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Some Reservations: Food Tourism, the Food-Selfie, and Everyday Life Performances on Instagram

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Abstract

Food is the very lifeblood of who we are; it brings us together, defines our cultures, and provides us the vital nourishment we need to survive. However, with the rise of social media platforms that encourage image-sharing, images of food have become increasingly significant in regard to how we understand our communicative choices and habits online. In this project, I trace a lineage of popular food media aesthetics from cable and streaming television shows through the online social media platform Instagram, to argue that an expanded understanding of the "food-selfie" helps one articulate how and why they share images of food online. The food-selfie – a genre of selfie-photography described by sociologist Bhavna Middha in which "people take pictures of food they like, cook, and/or eat and subsequently upload them on social media" – has been influenced by popular, stream-able food media like *Triple D, Kitchen Nightmares, Man V. Food, and Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* (to name a few), is a communicative performance, both through the exhibition of the photographed meal and how we choose to present ourselves in and alongside these images. These performances are both *of the self* (for the user's imagined audience) and *for the self* (for the user's own understanding of who they are/how they want to be viewed). Finally, these practices become problematic when much of the current mediascape surrounding food and food tourism is gendered through inherently Western and masculine normative performance practices. Overall, a better understanding of how the food-selfie helps shape and maintain Instagram users' online identities, and how the norms of the food-selfie aesthetic is informed by larger sociocultural structures, affords us new ways of conceptualizing performances of digital identity in social media spaces.

Keywords: food tourism, food media, selfies, food-selfie, Chef's Gaze, Instagram, celebrity chef, performance, identity, digital media, photography, surrogation

Some Reservations:

Food Tourism, the Food-Selfie, and Everyday Life Performances on Instagram

by

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THESIS

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Preparing the Meal: Food and Identity

"Meals make the society, hold the fabric together in lots of ways that were charming

and interesting and intoxicating to me. The perfect meal, or the best meals, occur in

a context that frequently has very little to do with the food itself"

Anthony Bourdain

Memory-work, like cooking, is challenging.

Exploring my history is not something that I've ever done formally, or even willingly,

before. Sure, I love telling stories; hell, I even love acting them out with voices, gestures, and

impromptu costumes. But telling my stories – I mean *my story* – that has always been the worst

and hardest part. I tend to experience my past through smell and taste, and these senses, for me,

evoke waves of overwhelming emotions. So, if you see me crying while eating my Burger

King® cheeseburger, don't be surprised – it's not because its sublime, it just means a lot to me

for reasons I can't explain. At least, not yet.

My journey didn't begin with food and cooking, and it certainly didn't begin with

control, happiness, or stability. These things would come, but not for a long time. My passion

first came with acting. If you were to ask me, even to this day, I'd still say I'm a better actor than

anything else. But cooking and food, these are realms where you can't act; These realms require

an intimacy and honesty – traits that sometimes grace our everyday performances – that punches

through various roles and positions we, as social actors, find ourselves in. Every dish reveals so

much about who we are, where we've been, what we like, what we believe, and what we aspire

towards. Whether it is a fancy drink or a simple burger, our food choices communicate a lot

more than one might initially consider.

However, I should let that thought bake for a little bit – I'd hate for it to be raw or overly doughy. Instead, I'll offer you an appetizer: a lightly seasoned Instagram[1] photo garnished with some narrative flair.

In November 2015, after much pressure from my friends, I created my first Instagram account.[2] After going through the motions of creating a password, uploading a profile picture, and filling out a short biography, I came to a strange realization - I was at an utter loss in terms of what I was meant to be doing. I wasn't big into taking selfies, and most group photos I was in were on other peoples' phones. I could have texted one of them for a picture, but it was likely that these had already been posted to some social media account. Perplexed, I looked up from my phone and glanced over at my friend Steve.

"Now what?" I asked, offhandedly.

"Breth," he responded, "don't you have any coffee pictures from work? Everyone shares pictures of food on the 'Gram' (his slang term for Instagram)."

Shrugging, I proceeded to flip through the various attempts at latte art that cluttered my digital gallery. I wasn't going to share just anything - I was competing with what I assumed to be beautiful masterpieces from professionals, and I had to put my best foot forward. It must've been a half-hour before I finally settled on my piece de resistance – after all, it needed to be glorious; a scintillating aperitif that all of my followers would come to associate with me and my astonishing coffee skills. It also had to be iconic, as this would be, at least for a time, my sole digital footprint. At last it struck me: *Yes* – this would be the image. It had everything I wanted. Composition. Contrast. And most importantly, it showcased my amazing latte-art skills:

Figure 1.1: The Glorious Coffee Post. Courtesy of the author.

Reflecting on it now, this image (Figure 1.1) is none of the things I thought it was. It is amateur, out-of-focus, improperly formed, and the milk isn't the right consistency to get the truly silky gloss that one expects of latte art in spaces like Instagram. Yet, I distinctly remember that when I posted it I felt proud to claim this product and image as my own. It was part of me, and now that would be clear for the entire internet.

Over the past four years, I've continued to share images of my food alongside other important images of my life - gatherings with friends, my graduation, inductions, and more. Yet it wasn't until recently that I sought to analyze what these images offer my digital identity – the 'me' that people using the internet to get to interact with and know – through their juxtaposition with the other visual and textual elements on my profile. Alongside my group, landscape, special event, and selfie photos, these food-selfies perform my identity in ways I never intended.[3]

In this project, I argue that such food-selfies – a genre of selfie-photography described by sociologist Bhavna Middha in which "people take pictures of food they like, cook, and/or eat and subsequently upload them on social media"[4] – have been largely influenced *for some people* (myself included) by popular, streaming food media like *Triple D, Kitchen Nightmares, Man V. Food, and Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* (to name a few). Food-selfies are communicative, both through the exhibition of the meal and how we choose to present ourselves in or alongside these images. Further, the taking and online posting of these images are performances both *of the self* (for the user's imagined audience) and *for the self* (for the user's own understanding of who they are and/or how they want to be viewed by others). Finally, the processes and products the food-selfie affords is complicated (in potentially problematic ways) by the fact that a large portion of the current mediascape surrounding food tourism is gendered through inherently Western, masculine,[5] normative performance practices. Through understanding the selfie as a

genre, coupled with an expanded understanding of the food-selfie, this project offers a new perspective regarding performances of digital identity on social media. Ultimately, through understanding the ways food-selfies help shape and maintain Instagram users' online identities, and how the norms of the food-selfie aesthetic is informed (for some users) by specific, larger, sociocultural structures, this project provides new ways of conceptualizing current performances of digital identity in social media spaces, and imagines progressive possibilities for future performances.

Food Tourism and Media: A Slice of the Pie

> "If I'm an advocate for anything, it's to move. As far as you can, as much as you can. Across the ocean, or simply across the river. Walk in someone else's shoes or at least eat their food. It's a plus for everybody."
>
> Anthony Bourdain, *No Reservations*

This should come as no surprise – food media is *literally* everywhere. Whether it is the billboard ad for Dunkin Donuts® that you pass on the commute to work, the advertisements you see between YouTube videos (or even entire YouTube channels devoted to food itself- looking at you Rhett and Link[6]), or the latest monstrosity constructed by Applebee's® or Starbucks® to make more money, it is nigh impossible to escape the influence of how popular food is. Now, I know the obvious criticism: "Duh, we need food to eat, so why wouldn't it be everywhere?" And I would agree. As a human, I, too, enjoy eating. Yet, the ways many internet users depict food in images, and its connection to the various manifestations their nourishment, is more complicated than what one might consider at first glance.

Before I discuss food tourism, I must make the distinction that "food media" is to "food tourism" as the idea of *steak* is to the *experience of eating* the best filet mignon you've ever tasted. While these media are connected, to refer to one as the other would be inaccurate. Food media, as I utilize it throughout this project, refers to all the *mediated presentations of food* that exist: pictures, drawings, oral histories, recipes, writings about, or videos of food/cookery. These are all forms of food media. Food tourism, on the other hand, is a specific *set of performance and exhibition practices* surrounding the creation, consumption, and context of food. As explained by tourism scholars Chen-Tsang Tsai and Yao-Chin Wang,[7] food tourism is the act of tourists "visiting primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food and tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel" (56).

Tsai and Wang also offer insight into what goes into crafting a food locale from an industry perspective, discussing the implications of physical/digital branding and brand identity on touristic practices. They cite the connection to "authenticity" as a key factor in the tourist's interactions with food. They draw upon the experience of the food – used here as a marketing ploy (i.e. what does a particular city's food offer a tourist?), and couple this with the tourist typology designed by tourism scholars C. Mitchell Hall and Liz Sharples.[8] Ultimately, Tsai and Wang conclude that the desirability of a location, for food tourists, is predicated on the branding of particular foods as unique and authentic to that particular space. In other words, the perceived return-on-investment (ROI) and experiential value for the food tourist is the instrumental factor that determines whether or not they will choose to travel somewhere. While Tsai and Wang's observations are more about the branding of a site, their conclusions offer valuable insight into what drives food tourists, as consumers of both food and culture. Spaces that hope to brand as a

spot for "culinary tourists" should focus on selling the *experience* of the food to the tourist. The food experience must be personable and unique, and it must resonate with tourist in a way that is more than superficial.

These food experience factors are what tourism scholars Tommy Andersson and Lena Mossberg refer to as the push-and-pull factors for a locale. From an industry perspective on food tourism akin to Tsai and Wang's, Andersson and Mossberg[9] note the impacts of food tourism on the *identity* of those participating in the consumption of food and drink, stating that:

> [T]he meals can be a part of who we are. We take gastronomic experiences with us; we consume for our own sakes but also so that others can see who we are . . . Food and drink offer an opportunity to become involved in a community through travel for the sake of food, membership in gastronomic societies and so on. The creation of a gastronomic identity has the effect of both creating a sense of belonging and of strengthening divides."
>
> (2).

Andersson and Mossberg also note that additional motivating factors for food tourists are linked to key "push and pull" factors, which determine the likeliness of a tourist to visit (based on the other draws of the locale coupled with the importance of food to their visit).

Food scholar Greg Richards[10] also links gastronomy to the touring of physical space, not only as a tangential factor but as a main draw to certain locations. Potentially linked to the current focus on experiential ROI for tourists, they note:

> The first generation of gastronomic experiences [was] based on the production of themed experiences for consumers; the second generation of experiences [was] co-created by producers and consumers, and the third generation of gastronomic experiences [is] related to the development of communities around gastronomy and food. In this process a shift is

observed from the taste patterns of individual 'foodies' to the development of entire foodscapes." (1).

This establishment of "foodscapes" is critical, as it represents both an ideological concept as well as the physical space that the food occupies. Interactions with foodscapes form interpersonal and group bonds akin to cultural scholar Victor Turner's[11] theories of ritual and communitas. According to Turner, "ritual" involves a series of rites of passage in which participants are thrust out of their everyday roles and into a space of ideological (and sometimes physical) reformation. Most relevant to my usage of this idea, is the notion that occurrence of a ritual promotes a *heightened state of collective joy* amongst its participants. The ritual enables a "modality of human interrelatedness [which] can play across structural systems"[12] (45) – a sense of community and belonging that Turner distinguishes as *communitas*. Through communitas, traditional roles and statuses come to matter less than they would in other settings, as the unitedness of the group overrides any other differentiating or dividing factors.

Food tourists can have almost nothing in common, yet uniquely connect through their shared experiences (communitas) within foodscapes. In foodscapes and foodie-culture, the ritual objects and spaces are clearly established via the foodie community. Then, in order to truly be considered part of the "foodie" lineage – to share in their communitas – one must pass through these foodscapes and experience the food and culture of a given location in order to be granted "foodie" status. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor describes this sort of communitas as the *doing becoming the belonging*.[13] By performing and taking ownership of food tourist and foodie traditions, the performer is marking themselves as a part of these groups.

Andersson and Mossberg's conclusions are grounded in the physicality of food tourism and its associated spaces. Yet, their observations offer a foundation from which consumers,

scholars, and, frankly, *people who eat*, can further interpret the ways that food media is crafted and presented by corporations, celebrities, and other lesser-known people. The way that food media circulates through digital spaces, for example, creates another touristic model for scholarly interpretation. Similar to what performance studies scholar Richard Schechner would call "restored behavior," the phenomenon of experiencing food through images can be looked at as a combination of memory work and the replication (or re-performance) of a physical encounter. Restored behavior, or "twice-behaved behavior," as defined by Schechner is a behavior that is never for the first time, and always in some way a replication (though never exact) of a previous performance. Restored behavior is a "symbolic and reflexive [action . . . which involves] 'me behaving as if I am someone else'" (2-3). It is me, in my apartment kitchen, cooking up some dumplings I learned how to make by watching Rachel Ray, Alton Brown, or Bobby Flay. It is, perhaps, you—reading the faded recipe card for banana bread left in an old box by your grandmother, googling for twenty minutes to determine what on Earth she may have meant when she wrote to *add a pinch of* some ingredient.

Meanwhile, in the contexts of food tourism, we can view the representations of food and the sharing of our engagements with it in digital spaces as (sometimes) attempts toward approximating the feeling of physically exploring a space. Through consuming and sharing images (and sometimes even short videos), social media users are *also* not necessarily behaving quite as 'themselves.' They are performing their personal versions of the foodie, the food-tourist, and the culinary critic—all identity markers that will become integral to my analysis in chapter two—insofar as these identity performances have been informed by the food tourist's experiences with other foodies, food tourists, and food media.

Building from these ideas, one might reasonably conclude that any individual image of a meal or food becomes fairly inconsequential by itself, beyond larger notions of what the dish signifies on its own (e.g. "Thanksgiving" turkey, matzah, Indian halwah, goulash, mole sauce, borscht, etc.). Its potentially unknown "*original truth* . . . may be lost, ignored, or contradicted" (emphasis added, Schechner 2). Yet, following Schechner's theory of restored behavior and Diana Taylor's notions of "performance," images of and foods can function "as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through [their reiteration]."[14] Thus, rather than being understood as acts on their own, images of food are performances with potentially unknown origins and undetermined futures, capable of being reproduced, revised, and continued indefinitely—or, sometimes, lost. These implications free food imagery from being merely a mimetic reproduction of a physical space and/or culinary artifact. Considering the ways that food images can perform, particularly on social media, can illuminate how specific ideologies are perpetuated or challenged in various foodscapes through individual and group behaviors (i.e. performances), which are associated with and informed by an individual's exposure to other food media and specific histories of food tourism, along with their desire to experience communitas as part of a larger food tourism group.

In this sense, food media is working on two levels. First, it is behaving as an object specific to a ritual (i.e. that of *becoming* a "foodie"), and by assuming that status it becomes enriched with an affect, temporality, and intimacy that might draw a viewer in. This priming also affords the viewer a means to engage *differently* with the image, in a way that calls upon their own unique experiences with food as a ritual object. Further, a user's sharing of their own food image, a potential attempt at "foodie" communitas, becomes the jumping off point for a new performance; one the user adopts and redeploys as a means of creating new meanings with food

– allowing the image of food to perform online in new contexts and thus in new ways. These images of food, meanwhile, are simultaneously (and perhaps even unconsciously on the part of the sharer) performing social, cultural, racial, and other ideologies for the user's personal online social connections through the processes and products of cooking or eating out, and the subsequent image-sharing of meal re-presentations as digital performances of identity.

White and Masculine Performances of Food in Popular Media

Before going further, I would be remiss if I asserted that the lineage of aesthetics I am examining in this project is the only (or even primary) way of viewing and interacting with images of food. While yes, I claim that it is one prevalent way that food media and images of food are presented to consumers en masse, its dominance of the food mediascape is predicated on its omission and surrogation of many other aesthetic lineages. While there are numerous historical and contemporary aesthetic traditions that attention could be drawn to, I would like to acknowledge several feminine and modernist lineages that are most relevant for this study (in which I focus on masculinity and food photography). These feminine and modernist lineages, specifically, include the works of Julia Child, Rachael Ray, and Anthony Bourdain.

As one of the first televised celebrity chefs, Julia Child's influence has been widely acknowledged through her numerous Emmy award-winning cookbooks, shows, and biographies. Over the course of forty years of televised broadcasts, Child effectively carved out what it meant to engage with food as a celebrity chef. Through her authentic and approachable style – reinforced by the fact that her initial shows were aired unedited[15] – she established an aesthetic of imperfection, comfort, and empowerment for a sect of (at the time) largely domestic women. Through her work, Child opened the door for the work of future celebrity chef icons like Rachael Ray and Ina Garten[16]to stake their claim in the culinary landscape. Compared to the celebrity

chefs I focus on in this work, Child's approach uses what I would term a traditional feminine chef aesthetic and ethos – professional and personable but bound intrinsically to a notion of domesticity (in this case, likely due to the era in which she was working).

Many of the values exhibited in Julia Child's food media also come to the surface in the work of her successors. Rachael Ray, for example, includes many aesthetic and ideological conventions that can be seen in and/or seem built upon Child's feminine approach, including Ray's emphasis on familial ties to food, its ability to bring people together, and how food helps people experience moments of communitas**.** This emphasis on communitas and connection building is the vital shift that Ray offers the food mediascape, making the work of food media simultaneously about representing the *process of making food correctly* and about *the body preparing it* in ways that Julia Child's work did not. Ray modernizes Child's feminine aesthetic, as greater emphasis is placed on the connective power of food through a woman chef's mediation of it. However, Ray's food media is also (like Child's) often tied to domesticity and home labor, rather than the aesthetics of a professional kitchen. The set Ray cooks on for *30 Minute Meals*, for example, is styled to look like a home kitchen as opposed to a fully functional restaurant kitchen, which we are more likely to see in shows headed by more masculine celebrity chefs.

Finally, despite not being a woman celebrity chef, Anthony Bourdain's food media also follows a more feminine aesthetic and ethic. His way of engaging with food and those who prepare it emphasizes authenticity, approachability, humility, and (again) communitas, which is not seen in much contemporary masculine food media. Bourdain draws attention to the experience of food tourism, specifically, and the potentially positive impacts of food tourism on all involved parties. Bourdain's bravado does not manifest in the same way as Gordon Ramsay's

or Guy Fieri's (chefs' lineages that this project focuses on). Instead, Bourdain exudes an earnest urge to connect, learn, and grow together with others who create food.

The lineage I'm examining in this project is thus one of many food media lineages. In contrast to the modernist stylings of Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations* or the media of women celebrity chefs like Julia Child and Rachael Ray, I look at food media that is dominated by masculine (and often white) voices and bodies that ultimately work to uphold hegemonic, masculine identities and ideologies in relation to food media and food tourism. Thus, while other ways of seeing and representing food have existed and do exist (and are incredibly valuable), a full analysis of these histories is beyond the scope of this project. Additionally, omitting analyses of these examples also shows how easily other ways of seeing and knowing can be forgotten, and even replaced (inadequately) by more problematic lineages. More to this in chapter two, though.

In addition to food shows, which I discuss below, many recent popular films have acknowledged the ability of performances of food consumption to transport us to different times and affects, mold our identities, and stimulate our bodies and minds in various ways. For instance, in an animated sequence in the Pixar film *Ratatouille* (2007), the 'antagonist,' food critic Anton Ego, tastes the titular dish. As he takes his first bite, he is affectively whisked back to his childhood, with memories of his mother serving him the same dish. The film then cuts back to the present, where a glow of happiness begins to radiate over him. Here, the consumption of familiar food has evoked an affect through signaling memories within Anton's embodied epistemology – that of his home, his childhood, and the love of his mother. He is experiencing "restored behavior" through taste, smell, and memory. Thus, the food is implicated in Anton's nostalgic performance, as it triggers an affective response in him – the consumer – through

appeal to a prior experience of his life and part of his identity. Anton's social and personal knowledges re-manifest easily here in in new contexts.

These performances can also become normatively gendered in ways one might not initially consider. Another film that indirectly examines the connection between food, identity, and affect is *Eat Pray Love* (2010). Based on the biographical novel of the same name from 2006, the film follows Elizabeth Gilbert (portrayed by Julia Roberts), broke and newly divorced, on a journey of self-discovery. As part of this quest, she first visits Italy in search of "pleasure of the senses" – to which she indulges in simple Italian cuisine, wine, tiramisu, gelato, and espresso. While not the exclusive portrayal of Elizabeth's time in Italy, there is a clear demarcation between her experiences with the food and her overall happiness and wellbeing. The food not only is shown to nourish her physically, but spiritually and emotionally as well. This emotional coding leaves the encounter with food reading as feminine[17], as it is depicted as a tool for expression and self-care more so than anything else.

American Pie (1999) depicts food similarly to *Eat Pray Love* insomuch as it can be vital to discovering one's process of understanding their own identity and—in this case—their coming-of-age (even if doing so in a raunchy way). Unlike *Eat Pray* Love, however, the teenage protagonist's interaction with food in *American Pie* is left reading as a more masculine encounter. After being informed by a friend that the feeling of warm apple pie is tantamount to how having sex with a woman feels, the main character Jim, tests this theory—after his mom bakes him one and leaves it out to cool. As you can imagine, this can play out rather comedically (depending on your sense of humor). This scene, however, unlike the depictions in *Eat Pray Love,* leaves the food void of any serious emotional attributes. It is simply an object used for the pursuit of pleasure. Yet, the infamous scene of Jim engaging in sexual acts with an apple pie

offers a fascinating insight into the intertwined erotization and gendering of food. Here, the implication is not only that food is equitable to carnal experience, with it being able to offer similar sensory pleasures, but also that it is an object on which consumers can place desires indiscriminately. However, by placing food subordinate to the desires of the male character in this movie, and then compounding that status through its comparison with 'third base,' the food becomes sexualized and feminized in a way that permits this dominating action, while still taboo and somewhat strange, to occur in an acceptable (awkward, teenage) context.

These ways of seeing food via film and video technologies are not limited to feature length films. The mere existence of *The Food Network* implies audiences that have obsessions with or desires to observe food and its consumption in visual ways. Specifically, with shows like, *Top Chef, MasterChef, Kitchen Nightmares,* and *The Great British Baking Show*, we see a gluttonous amount of food images circulated for entertainment. The structure of these shows is in most cases incredibly predictable; for the competitive shows, the contestants are given a challenge, told to interpret it in a personal way, and then present their culinary results to several judges. As the challenges are being accomplished, the audience is usually treated to a description of the contestant, how they are structuring the dish, and a montage of its creation. Yet, the most interesting part of these shows, and the moments the showrunners themselves build up the most tension for, are the final moments of revealing and tasting the final dishes.

As part of this tension, the audience is often offered a panoramic and almost erotic filming of the finished dish. Then, the judge(s) begin to assess the dish based on its appearance in a way that is near prescriptive of the way they believe it will taste. Especially in moments of poor plating, they linger and address every scrutinizable detail, priming the audience for the moment of mutual consumption. As the judges finally eat the dish, they pause dramatically, and

then break the tension by commenting in ways that allow the audience to know how they too, should feel if they were consuming this dish. Words and phrases such as "a bit too dry", "dense and heavy", and "heavenly," flow easily from judge's mouths. Occasionally, the food itself flows from a judge's mouth, and the audience is expected to assume a similar sense of revulsion. The summation of this entire process is to simulate the experience of dining, predicated on the audience's embodied experiences with food similar to what is being exhibited.[18]

Meanwhile, in food tourism shows like Fieri's *Triple D*, the structural conventions vary slightly more from show to show. In examining a segment of *Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives*, Negra and Tasker describe the conventions of the show:

> Each episode of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* showcases Fieri as a roving endorser of small restaurants that serve, as it is put in one episode, "homemade comfort foods," which tend to be indulgent, highly caloric, and unhealthful [sic]. He profiles the owner or chef as they make a signature dish (with some perfunctory involvement from Fieri), gathers testimonials from loyal customers, and sketches a picture of conviviality and community at the restaurant. The recipes are invariably personalized and perfected over time; they are presented as manifestations of dedicated, long-serving, personally committed restaurant cooks. The atmosphere in which they are served also highlights familiarity and reliability for consumers. . . the show celebrates the authenticity of entrepreneurial cooks producing flavorful yet everyday food—here a signature sweet relish for hotdogs—and Fieri as an admiring observer and taster. (127)[19]

As described here, there are multiple fascinating implications for Fieri's *Triple D*. Most notably, the presence of Fieri as the admiring observer, participant, and taster in the restaurants he visits centers the male – and the masculine – as an incipient center for the "American" culinary

community. This shift in focus towards the masculinity of cooking (as a profession) aligns with current trends in food media as observed by culture and gender scholar Casey Kelly,[20] who notes that in modern society, cooking is depicted as exhibiting "manly knowhow and is rewarded with confidence, the respect of peers, and the admiration of women. Like home repair, physical labor, athletic competition, or sexual exploits, cooking masculinizes men." (202).

Food is thus linked through its media representations to corporeal embodiment and identity. A chef in a restaurant might prepare a dish that is personal for themselves, which the consumer then experiences in a way that joins the dish with their own embodied epistemologies. When this physical connection with dish is removed, however, and consumers and viewers instead look at images of the dish there is *still,* for some, a desire to capture these elements of embodiment and identity—even despite mediation that does not afford experiences of smell, taste, or touch. Contemporary cable and streaming programs are thus constructed with attention to imagined audiences that will be consuming the dish aesthetically, and thus designed to fit larger narratives of contemporary society. Similar to how Walter Benjamin discusses the storyteller, the photographer of such food does not "aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller" (i.e. photographer) allowing their handprints to exude through the work.[21] From the perspective of the photographer (or perhaps, the eyes of the chef), the image of the dish should be personal, and come from the personal (mixed with some knowledge of their audience). Most importantly, though, the food image should *feel* uniquely personal in its consumption – it is a sort of story, shaped for the audience in a way that offers them counsel. Unlike Benjamin's storyteller, however, the counsel being offered here is not ethical or moralistic. Instead, it is a counsel that guides the consumer of

the food (via the image of food) to understand and desire the dish in a specific way: A way that is bound intrinsically to the creator of the image/food.

This establishment of intimacy between viewer, space, critic, and chef is not only critical to the success of the show as a piece of entertainment; it is also critical to understanding these shows and their associated media as existing within the genre of food tourism. In food tourism, through the appeals of the show to the audience's sensory perceptions of taste, smell, and touch, show creators attempt to connect the physicality of the space, culture, and style of cookery being shown with the viewer's own life. Utilizing the celebrity chef as an anchor, viewers can see, taste, and experience the food and location. Like a tour guide, celebrity chefs like Fieri lead us through the foodscape and implicitly (or at times explicitly) show us how to best *experience* it.

Continuing with Fieri as my prime example, I look to a segment of *Triple D* about the Greek restaurant "Axios," in Denver, Colorado to see what he (as tour guide) is suggesting viewers should feel about this space that is both distinctly Greek *and* American. One of the first filmic elements the segment presents, aside from the name of the restaurant, is a shifting soundtrack as we visually "enter" the restaurant, from ambient noise to the stereotypical rock beat the show is known for. This stylistic choice works to begin coding Axios as a part of the greater structure of Americanicity[22] – specifically the spatial atmosphere of American Dining that Fieri has curated over the course of the show. The next important audio element to note is the shift in soundtrack as the owner of the restaurant is introduced. This change, from the generic rock-beat to a live performance of the owner Telly Topakas on his bouzouki, signals a change in coding of the restaurant. Axios moves away from the latent Americanicity that *Triple D* often imposes and is situated as both individual and unique – tethered only to its origin story and culture (in this case Greek culture). Yet, the restaurant is still incorporated as part of the

homogenized landscape of American dining we find on *Triple D*. This dual construction offers

implications in terms of how we might interpret the subsequent dishes that are presented, as it

not only positions the dishes as being co-opted into Americanicity, but also positions both Fieri

and Topakas as collaborators in this performance of culinary identity. To clarify, the restaurant is

no longer intelligible as Topakas' creation alone. It has become American, with new affordances

and meanings, through Fieri's affirming intervention.

The scenes, sounds, and patron comments have all been collected and presented in a way

that prompts audience members to understand the restaurant's Greek food as being culturally

marked in ways that appear to be explicitly positive, and implicitly Americanized. The reduction

of culinary identity to easily consumable understandings of "American" cuisine is

simultaneously individuated and homogenized – Axios is Greek and American, it is unique yet

part of a larger, more easily accessible knowledge. Fieri underscores this throughout the show by

emphasizing Axios' unique Greek elements while situating it within a collection of iconic

American locations.

From Celebrity to Social Chef: Broadening the Selfie

"The second thing I can't stand is dirty cooks. I want clean trousers, clean hair and

clean nails. If a chef is proud about how he looks, he's proud about how he cooks."

Gordon Ramsay, *Humble Pie*

The Restaurant Selfie

There are countless more examples of this type of work across food tourism media that

exists within the same lineage as *Triple D*. The celebrity chef, in whatever way they have pre-

established, initiates interaction with the site. Guy Fieri takes a rather traditional approach to

food tourism, by visiting the place, meeting with his 'local experts' or 'guides,' and experiencing the food without offering much or any critical commentary. For Chef Gordon Ramsay, meanwhile, this is usually tourism through renovation, wherein he enters, critiques, and 'fixes' the restaurant through menu changes or radical reconstruction of the restaurant proper.

Often the format for these types of shows (despite variations from show to show) begins with a description of the location of the restaurant, its owners and history, and the significance of the chef's visit. During this amuse-bouche for the coming episode, the viewer is often presented with a montage of images or filmed shots of the restaurant and its locale. If places can be said to have identity (and many do, when we think through the newer notion of *branding*), these images serve as a series of *selfies* for the restaurant. The images present the restaurant's identity through its physical form, akin to how users share images of their own bodies on social media – often curating only the "best of me" images to attach to their public/social image.

The term selfie, for many, may conjure to mind the common flocks of young people duck-facing into their phones (in 2020, this trend is passé, however, you probably get what I'm trying to say). However, "selfie," for the purposes of this project, is not only a *type* of photograph (e.g. a photo of me, taken by me, here, or there, or at home, or at work, etc.), but also as a *genre* of photography that has come to be through our socialization with this common image type, as described by visual scholar Paul Frosh[23]:

> As a photographic genre, [the selfie] invites attention to the pictorial conventions underpinning generic identity: After all, one cannot recognize an image as a selfie without looking at what it represents. Yet on the other hand, as with genre more broadly, representational criteria alone are insufficient (Mittell, 2001). Understanding that a particular image is a selfie (rather than just a photograph of, say, a face) *requires viewers*

to make inferences about the nondepictive technocultural conditions in which the image was made (Frosh, 2001). It requires, among other things, that these viewers have been adequately socialized through having seen, taken, or heard tell of selfies. (emphasis added, 1-2)

What is important in this distinction between image type and genre is that selfie photographs are intelligible largely due to our creation and interaction with them. The selfie as a social construct, to return to Diana Taylor, is intelligible because we have prior knowledge of the scenario(s) in which they occur. We can identify the selfie-genre based on the context of the photograph, building from how we have been socialized to understand similar images – it becomes a reflex, much like seeing someone's face on social media sites. Thus, when we, as viewers, are presented with an opening montage of a cooking show that presents a restaurant through images in a way that is similar to how people share selfies, we may come to interpret the restaurant image in the same vein as the selfie—as it holds, reveals, and/or constructs identity.

The selfie is performative in both the theatrical sense (it "performs" the image, as it will be interpreted by viewers indefinitely into the future), and in the sense that it creates a reality (i.e. a unique identity) through its mere existence. To use the restaurant example again, the montage of images presented at the opening of a food tourism show is fundamentally conveying information about the location, restaurant, and food – to borrow a phrase from Mary Francis HopKins – in an inherently slanted way.[24] The 'slant,' in the case of food media programming, is motivated by producers hoping to capitalize on entertainment and dramatization. Thus, the creators have edited images and video together in order to maximize this effect. *Kitchen Nightmares*, for example, shows how, through juxtaposition with other filmic elements (music, narration, etc.), the restaurant's slanted selfie(s) can perform identities that include dysfunction,

instability, and desperation. The opening soundtrack strains with tense chords and is usually dotted with dishes smashing, yelling, and other altercations. The constructed identity of the restaurant (and chef or owner) through image and music then positions the viewer to see Gordon Ramsay as the savior for this restaurant for the next 60-ish minutes. The restaurant's selfies move beyond identity, to aid in the greater performance of whatever the show requires most for viewer engagement – desperation or celebration, desire or disgust. The conventions of the restaurant selfies from episode to episode of a single series can then also build a base of cultural knowledge that distinguishes 'good cookery' from 'bad cookery,' aesthetic conventions and judgments I speak more to in chapter two.

The ability to deduce values and traits from selfies and selfie-like images has been observed in several studies. Digital scholars Lin Qiu, Jiahui Yu, Shanshan Yang et al.[25] note that information linked to value and trait cueing can be gleaned from selfies, including "cues… related to agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness." These scholars also observe that these traits are often agreed upon across users looking at the profile, noting that "observers had moderate to strong agreement in their ratings of [the] Big Five[26] personality [traits] based on selfies." Media scholars Nicola Doring, Anne Reif, and Sandra Poeschl,[27] meanwhile, find that selfies tend to reflect and reify traditional gender stereotypes. Particularly on Instagram, they observe that selfies are gendered in ways specific to social-media, and that these images are generally more stereotypically gendered than they would be other forms of media (in their study, they directly compare with magazine advertisements). Media scholar Jiyoung Chae, further describes that with the widespread sharing of selfie-photography on social media sites, users have increased the frequency of editing in their photos, the implications of which I address shortly.[28]

What these studies all lend is an understanding of the selfie as an object of social communication that works to perform a particular set of values that the users and their imagined viewers find desirable. Due to users' socialization with the selfie genre, to combine Frosh and Qiu, Yu, Yang et al.'s findings, viewers of selfie images of all sorts are able to consistently identify and agree upon certain traits that can be inferred by the photograph. This allows for otherwise subjective claims about *what* the selfie image shows us or represents to be considered as analytically valid beyond singular interpretations or phenomenological approaches.

The Food Selfie

Through examining how other images possess traits of the selfie that are similar to selfies of the human body – applying similar types of reasonings, assumptions, performance abilities, etc. – viewers can gain insight into what is going on in food tourism spaces, beyond simple assumptions of "This is a cool restaurant," or "Man, Guy Fieri must love this food, as he's slathered in their BBQ-sauce." Food, as I've previously discussed[29] is a highly communicative and performative object that draws people to places. So, what happens when we look *at our photographs of our food* as another image type within the selfie genre—and thus as part of our performed identity?

Bhavna Middha utilizes the term "food-selfie" (again, a genre "where people take pictures of food they like, cook, and/or eat and subsequently upload them on social media" (291) in a study focusing on how people utilize food photography on social media, primarily focusing on Facebook. By analyzing the sociocultural dynamics of the food-selfie in daily digital performances, Middha asks the participants of their study to share a picture of their meal with some commentary within a private group devoted to their project. The privacy of the group was implemented due to the nature of the research subjects, as they were all active students. The main

findings of Middha's study not only included insights into participant dining habits, dietary trends, and cultural demographics, but also trends in areas of dining based on convenience or other temporally effected factors. Food-selfies, thus, "[provide] an open and accessible way of analyzing everyday practices, including, but not limited to, practices of eating." (303). Further, as food image aesthetics are (eventually) adopted/adapted from celebrity chefs and picked up by a more general public, these aesthetics may pass through several other possible intermediate phases. While an argument could be made that this aesthetic "education" or "culturing" is accomplished through food and restaurant advertisements, as these inundate our lives, within the contexts of Instagram there are specific types of users that serves as intermediaries: influencers and microcelebrities.

As much as I'd love to say otherwise, not everyone watches food shows. Yet, I can confidently say that anyone with social media accounts online that allow for the posting of images likely interacts with food media frequently. Often, this occurs through pages with large followings – either individuals or pseudo-independent pages like "Tipsy Bartender" – that share their mouth-watering and nigh-pornographic images of food: scintillating cheese-pulls, DIY recipes, and two dozen jungle juice variations. In a world where "foodie" is an acceptable and understood identity marker, many people likely have at least *one* friend or contact that shares these types of food-devoted pages or images somewhat regularly.

For my social network, that would be me. I'm the person clogging up your news feed with amateur food and cooking pics.

Unlike myself, though, large aggregator pages or accounts like Tipsy Bartender fall into user categories such as "Influencer" and "microcelebrity." Digital media scholar Alice Marwick defines microcelebrity as a user or page with 10,000+ viewers that works to deliberately craft an

identity – and simultaneously a brand – that has positive associative value. This deliberate

crafting of digital identity may also be interpreted as a direct result of the microcelebrity and

brand culture that is both enabled and encouraged by platforms such as Instagram. Alice

Marwick[30] notes that:

> [t]he microcelebrity practitioner may have a very small audience but is nonetheless able
>
> to inhabit the celebrity subject position through the use of technologies also popular with
>
> superstar musicians, athletes, and actors. In the broadcast era, celebrity was something a
>
> person was; in the Internet era, microcelebrity is something people do. Subcultural or
>
> niche celebrities are now able to amass enough fans to support themselves through their
>
> online creative activities while remaining unknown to most and ignored by mainstream
>
> media. Celebrity thus becomes a continuum of practices that can be performed by anyone
>
> with a mobile screen, tablet, or laptop. (139 - 140)

Here, by performing *acts of celebrity* (undoubtedly often drawing upon trends of popular media

aesthetics), the microcelebrity can introduce and/or reify "mainstream" (and as I will identify in

Chapter 2, potentially problematic) ways of viewing food. Both within (e.g. mass

communications and public relations education) and outside of academic circles, meanwhile, this

conversation is occurring in ways that asks the user to find popular aesthetic trends and brand

themselves in line with these, in order to move beyond mere microcelebrity aspirations and

become a true *Influencer.*

In *Influencer: Building Your Personal Brand in the Age of Social Media*, Brittany

Hennessy encourages this reification of mainstream aesthetics. Namely, when discussing the

types of content you should be sharing as an aspiring influencer, she prescriptively describes four

content types that "good" influencers should be producing: videos, photos of yourself, photos of

your surroundings, and "bag spills"[31]; a type of post characterized typically with a handbag

positioned on its side, overflowing with items. While not exactly a critical intervention in the

discourse, Hennessy's work offers an entrepreneurial glimpse into the normalizing elements of

celebrity culture in an attention economy – an economy that holds the viewers' attention (a most

valuable resource), and inspires likes, shares, and (for some) even monetary compensation– and

how these trends and aspirations can potentially (and unconsciously) alter the sharing habits of

many additional Instagram users.

Looking critically at these two observations – one from an academic perspective noting

the increased accessibility of performing acts of 'celebrity,' and one from popular media

advocating for 'correct' types of behavior for aspirational labor that will lead to celebrity – what

emerges is a preponderance of evidence that all social media users (as Marwick states, anyone

who has access to a screen is able to perform this role) are facing increased pressure to present

their digital identities in specific, positive, easily consumable, and attention-worthy ways (as

Hennessy names several types of 'proper' content to include for users, including bag spills, etc.).

Despite the differing approaches of these two writers, both discussions explicitly invoke

the nature and norms of the selfie genre. Neither author makes the claim for creativity in terms of

the style of content being created (although Marwick acknowledges that the microcelebrity

functions as a result of creative endeavors). However, Marwick's use of "creativity" seems to

refer mainly to the roles and actions users perform, rather than what one might consider to be

creativity in presentational aesthetics. This is to say, the creativity of microcelebrity foodies lies

in their unique and successful performances within a chosen foodie category. Pages like Tipsy

Bartender, for example, are creative with their usage of ingredients, while their *aesthetic

conventions* are clearly borrowed from and/or influenced by more popular food media.

Figure 1.2: Screenshot of "Tipsybartender"

Looking at Figure 1.2, a grid of images taken from @tipsybartender's page, the aesthetic

of professionalism and 'high-cookery' are on display in ways similar to that of much televised

food tourism media. One, without knowledge that the account is an Influencer account, might

easily mistake this as the page of a food media professional. As I noted previously, the creativity

lies in the form and composition of the drink – notably in garnishing and aesthetic presentation.

However, as I will discuss in greater detail in chapter two, the cleanliness of the presentation, the bounty of ingredients, and the appeals to wealth, indulgence, and ability are latent throughout this grid. All of these conventions are part of the aesthetic traditions set forth by the lineage of popular television food media I focus on here, and its associated (white, masculine) professional chefs.

The implications of microcelebrity and influencer culture on the "food-selfie" is that these types of users can act as an intermediary between the aesthetics of celebrity food media and how everyday users choose to "naturally" or "authentically" present their own food images. Thus, while it could be argued that food tourism media is not necessarily influential in the everyday digital sharing of food photography, I posit that these shows and chef personalities set the predominant and precedent aesthetic modes of viewing, interacting with, and presenting food. These behaviors and conventions are then (sometimes) picked up by microcelebrities and influencers, who aid in the dissemination of heightened (yet paradoxically "natural" and "obvious," for some) ways of viewing food and performing identity through food images, which then reifies (or potentially introduces) these practices both to and for everyday social media users of Instagram. Thus, when looking at the food-selfies shared at the level of the everyday user – in a less regulated environment, as opposed to Middha's original study – one sees both elements of the selfie genre of photography and conventions and aesthetics of food tourism media.

Into the Oven: The Intersections of Food Tourism, Selfies, and Digital Identity

At this point, I've provided two conversations that are starting to reduce into a nice broth for this project to baste in. However, for me, this is like an episode of *MasterChef* where one of the contestants is desperately working on a recipe they've never before had to make, and they're scrambling to get it into the oven, praying that it won't be the end of their journey on the show.

In my case, I am that contestant and my dish is the combination of these fields of knowledge that, whether knowingly or unknowingly, inform each other as follows: Thus far, I have discussed food tourism and food media generally, noting specifically how food tourism in the current era capitalizes on building an experience for the participant – giving them something that they can latch onto for their own identity, and something that aids them in understanding the space of the culture they are experiencing. I then move to discussing selfies as a genre, and the implications of how looking at images other than the body as selfies can radically open the potential meanings of the image type to allow us to make contextual assessments that one may not otherwise make. These implications, in conjunction with an expansion of Middha's notion of the food-selfie, brings me to my major claims: Ways of viewing food are influenced by the popular food tourism media that people come into contact with, which has often been already-circulated on a broader scale. The aesthetic conventions and the ideologies that such food media aesthetics imply either later or concurrently become reified through the actions of Influencers and microcelebrities online, who ultimately reinforce, for the "everyday" social media user, "proper" ways of viewing and interacting with food and its associated cultures.

There are additional connections between food tourism and the performance of digital identity through food, as social media sites also often encourage a touristic style of engagement both for and by the user. After all, when creating these spaces, the user must necessarily envision some audience (large or small, real or imagined, self or other) that will visit and look at their shared images. Through attempting to exhibit the most positive, negative, or 'authentic' versions of oneself in these spaces, the user is, knowingly or unknowingly, creating a touristic experience for the viewer that attempts, similarly to physical sites, to give visitors a positive ROI (i.e. it was worth it to visit, and they may return again in the future).

Approaching this claim from the notion of online performative curation, as defined by

Lyndsay Gratch,[32] we might better analyze the similarities between explicitly touristic spaces

and the implicitly touristic user profile page, in terms of how both create meaning through a

means of selective engagement and juxtaposition. Performative curation, as described by Gratch,

"is a method of gathering, collaging, and selectively contextualizing ...artifacts… that is reflexive

about its mediation and place within mediated networks… Performative curation offers

opportunities [for the curator and audience] to create multiple meanings" about the media the

curator has presented (69). What Gratch posits is not only that performative curation is a means

for reading images through their juxtaposition, in order to access potentially new meanings, but

also a way to interpret the food-selfie as a performance of the self that is engaged with all other

representations of the self on a given social media site. Through images' juxtapositions and

socializations alongside each other (in addition to any text or hashtags provided), both selfies and

food-selfies have the potential to be interpreted in new and expanded ways. By placing the food-

selfie alongside the images of themselves, their friends, their family, etc., the user is knowingly

or accidently placing the image in a way that it enhances and offers a unique touristic experience

for anyone viewing the profile. This approach also enables viewers of a particular profile to

interact with and "consume" the displayed food images akin to how they might consume food in

a physical space – in that it offers a unique identity marker for the user and allows them to

'experience' the identity of that user in a new way.

With this link, I can thus clarify the connections between the fields I have put in play.

These connections can be reduced to four major claims: 1) Food tourism media influences how

users share food as part of their digital identity on Instagram. 2) The aesthetics and implied

ideologies of food tourism media are passed through either direct engagement with popular

media or microcelebrities and influencers, 3) The selfie (as a genre), which is complicated by understandings of the restaurant selfie on television and the food-selfie on social media, affords us new ways of understanding performances of digital identity in social media spaces, through how we view and understand the images of food shared on Instagram profiles, and 4) These image performances are both *of the self* (for the user's imagined audience) and *for the self* (for the user's own understanding of who they are and how they want to be viewed).

Again, in this study I am addressing a very specific lineage of food-selfie production that emerges from a small slice of the larger media pie. Other slices involve ways of seeing that I do not address here. These include the influences of reality television on food media (competitive shows, makeover shows, HGTV series, etc.), alternate forms of food tourism media (like Anthony Bourdain's work, some of Gordon Ramsay's media, etc.), differently gendered food media (e.g. Julia Child, Martha Stewart, Rachael Ray, etc.), historical education trends and embodied ways of learning "cooking" (Beecher and Stowe's *Domestic Science* and the teaching of home economic classes), and even different types of selfies (posies, group-selfies, etc.). What makes the white, masculine lineage I focus on particularly notable is its predication on forgetting all of these other ways of seeing in order to supplant them with its own self-serving end – one that serves as a tool of hegemonic masculinity. While I would address all of these given the time and space, as they are all valuable and, perhaps most importantly, are *worth remembering*, they lie beyond the scope of my project. Their omission, meanwhile, adds an extra layer of critical performance to this project – demonstrating the effects of what I will term the "Chef's Gaze" and how it employs methods of surrogation, both concepts I address further in chapter two.

The following chapters will build upon these four claims to explore images of food on Instagram in two distinct ways. In chapter two, I examine public Instagram users' pages and

observe trends in their sharing habits. I identify the types of influence that popular food tourism media and celebrity chef cultures have had on the everyday sharing habits of users, and re-present multiple "types" of profiles (in their original grid formation) to explain how meaning can be made—and identity markers performed and/or interpreted—through the various 'touristic artifacts' presented. To this end, I've selected the Instagram profiles of two notorious white, male celebrity chefs – Gordon Ramsay and Guy Fieri – to examine. I articulate how their representations of food and the self, through various forms of food-selfies, constitute a way of looking that I term the *Chef's Gaze* – defined simply as the way that certain celebrity chefs model behavior with, represent and circulate portrayals of, and mediate interactions with food and it associated cultures-turned-white, masculine, and Americanized. I next examine how this gaze, its accompanying aesthetics, and its implicit ideologies move into microcelebrity and influencer profiles, and the implications thereof. Then, by analyzing images on the first forty profiles to appear while utilizing the hashtag "#homechef," I present several accounts representative of my larger findings through this widely used hashtag. These accounts display how the trends I found imply a (possibly unconscious) deployment of the Chef's Gaze across 'everyday' users of Instagram, ultimately showing the larger implications of the adaptation of the Chef's Gaze aesthetic. For these everyday accounts, I have also chosen "#homechef" as opposed to "#homecooking" as it implies chef as the chosen identity marker rather than cooking, which implies more of the act of cooking rather than aligning one's identity with chefs/chef culture.

In chapter three, I use performative writing methods to explain my experiences with cookery, food, celebrity chef culture, food tourism media, and how all of this has influenced my social media sharing habits, particularly on Instagram. I provide both an in-character narrative script and a critical assessment, musing on what the celebrity chefs whom I've long idolized

might say about my food sharing and my history with food. As I put these chefs into dialogic

engagement with me and each other, I also move in and out of a more distanced, critical, and

reflexive voice, to addresses my own performances of whiteness and masculinity, and my—at

the time, often unwitting—experiences employing the Chef's Gaze. (After all, this project

wouldn't feel performatively complete if I didn't offer myself on a plate for you to experience,

tour, and examine.) The performative writing in chapter three gives me space to critically engage

with my relationships to both other people and food media in both intimate and distanced ways.

This critical distancing, especially in regard to the childhood and teenage trauma that led to my

deep and complex relationships with food (and *specific* celebrity chefs), allows me to remain

critical of my behaviors and actions. My history, as I tell it here, certainly includes things I

would never add to my "best of" photo reel on Instagram. Finally, the performance methodology

in chapter three allows me to position myself both with and against the Chef's Gaze and offer

insight in terms of how we might work against its potentially problematic aesthetics, again in a

critical way.

      With that being said, though, let's get on to the main course. Bon Appetit!

The Meat and Potatoes: Food-Selfies and Instagram Profiles

 "The Tom Brady sandwich would be a prosciutto with a nice Buffalo mozzarella,

on a crispy baguette with a little fresh basil. Brady is classy; he's a really cool dude.

He's got a lot of flavor."

Guy Fieri

In Chapter One, I offered four major claims regarding the food-selfie's production,

circulation, and analysis. These were:

1. Food tourism media influences how users share food as part of their digital

    identity on Instagram. (Tsai and Wang; Andersson and Mossberg)

2. The aesthetics of food tourism media are passed through either 1) direct

    engagement with popular media or 2) microcelebrities/influencers. (Hennessy;

    Marwick)

3. The selfie, as a genre, coupled with the understanding of the food-selfie, affords

    us new ways of approaching the performances of digital identity present in social

    media spaces, particularly through how we view and understand images of food

    present on Instagram profiles. (Frosh; Middha; Taylor; Qiu, Yu, Yang et al.)

4. These performances are both *of the self* (for the user's imagined audience) and *for

    the self* (for the user's own understanding of who they are/how they want to be

    viewed). (Frosh; Middha; Taylor; Qiu, Yu, Yang et al.)

Additionally, I cited numerous forms of popular media that inform our interactions with

food. While the movies and cable/streaming shows I discussed are the "broad strokes" that

normalize the conventions of food media, there is one facet of popular food culture in the West

that acts as the epicenter of many peoples' interactions with food. These are the food experts

millions know by name; we buy their merchandise, own their cookbooks, and watch their shows. These are the very same celebrities that have been quoted on numerous occasions as denying their own status as celebrities: Celebrity Chefs.

Searching the phrase "Celebrity Chef" on Google[33] offers some fascinating results. The first noteworthy observation I made through this search was that 13 out of the first 14 listed chefs (along with most of the other people presented) were white. My second (quite unexpected) observation was that 11 out of the first 14 listed chefs were male. While this is a surface level observation (and not a very nuanced one at that), these findings still open space for additional questions: If both popular and everyday food media, on the whole, features predominantly white and masculine bodies at the veritable top-of-the-list (as it seems to, through both my knowledge of cooking media—as explained in chapter three—and the Instagram searches completed for this study), what does this say about the production of food images that audience members like me get to interact with? More specifically, how do (white, masculine) chefs show and tell us about their 'brand' of consumption, both in terms of how we are meant to interpret their position as a producer of food media and as chef, and in the practical sense of how their actions and performances model 'acceptable' engagements with food? These questions thus inform the major research questions I address in this chapter: How do everyday users of Instagram who identify as a "home chef" adopt and reify popular aesthetic conventions of certain celebrity chefs, and to what end? Additionally, how and why do these social media users include food-selfies as part of their identity performances on Instagram, and what might these images offer, in terms of the personas they create (and that others interpret) in digital space?

To briefly answer the final question posed above, food-selfies—through their juxtaposition with other images on a profile—offer users nuanced ways of conveying attributes

about themselves and their values/beliefs, without necessarily showcasing a physical body. These attributes can range from signifiers of wealth, culture, class, race, gender, ability, creativity, access, and privilege – in either the actual (experienced or "lived") sense, or the aspirational sense (when the user either identifies with or *wishes* to be associated with specific identity markers). The performance of these identity markers serves two primary audiences; the imagined audience of the user (a performance of the self for someone else) and *the user themselves* (a performance of the self, for the self). Regardless of audience, to accomplish this work, the food-selfies I have analyzed for this chapter also largely draw on the aesthetics of 'good and proper cookery' that is perpetuated by predominantly white, male celebrity chefs.

When I refer to the *white, male, celebrity chef*, I am looking at their cultural position in terms of intersectional privilege (which I discuss in greater detail below). However, to reach a common understanding of this type of intersectionality, I will start by defining the concept of 'masculinity,' in terms of how I will be using it. I thus draw on several interpretations of masculinity across critical race scholarship (as there are numerous interpretations of what *masculinity* is or means). In the article "What is Hegemonic Masculinity?" race and gender scholar Mike Donaldson defines the term by drawing on work from Carrigan, Connell, and Lee along with Chapman, Cockburn, Connell, Lichterman, Messner, and Rutherford. Donaldson notes that masculinity is:

> " … a specific strategy for the subordination of women . . . [and as] a culturally idealized form, it is both a personal and a collective project . . . It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking . . . brutal, and violent. [Masculinity] is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, and socially sustained. . . [and while] not all men practice it, …most benefit from it. Although cross-class, it [also] often excludes working-class and black men." (645-646).

Here, masculinity is observed as exclusive, functioning in a way that removes or erases the experiences of those who do not abide by its conventions or do not fit the socially constructed, "common-sense" definition. Masculinity is also a *primal force* in Donaldson's interpretation: It has been, is, and will continue to be characterized by viscerality, which includes a stereotypical chest-puffing bravado, dauntless courage, and generally assertive behavior. Masculinity may even manifest through the hyper-sexualization of non-human objects or through an insistence on perpetual virility a la the male gaze.[34]

Whiteness is a bit harder to pin down, definitionally speaking, as it is primarily defined in opposition or in absence of "Other" races and cultures. Multiple critical race scholars (Ali Sammel, Katherine Maurer, Susan Young, Marta Rose[35]) have discussed the intangibility and invisibility of whiteness, insomuch as it is an irreducible and seemingly invisible construct. Like the construct of hegemonic masculinity, whiteness asserts its existence through a pseudo-naturalistic stance. It has innate political power, as it benefits, according to Sally Robson, "from the invisibility of [its] own racial and gendered specificity" (2). In other words, white bodies are generally not asked to make a claim about what "whiteness" is. Whiteness assumes the primary ontology of "race," and as such it is what people use to mark Other (non-white) bodies as existing outside of its parameters (3). This ability to mark and leave unmarked certain bodies is critical to the enactment of identity politics, as it dictates how someone must first define and label themselves in order to be seen and heard within hegemonic structures.

While these foundations for understanding whiteness and masculinity are useful, it is impossible to consider them as separate categories that might be experienced without the influence of other identity markers. These experiences must thus be considered in terms of their intersectionality. Intersectionality, a concept originally defined by feminist race and gender

scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain the oppression black women experience due to multiple, inseparable, identity markers,[36] has been expanded in recent years to explain privilege, oppression, and identity politics in a variety of ways. For example, intersectionality is defined by race and gender scholars Patricia Collins and Sirma Bilge, as "a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences"[37] that acknowledges that experiences are never shaped by one facet alone (2). Meanwhile, implicit within the notion of hegemonic masculinity, is that at its core it is a *white* masculinity. Thus, I approach what I will term the *Chef's Gaze* in this chapter (i.e. the common way that celebrity chefs circulate, model behavior with, represent, and mediate interactions and portrayals of food) with this privileged intersectionality in mind.

In this chapter, I show how food-selfies might be understood as potentially problematic artifacts as they currently exist within popular and social food mediascapes. To achieve this, I explain how the Chef's Gaze (as it is informed by white and masculine performance norms) is enacted by specific celebrity chefs and then re-enacted or replicated in the performances of non-celebrities who align themselves with the identity marker of "chef." I first examine the profiles of two famous and well-circulated celebrity chefs – Gordon Ramsay and Guy Fieri – as both have received substantial critical attention for their media. While having followed these chefs personally for years, I re-examined their posts from 2019-2020 and selected a grid of six images for each, which I will show exactly as they appear in relation to each other on the chef's profile. These grids were selected by how accurately they encapsulate the larger trends I observed on the chef's Instagram pages. I then move on to two influencer profiles: @halfbakedharvest and @Kimberley Hasselbrink. I chose these profiles for analysis directly from IZEA's "Top 10 Foodie Influencers for 2019" list.[38] Finally, I round out the chapter with analyses of multiple

profiles that most accurately reflect the larger trends I found across user profiles after searching the hashtag "#homechef."[39]

I performed close readings of the images I discovered through my searches, looking to both what is seen and what is unseen about the users' values and identities (for some, 'brands') – the marked and unmarked – and how it is represented. In doing so, I was also able to note how the characteristics of whiteness and masculinity manifest themselves in the food media shared by celebrity chefs – how these chefs mark dishes and spaces, how they present themselves, etc. – and then observe if and how these practices permeate the practices of influencers (10,000+ followers) and microcelebrities (10,000 or less followers),[40] and everyday users of Instagram (usually between 1 and 1,000 followers). The way I conducted these close readings involved an analysis of individual images – including the image itself, any hashtags or captions, and geotags – followed by a reading of the immediate two-by-three grid in which the image appears. Any video content that appeared as a part of these grids, meanwhile, was interpreted only by its thumbnail, as this is how the media would be interacted with if one was simply scrolling through the profile in the grid format. The grid attempts to approximate how most people might view an Instagram profile page. (In other words, I am not looking at how these images might also appear in a news feed.) The grid also allows for observation of more generalized aesthetic and shows how the images work together in juxtaposition to form meanings and perform digital identity markers for and on the celebrity, influencer, microcelebrity, or everyday user's profile.

I move on from *what* it is I am looking at (i.e. a picture of food or prepared culinary arrangement) to *how and why* I am looking at these objects as I do. Before doing so, I must also acknowledge that my ways of viewing and analyzing images are personal to me – necessarily including bias stemming from my own personal experiences – and therefore not something that

can be universalized in specificity (this is to say, I cannot expect someone else to read *precisely*

the same meaning from any given image). This, however, does not invalidate nor cheapen the

work of the analysis offered here. In negotiating a similar analytical dilemma, I follow the

methodology of performance studies scholar Lyndsay Gratch,[41] who uses John Fiske's theories

about media and popular culture to interpret online video adaptations. By looking at online food-

selfies similarly, as a (loose) set of image adaptations within a genre, it becomes easier to

determine what the image might *mean* to others (and not just me). According to Gratch:

> [John] Fiske theorizes that while the meaning of a text can be hard to pin down, we might
>
> address this by "shift[ing] our focus from the text to its moments of reading" (Fiske,
>
> *Reading* 117). In other words, studying how people are adapting (and by extension
>
> "reading") a video within specific social and historical constructs would prove more
>
> fruitful than analyzing the video on its own, to determine its possible meanings. Close
>
> readings of [many video] adaptations, along with an analysis of the similarities and
>
> differences among these videos, can provide "valuable clues to the readings that a
>
> particular culture or subculture is likely to produce" [from the source media]. (4-5)

I thus look at how the food-selfie's inclusion is informed by or challenges the aesthetics of the

Chef's gaze in multiple Instagram user profiles. Through drawing attention to larger trends and

variations within the food-selfie genre, I can point to ways images are being interpreted, adapted,

and/or reproduced by users on a larger scale, which reveals the possible value users might find in

this type of photo taking and sharing, rather than esoterically trying to determine what singular

images contribute to a user's profile. Through viewing these food-selfies as adaptations, in

Gratch's sense of the word, I am able to point to the larger implications of the Chef's gaze in

everyday digital performances of food-selfie sharing and food culture more generally.

In terms of the re-presentation of these images in this project, the only manipulation on my part is the placement of the header material for the page alongside the grid of images. I do this for two main reasons. First, this will help in referring to images as belonging to a certain profile (a tool for both myself and the reader to employ). The second reason for this modification is that the biographical information serves as a contextual part of the digital profile that is accessible to anyone viewing the profile. Therefore, it seems reasonable for the purpose of analyzing the food-selfie's performance to include this written and visual information. The food-selfie, after all, is a performance for the user as much as the viewer. It conveys traits and values on its own, yet through its intertextual reading with other elements on the profile (images, text, hashtags), the food-selfie can accent other identity markers and aid in the overall performance of the user's digital identity.

As many of the primary food media industry leaders are white men, the implications of how they display food, and themselves alongside it, extend far beyond simply impacting their own brands. At worst, they perpetuate the potentially problematic nature of the Chef's Gaze. Through the constant performance and reification of similar aesthetic norms, some celebrity chefs have established ways of seeing and interacting with food that have been informed by (and in turn inform) hegemonic structures of whiteness and masculinity. By examining the Instagram accounts of two of these celebrity chefs, I show how the Chef's Gaze can function as both an extension of and a tool for hegemonic masculinity.

The Celebrity Chef Profile: White, Male, and Cultured

Chef Profile: Gordon Ramsay

Arguably one of, if not *the* singular, most famous chef in the world, British-Chef Gordon Ramsay has earned sixteen Michelin stars[42] for his restaurants and hosted numerous competitive

cooking shows such as *MasterChef, MasterChef: Junior, The F Word,* and *Hell's Kitchen (US/UK).* In addition to shows surrounding competitive cookery, he has also hosted shows that occupy the intersections of the hospitality, tourism, cooking, and renovation genres – namely *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares (UK), Gordon's Great Escape, Kitchen Nightmares (US), Hotel Hell, 24 Hours to Hell and Back, Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Home Cooking*, as well as some travel content on his YouTube channel, appearing as a pseudo-revival of his *Gordon's Great Escape* series. In 2018, Forbes ranked him in their Top 50 highest-earning celebrities in the world. For these reasons, in addition to his 8.1 million followers on Instagram, Ramsay is a great starting point for looking at celebrity chef media on Instagram:

For Chef Ramsay's profile, and the other celebrity chef example I will use, I am modifying slightly the approach I use when analyzing their images. One reason for this is that (due to the limited scope of this project) I am operating under the assumption that these celebrity Instagram pages are being used explicitly as extensions of the self-as-chef (in terms of identity), and as such all work toward creating a very "cheffy" read on the celebrity's identity. A second reason, and perhaps the more important of the two, is that these pages are being used to both determine and examine which popular aesthetic practices are being employed by food media professionals.
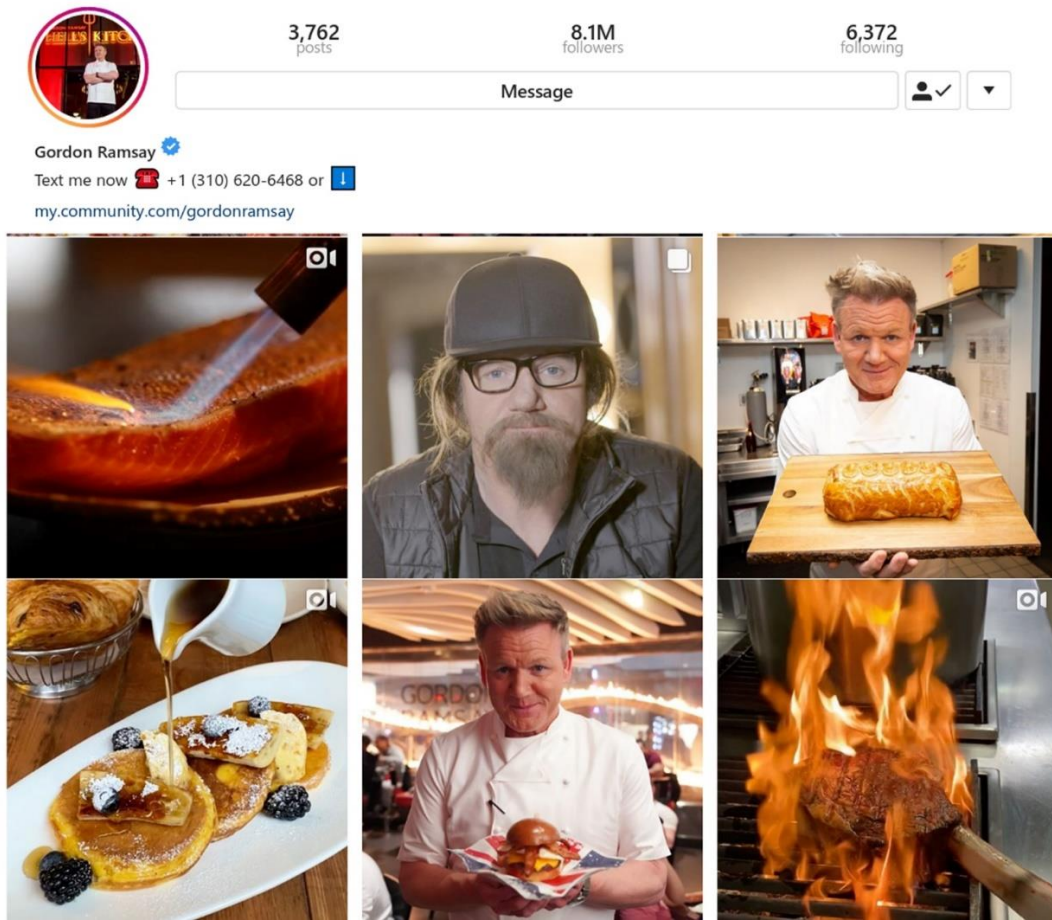
Figure 2.1 Chef Ramsay's Instagram Page

At a quick glance, the grid above (Figure 2.1) appears to be fairly straightforward in how it should be read. However, in thinking about the establishment of a dominant aesthetic for marking 'good' and 'bad' food, several key elements stand-out in this grid of photographs. Starting with the images that include Ramsay's body, the central column and the top-right-hand corner of the grid offer two distinct aspects of his identity as a chef. The images in the top right. And central-bottom positions offer clear representations of how Gordon routinely presents himself. In both images, the viewer is presented with a well-lit scene. The food is foregrounded in the frame and dominates the lower third of the image. The plating is neat, tidy, and strikingly clean, which in turn connects to how Gordon appears physically. Like the immaculate canvas on which he presents the dishes, Gordon, too, appears professional and immaculate; his chef's jacket crisp, and never wrinkled or stained.

In contrast to these clean and professional images is the central-top image, in which viewers are presented with an incognito Gordon Ramsay. This inference is confirmed by the caption, which reads "Tonight its double the undercover and double the transformation tonight on @24hoursfox at 8/7c [43]! I think beards fit me….no?" Here, Gordon appears much messier than when he is in his professional chef attire; his hair is longer and not controlled or styled, and his fake beard is long and ragged. He is dressed in a cheap, drab, brown and black outfit; his face reads as grumpy and lifeless (rather than his normal cheffy cheerfulness); and his body appears slouched, sans his usually great posture. While this was all obviously done to conceal his identity – a convention of the show justified by his need to 'accurately' assess a restaurant's functioning and quality, as it allows him to not be noticed before his dramatic reveal as the chef-critic as opposed to a normal diner – the way he has been disguised offers additional implications for the aesthetic conventions of the Chef's Gaze as it is applied to food media, as well as how this

specific image models proper engagements with food (via what a chef *does not* look like). Generally, when appearing as such, Ramsay is not afforded the privileged treatment of the critic or celebrity-chef, with his table often ignored in favor of the high-profile guests he brings along as deliberate distractions.[44] An example of this can be seen, for instance, in Season 3, Episode 7 of *24 Hours to Hell and Back*, where he brings football star Rob Gronkowski to the restaurant as a distraction while he critiques the food. To further contextualize this within the contexts of the show – which the post alludes to via its tagging of @24hoursfox – after assuming his character, Gordon is accompanied by locals or "friends" that help him keep a profile while he performs his critique of the restaurant's food.

The juxtaposition of Gordon's two types of physical performances can be noted in this grid; that of the 'food professional' (the proper Chef Ramsay) and the 'everyday person' (a character unique to each episode; personas that Ramsay assumes, names, positions, and theatrically embodies for the first segment of each episode on *24 Hours to Hell and Back)*. Looking critically at the former, the images of Ramsay-as-chef (proper) set expectations regarding how "proper" food media should be visibly created and consumed. Both the dish itself and the body with it must be – to some extent – clean, refined, and tidy.

Yet, Ramsay abandons these aesthetics to assume the guise of the less privileged "regular diner" in his other image, transforming into a prototypical "someone" who is not expected to know about or appreciate food beyond what simply tastes good to them. Gordon's performance, through making his presence casual and decentering his role as a chef-critic, can be read then as a sort of guide to interacting with food in everyday life as a non-professional. Ramsay erases the aesthetics of the Chef's Gaze, making the barriers of training, expertise, tidiness, and wealth irrelevant for food viewing and consumption. This, then, permits *anyone* to employ his

approaches to viewing and engaging with food, as one may find resonance in *some facet* of Gordon-as-everyday-person, and seek to emulate his behavior. Thus, in marking food as good or bad through his intervention as a professional chef and providing a model for this behavior with his physical interaction (rather than simply presenting images of good/bad), Gordon's use of the Chef's Gaze mirrors the ways that his whiteness functions as a marking force. Here, the flame-bathed meat is desirable because *he* prepares it so; the pancakes, ever so slightly drizzled with syrup, are acceptable and good, because of the way *he* has presented and prepared them.

The Chef's Gaze also extends beyond this simple marking of food. Through its use, Gordon performs the body of the 'chef' – tidy, respectful, talented, masculine – and the body of the 'normal diner' – messy, cheap, uninspired, and *also masculine*. This creates a hierarchy, much like whiteness, that assumes the clean and tidy white body is the pinnacle and high standard of food culture, and that Other bodies (being stood in for by Ramsay's persona) are messy and subordinated when it comes to interacting with food.

The other images in this grid, which have been informed by this dominant aesthetic, provide perfect examples of how the Chef's Gaze has been imbued with masculinity. Let's tackle these in ascending order: First, in the bottom-left hand corner of the grid, the image is relatively feminized (compared to the understanding of masculinity I am working with – the chest-puffing, bold, and confident type). While the image maintains the clean and tidy aesthetic of Gordon's other images, the frame appears more cluttered than the other images. The colors appear softer, the plating and garnishing delicate and deliberate. The syrup that is being sensually drizzled over top of the pancakes is pooling gently, and the berries are kissed with a dusting of powdered sugar. Looking on it, one could envision birds chirping and the soft morning sounds of a breeze through your window. Suffice it to say, it is calming and elegant – divine. It is also worth noting

the space in which appears more domestic, with the presence of the pastry in the top-left hand corner, and the wooden table as opposed to the metallic kitchen present in the some of the other images – which are commonly coded signifiers for femininity in the stereotypical Western understanding of it.

This is contrasted against the bottom-right hand corner of grid, which I will simply describe as a haunch of meat in a flame bath. Thinking back to the foundation of masculinity that I discussed earlier in the chapter, I want to note this image's particularly visceral feel. It is bold as it tosses the flesh of the animal into the fire, it is violent as the flames rage around the meat, charring and marking the flesh with the grill marks on which it lies waiting to be finished. The heat, the fire, and the passion ooze from this image as we gaze upon it from the eye of camera. Moving beyond this contextual way of viewing food (i.e. the body of the Chef and the dish they prepare shown together), here we – the viewer – are granted the point-of-view of Ramsay as he creates the dish. We feel his need for clean and neat aesthetics, as the meat is presented as such and the surrounding countertop is nigh unblemished. We assume his position in relation to the food in the kitchen, and in doing so we imagine the performance of creating the dish as he would – in his aesthetics, in his whiteness and masculinity, and in his desire to have his vision be see, shared, and exalted.

The masculine fire motif continues to the only image we haven't yet examined in this grid – the top-left corner. Here, we have a piece of fish, being seared by the flame of a kitchen torch. This flame, while deliberate, controlled, and less vicious than the previously described fire, is still a violent and 'tough' approach to preparing the fish. There is also the phallic imagery of the torch itself – protruding rigidly from the top-right corner of the frame, it sprays its contents over the salmon. The meat of the trout, in response, perks up at the beckoning flames, glistening

slightly as the juices are drawn out to the surface of its pink flesh. Here, the masculine chef, through their surrogate member, has created a stimulating and near-erotic image of preparation of this fish, for the visual pleasure of the viewer. The fish, subordinate to its chef-master and responding obediently to their whims, replicates a desire to subordinate the feminine, thus—in a way—implicitly upholding ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

To depart from this erotic prose, I will circle back to what is happening through the juxtaposition of these images. In the first set, we can understand the politics of seeing as a way of marking food as good (i.e. presentable, determined, and arbitrated by the white, masculine body) and bad (i.e. what we, as viewers, are not permitted to view without mediation from this same white body). This marking mirrors the practices of the marking-as-Other that whiteness engages in, vis-à-vis *surrogation*. Performance scholar Joseph Roach's concept of surrogation[45] is the process by which there is an attempt to fill a void presented by a death or other departure with another process that culturally simulates the same effects. Similar to the actions noted in Roach's descriptions of how society perpetuates policing black and other minority bodies,[46] the Chef's Gaze is employed to fulfill the ideals of hegemonic masculinity – encouraging the need to police and hold power over particular "Other" sets of bodies by centralized, white agents. In Ramsay's images, surrogation occurs on two levels; the first with the assertion of the white chef as the judge of proper culture (i.e. re-centering whiteness as the dominant power), and then with the assertion of what proper food looks like (produced from historically white/western traditions, that excludes aesthetics and practices from other cultures). This is not to say that Ramsay never shows foreign food; in fact, to the contrary, celebrity chefs typically revel in sharing dishes outside of the traditional Western repertoire. However, even when interacting with these "ethnic" cuisines, there is an emphasis on the chef's active mitigation of how we can and should interact

with the food and culture; or they simply offer their own recreation of the food. This is the *excess* that is created by the Chef's Gaze, revealing the insufficiency of the surrogate (the celebrity chef as food tourist) as they negotiate spaces and foods that are not American or not yet Americanized.

The performance of the celebrity chef and the Chef's Gaze also creates an excess of policing power in relation to food; an abundance of white authority that the chef exudes as they act as the mitigating force for the food. The implication here is that "ethnic" cuisine will never be enough on its own, and its value depends on the celebrity chef and the Chef's Gaze. This is similar to the historic power that white bodies and minds have held over minorities for centuries. With a lack of power over their own physical sites and foods (their bodies, their cultures, and their cuisines), the Chef's Gaze encourages both physical policing (as described above) and ideological policing. The Chef's Gaze purports the simple idea that 'This is worthy of being seen' or 'This is unworthy of being seen.' In this sense, the Chef's Gaze replicates precisely a policing of visibility by labeling food (and thus cultures) as "Other," and then subsequently as good or bad.

By looking at these images and other food media as it is presented by Ramsay, we can understand his dual construction of self-as-chef and self-as-everyday-person, and subsequently how we, as viewers, may be able to perform these practices of marking, as well. In the second set of images I discussed, we can also interpret and recognize obvious appeals to stereotypically masculine and feminine aesthetics, with the masculine aesthetic being far more common across all of the images. By reading these images in their intertextuality, the viewer can gain a better understanding of the implicit messages associated with the dominant gaze Ramsay employs (the Chef's Gaze) which others may then adopt to view and judge food.

This way of deploying the Chef's Gaze is not exclusive to Gordon Ramsay. In looking to other popular television chefs and producers of food media, another name comes immediately to my mind. I have found myself inexplicably bound to him – both in the sense of intrigue surrounding his relationship and interaction with food and the fact that my nickname[47] is drawn from him. Regardless of my personal bias towards him, which I recognize,[48] what his profile shows is a clear expansion of the Chef's Gaze just as Ramsay has deployed it.

Chef Profile: Guy Fieri

For the unanointed (and I use this phrase deliberately as many of his fans are nigh-religiously devoted to his culture) - the self-proclaimed "Mayor of Flavortown," Guy Fieri is an American restauranteur, chef, and television personality most notable known for his series *Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives,* which is currently entering its thirtieth production season. Having rose to fame following his victory on season two of *The Next Food Network Star*, Fieri has appeared on dozens of shows, written several cookbooks, opened a vineyard, and has appeared as part of several advertising campaigns. Suffice it to say, while not being known exclusively as a chef, he is a culinary icon. This is reflected overtly on his Instagram page:
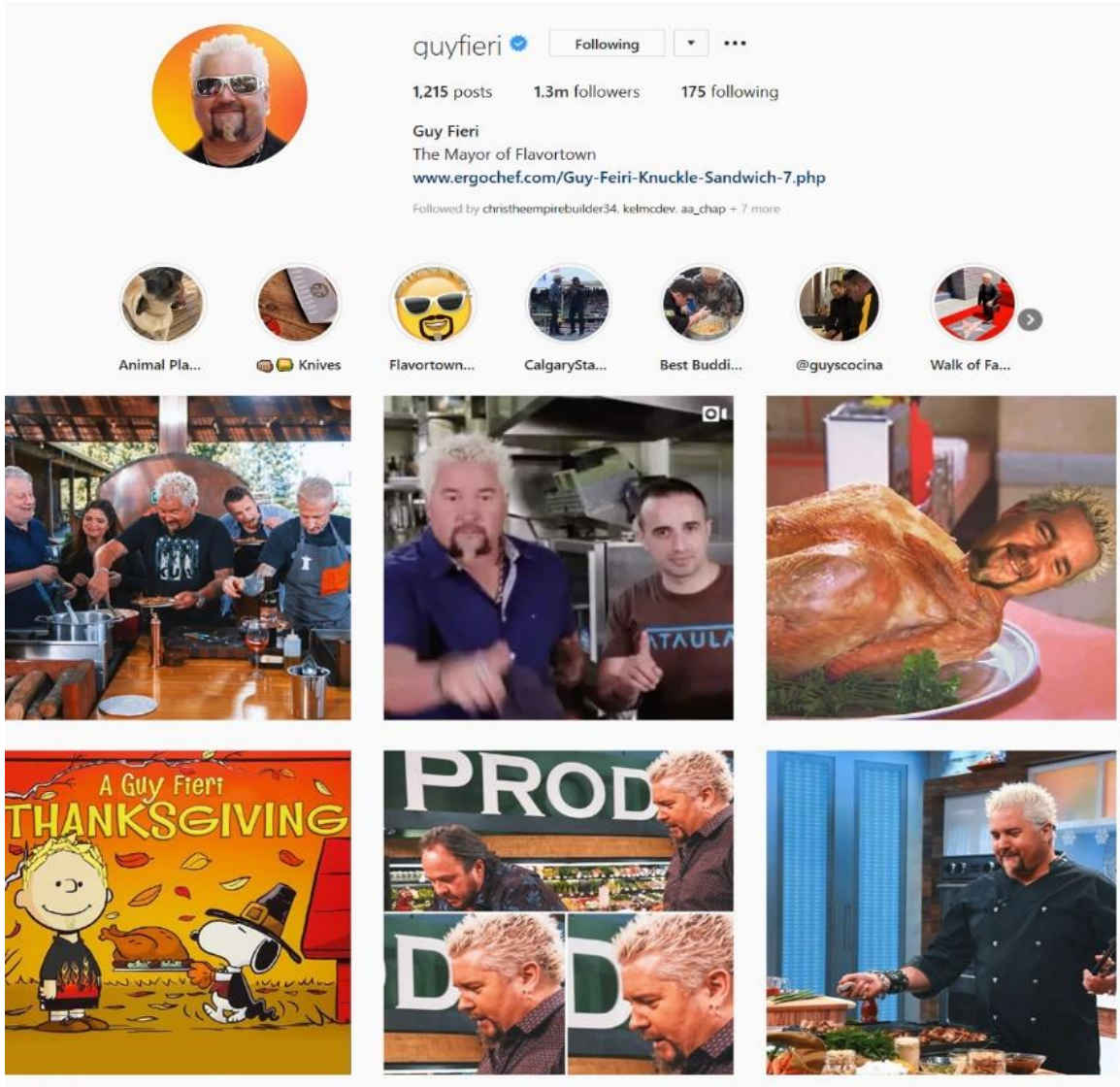
Figure 2.2: Guy Fieri's Instagram Page

At a first glance at Figure 2.2, what is immediately noticeable, in comparison to Gordon Ramsay's profile, is the shift in emphasis from the production/presentation of food to the identity of the chef himself, with only two of the six grid images being food-selfies. The other four primarily focus on Fieri – incorporating references to other media such as *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* or absurdist photoshopped images of his head appearing on a cooked turkey. Particularly with these colloquially 'meme'd images, Fieri lives up to his reputation as a humorous, boisterous, and high-energy person. To take just a moment to seriously discuss the turkey image with Fieri's head photoshopped onto it, this image personifies Guy's approach to food and his personality *perfectly*: fun, eccentric, and most importantly, his own centricity to whatever context he is shown in. With that being said, though, the Chef's Gaze is still at work in these images, performing similarly to how it was observed on Ramsay's profile.

Beginning with the overt food-selfies (the top-left and bottom-right corner images), these read similarly to how Ramsay used them; the clean and tidy chef is presented alongside the product they have created or are in the process of making. The images are vibrant and tantalizing, yet here the focus is shifted away from the food and onto the chef. Note specifically how in both of Fieri's images, he dominates the frame, and the food itself is minimized. It is also crucial to note how this lends itself to the marking of culinary space beyond the aesthetics of the food itself, as Fieri's white, male body is consistently the focus and main occupant of the culinary space.

Here, more than Ramsay's usage of food-selfies, the viewers are offered context in terms of who may occupy culinary spaces and how the Chef's Gaze marks these spaces. Every image that features more than Fieri himself in this grid includes people that are, for the most part, white, and predominantly male. In reviewing his profile beyond this grid, this trend holds true. In the

few images in which Fieri interacts with minority chefs, he is still the focal point of the image. In

sharing these images, Fieri marks these spaces of professional cookery as necessarily and always

masculine and white, with women and minority groups being permitted to appear only through

mediation.

An abundance of confidence oozes from these images, with Fieri always occupying the

central role – usually for a comedic reason, as seen in several of the images above. A simple

analysis might posit that Fieri's brand is less about his food and more about his raucous, silly,

and frat-boy-esque personality. Yet I think that would be letting him off the hook too easily.

Whether conscious or not, there is an appeal to the underlying nature of masculinity as a draw for

Fieri's media. After all, in his shows, he acts as the focus and mitigator for all of the food

present, he is known to interact with food in very visceral ways (i.e. grunts a lot), and he

generally pals around like an old drinking buddy with everyone he meets. So, by centering his

identity in such a way – his physical body being the surrogative hitching post for his viewers to

experience *any* cuisine – he is depicting and reifying food spaces as valid only when prepared for

and interacted with by white men. Media scholars Tasker and Negra – whom I reference in

chapter one – note very similar implications of Fieri's media, insomuch as it works to create a re-

centering of white men in discourses surrounding food due to cooking media "function[ing] as a

site for the reconsolidation of male authority and privilege."

Lucy Sholes[49], another media scholar, also observes this trend in cooking media more

broadly, stating that "if we turn to today's TV celebrity chefs there is still a sharp distinction

between how, where and what the women cook compared to their male counterparts" (2) – a

point which Fieri's and Ramsay's television and Instagram performances reinforce. Both

illustrate the cooking world as an inherently masculine and white space, in which cuisine is only

deemed valuable through a white man's interpretation and presentation. The realm of domesticity, femininity, and ethnicity is best left unseen in these "proper" performances of cheffing. Despite these blind spots in the Chef's Gaze, its aesthetic conventions have been adopted into many other non-dominant realms of self-presentation and identity maintenance online – influencing how food-selfies (for some social media users) are crafted and used.

To recap, Ramsay and Fieri illustrate the major implications the Chef's Gaze imposes in relation to food media. The first: that this gaze seeks to mark food in masculine ways through a focus on the male body or aesthetics associated with 'masculine things' (i.e. fire, intensity, viscerality), while also maintaining a certain level of sterility and cleanliness. The second implication is that by focusing on achieving these aesthetics, the Chef's Gaze actively excludes all other ways of viewing and performing (with) food that do not fall into its rigid guidelines. The Chef's Gaze only allows for exceptions when "ethnic" or feminine food is interpreted and/or mediated by the white, male chef who is sharing the image (e.g. having the chef perform alongside a minority or female chef, or in some other way mitigating their presence). In these ways, the Chef's Gaze acts as a tool for hegemonic masculinity, surrogatively – in Roach's sense – replicating the act of policing bodies by mediating how the food Other (non-white, non-masculine) bodies produce and/or consume is encountered.

Beyond the world of celebrity chefs, the racialized and gendered aspects of these images become less overt. Nevertheless, the practices of presenting and performing with food, as observed in Ramsay's and Fieri's accounts, are still at play in non-celebrity accounts.

The Influencer: Less Self, More Classed

The next step 'down' the social media popularity chain from celebrity chefs are influencers and micro-influencers (or microcelebrities) – often self-identifying as foodies, food-

bloggers, food-photographers, or aspiring/semi-professional chefs. These pages generally have smaller follower counts, no televised media, and rely on alternate avenues for promotion of their work. While some of these employ the aesthetics of the Chef's Gaze, they do so in a way that differs slightly from how celebrity chefs to deploy it[50].

Influencer Profile: Tieghan Gerard (Half Baked Harvest)

Tieghan Gerard (aka @halfbakedharvest) is a food-blogger who began working on their titular blog in 2012, and as of March 7th, 2020 has 1.2 million followers on Instagram. Since then, according to the biography on her website, she has been featured on The Cooking Channel, Food Network, HGTV, Crate & Barrel, Shape Magazine, Self Magazine, the Huffington Post, and PopSugar, among others. Half Baked Harvest was named Readers' Choice Favorite Food Blog by Better Homes and Gardens in both 2014 and 2016. Most recently, in 2017 Gerard has published a cookbook entitled *Half Baked Harvest Cookbook: Recipes from my barn in the mountains*.[51]
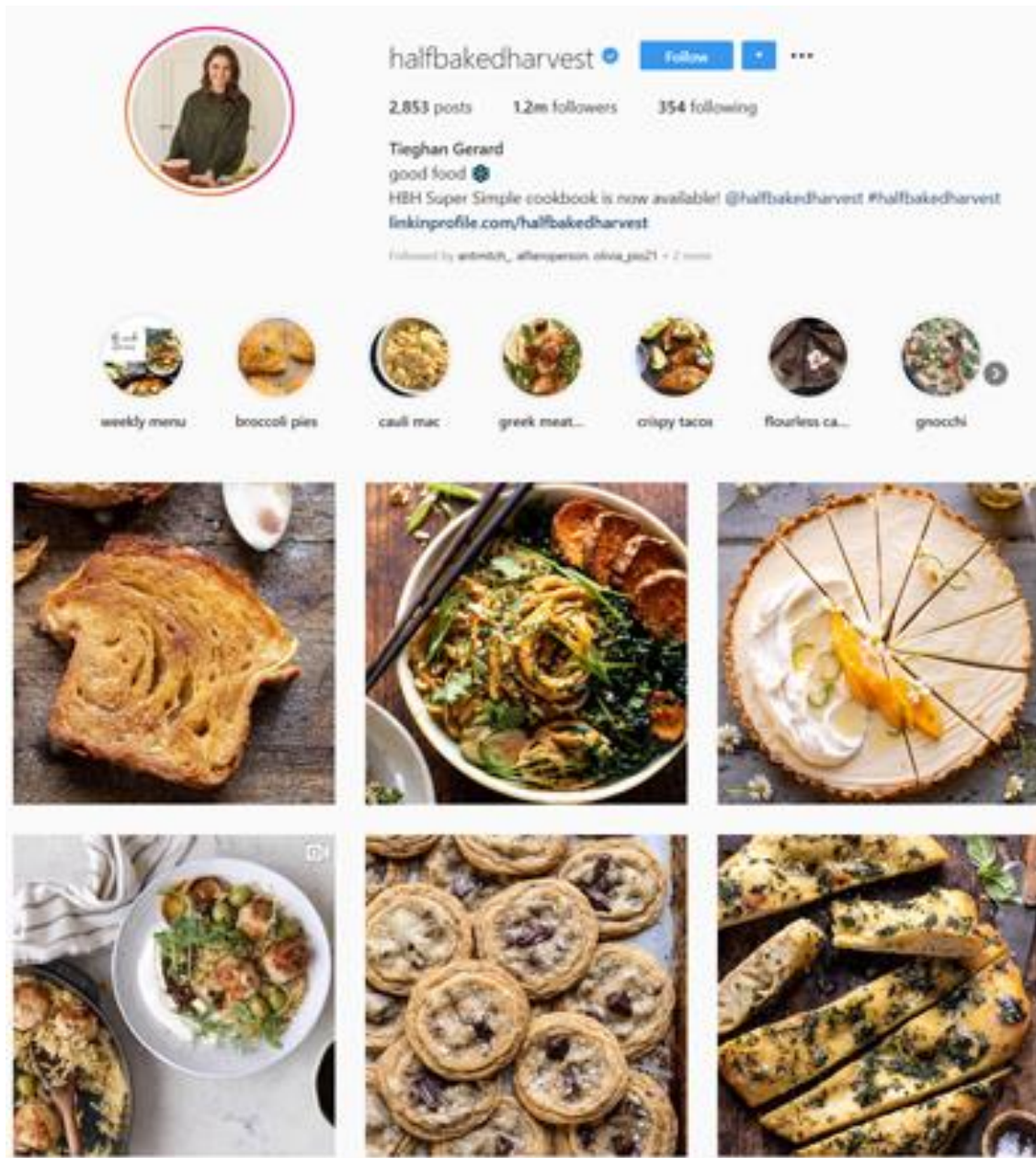
Figure 2.3: @Halfbakedharvest's Instagram profile

It is important to note several key conventional differences seen on the page of this influencer. The first is the usage of hashtags within their biography. The hashtag is being utilized here (as many hashtags are) to not only help increase the circulation of the images or centralize via the Instagram algorithm[52] all things pertaining to "Half Baked Harvest," but also to give viewers a way of potentially engaging with the influencer in a way that is different from how a celebrity chef might allow them to interact. Here, anyone can tag their own image with the hashtag used by the influencer, and it would be added to the algorithmically generated archive associated with the popular page—increasing a possible sense of "foodie" communitas.

The second major difference here is the habitual absence of a physical body accompanying the food in the images. There is no body shown at all, and thus the viewer may seem to have more options in terms of how they orient their interpretation of the page, and by extension, the person. Yet, it is just the opposite, as the dominance of the Chef's Gaze in the images present suggest that the viewer should associate these clean, tidy, and well-presented images of food with the idea of "good food"—and thus also with the (invisible) white masculinity a la Ramsay and Fieri, which has set this standard of "goodness." Despite a lack of corporeal representation in the images, they are still food-selfies, and Gerard's profile picture reveals a bit more about her physical body as she stands posed with a table of food before her. (This image can also be read as a food-selfie along with the rest.) Overall, Gerard's images are all ones that she liked well enough to share and circulate, and presumably, per my extension of Middha's definition of the food-selfie, the images are offering a performance of identity on behalf of the user. In Gerard's case, the images are offering us glimpses into the topography which defines "Half Baked Harvest" (and by extension, Gerard herself) as a brand-identity.

In terms of general aesthetics, the images share a tidiness in line with the Chef's Gaze, as previously discussed. They are well lit and display a modern and elegant conceptualization of plating. Further, they are underscored by rustic earth tones to accentuate a 'barn house' or shabby chic aesthetic that Gerard seems to be attempting to establish, in conjunction with the term "harvest" as it is used in their username. It is through this juxtaposition of elegant and rustic that the performances offered by these images—and by Gerard, as the creator, owner, and sharer of these images—becomes clear. For example, to deconstruct the top-center image, what the viewer is presented with is a bowl filled to the brim with vibrant vegetables and colorful potatoes (i.e. "harvest"), and cutlery balanced along the top-left edge of the serving bowl. However, note the stark contrast between the rich, wooden table and the pristine white ceramic bowl. Note the light, and how its brightness accents the food wonderfully yet strips the comforting warmth and casualty that a barn house aesthetic might normally be associated with. The wooden chopsticks, showing some stress on the grain from age, feel robbed of their naturalness – looking almost plastic as the light reflects off them. The caption, meanwhile, exudes plasticity, with the user singing the praises of the dish while describing the ingredients present:

> "(extra) Saucy Cilantro Lime Tahini Noodles with Honey'd Sweet Potatoes. Late Saturday night noodles!? Yess. [sic] I don't love using the word perfect, but this recipe is pretty close. It's heavy on the noodles and sauce, a little spicy, but balanced with the perfect amount of sweetness + crispiness from the sweet potatoes...which are like eating candy. Sooo goood. It's made extra colorful (+ healthy) with a good amount of greens. And? EASY. Nothing not to love. And that's all I got tonight. Recipe on the blog - linked in profile. PS. If you hate cilantro, use basil :)

In many ways, the images presented as part of this photo grid are idealized forms of their more realistic and historical rustic counterparts – gentrified eats, if you will – that were likely historically eaten with little to no thought given to presentational aesthetics for photographic capturing prior to consumption. Further, in terms of plating, lighting, and composition of a "meal from my barn in the mountains," access to the types of ingredients that she used to construct the dishes also implies a level of wealth or status. The image described above is titled "Saucy Cilantro Lime Tahini Noodles with Honey'd Sweet Potatoes," which largely appear to be ingredients beyond the staple pantry that one might normally have in their home.

There is also the issue of these foods, at least from my perspective, seeming "out of place" in a barn kitchen. For me, barn cooking implies a certain type of rustic, homemade, rural, and simple cooking.[53] While anecdotal – and not universal – having grown up near Amish Country and spending some time in the mountains of Central Pennsylvania, I've come to expect hearty pies, livestock, vegetables, breads, starches, and fish. Tahini noodles just feels a bit too *gentrified* to exist within a space that, to this day, is dominated by locally sourced and produced dishes. Thus, I read these images as trying to capitalize on this aesthetic of simplistic living while presenting a dish that exudes class, access to ingredients, and complexity.

To that point, implicit in the construction of this dish and meal is that whoever is sharing it has access to fresh, or at the very least a wide array of, ingredients and can set aside the time to prepare a potentially elaborate dish. In short, the subtext of this image is beckoning an audience who would want to identify as middle-to-upper class to reproduce it, while simultaneously appealing to working class audiences a la Barthes in "Ornamental Cookery." Here, like Barthes observations, the images are aesthetically embellished – glazed – so that they can sustain the viewer through visual consumption alone.[54] Further, the dish prepared is tahini noodles – a dish

marked by its cultural contexts (tahini being Ethiopian) rather than as a rustic Western staple. Here, the Chef's Gaze properly marks the acceptability of this image, with another potential subtext of the image being that this dish is made acceptable for commercial and visual consumption best when it is divorced from its heritage – existing in a bourgeois state as an elevated dish from a white (albeit feminine) chef. It is metropolitan yet rustic, trendy and unsophisticated; it is a performance that conceals as much as it reveals.[55] It is the same sort of contradictory performance that anthropologist Benjamin Wurgraft describes of Starbucks, insomuch as its décor and appearance are "about economic change . . . staring at wood panels in calming shades is about *money*, one's power to enjoy these luxuries, and those luxuries' claim on one's money and time" (74). Akin to this description, Gerard's images become depictive of the ability to enjoy such luxuries of fine food.

When we look beyond the wooden tables and rustic elements within these images, one might come to understand that the issue of access and possession (which allows one to create the types of food presented) is the prominent, and inherently classed, discourse. These images perform having the time and money to bake, cook, and take photographs of food instead of being burdened by means of access or financial stability. Reading these images against each other, and the biography that includes the phrase "good food," viewers would not be stretching to (implicitly or explicitly) interpret this profile as a performance of wealth and accessibility that is afforded to relatively privileged (white) people. Meanwhile, it is still marked as a performance that may be attainable and replicable by anyone who can manage to pull themselves up by their neoliberal cooking bootstraps, given proper motivation, time, money, and aesthetic plating and photography skills. Thus, a performance of an identity through food-selfies that is presented as attainable yet is—under most circumstances—certainly not.

Influencer Profile: Kimberley Hasselbrink

     Half Baked Harvest is a very popular of account, as their following falls in roughly around that of Guy Fieri's. Thus, while they are not recognized as "celebrity" in the same way as Fieri or Ramsay, they might be not so distant from the Celebrity Chef world and the aesthetic practices implicit therein. Even as the follower counts begin to slide towards the level of an everyday user of Instagram (from millions to thousands), these same problematic tendencies crop up: a "proper" aesthetic, white bodies, and a mediation of other cultures.

     To exemplify this trend, I turn to Kimberley Hasselbrink, a West Coast food-photographer and food blogger that has (as of March 7th, 2020) 32.9 thousand followers on Instagram.

Figure 2.4: Kimberley Hasselbrink's Instagram Profile

Much like *Half Baked Harvest's* page, the viewer is initially greeted with clean and tidy food (as seen in Figure 2.4) – perhaps even more so, as this is the page of a food photographer by vocation. To that end, it is complicated to identify if any food-selfies are present in this grid – for arguably anything a food photographer takes an image of satisfies the criteria of the food-selfie – as I'd be hard pressed to make a distinction between food images and food-selfies on the page of a food photographer. So, while a bit trippy, the type of identity being built here is not only a personal one, but also a professional one, and the food-selfies shown are contributing to Hasselbrink's identity as a professional food photographer. A cursory glance reveals the same types of performances that are present on *Half Baked Harvest's* page. Most notably, the top-center image of the grid showcases a rustic wooden table juxtaposed with modern plating and glasses that imply a performance of wealth and access to certain expensive or potentially rare ingredients, equipment, and spaces.

Another interesting image to note is on the top left, as it does something quite different for the page than most of the other posted images. This image is an almost sterile isolation of a dumpling and chopsticks, using harsh lighting and hard shadows on an ambiguous red background. While exhibiting a type of creativity in representing the food beyond the Chef's Gaze plating styles, the image pendulums to an altogether different artistic extreme. Viewers are afforded almost no context for the food, and the caption for the photograph offers no insight into the production of the dumpling itself. Dumplings are a common, cross-cultural dish[56] and thus may be potentially read in conjunction with the rediscovering of oneself through an ancestral connection that is hinted at in the photo's caption. In this sense, the image *could be* a depiction of a style of dumpling that exudes culture and familial history. It could also be a pre-made dumpling chosen from Whole Foods® hot bar.

The next interesting aspect of the dumpling image's performance is its caption. The text explanation focuses on Hasselbrink's break from social media insomuch as it was a positive influence in their life, due to removing the over-stimulation of Instagram. The caption in full reads:

> "How's it going pals? Unintentional break from Instagram. Don't know how long. Felt real good. Led to an opening of space in my brain, with errata like songs I loved 20 years ago and dreams I have at night creeping back into my waking hours. It was a pretty great ride. I've been maxed out on the anxious overstimulation of media but sometimes it takes a nudge to actually step back. Here's to more room for good accidents. Maybe that's my 2020 resolution 😆 #leanout #obliquestrategies[57]"

Here, when contextualized within the contexts of self-care through its caption, this image can be read on multiple levels. In addition to the reading I offered above, one could further interpret the empty space and lack of business in the image to be metaphorical for the user's journey off of the platform. Even with this second meaning functioning as a tool for subverting the Chef's Gaze, in juxtaposition with the other images on the profile, this image is still reifying conventions that support the ideals of hegemonic masculinity via what counts as "good food." It exudes the sterility, tidiness, and professionality of an image we might expect to find on Chef Ramsay's page, making it complicit in perpetuating a mitigated version of the Chef's Gaze.

Everyday Users on Instagram: #homechef

Knowing what some aesthetics for food media are in the contexts of Instagram – including the Chef's Gaze as I have defined it and its various implications – and how these can pass from celebrity chef media to influencer/microcelebrity social media accounts, I return to my most pressing question: *How and why do people use food-selfies as part of their performances of*

digital identity? To help determine this, I have examined the first forty public profiles to appear

utilizing the hashtag "#homechef" and present below the accounts that most efficiently display

the trends I observed overall. These trends point to implications that include some ways the

Chef's Gaze can be observed across the profiles of 'everyday' users of Instagram. For these

everyday accounts, I have chosen "#homechef" as opposed to "#homecooking" as it implies chef

as an identity marker rather than cooking (as #homecooking implies more of the activity of

cooking rather than aligning with chefs/chef culture).

What I must acknowledge before continuing is that while searching these first forty

profiles, I was unable to locate any minority chefs or accounts belonging to people of color.

Considering this, I began searching beyond these initial forty profiles to ensure that I represented

the participants and data ethically and accurately. Despite this additional searching, at the time of

conducting my research I was unable to locate a single person of color's account who was

publicly using the hashtag #homechef. This speaks volumes to the inundation of whiteness that

currently dominates portions of the food mediascape on Instagram. I must also acknowledge that

the following readings are necessarily incomplete – lacking nuance, as I simply cannot read what

the image is performing *for the user*. My readings are also partial as I am basing these readings

off a grid of six representative images, a decontextualized and incomplete portion of the user's

overall profile. However, despite these shortcomings, my method of analysis still affords me

some critical information in terms of how an outsider might interpret the user's performance *of

the self*, based on the juxtaposition of the posted photographs.

While examining the following profiles, I will address how these food-selfies perform

aspects of the user's digital identity – the quilt that is woven and appliqued in order to create the

brimming tapestry that is the overall profile – for an *external audience*. Digital identity, as I

examine it here, draws on the work of danah boyd[58] – in that representing oneself digitally is not a new identity, but rather a reinterpretation and representation of the self for virtual spaces (37-38). What I am examining is the sum of all six images for each user (food-selfies, selfies, etc.) and any textual components that allow viewers of the profile to try to 'know' the person on the page. In other words, I am looking at how the use of food-selfies (among other profile elements) can showcase identity markers for external audiences, and offers glimpses into the spaces, ideas, and values of the user.

Everyday User: @mrndamo
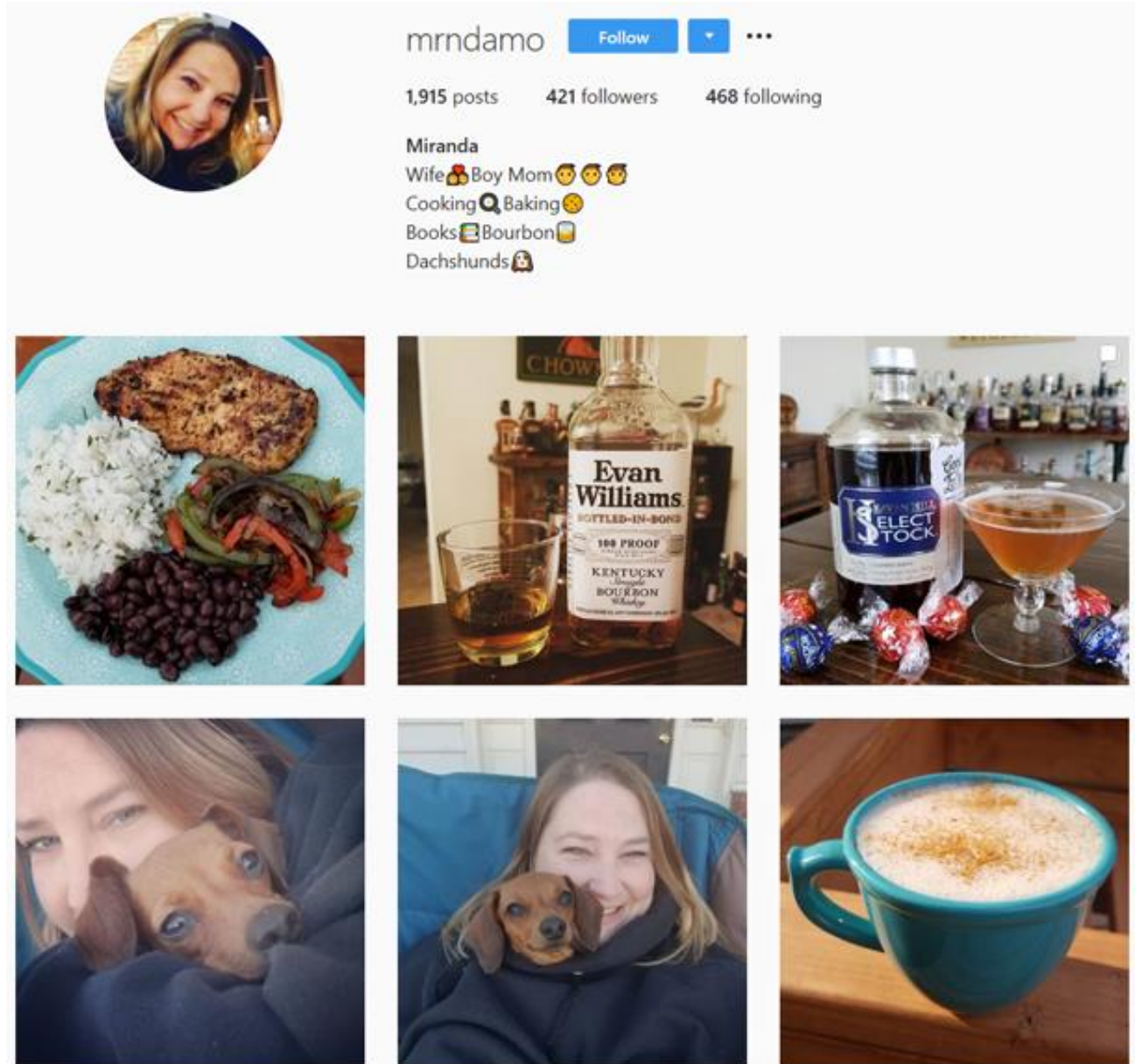
Figure 2.5: @mrndamo's Instagram profile

The biography of this page (seen above in Figure 2.5) claims that this user identifies as a mother and wife, and enjoys cooking, baking, books, bourbon, and dachshunds – which for the most part is also reflected in the six most recent images on her profile. In the grid, we have a plated meal, two images of alcoholic beverages, two images presumably of the user and their dog, and a cinnamon-dusted latte. Specifically looking to the food-selfie in the top-left hand corner of the grid, we are offered a bit more insight into the possible personality and/or performed identity of the user, as it might be interpreted through food images.

To begin, the caption for the image reads "Mojito lime chicken, cilantro lime rice, sauteed peppers & onions, and black beans. Delicious dinner!! #iLoveToCook #iLoveCooking #homemade #homechef #cilantrolimerice #cilantrolimechicken #cilantrolime #iLoveFood #mexicanfood #MoonsTavern." This caption offers insight into the user's performed palate and flavor preferences, while also offering greater insight into what is *plated for the viewer*. Here, Miranda (whose name I have pulled from her biographical information) has employed a clean and tidy aesthetic similar to what we have seen with the Chef's Gaze. However, the image is noticeably rendered in a more amateur quality. The image resolution is lower, implying it was likely taken on a phone and not a professional camera. The sautéed peppers, meanwhile, look somewhat greasy and wilted. The framing of the image is also slightly over-cropped, obscuring certain parts of the plate and table setting around the food. Here, while the image is employing some presentational aesthetics seen via the Chef's Gaze, it is also subverting these norms of food presentation due its "homemade" aesthetic. For my purposes here, I use the idea of "homemade" to represent a way of interacting with objects as a confident amateur – confident enough to share the photo – and therefore having different requirements when it comes to sharing. (This is my

own understanding of the "homemade" aesthetic. It's like school play compared to Broadway – Broadway would be the Chef's Gaze while a school play is homemade.)

If Miranda considers herself a #homechef, it may be valuable for her to preserve the assumedly "authentic," homemade (low-res) quality of her image – regardless of whether this image adheres to the Chef's Gaze. It may also simply be that she does not have access to professional photography equipment and/or the training to be able to represent her media in more 'cheffy' ways. Regardless, the latte (bottom-right corner) has a "look" that is similar to the plated dish; the drink itself looks cheffy, as if it could have been prepared in a coffee shop. Yet, due to its framing and positioning within the space of domesticity, we might better understand it as being an object of everyday use that Miranda made, rather than as an indulgence out of the home. One can almost imaging sitting in her home with this coffee resting on the arm of the chair – it exudes a relaxed aura. While precarious in its placement on what appears to be a ledge, it shows that she will enjoy her drinks wherever she finds comfortable, regardless of practicality.

This same sort of reading can be applied to the two other food-selfies that comprise the top row. While both are plated and presented in line with the Chef's Gaze aesthetic, the background of both images frame the dishes within a space of presumable comfort – the home. Here, the images can be read as "not meaning to be" professional, but rather as showcasing the behaviors that occur on a day-to-day basis within her home and life. Thus, in reading all of these images in terms of what they perform intertextually, we might understand them as vignettes into the performed identity of Miranda. This, of course, is only insomuch as she wishes to portray her life and identity for the digital world. From these images, then, we might interpret her as a dog lover who spends time at home preparing various drinks and meals. Finally, we might also

infer—from Miranda's homemade aesthetic—that, in terms of aligning with a #homechef identity, performance of *home* is more crucial to her identity than performance of *chef.*

How I read their identity: *Middle class woman. Someone who enjoys relaxing. Not necessarily a fan of public outings. A self-starter – someone who values doing things themselves. Her dog is a crucial member of the family.*

Everyday User: @dylan.finley
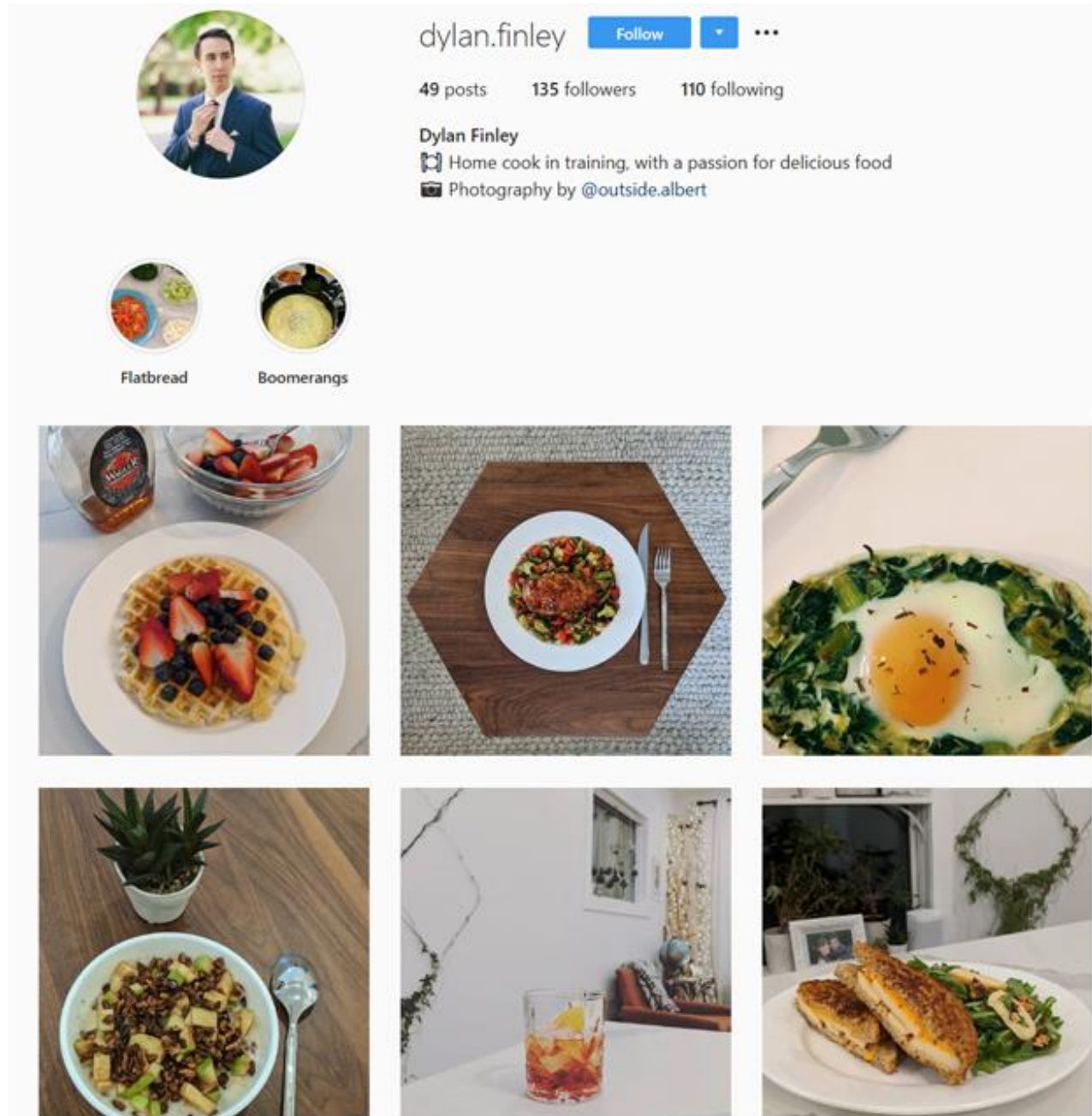
Figure 2.6: @dylan.finley's Instagram profile

If looking for a prime example of the Chef's Gaze as it might be absorbed into everyday life performances through food-selfies on Instagram, *@dylan.finley* fits the bill (Figure 2.6). The biography identifies this user, Dylan, as a "home cook in training with a passion for delicious food!" while also specifying that he has a photographer that takes the images for him. Looking generally across these images, in conjunction with his profile picture, it appears that Dylan is trying to emulate the aesthetics of the Chef's Gaze in food media rather precisely.

In terms of identity performance, Dylan's adherence to the Chef's Gaze is a way of performing his education and/or training via specific popular food media representations. As a "student," he is positioning himself in terms of the embodied processes of training and the value-driven processes of thinking about what counts as "good" food. He is likely self-training by viewing the cooking, plating, aesthetics, and embodiments of professional, celebrity, or influencer chefs, and thus is also *trying to think like* a professional chef. While his profile states he cares about the *taste* of food, the images perform his care regarding the *look* of food. Thus, by performing these aesthetics and positioning himself as a student, Dylan's food-selfies might be understood as an overall performance of aspirational labor,[59] perhaps aiming toward the level of skill he wishes to attain. There is also a recurring theme of houseplants in these images, which appeals to a sensibility much like Wurgraft's work (above) – there is an air of luxury and ability here, which allows one to afford and perform enjoyment in "classy" ways (i.e. classy people have house plants and are able to tend to them).

How I read their identity: *Run-of-the-mill culinary guy. Wants to be seen akin to celebrity chefs. Enjoys caring for houseplants.*

Everyday User: @acm0321
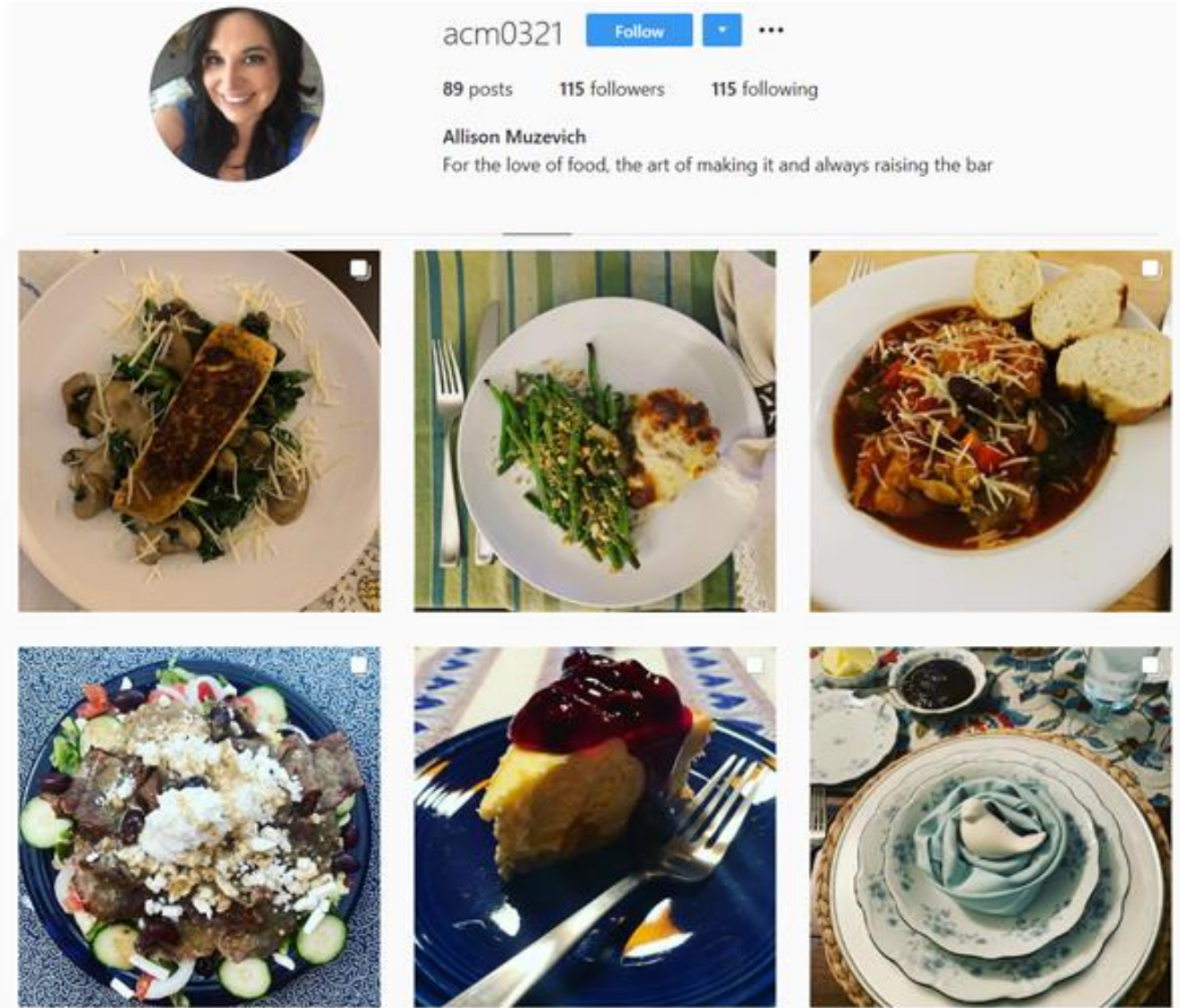
Figure 2.7: @acm0321's Instagram profile

In the grid shown in Figure 2.7, viewers are offered a hybrid between the @mrndamo and @dylan.finley. Here, the user identified as Allison writes in their biography that the images are "for the love of food, the art of making it and always raising the bar." While capitalizing again on the tidy aesthetic, Allison walks the line between professional and homemade images in these food-selfies. In doing so, Allison offers viewers a variety of different performances and food contexts. In the bottom right hand corner, they perform a formal dining presentation; in the top-right, they perform a more modern aesthetic that one might see in a pricey restaurant; in the bottom left, the viewer is offered a loaded plastic plate that looks more "homemade" than any of the other images.

True to the biography of their profile, Allison offers diverse images that represent the various ways in which they might be seen as attempting to live up to their own self-description. This speaks rather clearly to how they want others to interpret their digital identity – they do things "for the love of food" and its creation, a phrase which speaks ideologically toward positivity, openness to new experiences, gratitude, and creativity. Through the multiple ways in which they are able to live up to their self-description in this small grid, Allison's food-selfies work in tandem to convey a performance of skill, artistry, and determination that can be easily associated with Allison's proclaimed identity on Instagram. At the same time, considering that the majority of this grid is comprised of *cheffy images*, combined with the contextualization of "always raising the bar" that is in the bio, additional layers are implicit in Allison's identity performance. In playing into this type of narrative, Allison is (consciously or not) reifying the authority of the Chef's Gaze and seems to be striving to appear more like others who purport it.

How I read their identity: *A white, middle/upper class woman. Creative, or at least an eye for design. Generally happy or content with life. Cares about quality and self-perception. Meticulous in their attention to detail.*

Everyday User: @an.entertaining.life
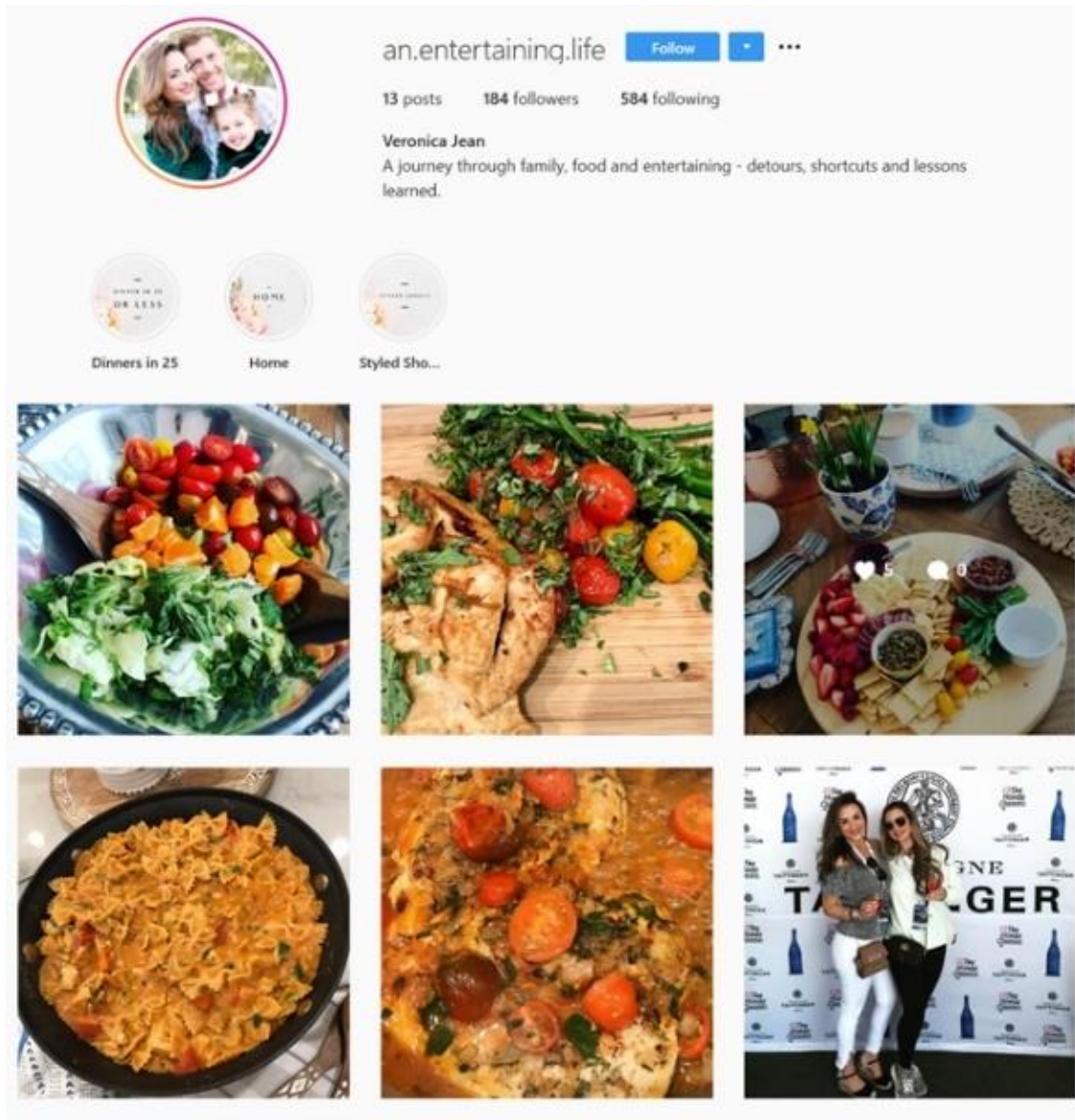
Figure 2.8: @an.entertaining.life's Instagram profile

In Figure 2.8, more than any of the other profiles included in my "everyday user" analyses, is an explicit performance of wealth, accessibility, and access (here, again, to fresh ingredients). The profile is of a user named Veronica, who describes the account as "a journey through family, food, and entertaining – detours, shortcuts and lessons learned." In the food-selfies present in this grid, I first notice the vibrant and fresh produce and foods that occupy the top-row of images. Fresh produce, as described above, implies access to stores like Whole Foods®, Wegmans®, or similarly styled places that supply fresh, useable, and attractive produce; In other words, stores that would not be easily accessible in a food desert. For example, while living with my parents in Hatfield, Pennsylvania (in the relatively affluent Montgomery county), I would easily be able to recreate many of these images and dishes. Within a 3-mile radius of my parent's house, there are at least 3 grocery stores that offer selections similar to the images on the top row of this grid. This can't be said of the more impoverished and/or urban areas of the US.

Next, I note the cheeseboard featured in the top-right hand corner of the grid, which is certainly not an "everyday" dish for most people. Meanwhile, the food-selfies in the bottom row of Figure 2.8 (aside from the image on the right) appear to perform in line with a "homemade" aesthetic, despite their vibrance, color, and the impression of freshness. These images are perhaps the most theatrical in the grid. They *appear to be* homemade, yet their vibrance could easily be "put on" through an Instagram filter in an attempt to make the food look *less* homemade. The complicating image of this set, meanwhile, is in the bottom-right corner of the grid, as it returns the focus to the bodies associated with these dishes. Here, the underscoring of wealth is brought to the surface, based on how Veronica and @he4therlynn are dressed – with designer bags (the Gucci bag pictured slung over the one's shoulder being priced around $1,000

to $2,500 based on retailer[60]) and posed at what the geotag clarifies is the PGA National Resort and Spa – a resort that costs nearly $300 per night for 2 adults in their cheapest accommodations.[61]

Given the implications of this final image, juxtaposed with the cheese board and (possibly filtered) fresh, vibrant produce in the other images, these food-selfies reveal Veronica's identity performances through both covert and explicit exhibitions of conventionally white notions of wealth, status, and privilege. Her more homemade images might be an appeal to humility—which some viewers may not buy into when considered in context with the other images. The food-selfies are largely symbolic of affluence, and thus contextualize her performance of a "journey" that spares no indulgence. In looking to Veronica's food-selfies, it makes sense in a way that she seems to emulate the aesthetics of some professional chefs and the Chef's Gaze, as this is the level of society that she seems to align her performance of identity with (again, based on a read of all of the images together).

How I read their identity: *Upper-class white woman. Possibly indulgent and concerned with appearances. Identity here seems more like a performance in the more theatrical sense of the term – something one puts on, a "show" of identity.*

Everyday User: @brethaway
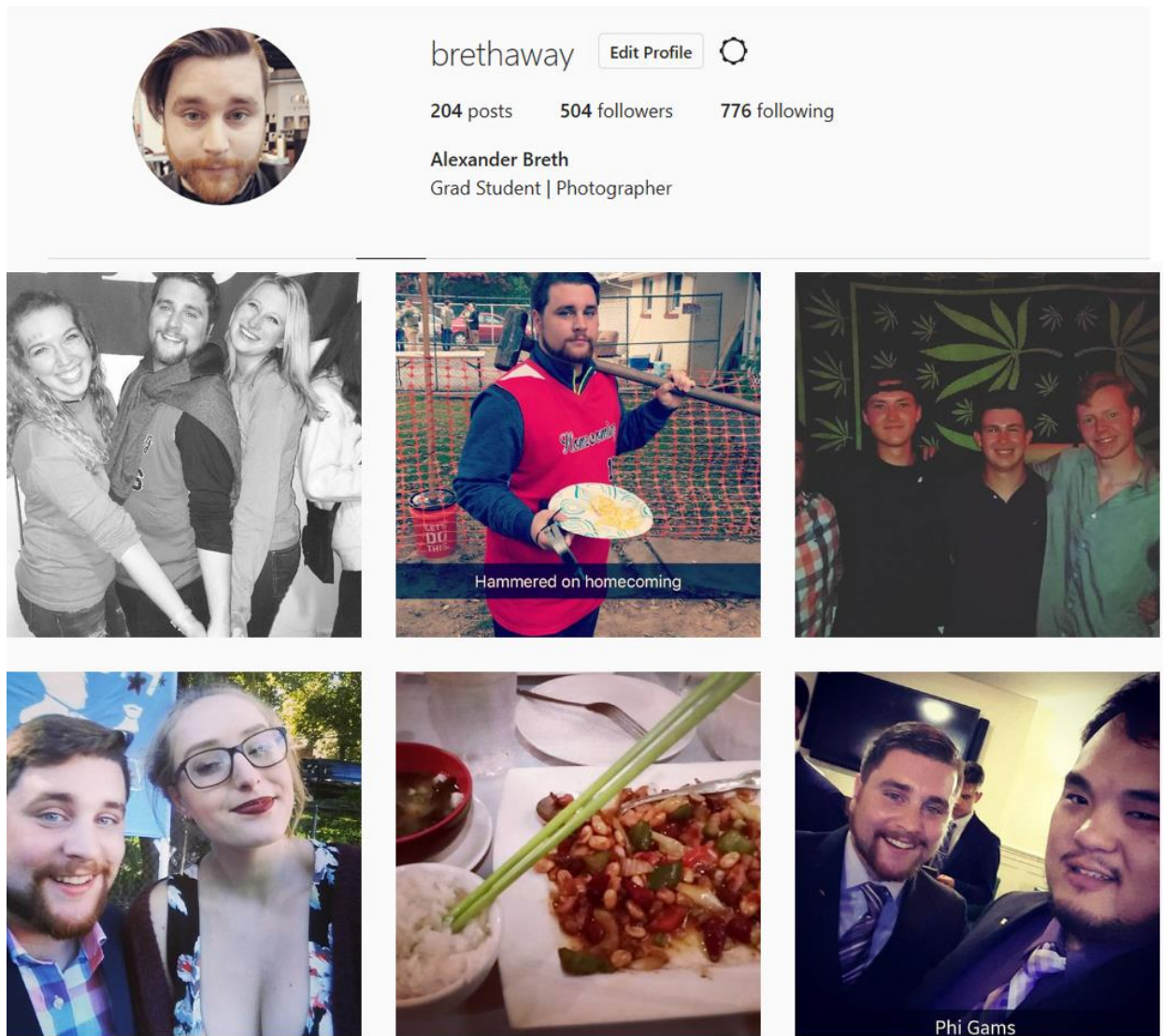
Figure 2.9 @brethaway's Instagram profile

This profile (Figure 2.9) offers a different take on food-selfies than any of the users I've presented thus far – offering fewer food images than the other examples. What is most prevalent in @brethaway's images is the centricity of the user themselves, much like how Fieri's profile is composed. The main themes that seem to echo across these images are an emphasis on performances of tidiness/presentability, a performance of social status/popularity that is also bound up in a particular classed experience, and performances of masculinity.

Starting with the first of these themes, note that the user is always shown in a controlled manner – looking at the camera implicitly suggesting that they are *aware* of their documentation. While the other everyday users also often looked at the camera when their bodies and/or faces are shown, there are photos included here (i.e. the full top row) that *also* reveal an obvious external photographer who holds the documenting device. This consciousness-of-self is performed in their food-selfies, as well. Looking to the Chinese food plated bottom-center, in addition to the editing (where there appears to be a vignette applied on the photograph that draws attention towards the center of the image), the various dishes and utensils are all arranged in line with the Chef's Gaze to look neat and picturesque. While the editing does seem to dull the colors of the image, the vibrancy in the dish is still visible. It also does not appear to be homemade food, which implies having the access and wealth to afford eating out.

This food-selfie is contrasted against the image appearing directly above it in the grid, where the user is shown posed stoically, with a sledgehammer in one hand and a smaller hammer and plate of (presumably, based on color/texture) eggs in the other. This image demonstrates a performance of stereotypical visceral masculinity – strength and authority, both in the body language of user and the presence of the hammers. A subtext of manual labor, another commonly prescribed masculine activity, might also be read in this image, as the fence behind the user

appears to be connected to his pose in the image. The plating of the eggs further aids in this performance of masculinity – while not conventionally aligning with the Chef's Gaze, it shows a practicality and utilitarianism; the plate does not need ornamentation or embellishment, as the masculine performance accompanying the image is enough to 'excuse' the untidy plating of the dish. The simplicity of the dish (scrambled eggs) and paper plate further accentuate this masculinity.

Alexander's food-selfies seem to function, more than the other everyday users' images I have included in this chapter, primarily as supplementary performances of identity that underscore the themes prevalent across their other images of self. The central bottom image reifies his performance of wealth/accessibility through its aesthetics, plating, and framing, for example, while the central top image aids in the performance of the user's masculinity.

How I read their identity: *A frat-boy. Self-image focused. Possibly personable, but also possibly judgmental. Seems to consider themselves desirable and cultured.*

An Empty Plate: Reflections on the Analysis

What I've gathered from examining these everyday accounts is that, by and large, the Chefs Gaze aesthetic is a popular way of engaging with and using food-selfies for those who identify as #homechef. Considering that other viewers of the hashtag #homechef are included in the imagined audience for each of these users, it makes sense, in a way, that the Chef's Gaze aesthetic would be prevalent – they are performing the identity of "chef" for this imagined audience. To deviate from the socially accepted behaviors regarding the production of food media and "proper" food-selfie aesthetics might be met with negative attention—an opposite of communitas. These users are also performing the #homechef role for themselves, possibly hoping to photographically preserve their own performances as talented, tidy, and able chefs in their own right, which they can later refer back to. The profiles and performances I have presented here, regardless of their efficacy and/or intent, serve in some way to reify hegemonic masculinity through an adaptation or even attempt at direct replication of the Chef's Gaze aesthetic—again, a trend I observed throughout users who aligned themselves with the #homechef identity on Instagram.

In this chapter, I have thus offered an understanding of the aesthetics of food media, in terms of how food media can be used by all categories of Instagram users in ways that can uphold systems of hegemonic masculinity. Food media is able to mark spaces in particular ways, dictate which bodies and cultures are allowed to perform in these spaces, and prescribe how these bodies are allowed to perform either directly or via white masculine mediation. This practice is reified, consciously or unconsciously, by everyday producers of food media and food-selfies, *possibly* through their own engagements with the food and cooking spaces of celebrity chefs. Celebrity chef behaviors, norms, and aesthetics can also be passed down to influencers

and microcelebrities who adopt these traits in order to perform identity markers for their own brands – whether it is trendiness, affluence, or other performances that reflect other attributes they wish to be known for. These practices, at this level, are usually designed in a way that markets a service or potentially generates revenue.

Regardless of source – celebrity chef or influencer – these aesthetics have been adopted into everyday use, through a variety of performances that allow Instagram users to showcase experiences, nuances, and aspects of their identities that may be difficult or impossible to convey by other means. Their use of food-selfies and hashtags also allow these users to align themselves with others who hope to perform similar identities (all in a seeming attempt at communitas), and "tour" the pages (and thus aesthetic choices) of users who use a common hashtag. Examples of performed identity traits I noted include the aspiration of talent and professional cookery, pride in kitchen skill and creative abilities, and the performance of access and excess (through expensive or rare ingredients). I am tempted to further refer to these sharing and viewing practices on Instagram as touristic, as the chefs I draw on as my foundation for the Chef's Gaze are also producers of several of the most popular food tourism shows in the current era. While not a perfect fit, this notion carries with it the implications of narrative construction, models for engaging with objects, and practices of curation that are seen in the Chef's Gaze, tourism media, and on multiple types of Instagram user pages.

When analyzing other users' profiles, it is only possible to interpret and speculate what these images are meant to offer, or how the user feels about the image they chose to share based on the other images and texts on their page. Of course, the interpretation is truly what matters on these sites, as chasing authenticity is a foolhardy venture. Nevertheless, I find myself wanting more certainty in my analysis – more context, more knowledge surrounding the image, and

ultimately, more of a history surrounding the user. These food-selfies make me curious about why they are shared and what the people who share them mean to convey.

Again, I share food-selfies myself frequently. If the username did not make this apparent, *I am* @brethaway. And while I don't personally use the hashtag "#homechef," food media has always been a critical part of my identity. As such, I felt it was an ethical choice to attempt to appraise myself as an outsider might, and in a similar way to how I appraised the other everyday users' profiles and food-selfies included in this chapter. They are, assumedly, "real" people (i.e. not bots), with real histories, experiences, feelings, tastes, goals, relationships, dreams, problems, and everything else that comes with being human. So I have appraised what they have chosen to share, and also what I (at a point in my history) similarly chose to share, from an external audience perspective—as images that perform *of the self* and thus may be interpreted in ways that point toward specific identity markers the user may want to align themselves with.

But what if I stop asking what is being shared, and instead ask "why?"

Of course, food itself is a necessity for *living*. Food sharing (across cultures) is a means of community building and maintenance, and a way to understand and pass on cultural traditions. An invitation to someone's table for a meal is an act of kindness, generosity, or even an honor. Food is (historically and even still) central to interpersonal interaction and relations. Food sharing represents family (both biological and chosen), friendship, bonding, ritual, communitas, and the possibility of *fullness*—having eaten *enough*; *richness* in flavor, sound or color; *the state of being complete or whole*. Instagram users' shared photos of food, meanwhile, imply an imagined audience that necessarily includes the user themselves—who will likely return to their own images as a viewer.

So what, then, does food-selfie sharing *do*?

How and why do we perform *for ourselves* by sharing images of and with food?

While the scope of this study precludes my answering that question for a broad sample of Instagram users, I can start with what I have: Me – my digital identity. In the following chapter, I thus turn to performative writing as a methodology for examining my own history and usage of food-selfies, not only to illustrate how I am complicit in the Chef's Gaze and its reification of whiteness and hegemonic masculinity, but also to gain a vital and unique context that reveals, at least for one person, how, when, where, and why food-selfies *are*. This work will hopefully open the door, too, for more critical reflexivity to be applied to others' shared, everyday images of food-selfies in additional contexts. Ultimately, being both vulnerable about and critical of ourselves and our histories with food allows us to examine how these histories inform and are informed by our unique intersections in identity (e.g. race, gender, class, ability, socioeconomic status). Additionally, examining popular culture and social media, and their integral role in how people form and maintain digital identities, can be the starting point for a conversation that could fundamentally change how Instagram (along with other social media users) – to turn a phrase – consume the world.

Now, on with the show.

Some Reservations

"Everything I have learned about food, myself, and being a man comes from my dad

and Gordon Ramsay."

A conversation with myself while watching Kitchen Nightmares

Scene One: The Bar

(Lights up on a cozily lit, rustic bar filled to the brim with patrons. There are several tables

dotting the room, with formal place settings – candles, wine glasses, decanters – the works.

ALEX is sitting silently and alone at one of the tables, dressed business casual with his stained

apron draped over the back of his chair. He nervously taps his hand on the table. After heaving a

sigh, he kicks back the remainder of his beer and signals the bartender to pour another.)

(Enter GUY FIERI and GORDON RAMSAY, looking for a table. On seeing the crowded area,

Gordon turns to leave, however Guy catches him by the arm and points out the open seats at

Alex's table. Guy approaches him.)

Guy: What's up, brotha? You a local around here?

Alex: *(starstruck)* Uh, yeah –

Guy: Word. Would it be okay if me and my buddy Gordie have dinner with you? I've heard this

place has the most bangin' burger this side of the state.

Alex: Yeah, sure. . . You're Guy Fieri, yeah?

Guy: The one and only my man – thinking about having this place on my show. What's your

name brotha?

Alex: Alex.

(Guy signals to Gordon to come over, who moves through the bustling room towards them. Alex quickly stands up and extends his hand to greet Gordon. However, upon recognizing who it is, Alex freezes. Gordon gives him a quizzical look. Guy puts his arm around Alex and proceeds to introduce him.)

Guy: Gordon, this is my buddy Big Al –

Alex: Actually, its Alex –

Guy: *(ignoring the interjection)* We'll be joining him in this joint. Big Al is a local.

Gordon: Pleasure, yeah, and good luck putting up with this one all night. *(He grins and playfully slaps Guy. They sit and proceed to order their meals)*

(The Trio begins sharing stories from the kitchen. Alex doesn't offer much, however, he is deeply engaged – laughing, emoting, and learning.)

(Guy talks in his usual playful and energetic way – using puns, wordplay and metaphors that only the man himself would imagine. Gordon, while relaxed, retains a certain amount of his television personality – posh, critical, and witty.[62] Alex is obviously fixated on something, lost in thought. After being pressured by his company to speak, Alex tries to find some words.)

Alex: *(Timidly)* Don't you think it's odd how we interact with food?

Gordon: I haven't the slightest idea what you mean. We cook, we prepare, we serve it. What's odd about that, big boy?

Alex: Bear with me a moment, yeah?

(Gordon shrugs and takes a pull of his beer. Guy and Gordon occasionally exchange side dialogue as Alex speaks.)

Alex: I have always had bodies – white bodies, like mine – on which to model my behavior and interactions with food. It's the perception that these bodies are prefaced on the invisibility that

garners the most attention from critical race scholars. However, if considering cultural behaviors and how they are transmitted, there certainly must be a better way of examining whiteness beyond rendering its performance as unnamed and unnoticed in political and social discourses.

In their book, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*, critical race scholar Sally Robinson notes that white men are often conflated with normativity in the American social vocabularies and have not been understood as practicing identity politics because they (i.e. white people) are visible in political terms. However, this isn't an historically accurate or theoretically useful way to frame whiteness and masculinity. Conceptualizing whiteness as existing outside the structure of identity and racial politics has never yielded anything productive beyond a cop-out for white people in difficult racial situations. *(Pause. Alex waits for the others to agree. Nothing)*

Alex: Well, uh, I know I'm guilty of relying on this strategy, at least. I know I have been able to enjoy the luxury of being invisible and not being critical of the politics of my food photographs, specifically because of *you*, gents.

(Alex takes a pull from his drink anxiously as this grabs the attention of the two chefs. Gordon interlocks his hands beneath his chin and Guy sputters slightly on his beer. Alex accents the end of his gulp with a firm placing of the glass on the table, followed by several nervous taps of his hand on the table. A sharp exhale. He speaks again more confidently.)

Alex: You are the unmarked men – and through saving me at a young age, your vision has become mine. I never experienced a minority chef without your mediation, or their cuisine without your voice and presence lingering and becoming commiserated with their creativity and creation. It was through you that they were made intelligible, and now, I find it difficult to accept and learn new styles of seeing.

The fact is, guys, that even my Instagram account – my space of creativity, identity, and sharing – hasn't let me escape your ways of seeing either. The IG pages that post food, the advertisements on the platform, the things that get liked and shared, these too, are touched by your aesthetic traditions and tastes as well. Your personal pages reify endlessly the 'proper' way of interacting with food and presenting it for visual consumption.[63] You present the world with your bodies alongside the food – showing *which people* can stand by and prepare food. You show proper and best aesthetics, ways of plating and garnishing, and spaces for preparation of 'good' food – all informed by your training and traditions, which too, function as a part of greater social structures.

Yet, what happens to the images that never came to be, or never came to be shared because, implicitly, *you* have deemed them improper or they have positioned themselves against your ways of seeing? As Cook and Hasmath[64] note, gendered identity – and to which I'd argue racial identity, too– is defined in opposition to these hegemonic masculine ideals; this must certainly mean then that images that do not measure up to your standard are gendered or raced in ways other than contributions to the dominant ideal of white, masculine cookery.

Gordon: Slow down there for a second, yeah? We don't go into each meal or each show thinking about race or gender. I – and speaking for Chef Fieri here – simply look for what we are trained to look for. We're perpetuating the proud tradition of fine cookery in its presentation and production. *(a beat.)* Guy, back me up on this.

Guy: Yeah, I've got you Gordie. *(turning to Alex)* Listen Big Al, you're obviously a fan of our shows, yeah?

Alex: Yeah, of course.

Guy: Right, so you know we never talk 'bout the gender or race of the chef unless it's important to the meal. And the food, brotha', that certainly ain't gendered. *(He chuckles)* The way we shoot food is the way people want to see it – gotta keep it simpatico with the viewers, you feel?

Alex: Fine. *(beat)* But could that assumption that *this is what people want to see* have ulterior motives? To look at Richard's notion of whiteness as male enterprise, does that tradition of seeing, as Tasker and Negra reaffirm, create "a fictional America associated with a frontier mythos and the singular masculinity—independent, competent, uncomplaining—popularly associated with it," rather than opening our eyes to more diverse ways of experiencing food (1)? *(Alex pauses, taking yet another long pull of beer. He takes a deep breath, gently sets the glass down, and continues)*

Alex: Y'know what – I'm being too pessimistic. Surely, y'all enter these situations with the best of intentions, and on the whole, I have watched you across your careers respect the cultures and chefs that you come in contact with. Gordon, you always encourage the youngest chef in the kitchen to pursue their passions and dreams. Guy, you are just on a funky voyage to find some good eats, and you bring overwhelming positivity with you.

So yes, I sit here and accuse you of being negative agents in the world, when at the same time I also believe you have aspired to simply find good food and help people succeed by pushing them beyond their limits. I believe you are both earnest people – well intentioned and cognizant of your actions. I believe that you have done good, that you do good, and that you will perpetuate goals and ideals that have the best of intentions for chefs and culture en masse. Yet, even so, the primary beneficiaries of this culture are the assumed, invisible, white audiences.[65] So how much good can you enact when it ultimately serves such a narrow set of viewers?

I want there to be redemption, but I cannot overlook your complicity – *our* complicity – in endlessly perpetuating a certain way of cooking and cookery that is at its core a privileged, white, and masculine performance. This is a way of interacting that limits how we can look at food across all forms of media and our everyday encounters with it. The ways of looking you perpetuate and that I have adopted are innately touristic; we go, we eat, we leave, we perform through sharing. I need look no further than an episode of *Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives* to see that. Every episode exemplifies how, through our selective, curated, and mediatized habits, we have perfected the art of attaching other cultures and bodies to our bodies; we have made them important only through our interaction and intervention with, and re-presentation of, these spaces. For instance, Guy, when is the last time you did an episode of *Triple D* without commenting on restaurants in a way that connects their quality with *your* experience dining there?

(Guy shrugs. Alex continues)

Alex: But as I said, *all of us* are complicit. When sharing my images on Instagram, no matter how good my intentions might be, I have still marginalized other ways of seeing, discounted other gazes. I have also discounted other ways of being, and that is now causing some cognitive discord. Through constantly Othering different bodies and food with our gaze whilst simultaneously aspiring to make them a part of our identities by appropriating and adapting them to suit our own culinary and visual repertoire online – *we* have begun to objectify our experiences. We've done this by looking at our experiences in these spaces as trinkets to be exhibited and shared with the world. I'm not the first to say this but we truly have made our identities the center of the culinary world in a way that innocuously makes everything valuable through its relations to our bodies and experiences[66].

(Alex pauses, breaking the crescendo of momentum in his speech. Like a rusty engine starting back up, he slowly and deliberately utters the next words)

Alex: All this is to say – we need a conscious effort to be critical of how we engage with food, its preparation, and its visual presentation. I hope we can do at least that much. By being critical of these practices, I hope that I can better understand how you as white, male chefs have influenced my standards for sharing, and in doing so, altered the way I am able to use the food-selfie to display my identity digitally. Beyond my own usage, I hope this, too, can open and enrich dialogues about food-selfies, the mediascape they construct, and how they function as part of our identities in digital spaces.

(Gordon and Guy exchange a hushed dialogue)

Gordon: What is this yank going on about? Aesthetics are aesthetics – you're taking the piss if you think otherwise. I didn't work my way up from nothing to have this arrogant amateur tell me how to do my f*@%'in job.

Guy: Gordon, brother, you have'ta chill out. We haven't even seen the food yet. This could be our funkiest find yet. Plus, Flavortown always could use a new slather of paint.

Gordon: *(exhaling)* Bloody hell, let's hope it's better than the décor.

(I pull up the first image. It's titled The Glorious Latte.)

Alex: *(aside)* I know you've seen this before, but I swear this has a point.

(A beat)

Alex: Before showing you anything, guys, it's worth thinking about who I was trying to perform these images for. While the exact group of people in mind varies slightly from image to image, I was mainly thinking about my own self-image when sharing these images – how they made me

feel about myself. After that I considered my friends and followers, who I wanted to think good things about me – to think those good things I felt, yeah?

(a beat. Guy and Gordon nod.)
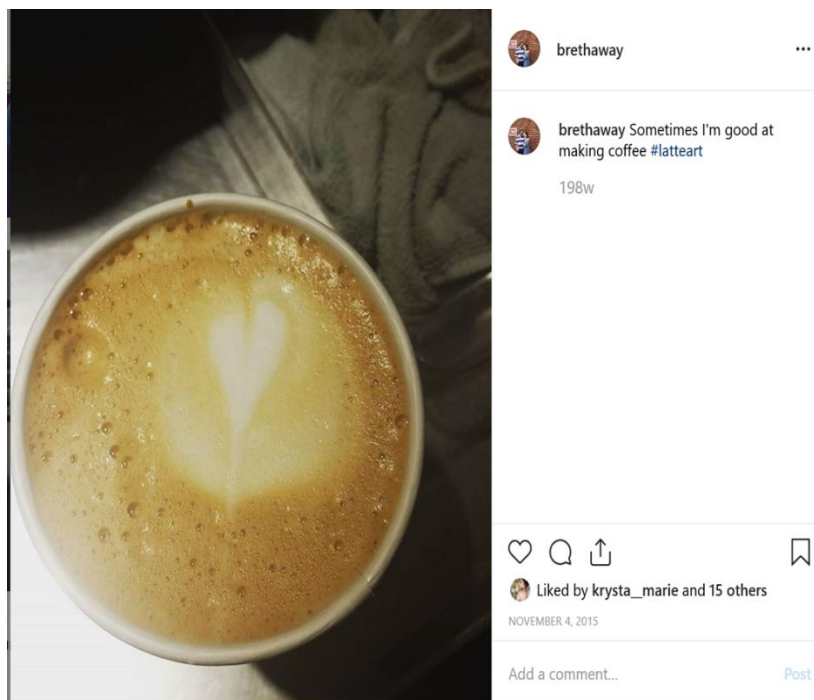
Figure 3.1: The Glorious Latte.

This first photograph that I'm sharing is very special – it's the image that launched me, unknowingly, into using the food-selfie as a staple for my posting habits. It's definitely not my best work, however, it's as good of a starting point that I have. It's not particularly glamourous; the latte art is smudged and blurry, the framing and lighting are hardly thoughtful, and the brightness in the bottom-left quarter of the image is entirely distracting from the focal point of the image as its sheer whiteness draws the eye away from the intended center of the image. The balled-up rag in the top right-hand corner also contributes to the lack of glamour of this shot, it feels dirty, out-of-place, and ultimately reduces the type of Barthesian glaze one might expect of a food image meant for commercial use. However, running counter to this visual depiction is the

caption "Sometimes I'm good at latte art #latteart", which is attempting to cast this as living up to the aesthetic traditions of what one might see of professional baristas sharing on Instagram.

The framing of this image is not professional/commercial; it is a homemade picture, and as such, isn't being shared for the purposes of selling the product within the frame. This frame also does not imply that this image or object was produced in a domestic space or a space of comfort, as it does not depict the cozy background of a kitchen or even a cafe table where one might normally consume a drink like this. The counter is a metallic and polished silver tone, reminiscent of what we envision restaurant kitchens to outfitted with, and the implication of a professional kitchen space is only cemented by the rag in the corner, presumably used to wipe clean any potential blemishes that could appear.

From creating this image, I know that it was created in the local Starbucks in my hometown of Hatfield, Pennsylvania, during my time working there, which binds the image's performance to two main implications –it simultaneously is crafting and performing a personal and professional identity for me. On the half of the personal, signaled by the relaxed framing and deliberate inclusion of the rag in the shot, this image is performing signifiers that denotes a level of creativity while also self-performing a level of casual talent for the user themselves. Here, to both meanings, I shared this particular photo because of its ability to elucidate and preserve an embodied experience for myself. Judging by the caption I gave this image, it was one of the few successful attempts I had at latte art when first learning how to create designs. It is a moment of pride that is being shared to perform the personal joy of harnessing a creative skill, whilst also exhibiting that skill to my imagined audience in ways that allows them to acknowledge the skill and potentially allow me to celebrate it with them. It also signifies having the wealth and resources to be able to focus on honing an art rather than simply performing a task, which will

come to be important when considering the profile in its entirety. After all, having the ability and equipment to work with espresso (and subsequently produce lattes) is bound up, in many cases, to material conditions of the user.

On the half of the professional, this image gains several new readings, all of which could be valid considering the context of the image's creation. One of the first meanings this photograph of food signifies is a level of privilege, both in the sense of knowledge and access as well as training. In the sense of knowledge, it implies that the type of skill exhibited here is not available to everyone, thus making it unique in its ability to individuate the user through its sharing. It also implies the knowledge of coffee and dairy products in order to produce the desired results. In this sense, it begins to gesture towards the identity of a skilled worker who spends time to perfect their craft in aesthetic ways, despite the image potentially failing to convince some viewers of the truth-claim for the media. This identity of the worker also bleeds through as one can infer, this drink is not for the person taking the photograph, and thus subsequently positions the producer of the image in a role of service rather than indulgence.

My body isn't present, as you might expect, but you can feel it existing beyond the framing of the shot. As Richard Dyer notes in *White*, black people are reducible to bodies and their race within white culture, while "white people are something else that is realized in and yet is not reducible to the corporeal, or racial,"(32), and thus in absence of a body the whiteness of my body is likely inferred by a viewer, especially when combined with the aesthetics present. Despite the seeming amateur quality of the image, it could just as easily be one of the photographs in your *Funky Finds of Flavortown* cookbook series, Guy. It has the aesthetic of kitchen preparation – as I've outlined above – which serves as a highlight for your shows as well, Chef Ramsay. In either, though, this image could naturally fit as a part of your visual schema.

(Gordon shoots Guy an exasperated look. Guy laughs and shrugs back. They exchange another hushed conversation.)

Gordon: This must be some kind of joke. Look at the execution; sloppy art, sloppy station, and couldn't even focus the camera to make any effort to redeem himself.

Guy: It has got 'heart' though.

Gordon: *(cheekily)* Oh, piss off.

Guy: It has a story and sells it hard. While the quality isn't there, he makes a point – it does fit with how we show food. It shows panache, the professional space, and the evidence of preparation.

Gordon: Yeah, whatever. If he's adamant about being critical, why focus on a latte? Everyone has coffee – it's always prepared slightly differently, but in all my years, I've never not found coffee.

Guy: We can *totally* agree on that.

(I pull up the next image. Its titled "Blending In")

Figure 3.2: Blending In

Alex: *(as if pre-empting the conversation)* Coffee is pretty universal though – however lattes are not. As you know, they are often more expensive and require access to luxury ingredients and preparation methods, whereas regular coffee is easily made through a variety of more affordable methods and machinery.[67] And while this image is near and dear to my heart, you'd be right in saying it does not push any racial bounds or even offer that nuanced of criticism. I chose to share this image as jumping off point because it serves as evidence and establishment of my complicity in viewing food as your media has taught me to. It's not boundary pushing, it's not unique – it's hegemonic.

This next image, however, provides deeper implications regarding raced interactions with food when it becomes part of my performed identity. On the contextual level, the image was posted originally on October 13th, 2016 and is geotagged in Chinatown, Philadelphia. The caption reads "Trying to blend in with @realpeterho" with the username '@realpeterho' being linked to their profile – a fact that will become more important. As of the time submitting this[68], the image was liked by 37 people and has 2 comments – which for the time was about the average engagement for my posts.

Speaking more specifically to the image itself, what appears dominantly in the frame is a plate of vegetables, meat, and nuts, coated in a resplendent, brown sauce. To the left side, there is a traditional serving bowl of soup and a bowl of rice, with two bright green chopsticks protruding diagonally across the frame, drawing the eye to the small ceramic cup. Here, peeking out on the borders of the frame is evidence of a second place-setting that is alluded to in the caption of the image.

This image is where things start to get complicated in terms of my performances via food-selfies, as there are some obvious efforts to establish the food as part of the racialized other.

First, there is the nod to a physically othered space – the Chinatown District of Philadelphia. At the time when I took this photograph, I was visiting the area – touring it, if you would – for a yearly Asian Festival that I was invited to by my friend, Peter (who is of Asian descent, which is also relevant to my point here). I remember trying so many foods for the first time that night; bubble tea, rolled ice-cream, and the dish that is pictured here – which I believe was miso soup, rice, and peanut-chicken with vegetables tossed in a glaze. I remember Peter telling me which foods I should try and where I should try them – like a tour guide would. While seemingly unimportant to the reading of this image, it speaks to how I engaged with the space. I engaged as if I was the white, male, celebrity chef.

I had my 'local expert' showing me the hottest spots for the best food; a person that is only important to the sharing of the image as they afford a certain amount of authenticity and credibility to be ascribed to the image. I also only entered the space for purposes of experiencing the culture through physical, gastronomic consumption. I made the food important *insomuch as it related to me* – the white male tourist – and my experience consuming it. This is all embedded in the implications of the caption "trying to blend in with @realpeterho." By claiming I was trying to blend in, its implicit that I was aiming for authenticity and a 'real' experience. Through referencing Peter's account as my 'insider,' I was rhetorically positioning this particular dish as approved by a member of that community – a move that predicates his race as being the ultimate criteria for the consumption of this food.

Isn't it a bit absurd that I'm relying on my friend Peter for credibility and authenticity? Like, to truly think about it, he only has some familial ties to Asian culture, otherwise he grew up in the relatively white section of Harrisburg, PA. It's absurd because, for the viewer of the image, this appeal very well *could work*. Viewers buy into "authenticity" based on this 'insider

knowledge,'; based on the simple fact that if they don't know him and don't have access to his photos, his last name is Vietnamese and that's enough. Also, as an "outsider" to this gastronomic culture, which we perhaps both were, I felt it necessary and relevant to justify dining in one particular restaurant over another that night. It's the cultural equivalent of exclusively trusting those with Italian lineage to tell you where to get a good pizza this weekend – it's so deep-seated in our culture that we hardly notice it in our day-to-day engagements. It is silent, implicit, and systemic racism. However, that's its own conversation.

To continue with this one, the trope of the local expert and the mobility of the culinary tourist is common in media like *Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives*. Tasker and Negra note that food media's focus on "the mobility of these male entrepreneurs (referring to Celebrity Chefs) and their ability to appropriate a range of ethnically marked cuisines enable them to symbolically reauthenticate themselves" (118), an act that I, too, am engaged with in my production and sharing of this image. Looking critically, this image is my attempt to appropriate this meal (and subsequent culture) in order to reassert myself as a person of importance; someone worth *seeing*. Look at how the plates and bowls are arranged – I made special effort to show the authentic elements; the chopsticks, the traditional soup bowl, the small ceramic cup for green tea, all acting as bits and pieces for the performance of a cultured, respectful food tourist. I lived the gaze of the Celebrity Chef in this moment – the gaze that you both circulate in your shows. However, if you look closely at the image, you can see my fork and knife hidden within the frame as I couldn't use the chopsticks well. I wanted people to view me like you guys, but without being authentic to myself and how I actually engaged. I used this image to become more credible as a food-tourist and food-enthusiast, while capitalizing on the culture of the dish with how food media has told us to view and interact with these spaces. Food media asked me to be authentic, so I attempted

my best framing and contextualization; food media asked me to use the Chef's Gaze – and so I did, gazing on this dish and capturing it as I knew you would. I find myself now asking if I would've framed this image differently if I didn't have you both as role models – or if the vision I had grown up with was from different perspectives.

How would that change how I used this photo? How would it change how I view myself? Shit, would I even have taken it at all?

(I quickly pull up the next image. Guy and Gordon look on intrigued, if not quizzical. This one is titled "Celebrating America").
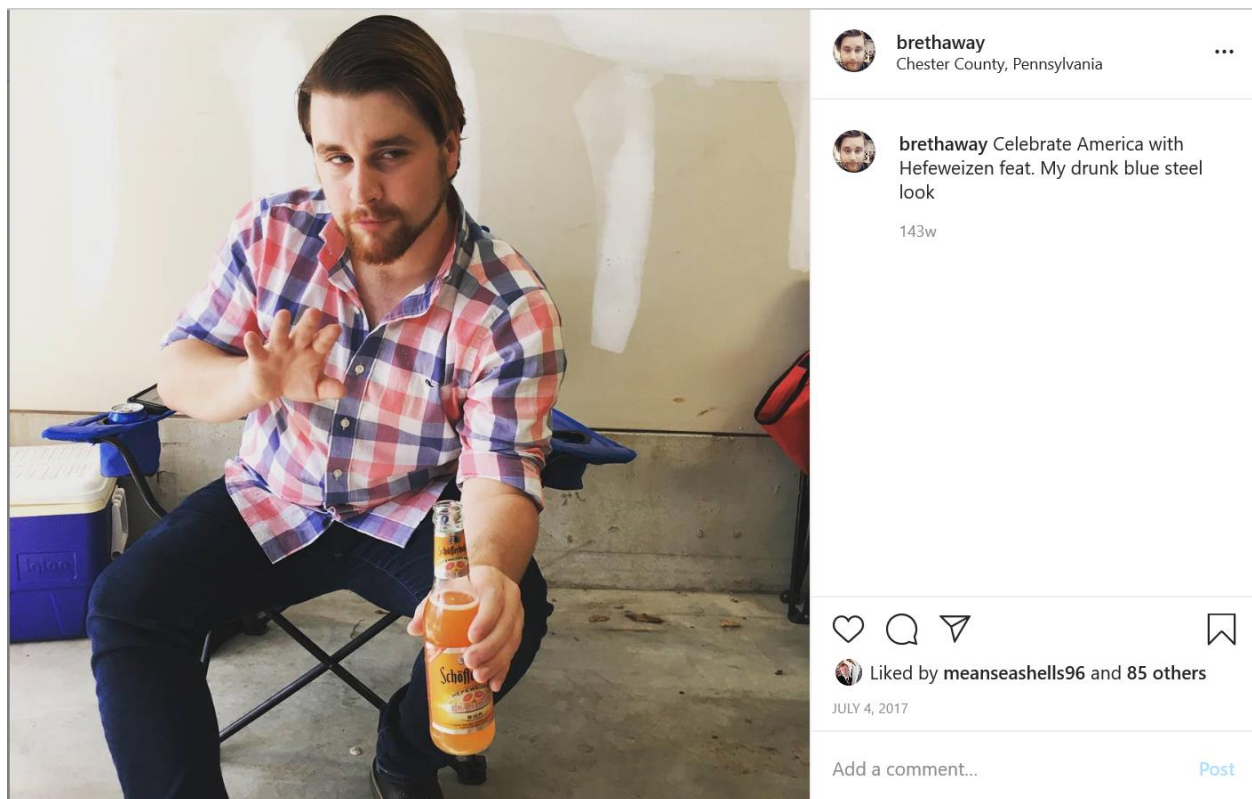

Figure 3.3: Celebrating America

Alex: I get how you might think that these photos aren't doing the same things as your shows – so let's look at my images where I choose to present myself alongside the food or drink? Y'know exactly how you guys do on your shows. This image for instance is a perfect side-by-side for

how you guys place yourself alongside cookery online. I call it "Celebrating America;" partially because of the outfit, but primarily because of the context in which this photograph was taken. I originally shared this image on the Fourth of July back in 2017; I was still a student at West Chester University (geotagged accordingly).

All though the caption states that I was perhaps less than sober for this image (re: "my drunk blue steel face"), I do remember asking for my friend to take the photograph of me – I remember specifically asking for it because it was my first time having grapefruit Hefeweizen, and I was scared of forgetting what the name of the drink was. While not crafting the beer myself, this image is all about building my identity as a 'foodie' and aligning myself with the gaze of the Celebrity Chef.

Gordon: Oh bollocks, Alex. That's not what I've shown on my shows at all. Everything is about the ingredients, the technique –

Alex/Gordon: The passion.

(a beat)

Alex: I know. I grew up watching you. Everyone thought you were a bully or an ass. But you were more than that for me. You both were.

(There's a long pause. A server brings over the trio's burgers and tops off their water. Before they begin eating, Guy pulls out an unmarked bottle of condiment)

Guy: Big Al – Gordie – I got a favor to ask.

(They nod curiously. Gordon mouths 'We're screwed')

Guy: I've been working on a new Donkey Sauce blend, and while I'd normally not mess with a burger I've never tried before – I gotta try it, man. So – will y'all try it with me?

Gordon: As much as I hate the damn name, yeah sure.

Alex: When in Flavortown, I suppose.

(Guy uncorks the bottle. A blossom of garlic, mayo, and spices exit. It is pungent, almost fermented in its smell. He slathers each burger with a healthy serving, and the three 'clink' their sandwiches. Gordon's face contorts as he has the first bite; Guy is completely loving it. Alex, however, has dropped his burger on the plate after taking the first bite)

Guy: Big Al, you good?

Alex: I-I don't really know… You know. . . my dad used to call me that. . .

Scene Two: Fieri's Inferno

". . . he knew how homesick, how isolated I was. He saw through my arrogance, my pushiness. I was like an orphan there, and he stepped in as a father-figure."

 Gordon Ramsay, *Humble Pie*

(The lights begin to dim on stage until it's a single spotlight on Alex's table, with Guy and Gordon frozen in a tableaux vivant. The steady rock music that underscored the previous scene becomes more and more discordant. Alex, wide-eyed, runs his hands across his face and through his hair. He begins hyper-ventilating. At this moment, the cheeseburger levitates off his plate, rising and falling on an invisible wave. Alex violently pushes back from the table.)

Alex: What the hell is going on here?!

Cheeseburger: *(in a soothing baritone)* It's okay, Alex. It is just us now. Just like it used to be, don't you remember?

(Alex stands frozen as he watches the cheeseburger float towards him)

Cheeseburger: Perhaps, it would be better if I took a more conventional form? Human?

(Blackout. As the lights come up again, the cheeseburger has transformed into the ghost of ANTHONY BOURDAIN,[69] dressed as Virgil from Dante's Inferno. The stage has been cleared, leaving Alex and Anthony in a void-like space.)

Anthony: Forgive my deception, I thought appearing as a food you enjoy would be less threatening than a spirit.

Alex: *(trepidatiously)* What is going on here?

Anthony: Well, Alex, I am Anthony Bourdain – and yes, I know you didn't watch my shows as much. Yet, I know too well of using food and travel to escape the trauma that life burdens us with. It was my profession in life that had me explore parts of the world and understand their cultures, values and inspirations. *(a beat)* I have been sent to do the same with you.

Alex: *(nervously laughing)* This can't be real.

Anthony: To be candid with you, Alex, we're… simply in your subconscious. You buy into that Freudian shit, right? Okay, you want to understand your history with food, these chefs, and why they mean so much to you. It's not somewhere you are willing to travel unguided. *(extending a hand to Alex)* Thou follow me, and I will be thy guide, and lead thee hence through this eternal place[70].

Alex: *(nervously taking his hand)* Uh. . . okay.

Anthony: How do you have a degree in English and not know Dante's *Inferno?*

Alex: I did visual rhetoric, not literature, so you can calm down there, "Virgil."

(The two smugly smirk, both confident that they won the verbal spar. Anthony leads Alex across the stage, as ethereal stagehands place an audience seating, makeshift stage, and television.)

Anthony: Beginnings are often the hardest, yet they yield so much. So, I pose this question, Alex: What does cooking mean in the context of your life? You claim that it is your passion, so where did that begin?

(Anthony sits, gesturing for Alex to join him. Alex accepts and begins to ponder the question. After a long pause, he begins to speak.)

Alex: Cooking has always been more than a means to nourishment for me. It's a way of living, breathing, and seeing. In 2001, at the age of five, my parents, uh – Do I have to talk about it?

Anthony: If you cannot speak it loudly, whisper it to me and I will manifest it for you. You like theatre, yes?

Alex: Yeah, I do.

Anthony: Then, I'll have it played out for you.

(Sighing, Alex leans in and whispers to Anthony. He nods along and waves his hands. Enter THE GORDON'S FISHERMAN and THE WENDY'S MASCOT, who place themselves on the makeshift stage. While initially entering arm-in-arm, they quickly begin to fight, with exasperated and embellished gestures. Alex and Anthony sit, intently watching the play.)

Alex: I'd like to think that I reacted differently than most children in that I found a way to 'rise above' the trauma of a world falling apart. At first, yes, I was able to bottle-up my opinions and emotions, but I quickly found myself consumed with confusion, frustration, and seething anger.

(Enter the SAD CHEESEBURGER and COMBO MEAL. The Sad Cheeseburger tries to be a part of the combo meal, but they push him away. It repeatedly tries again, to no avail.)

It was hard to make friends – and frankly, I had little desire to. All I was concerned with was surviving until the next day, to be polite, to not let feelings out for fear of how people would react.

Alex: Years went by, and I became the "quiet kid," drawing as little attention to myself as possible. I kept reading, and focusing on school, but the constant stress at home started to weigh on me. At 8 years old, my dad was deployed to Iraq as part of Operation: Enduring Freedom, and I started trying to find ways of prolonging my days at school. I was already enrolled in an after-school program that went until 5 every day, but I was trying to find a way to deal with (or at least ignore) my emotions. Looking back on it now, I was already dredged in Western masculine culture – I felt like I couldn't express myself *in any way*. I felt like every day was a battle not to break.

 (Sad Cheeseburger is joined by another Cheeseburger, this one sporting a frilly bow. Sad Cheeseburger pantomimes vomiting, with pickle chips splattering on the floor, and his lettuce begins to wilt. The cheeseburger brings Sad Cheeseburger some sliders and pats him consolingly before leaving him by the television.)

Alex: I remember getting sick a lot during this time, too. My mom would call me and my sister out of school and would leave us money for lunch. I remember these days vividly, as my sister and I would walk about a mile to the Burger King, get as many cheeseburgers as we could, walk home and resume our daily life. I would sit down, pull out the GameCube, and play *The Legend of Zelda* with my food spread out in front of me. I can still see and smell the ketchup that I'd dip my fries in – this was one of the highlights of my childhood.

(Sad Cheeseburger is joined by PROTEIN SHAKE, wearing a mortar board. They sit by the television pantomiming conversation. The burger's lettuce perks up.)

Alex: When I was nine, my dad returned home from deployment. I remember being woken up one night around 10 o'clock. I don't remember much more of the night– between being half-asleep and a healthy amount of repression, I can only remember a few blurry moments – being.

taken outside, a lot of yelling, police, and going to my dad's house. When asking my dad about it, he tells me that my sister and I weren't properly taken care of; we hadn't gotten haircuts since he left, our clothes were ragged with some holes in them. The custody battle(s) ensued.

(Alex leans in, whispering to Anthony once more. Anthony's expression hardens, yet he waves his hands all the same. Enter the Gordon's Fisherman with the SUN-MAID RAISIN GIRL and the Wendy's mascot with ARBY.)

Alex: It was tough bouncing back and forth between the two houses, each offering unique flavors and garnishes to the already boiling pot of emotions inside me – I know I'm not alone in this, though. Many kids deal with parental turmoil growing up – I hate playing victim, man, I really do – people treat you differently when you've had *trauma*. I've always just wanted to be…

(The Sad Cheeseburger sits between the Fisherman and Raisin girl, pantomiming a meal. A great deal of pointing happens, with rolled eyes and behaviors indicating disdain towards Wendy and Arby. The Sad Cheeseburger's cheese begins to melt, and his ketchup flows down him like a river. He starts tearing at his bun, exposing some of the soft texture underneath the crust. He is then escorted over to Wendy and Arby. Sad Cheeseburger tears more at his bun, and as the Fisherman and Raisin Girl leave, Arby and Wendy begin fighting. Arby reaches for his cowboy whip when Anthony banishes the visions).

Alex: In 2007 (11 years old) I broke. Having been demeaned for so long at home by my mom's partner, and through mitigating the stressful conversations happening around me by bottling my emotions, I couldn't contain it anymore. One afternoon, a kid started bullying me. Truthfully, I don't remember much. I think I may have blacked out. Where my memory picks up, I was keeping one of the staff at bay in the cafeteria through a mix of screaming, hysterical crying, and running. They eventually got me to calm down, and my dad arrived shortly after.

I saw several counselors, which as one might imagine for a boy already petrified of speaking his mind, was not very effective. After several sessions, my parents stopped taking me, as no progress was being made. I settled into a comfortable routine of managing my emotions well for a couple days, and then having an outburst where I would either get irrationally angry about mundane things or just act out in hurtful ways to my friends and family. Overall, I was generally aggressive. It was also here that I started forcing myself to be sick – the rush of endorphins after throwing up made me feel good. I kept my purging secret for years.

This aggression would last for years, too, and while evolving from the after-school student to a proper latch-key kid, I began watching a lot of television. I started with the typical afternoon shows, but quickly branched out. During one adventurous channel surfing session, I found myself on the *Food Network*; specifically, watching Rachael Ray's "30-minute meals." There was something so captivating about it – it was vibrant, upbeat, and ultimately, *impressive*. Having never really cooked or baked prior to that, it was just amazing to me that you could (at least in theory) put together something that looked so delicious in under an hour. I started going from passively watching while playing computer games to actively watching, listening, and at one point even taking notes on how she prepared her meals. There were more than simply recipes at play here; there were windows to other worlds I hadn't ever conceived of. To guide me to these places, I had Rachael, coaching me and nurturing my love of food and *Culture*. *(Anthony summons an actor back to the stage. Here, Sad Cheeseburger transforms into Hopeful Alex – an identical, however clean-shaven, copy of Alex. He stands proud in a white chef's apron by the television, marinating chicken alongside Rachael Ray, who is encouraging him as he slices the meat and prepares it to be soaked. As he finishes, she gives him a hug.)*

Alex: She is like my second mom, even to this day. However, like any chef-in-training, I wouldn't remain in her kitchen forever. She showed me the world, the options, the Italian heritage, and distilled it into consumable bites, but I had to learn more. There was so much joy in what we started, and I had to see what else was out there to be explored. I finally began to find some sort of comfort and peace in consuming these kinds of media. It was around this time that I started cooking as well.

One day – I forget the year, but I must've been 15 or 16 by this point – I took an unexpected trip across the pond with the show *Kitchen Nightmares*. Watching these episodes with Gordon Ramsay visiting various restaurants around the U.K. and working to make them better was the next part of my training.

(Anthony summons Gordon Ramsay dressed as a drill sergeant. Hopeful Alex now appears as Commis Chef[71] Alex. They stand over a war-room table, where Gordon strategically moves figures around and stations. Alex takes a stab at repositioning some of the figures – he places the first one wrong, which Gordon reprimands him for. He places the second one correctly, to which Gordon gives a fatherly pat on the shoulder).

Alex: He taught me about the importance of passion, sensibility, and authenticity in food. He showed me that there is beauty and elegance in simplicity. Perhaps most importantly, Gordon, a man renowned for being boisterous, angry, and vitriolic, became a role model for me, showing me how to take hot-blooded tendencies and use them for good; to channel them in productive ways, in ways that push you to your limits to achieve the absolute best. As I've continued to watch him in all of his shows and media, not only has he shown me worlds, cultures, and people that I might otherwise never have interact with – he's shown me how a Man acts; as a father, professional, and creator of food.

While these two chefs are perhaps the most influential to me finding myself in cookery-as-therapy and food as an integral part of who I am, I've dabbled in many celebrity chefs. They're what I want to be; I want to create and share food like they do.

(Commis Chef Alex begins to cook, with each completed dish being tossed to the side in favor of the next one. Shortly after he begins, Rachael re-enters and proudly joins him.)

Alex: At 16, I created my first signature burger recipe, started baking bread, and refined meatloaf. At 17, I received my first apron from my Dad and my stepmom. I also started dabbling in cooking fish and making sauces. At 18, I debated leaving college to start a coffee shop and bar hybrid called "Tradewinds"; specializing in craft drinks and casual Americana.

(Rachael crosses to the pantry for some extra ingredients.)

Alex: At 19, I cooked a three-course meal for my Dad's anniversary with my stepmother; Honey-Glazed Salmon with a lime-butter sauce, white wine simmered asparagus, goat-cheese and tomato chutney, with toasted baguette, and homemade apple pie, with French vanilla ice cream. Also, at 19, I became a Barista and started honing espresso skills, as well as tasting and palate knowledge. At 21, disgruntled with my debt and lacking a direction, I debated leaving college to go to culinary school. Obviously, this didn't come to pass.

(Mountains of finished meals pile up around the stage, trapping Rachael in the pantry. Enter Gordon and Guy, accompanied by a swarm of Roaches. As the men join Alex in the kitchen, the Roaches quickly dart over the food and drag it offstage. Rachael, caught the commotion, is enveloped by Roaches and carried off[72]. Alex doesn't notice at first, as he has new friends in the kitchen. They continue to work on Rachael's recipe. Alex looks up, seemingly for Rachael, but Guy and Gordon quickly bring his focus back to the meal they're preparing.)

Alex: I can't shake the thought of who I might be if I had not replaced Rachael with these masculine surrogates. She did so much for me – but felt insufficient, nevertheless. I can't pin it down – maybe it's because she *was* that second mom for me, and having stability felt foreign. Maybe I wanted to throw myself back into chaos – that's what these other chefs taught me. Masculinity is controlled chaos, and cooking is controlled chaos. Rachael's kitchen was calm and caring. There is respect and love in cooking, yes, but Guy and Gordon taught me that *passion* was paramount. *(a beat.)*

Alex: As I moved on from Rachael, I lost the familial aspect in my cooking – it became about glory and style, excellence and showmanship. It was about competence, not communitas. Sure, it was nice having male role models, but – I think the void I was originally trying to fill with food was more about feeling like I belonged somewhere – a feeling Rachael gave me, and then I lost when I abandoned her for chefs like Gordon and Guy… *(a beat.)* I've been chasing an emotional warmth that is so rare in a *man's* kitchen.

(Anthony raises an eyebrow and gestures toward himself. Alex looks at Anthony and weakly nods in affirmation, as if to say, "I see now. You may have helped me find this 'belonging.'" Alex then slouches back in his chair, exhausted. Anthony puts a hand on his shoulder.)

Alex: I guess that's how I got here. I guess that's what cooking is to me.

(Alex approaches his younger self on the stage, looking him up and down – a mix of melancholy and pride on his face. He places a hand on his counterpart longingly. Anthony watches silently.)

Anthony: So, cooking is… everything? It was therapy, it was how you situated your identity, it's how you learned to live?

Alex: As much as it can be, yeah. Food is *living* for me. This all means so much to me because it's the reason I'm still alive. But you already knew that, didn't you?

Anthony: I only know as much as you – I am only a figment of your imagination![73] However, even if I did know, sometimes it's less about the destination and more about the journey. That's what life taught me. *(a beat)* It appears my job is done then, Alex. Although, I didn't do much. I just let you take me on the tour.

Alex: Don't sell yourself short, you've done more than you could ever know.

Anthony: I can send you back to reality, if you're ready. If not, we can stay for a while longer.

Alex: I'm ready. Though, one thing before I go, Anthony?

Anthony: Yes?

Alex: Do you think I'll make it?

Anthony: Oh, Alex. I spent years of my life trying to figure out the answer to that question, and I'd hate to rob you of the satisfaction of discovering it for yourself. I will say this, though: in America, the professional kitchen is the last refuge of the misfit. It's a place for people with bad pasts to find a new family[74] - your journey proves that so far. So, take comfort in knowing, we're all part of the family structure you've built. *(A beat)* Be well, Alex – there's a spot at the table waiting for you when you finish your journey.

Alex: Thank you . . . Goodbye, Anthony.

(Blackout)

Scene Three: The Bar

"Maybe that's enlightenment enough: to know that there is no final resting place of the mind, no moment of smug clarity. Perhaps wisdom ... is realizing how small I am, and unwise, and how far I have yet to go."

 Anthony Bourdain, *No Reservations*

(Guy and Gordon are hunched over Alex's body, checking to make sure he's alive. After several seconds, Alex gasps, sputtering and coughing as he sits up.)

Gordon: Easy there, big boy. Guy, what in the bloody hell did you put in that stuff?

Guy: I guess, I must've overdone it with the mushrooms, kemosabe.

Alex: *(groaning)* How long was I out for?

Gordon: Probably a good minute, you gave us all quite the scare, chap.

Alex: Huh, feels like I've been out for months. . .

(Guy hands him a water. Alex sips it gently.)

Alex: Where were we, though?

Gordon: You were about to tell us about your passion for cooking – if you're still up for it?

Alex: *(nodding slowly)* Yeah, getting knocked out gave me some time to think about it.

(Alex laughs. Guy and Gordon crack a boyish grin. Alex begins to recount the journey he described to the spirit of Anthony Bourdain.)

Alex: So, to bring it all together, you chefs, and your media, have taught me how to see food, how to craft food, and how these things inform my identity, culture, and perception of self. I've learned from all of you artisans – whether it was Alton Brown, Anthony Bourdain, Bobby Flay, Rachael Ray – *(Alex pauses, raising a glass to the present company)* Gordon Ramsay, or the mayor of Flavortown himself, Guy Fieri. Your ways of seeing have become my own, and in doing do, I've tried to emulate your values, their passion, and in some cases, your looks:

Figure 3.4: Breth, Alexander. "Who wore it better?".

Alex: A pretty uncanny resemblance, right Guy?

Guy: Holy moly, Stromboli you could be my son.

Alex: *(laughs)* Don't worry, Hunter and your wife don't have to know. This photograph was taken during my junior year at West Chester University, and for those inquisitive readers, you'll not find it on my primary Instagram account. Yet, this photograph has haunted me. Inevitably, I always refer back to it when describing myself, with the conversation going something like:

"Hey, wanna see a picture of me as Guy Fieri?"

"Sure *(a beat)* OH MY GOD THAT'S HILARIOUS."

Admittedly, yes, it was and is hilarious. However, when thinking about my digital identity and performance of self, I continue to be overly dependent on this photo as a critical moment in my self-perception. As tough as it is to admit – you, Guy, specifically, showed me how masculine, white bodies are meant to occupy spaces of cookery, engage with food, and behave when interacting with the culture of others.

You showed me how to be a man.

You were the co-parent to me when my mom disappeared to Maine.

You were the one that showed me the joy of food when I was bulimic in college, and *you*

brought me back into the kitchen.

You are everything to me, and I'll never fully understand your influence over me. But I can't

help but feel troubled after seeing how I – how we – engage with food and present it visually.

Guy: Alex.

Alex: Yeah?

Guy: You don't need to be ashamed of your actions, of your own sense of guilt for being a man.

You don't have to apologize for seeing things like we do. What other choice did you have? We

were always there when you need us. We did our best, the best we could with our training. We

try to be respectful and respectful with the chefs we encounter, their cultures, and their spaces. I

do my best to bring the hidden spots of America attention, regardless of race, class, or gender.

Gordon: I, too, do my best. Hell, I spend most of my shows helping people who need it. I don't

care who or where they are. I just care about reigniting their passion.

Alex: But don't you see? That's just letting yourselves off the hook. Just because "it's all we

know," or its tradition, doesn't make it right. *What if* our engagements with food do more harm

than good? Like, I get you're *trying* – but how do we change? How do we afford more space for

those who look differently than us? How do we, to return to Sally Robinson, become involved

with racial and political struggles without co-opting marginalized peoples' efforts, labor, or

culture? How might we envision ourselves as political bodies in the mediascape of food?

(Guy and Gordon share a look)

Gordon: Well, you obviously already have an answer if you're asking the question. I've known

you for twenty minutes and I know that much already *(he laughs).*

Guy: Gotta side with my man Gordon on this. What do you think?

Alex: *(a long pause as I finish my drink)* Well, whiteness and masculinity aren't inherently bad things. Even though we often talk about them as such. I know I've demonized my own whiteness and my masculinity. I don't think I have a good answer, though – and is it really my space to make such a decision? But… suppose we act more often as advocates of different ways of engaging with food.

Gordon: Would that change anything, Alex? I don't see how it could do much.

Alex: It could – maybe. We could try sharing alternative forms of how people engage with their food, without necessarily mediating it with our presence – figuring out how to allow it to speak for itself. Or finding space and helping minority chefs share their approaches for larger and more diverse audiences. Like you've said, it's all about passion and wanting it, so what if we celebrate that without making it about our brands, our identities, or our interests.

(a beat)

Like, for instance, in reference to my Chinatown photograph, what if I framed it differently, as to distance myself more – in an effort to appreciate the food and space for what it is, rather than what it offers me and my motives? On Instagram, I'm hard-pressed to find many alternatives to what this might look like[75], but pages like We Want Plates and Grub Rockstar might offer some good starts.

(Alex does a quick search on his phone, then shows the images to Guy and Gordon. They both look them over.)
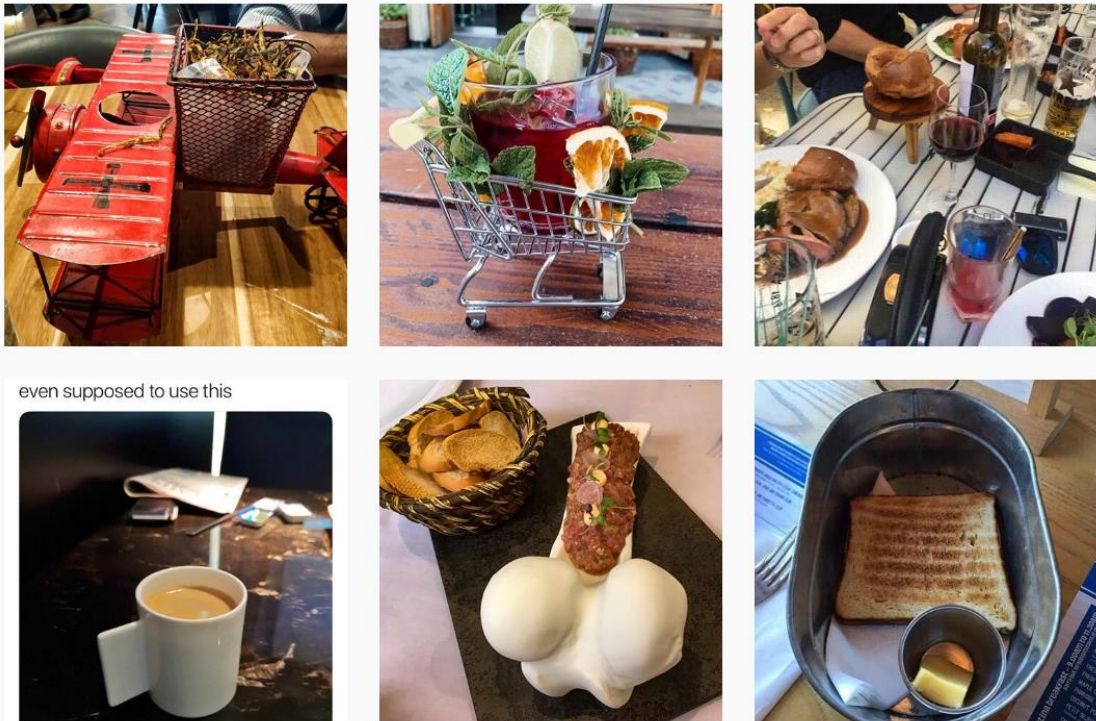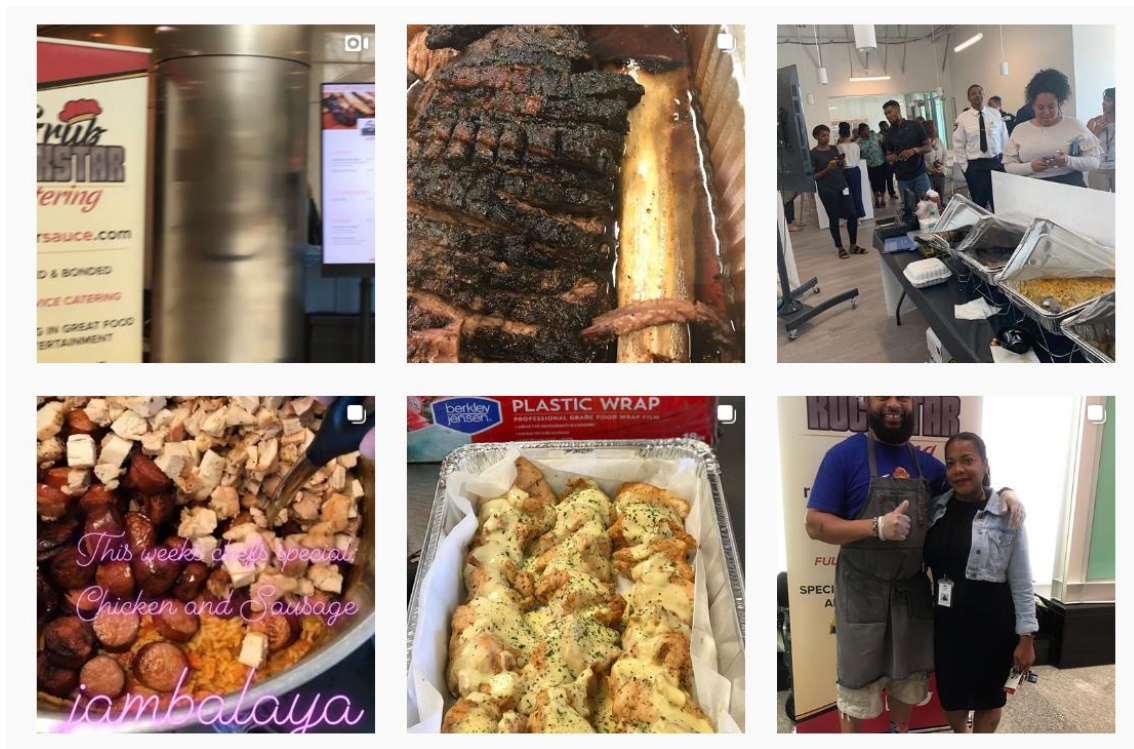
Figure 3.5: A grid from @wewantplatesofficial

Figure 3.6: A grid from @grubrockstar

Guy: Rollin it back to what you first said, Big Al, you've got a way to start for yourself–examining your motives and potential ways to change how you present food digitally.

Alex: Right, and that's what we'd need first – a start. We don't need people being perfect all the time. Just people willing to make the effort to change or modify the way they interact with spaces of food tourism and how they compile those as a part of their identities. Maybe we start new shows that foreground "unconventional" plating, maybe we try to give minority voices in television more spaces to explore, where they aren't governed by ratings – where they aren't governed by our coded talk for 'not-white-enough'? We are the problem, gents. We have created and benefitted from it, willingly or unwillingly, and have become tools for forces greater than us. But we, as agents and mediators, also have the power to work against the *greater* powers that be. By making our bodies visible, we can engage in these racialized issues by drawing attention to our biases and making room for other bodies and ways of seeing food to become visible.

Gordon: Exactly. But isn't doing some of what you proposed counterproductive? Isn't that just fetishizing other bodies like you described with your photographs?

Alex: You're right.... this is all incredibly difficult. *(a beat.)* I'm not saying that to cop-out this time, it's just that – y'know – we've occupied the positions of power that model the behaviors for interacting with these foods, bodies and cultures. I know it sounds counter-intuitive, but maybe we need to take problematic steps to open the door for a better future. There's also a part of me screaming that we shouldn't be at the front of this discussion – that we've dominated the conversation for too long, and simply need to yield the floor. Regardless, we need a place to start – and any of these options are places to begin. And that's all we need right now, yeah? Once somebody gets the ball rolling, other voices will join the conversation, and from there we can let them steer our approaches for creating better methods. All we need is that place to begin.

Guy: Looking at your 'Gram, Big Al, it makes me think about how I use mine. Maybe I can promote some other Instagram accounts for lesser known chefs who do some funky stuff with food. That would be money.

Gordon: It's getting late. I need to be on set in four hours.

Guy: And I got a new province of Flavortown to roll out to in the morning.

Alex: And I've already filled 118 pages.

Guy: Yeah. I'll think about what we've talked about, man.

(Guy and Gordon stand up and begin to gather their things. The three of them exchange good-byes. Gordon is cordial while Guy offers a "Peace. Love. And Taco Grease." And fist-bump.)

(Alex exits the restaurant into the night air, his stained apron tossed over his shoulder. He exhales deeply. As he moves to his car, theres a note tucked under the windshield. As Alex opens the letter, Anthony Bourdain enters upstage left.)

Alex: *(reading the note)* Dear Alex, "As you move through this life and this world, you change things slightly; you leave marks behind, however small. And in return, life--and travel--leaves marks on you. Most of the time, those marks--on your body or on your heart--are beautiful. Often, though, they hurt."[76] - A.

(A beat.)

(I push back from my laptop and reach for my coffee, which I notice is nearly empty.)

Scene Four: The Wobbly Café Table in My Parent's Kitchen

(Day 16.[77] The afternoon sun casts itself gently through the windows above the double-sink, reflecting off the stainless steel into my face. I try to adjust myself so I can finish writing, but to

no avail. I take the final gulp of my coffee, and slip off the black, high-top chair. I lazily move

towards the coffee maker and pour myself another cup of the semi-burnt coffee that I've let sit

since the morning. I mutter a couple of ideas to myself. I rush back to my laptop and start writing

again.)

> **Alex:** *(Alex folds the letter closed, tucking it into his pocket)* My name is Alex
> Breth.
> I'm 24.
> I've been taught how to see food from the perspective of white male chefs my
> entire life, but that won't stop me from trying to open new ways of engaging with
> food. It won't stop me from trying to open spaces for others to make their marks.

Alexander: *(eyeing it over, envisioning how this is received)* Ugh, terrible. Feels like an after

school special.

(I quickly deleted what I wrote. I start again.)

> **Alex:** *(Alex folds the letter closed, tucking it into his pocket)* I'll do you proud, old
> friend. The marks I'll leave, they'll create a more beautiful world. One act at a…

Alexander: *(still dissatisfied)* Hmph.

(In thought, I look around the kitchen – my kitchen. I see the stove where I cooked my first meals.

I see the counter where my dad and I had tried so many foods, snacked on lunch meats and

cheeses, and washed the dishes. I feel the energy of this room collapsing onto me. I am in the

room of the Inferno. I see the mascots move across the kitchen; I feel the years washing over me.

I blink and they are gone. On the television, I see Gordon Ramsay and another episode of

Kitchen Nightmares. His voice echoes throughout the room, and I smirk. I take a labored sigh

and write once more.)

(Alex looks toward the audience and says nothing. Anthony steps forward, speaking directly to the audience.)

Anthony: Much like cooking, changing can be profoundly challenging. Even at its sheer mention, there is an immediate and tangible melancholia that pulls at our hearts, beckoning us to stay longer, to laugh one more time, to taste one last bite. Nevertheless, the dishes must be washed, the tablecloth cleaned, the candles swapped out, and the stage reset for our next performance. Our next gathering around this table.

(A beat. Anthony crosses to Alex, placing a hand on his shoulder.)

Anthony: Find new ways of seeing, or new opportunities to grow. That is all we can do on the day-to-day, after all – change things slightly.

(I look up again at the room around me, letting these words sink in. I look to the oven. I look to the counter, then to the sink, and finally to the old coffee maker. I get up and leave the room as Alexander, slightly changed.)

Just Desserts: Conclusions and Onward

"There was no way I wanted to be a pathetic dreamer like him for the rest of my

life. I wanted to be the best at whatever I did. The only question was: what would

that be?"

Gordon Ramsay, *Humble Pie*

Food-selfies are every bit as flavorful, rich, and robust as our other representations of

ourselves in digital spaces. They draw on and allude to past experiences, knowledges, and states

of being. They replicate what we find desirable, what we want to be, and how we want to be seen

in ways more complex than one might initially consider –they are not simply images, but

performances of our identities, and understanding them as such affords us more nuanced and

comprehensive ways of understanding how we, as users, construct ourselves within digital

spaces like Instagram.

In chapter one I discussed myriad food media that informs understandings of how

viewers come to interact, utilize, consume, and reproduce images/videos of food. Specifically, I

traced a lineage through popular competitive and touristic food media like *Kitchen Nightmares*

and *Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives;* and films like *Ratatouille, Eat Pray Love,* and *American Pie.* I

also acknowledged that this lineage of aesthetics is predicated on surrogating other food media

lineages (e.g. the works of Julia Child, Rachael Ray, and Anthony Bourdain). Building upon

Bhavna Middha's work on the food-selfie, I broadened the understanding of the food-selfie,

allowing more information to be gathered from the food-selfie beyond how Middha utilizes the

term. Finally, I posited four main claims regarding the creation, consumption, and meaning-

making potential of food-selfies: 1) Food tourism media influences how users share food as part

of their digital identity on Instagram; 2) The aesthetics of food tourism media are passed through

either direct engagement with popular media or microcelebrities/influencers; 3) The selfie, as a genre, coupled with the understanding of the food-selfie, affords us new ways of approaching the performances of digital identity present in social media spaces, particularly through how we view and understand images of food present on Instagram profiles; and 4) these performances are both *of the self* (for the user's imagined audience) and *for the self* (for the user's own understanding of who they are/how they want to be viewed).

In chapter two, utilizing these claims alongside critical race/gender scholarship, I turned to analyzing the usage of food-selfies across several types of Instagram profiles. These were the profiles of celebrity chefs, influencers/microcelebrities, and everyday users of Instagram. After analyzing the usage and lack of aesthetic variation, I asserted that there is a specific way of looking at and interacting with food passed down from white, masculine food media professionals and celebrity chefs – a way of looking I term the Chef's Gaze. The Chef's gaze has led to potentially problematic ways that other non-celebrities interact with images of food or use them to construct a digital identity. The Chef's Gaze, defined as the way that certain celebrity chefs model behavior with, represent and circulate portrayals of, and mediate interactions with food and its associated cultures, is informed by underlying conventions of hegemonic masculinity and can easily be co-opted in ways that marginalize and makes invisible other bodies, cultures, and traditions that do not align with its aesthetic conventions. Many of the Instagram users I looked at never showed their bodies, for example. However, based on the other conventions present on their profiles, it was easy to acknowledge these users as (intentionally or not) complicit in reproducing the Chef's Gaze.

In reflecting on the ethics of my methodologies through chapters two and three, utilizing a cold read based on a grid of six images is of course a biased, partial, and reductive approach.

This method possibly produces inaccurate "results" in regard to knowing any user's "authentic" identity (if there is such a thing). Yet, interpreting these images as performances of the self, and noting similarities and differences among users, is valuable knowledge that can reveal aesthetic trends and thus possibly the ideas and ideologies (and identities) users wants to be associated with. The ethics of the "cold read" method in chapter two is also, in part, the motivation behind the inclusion of my own profile in the data set. It is only fair to attempt to "tour" and read my own profile in the way that I read others. I then can also set up a juxtaposition between the meaning of a cold read of myself, and the more nuanced understanding of my own food media sharing I offer in chapter three. This juxtaposition allows me to demonstrate the food-selfie's ability to perform both of (in chapter two) and for (in chapter three) the self, for the same person. As a future direction for this research, the richer knowledges of how the image of another user is functioning as a performance for the self (i.e. what I could not glean from a cold read of others' sites) could be accessed via interviewing or other ethnographic methodologies. As it stands though, those methods lie beyond the scope of this project.

In chapter three, I thus utilized performative writing as a means to explore my own relationship with the media, celebrities, and traditions that I analyzed throughout chapters one and two. Here, I admit to my own complicity, while confronting my chef idols and mentors in an imagined setting, exploring the personal trauma that has led me to view food as a vital part of my identity, and the process of maturing into 'manhood.' Through utilizing performance techniques as part of my methodology, I am able to both practice and show my own reflexivity, which may, hopefully, inspire someone else to think of their own usage of food photography and how it might be understood as an integral piece of their identity. Here, I also posit some potential starting points for how users may begin to undo the problematic aspects of the Chef's Gaze if

they find it in their everyday performances on Instagram (as I did), including: 1) yielding space to minority chefs 2) making small changes to our sharing habits and 3) always remaining open to different ways of seeing/interacting with food. This method is crucial to the fourth major claim I posit about the food-selfie, as it enables me – even if only for one person (myself) – to describe how these images are functioning as a performance of the self.

These ways onward are limited as I propose them. However, in thinking of practicing what I preach, as a white and male culinary enthusiast, I should not be making these decisions alone (or possibly at all). There is also the matter of this needing to be a *collective* change – a theory in the flesh[78], as race scholars Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua name it – as it would be naïve to think that the system itself could be completely overhauled by theoretical change alone. Hence, what we're are left with is this – define your own Chef's Gaze. Find what food you like – share that. Find yourself on a plate – share it. Find others who do different things with food – encourage them. Make space for the new, exciting, and different, and removing your need to adhere to what popular culture deems 'proper' food aesthetics. There is no need for such homogeny.

In other words, understanding food-selfies on Instagram as being informed by the Chef's Gaze as I explain it in this document allows us a chance to intervene at the level of the producer and consumer of food media. Through recognizing this aesthetic tradition, scholars, users, and analysts of social media sites like Instagram can be more thorough in their analysis of how and why these images are created and shared, and how users utilize them (whether they are aware of this or not) as a part of their digital performances of identity. This work also, through performative writing, shows how food-selfie sharers might begin to discuss our own complicity

through examining our everyday sharing habits. Through being reflexive and cognizant of our performances through these food-selfies, we can work to open space for other ways of seeing.

As for future scholarship – the world is a buffet and all the users merely cooks. I've explored only one hashtag as a means for looking at how users construct their digital identities through food-selfies. Using the understandings posited in this study, scholars could explore the numerous other hashtags present on Instagram related to cooking, cookery, and food. The Chef's Gaze may apply to more than just food-selfies on Instagram; it can be used as a theoretical lens to examine other social media sites, as well as being applied to the parent media of food tourism/competitive cookery shows that inform the aesthetics of everyday food-selfie use.

The current moment (April 2020), meanwhile, is likely changing the mediascape one would find using the same search I did (February/March 2020). Hashtags and posting habits related to food and identity are now being further shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic – as new hashtags such as #myquarantinekitchen have come to fruition throughout the past weeks. The hashtags I have mentioned throughout this document will likely also begin to include more "homemade" style photography, as 75% of the US population has been asked/ordered to literally "stay at home" and use social distancing when it is necessary to go out.[79] In the wake of this tragic outbreak, a space might be made to analyze how food media and food-selfies are deployed in times of national and international crisis. For instance, what does the food we share digitally say about the status, well-being, and life of the user in a time of crisis? How do we come to understand culture and cookery in crisis, if seen through the Chef's Gaze? Can food media and food-selfies offer a sense of communitas without adhering to the Chef's Gaze (or perhaps *any common* aesthetic)? Do these disruptive moments afford us an opportunity to more easily and naturally shed "traditional" aesthetics, allowing for more diversity in how we see food?

My goal in this project was not only to elucidate the potentially problematic trend I discovered within food media, but also to create a document that is useful to all readers – not just scholars. To be critical of our sharing habits, or at least cognizant of the ways we share food digitally: that is what I hope comes from this project. Regardless of training, theoretical knowledge, or myriad other factors – this is how any individual can begin to work against the Chef's Gaze.

After all, there will always be another table to set; there will always be another stage for our performance with food.

So, I ask this:

What will you serve?

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[1] Instagram, for those who may not know, is an image and video sharing site where users can post/like/share images, follow each other, and send private messages. It is owned by Facebook.

[2] At peak, I was actively using/managing six accounts. I can quit whenever I want.

[3] Sociologist Lee Humphries notes that digital identity construction on sites like Instagram is a summation of qualitative media accounting/media traces, like scrapbooks, that come to be intelligible through all of the contributions provided. Humphreys, Lee. *The qualified self: Social media and the accounting of everyday life*. MIT press, 2018.

[4] Bhavna Middha (2018) Everyday digital engagements: using food-selfies on Facebook to explore eating practices.

[5] Carole R. *Boys and girls: The development of gender roles*.

[6] YouTube content creators Rhett and Link (Good Mythical Morning) have many popular segments ranging from food taste-testing, guessing the origin of certain foods, to recreating fast food with expensive ingredients. https://www.youtube.com/user/rhettandlink2

[7] Tsai, Chen-Tsang Simon, and Yao-Chin Wang. "Experiential value in branding food tourism."

[8] C.M. Hall, L. Sharples. *The consumption of experiences or the experiences of consumption? An introduction to the tourism of taste*.

[9] Tommy D. Andersson & Lena Mossberg (2017) Travel for the sake of food

[10] Richards, Greg. "Evolving gastronomic experiences: From food to foodies to foodscapes."

[11] *Liminality and Communitas*, Victor Turner pp. 98

[12] Turner, Victor Witter. From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play.

[13] Taylor, Diana. Acts of Transfer. Ch. 2

[14] Taylor, Diana. *Performance.* pp. 25.

[15] As noted on her Wikipedia page.

[16] The Barefoot Contessa

[17] Carole R. *Boys and girls: The development of gender roles*.

[18] To name a few, *MasterChef, Iron Chef, The Great British Baking Show, Kitchen Nightmares, Nailed It*. (Any competitive show involving judge tastings, really.)

[19] Negra, Diane, and Yvonne Tasker. "Culinary Entertainment, Creative Labor, and the Reterritorialization of White Masculinity."

[20] Kelly, Casey Ryan. Cooking Without Women: The Rhetoric of the New Culinary Male

[21] Benjamin, Walter. "The storyteller." (2002): 94

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[22] Not my term, though used in a broad variety of contexts by different scholars. I draw on Barthes' use of *Italianicity* from "Rhetoric of the Image" as my understanding of the term as a descriptor for 'quintessential American-ness" or "having the quality of being ideally American". Some good examples for objects having Americanicity, for point of reference, are apple pies, baseball, and an author that has crippling student-loan debt.

[23] Frosh, Paul. "Selfies| The gestural image: The selfie, photography theory, and kinesthetic sociability."

[24] HopKins, Mary Francis. "Tell it Slant": "By now everyone has studied narrative discourse, which is of course always slant, but in varying degrees. Narrative events are always modulated by the narrator, whose vision, personality, and motives "slant" the report."

[25] Qiu, Lin, et al. "What does your selfie say about you?."

[26] Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

[27] Döring, Nicola, Anne Reif, and Sandra Poeschl. "How gender-stereotypical are selfies? A content analysis and comparison with magazine adverts."

[28] Chae, Jiyoung. "Virtual makeover: Selfie-taking and social media use increase selfie-editing frequency through social comparison."

[29] see Richards, Andersson and Mossberg

[30] Marwick, Alice E. "Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy."

[31] Hennessy, Brittany. *Influencer: Building your personal brand in the age of social media*. (38-39)

[32] Gratch, Lyndsay. *The Irish Hills of Michigan: A Performative Curation*

[33] As of February 26th, 2020. While acknowledging that Google algorithms are tailored based on your search history and may be potentially skewed, this data is still useful. As a check to note if the same search by a person who does not interact much with food media, Lyndsay Gratch conducted the same search on April 24th, 2020, and received the following results: "Top 14: 13 – white; 11 men."

[34] Laura Mulvey's key term, the Male Gaze is characterized by a way of seeing the objectifies and subordinates female subjects/feminine-coded objects, beings, or spaces.
Mulvey, Laura. "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema."

[35] Rose, Marta. Civil rights - race obviousness and the invisibility of whiteness: the court's construction of race
Sammel, Ali. Turning the focus from 'Other' to science education: exploring the invisibility of Whiteness
Maurer, Katherine. The Invisibility of Whiteness in Clinical Practice: Case Commentary on "Becoming Visible: The Case of Colette"
Young, Susan. Educating Australian social workers in the post-Apology era: The potential offered by a 'Whiteness' lens

[36] Originally conceived by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Crenshaw relates intersectionality to a traffic intersection, with traffic flowing in all four directions, so when an accident occurs it could have been a result of cars coming from any one direction, or all of them. She later wrote that reconstructing an accident is difficult and it is unclear who caused the skid marks or which driver was at fault. Which leads to no one held responsible and all parties go back to living their lives."

[37] Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. Intersectionality.

[38] Izea is an influencer managing company. https://izea.com/2019/09/11/foodie-influencers-2019/

[39] Trends observed as of 3/16/20. As of 3/21/20 (Mid-COVID-19 Quarantine), the total hashtag number has risen to 1,457,881 uses.

[40] This number comes from Alice Marwick's work on microcelebrities.

[41] Gratch, Lyndsay Michalik. *Adaptation Online: Creating Memes, Sweding Movies, and Other Digital Performances.*

[42] For those unfamiliar, the most prestigious award given by Michelin in their *Red Guide*, the oldest European restaurant and hotel reference guide. A max of three can be awarded per restaurant. Each star is given by a ranking of excellence.

[43] As a convention of the show, Gordon Ramsay goes undercover to each restaurant to get an accurate feel for how the normal dining experience is executed. Each time the character is different, and this night they aired two episodes.

[44] (5:42 – 9:00)

[45] Roach, Joseph R. Cities of the dead: Circum-Atlantic performance.

[46] Walk-Morris, Tatiana. "Why Is the TSA Still Searching Black Women's Hair?"

[47] My sister constantly refers to me as "Guy" or "Harry Fieri"; growing up, she thought I looked like Harry Potter and has since added Fieri because of a Halloween costume I wore a few years back. See chapter 3 for this image.

[48] We are always biased towards our subjects, for better or worse. Acknowledging this not only allows me to better research the subject matter here, but through performing this type of reflexivity – critical self-portraiture as Chuck Morris would say – it allows me to approach the subject in a new way.

[49] Scholes, Lucy. A slave to the stove? The TV celebrity chef abandons the kitchen: lifestyle TV, domesticity and gender.

[50] In creating this project, I looked at the profiles of Alton Brown, Gordon Ramsay, Guy Fieri, Rachel Ray (for cross gender comparison), Emeril Legasse, and Bobby Flay. All of these accounts use photographs, to a greater or lesser extent, as depicted in the examples I provide.

[51] Gerard, Tieghan. "About Me." Half Baked Harvest, 27 June 2019, www.halfbakedharvest.com/about-me/.

[52] https://later.com/blog/how-instagram-algorithm-works/

[53] Also supported by Sohn, Mark. Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, and Recipes.

[54] Barthes, Roland. "Ornamental cookery."

[55] John Berger addresses photography in a similar way in *Ways of Seeing* and *Appearances*

[56] Lyndsay Gratch actually informed me of this. I had no idea that dumplings were a catch-all term for the style of preparation. #naileditfoodscholaredition

[57] A card-based method for promoting creativity designed by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt. May be connected to the underpinnings of self-care embedded in this post.

[58] Boyd, Danah. It's complicated: the social lives of networked teens.

[59] Duffy, Brooke Erin. (Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work

[60] https://www.neimanmarcus.com/p/gucci-gg-marmont-2-0-medium-quilted-shoulder-bag-black-prod190690203?utm_source=google_shopping&adpos=&scid=scplpsku164870909&sc_intid=sku164870909&ecid=NMCS__GooglePLA&gclid=CjwKCAjwgbLzBRBsEiwAXVIygLR0GcGs3kK0mszCgIfpT7gCOdaDytEtKhj84w0NnlrvDlfnNZsd-hoC5iwQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds or https://www.bloomingdales.com/shop/product/gucci-gg-marmont-matelasse-mini-bag?ID=3519141&pla_country=US&CAWELAID=120156070009593636&CAGPSPN=pla&CAAGID=71258568635&CATCI=pla-557751283854&cm_mmc=Google-PLA-ADC-_-All_Traffic_NB_tROAS-_-jewelry-_-888108856008USA&gclid=CjwKCAjwgbLzBRBsEiwAXVIygPFoG83XD-HldxRV-30o1-FdsgDBvbUluiy9m59XiZ0VpKm21IyXShoCZi0QAvD_BwE

[61] https://www.pgaresort.com/

[62] See description in chapter two. Posh, tidy, and professional.

[63] See analyses of Guy Fieri and Gordon Ramsay's IG profiles in chapter 2.

[64] Cook, Julia, and Reza Hasmath. "The discursive construction and performance of gendered identity on social media."

[65] See chapter 2, re: hegemonic masculinity

[66] Negra, Diane, and Yvonne Tasker. "Culinary Entertainment, Creative Labor, and the Reterritorialization of White Masculinity.".

[67] Re: My time working as a barista

[68] April 2nd, 2020.

[69] From his Wikipedia, "Anthony Michael Bourdain was an American celebrity chef, author, and travel documentarian who starred in programs focusing on the exploration of international culture, cuisine, and the human condition." He died in 2018.

[70] Paraphrased lines from *Dante's Inferno.*

[71] Professional term for "Junior Chef".

[72] This event is a reference to Roach's concept of surrogation, which I discuss in chapter two

[73] A reference to a line from Chef Gusteau in Pixar's *Ratatouille.* After realizing that the chef may have been withholding valuable information, Remy, the protagonist interrogates the spirit of the chef, to which he responds "How was I supposed to know? I am just a figment of your imagination!"

[74] https://www.insider.com/anthony-bourdain-quotes-2018-6

[75] https://www.instagram.com/wewantplatesofficial/ does some interesting plating. https://www.instagram.com/grubrockstar/ works to center black bodies alongside these the traditional Chef's Gaze

[76] https://www.inc.com/kevin-daum/30-quotes-from-anthony-bourdain-on-making-your-life-a-fulfilling-adventure.html

[77] How many days I've been self-quarantined in light of COVID-19.

[78] Moraga, Cherríe, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color.

[79] Secon, Holly and Aylin Woodward. "A map of the US cities and states under lockdown — and those that are reopening." *Business Insider.* 28 April 2020. https://www.businessinsider.com/us-map-stay-at-home-orders-lockdowns-2020-3

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Vita

Alexander Breth is originally from Hatfield, Pennsylvania and received his Bachelor of Arts in English: Writings from West Chester University of Pennsylvania in 2018. Before pursuing his Master of Arts in Communication and Rhetorical Studies, Alex worked as the photography and design editor for *The Quad: Student News Service of West Chester University* and as the operations manager at Thirty West Publishing House. He is an avid writer, photographer, and home cook. Currently, he is working as a consultant with the Erie Canal Museum of Syracuse, New York on multiple food tours, and he is assisting in the restoration of a cookbook used by barge-chef Oliver Petrie (1937-1939) for recirculation by the Museum. Broadly, Alex's research interests lie in food tourism, performance, visual rhetoric, and digital culture.

After earning his M.A. from Syracuse in Spring 2020, Alex plans to return to Pennsylvania for a time before continuing to a doctoral program.