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**Abstract for an oral presentation**

**Celebrity Chefs, Taste, Lifestyle, Cookbooks and TV: themes emerging from a review of the literature**

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Abstract

Food is an essential part of our lives and is clearly more than simply a physiological requirement As such, the study of food is a useful means to help us understand important social and cultural factors that influence the way we live our lives. Taste is intrinsically linked to food, both from a gustatory aspect as well as from an aesthetic perspective. Aesthetically, taste can serve as a social discriminator because it implies notions of choice. Within this arena, the celebrity chef has become an important part of contemporary British society as an arbitrator in transmitting concepts of taste and distinction through television and other media. The celebrity chef is now a modern cultural figure that embodies notions of contemporary shifts in attitudes towards cooking, ethics, consumption, culinary taste, gender and cultural capital. This work in progress will seek to determine currently under-examined links between the construction of taste and celebrity chefs.

An extensive literature review has considered the sociological aspects of the construction of taste. The structuralist approach suggests that taste is socially and culturally constructed. A materialist approach argues that taste is connected to external influences such as economic and political changes, whilst post-modernist thinking posits that individual identity is central to the construction of taste. The proposed methodology is qualitative content analysis through the scrutiny of chosen television shows and associated cookbooks. It is anticipated that the data will be coded and examined through discourse analysis. The conclusions may suggest that the chefs have some influence in conveying messages of public health, lifestyle and food choices through their television shows, cookbooks and internet presence and therefore may be players within a wider sociological phenomenon.

Keywords: Food, taste, celebrity chef, media