

Did You Eat?

By L. Kling (they/them)

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation of food culture is a hot topic, for a reason.

- White women stealing recipes from Mexican women so they can open a food cart in Portland¹
- White restaurateur Andrew "Bizarre Foods" Zimmern opening a chain of lackluster² Chinese restaurants while calling other Chinese restaurants in the midwest "horse shit"³
- Non-Native Hawaiian people and white people from the UK trademarking "poke"⁴ and "pho"⁵
- Countless other examples!

It is harder to write about these things without my temper boiling over than it is to find numerous examples of the privilege and audacity that some people over food culture that is not theirs. It is everywhere. Emboldened by systemic colonization which aims to destroy Indigenous people, encouraged by xenophobia and white supremacy which cuts down People of Color (POC) . . . people are out here making a profit on food they steal from cultures they participate in eradicating.

Cultural appropriation is easy to feel in your gut and recognize if you are culturally connected to food that's been stolen and monetized in ways that don't benefit you. Appropriation might feel nebulous if you're used to consuming other cultures. This conversation about appropriation always feels like it is happening from a deficit perspective, for the benefit of the colonizer. But why should we only talk about theft? Appropriation is definitely an ingredient to understanding food culture, but there's so much more.

¹ thegrio.com/2017/05/24/white-womens-burrito-shop-accused-of-stealing-recipes-from-mexicans-closes-down

² eater.com/2018/12/7/18130579/andrew-zimmern-lucky-cricket-controversy-visit

³ [youtube.com/watch?v=bBUy2Yp2_Bg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBUy2Yp2_Bg) 10:00 minutes

⁴ hawaiiinewsnow.com/story/38770937/no-aloha-chicago-eatery-goes-after-pokeshops-for-trademark-infringement

⁵ pbrief.net;2013/10/18/can-you-trademark-a-national-dish-the-vietnamese-phobattle

APPRECIATION

What if the conversation was about how we appreciate our cultural connection to food? Appreciation is joy! Appreciation centers our experiences! Appreciation holds our traditional food as sacred! Appreciation celebrates our food love languages! This is a more interesting conversation to me. Better than trying to educate people who have every opportunity to educate themselves, than describing and reliving trauma to try to convince people that appropriation really hurts, than responding to accusations that acknowledging the cultural appropriation of food means white people can't eat anything with spice or flavor or from another culture. Appreciation is a celebration of our food culture, in our own words.

The stories and images in this zine are all about complexity and personal journeys. I am a person of color, living on occupied Dakota and Anishinaabe land, a child of colonizers and immigrants. I grew up with a familial love language centered around food, nourishment, serving, and imbibing. I contain multitudes and know how we walk in this world is complex and nuanced, rather than cut and dry like an unseasoned chicken breast.

Putting this zine together made me feel trusted with ingredients to the most delicious, painful, savory, sweet, loving meal. It is such an honor to create something physical and lasting on these garlic skin pages. When most flavors and aromas only live on in ephemeral memories. Endless gratitude to everyone who contributed stories, images, history, songs, funds, and love to this community effort