

Day 2 - Understanding the present

Session 2: Fusion cuisine

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Georges M. Halpern was trained as a cook and is a MD and a PhD/DSc. He was a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University [1981-1983], and Professor of Medicine, and Nutrition, University of California, Davis [1983-1997]. A French and US citizen, he has worked/lectured in 143 countries, and consults with/for government and industries on medical and public health issues.

From 2003 until the end of 2014, he was Distinguished Professor of Medicinal Sciences at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University; he is now Honorary Professor there, and Honorary Professor in Culinary Arts at VTC, HK. His research focuses on environmental public health issues, the role of pleasure, and Food. He has authored or edited 28 books, and hundreds of articles and chapters. He is a Commander in the French National Order of the Mérite Agricole for his original contributions to enology and French cuisine. External links: www.drgeorges.net

Abstract

Cuisines of the World Unite could have been the slogan started by Richard Wing when he launched his Chinois on Main in the 1960s in Santa Monica, CA. In fact a brief review of Food History shows that a common core is what the human (Neanderthals, Denisovans, Sapiens) race has eaten and is built upon. And if we were to select one place where Fusion Cuisine is omnipresent it is...Singapore!

A few critical features of food(s) that we eat are:

- we eat (mostly) cooked food: safe, tender, easier to digest and delivering more energy, tastier, storable
- we only eat what we like
- we only eat what we can afford
- we only eat what matches our genes, and those of our digestive microbiota
- some foods are very culture specific, but Chinese cuisines adopted and incorporated numerous foods from Central and South America

With rare exceptions eating is a familial/social necessity and important ritual that cements the inter-personal links. Table manners are part of these rituals. If we want to understand other cultures we just have to share authentic meals. We are all humans. Bon Appétit!