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From Documentary Heritage to a Contemporary Restaurant Menu

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Abstract

Documentary heritage can inspire many contemporary activities. The article analyses how the documented elements of past gastronomic culture can be reconstructed and applied to the contemporary tourism and restaurant industry. The research applies a case study methodological approach to documents from Radziwill's Archives and Niasvizh (Nesvizh) Library Collection (inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register in 2009). The case study demonstrates the contemporary relevance of documentary heritage and the potential for synergies between UNESCO's documentary heritage and UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage (gastronomic heritage).

Keywords

Intangible cultural heritage, Radziwill's archive, Gastronomy culture, Restaurant menu, Network society, Heritage communication

Introduction

The Radziwills¹ are a famous Lithuanian aristocratic family who were vital to the culture, economy, religion, and politics of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (currently Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, part of Latvia, and part of Russia) and surrounding countries (e.g. Germany) in the 15th–19th centuries (Górzyński et al., 1996). Due to historical circumstances (the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine and the Soviet repression of nobility), the descendants of the Radziwills emigrated to Poland, the United Kingdom, and the USA, where they now live. The manors of the Radziwill family were distributed in different regions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For this reason, the Radziwill family's documentary heritage has been deposited in the national archives of various countries.

The most significant Radziwill archival collections are preserved in (i) the Central Archives of Historical Records (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych; AGAD) in Warsaw as the Archiwum Radziwiłłów (AR) collection (Archiwum Radziwiłłów, n.d.); (ii) the Lithuanian State Historical Archives (Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas; LVIA) in Vilnius as collection No. 1280 (*Radziwills' Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection*, n.d., 2008); (iii) and the National Historical Archives of Belarus (Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі; NHAB) in Minsk as collection No. 694 (Радзівиллы, князья; Архив Князей Радзівиллов, n.d.). The documentary heritage

¹According to the different contemporary linguistic and historiographic traditions the family name is written as: Radvila (in Lithuanian), Radziwiłł (in Polish), Радзівіл (in Belarusian), and Радзівілл (in Ukrainian). The English version of the family name – Radziwill – is applied in this article.

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of the Radziwill family is also preserved in other collections of archives mentioned before and collections of other memory institutions, such as the Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv) in Koblenz as the collection of Nachlass Radziwill, the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine (Центральний державний історичний архів України) in Kyiv as collection No. 257 (Радзивілли), and the Library of Vilnius University collection No. 60 (Radvilų archyvas). Several documents from the Radziwill archives have been digitised and can be accessed online through heritage information systems, such as the Electronic Archive Information System in Lithuania (<https://eais.archyvai.lt/>) and Szukaj w archiwach in Poland (<https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/>).

Recognising the documentary importance and dispersal of the Radziwill archives, a joint application by Belarus, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine was made in 2008 to inscribe this set of documentary heritage on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The “Radzwill’s Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection” was inscribed on the Register in 2009 (*Radzwill’s Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection*, n.d.).

Purpose of the Present Study

This article analyses how documented elements of past gastronomic culture can be reconstructed and applied to the contemporary tourism and restaurant industry. The case study of the “Radzwill’s Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection” demonstrates the modern relevance of documentary heritage and the potential for synergies between UNESCO’s documentary heritage and UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage (in this case, gastronomic heritage). The Radziwill archives were analysed from the viewpoint of gastronomic heritage through selected studies by Lithuanian and Polish authors (Dumanowski & Jankowski, 2011, Kuncevičius et al., 2011, Drémaitė, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

The proliferation of digital information management and communication technologies (IT) in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has created a new sociocultural phenomenon conceptualised as the network society (Van Dijk, 1999). Researchers indicate that one of the main features of the network society is the growing importance of identities (Castells, 2010), which has transformed many people’s relationships with the past. The past is no longer perceived as historical information alone; it has become an element of contemporary life and culture, and is used in various spaces, from branding and creative industries to the criminal world (Laužikas et al., 2018). Thus, the line between documentary heritage (which belongs to the past and represents past culture) and contemporary culture is being erased. The heritage (including documentary heritage) essentially has become a part of the present. It works as a tool of modern culture, the modern entertainment industry, identity construction, political communication, etc., acting not so much as an archival record but more like the carrier of ideas which are important for people in contemporary communities.

The rise of the network society is also related to the growing role of communication (Castells, 2011). Concerning our topic (the contemporisation of heritage), it means the increasing impact of heritage communication. According to the theoretical framework of communication studies, heritage communication is the relationship between the past and contemporary societies. However, it is an indirect relationship; heritage communication comprises the set of reading, translating, and encoding actions in the sense of semiotic activities. Applying Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory (Lotman, 2001, 2005) to heritage communication, we notice that the interaction of the present culture with past cultures (as two semiosphere structures) occurs through three levels of texts, with text being understood as any ordered system of signs for communication whose clear distinction from other systems can be recorded. We, as modern people, interact with past societies through the fragments of past cultures, which are identifiable as tangible and intangible heritage objects (artefacts, ecofacts², traditions, or complexes of them). The individual heritage objects (archaeological finds, artefacts, ecofacts) that comprise these complexes can be interpreted as signs, which are constructed by applying rules called codes. Here, the resulting heritage complexes can be treated as first-level texts. Thus, heritage objects and their complexes are nothing more than signs and systems of signs (texts) organised in codes, referring to the intellectual constructs of past societies, determined by the culture or subculture to which they belonged. From UNESCO's point of view, most of them can be perceived as documents "...preservable and usually moveable. The content may comprise signs or codes (such as text), images (still or moving) and sounds, which can be copied or migrated..." (UNESCO, 2021). In the context of scholarly research, documentary heritage (primary texts) becomes a source of new knowledge (usually historical knowledge) through analysis. In this way, the relationship between the researcher (scientist) and the past (as fragments of past reality) can be understood in the semiotic sense of "reading", in which the researcher becomes an interpreter, trying to capture and read the signs and systems of signs (heritage objects, primary texts) left by a past society so as to better understand it. At the same time, the researcher becomes a subject who creates new signs and systems of signs: second-level texts of a scientific nature intended to communicate scientific knowledge to a professional audience (other researchers) through research reports, conference presentations, articles, and scientific monographs.

These two levels of texts (heritage objects and scientific knowledge) enable (and catalyse in the semiosphere) the emergence of a third level of texts aimed at non-scholarly audiences (as science communication), such as museum exhibitions, textbooks, lessons, lectures, computer games, television shows, and works of fiction. The creator of the third-level text, interacting with (and being part of) contemporary society, becomes an interpreter, reading scholarly texts and using the relevant sets of heritage objects (collections) to create a third-level text. This process is a translation of knowledge from the scholarly (scientific) to the non-scholarly semiosphere. Historical scholarly knowledge (from scholars belonging to the disciplinary semiosphere of

² Ecofacts are perceived as "plant or animal remains found at an archaeological site" (<https://mainearchsociety.org/glossary/>).

historians) is transformed through knowledge translation into community knowledge (for the community of non-historians interested in history), which is communicated through third-level texts. In this process, the person who produces the third-level text becomes a translator who “reads” the signs (heritage objects) and scientific texts. At the same time, this person interacts with existing community knowledge and promotes the emergence of new community knowledge. This knowledge generates new texts for communities, which are produced using language that is understandable to community members (non-scholarly people). In this process of heritage communication, heritage (documents) and historical scientific knowledge act as signs, and the organising code is left to the interpretation of the author of the third-level text. However, the interpretation is also shaped by the existing community knowledge and narratives, which are shared, understood, and accepted by most members of a particular community.

Narratives, like framing structures, link individual interpretation to community knowledge. Heritage communication also creates links between different UNESCO heritage categories. Depending on the communication objectives and the audience, tangible (natural and cultural) and intangible heritage, as well as documentary heritage and scientific knowledge, can be used simultaneously for constructing third-level texts.

Method

The research applies a case study approach (Yin, 2014) to the documents from “Radziwills’ Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection”. The documents were analysed in the context of gastronomic culture, a form of intangible heritage that functions in a specific cultural, social, political, or economic environment. In this sense, documents (documentary heritage) are the tangible record of an element of gastronomic culture that is specific to a particular period – a snapshot of the time, reflecting the circumstances of suppliers, producers, and consumers of the past. They act as sources of knowledge due to their mediality - they are the carriers and transmitters of information and its associated meanings about the past. In our case, information about the gastronomic culture was (i) extracted from the documents of the Radziwill archives (as first-level texts), (ii) classified and interpreted by a contemporary historian and a chef de cuisine (as a secondary-level text), and (iii) represented in the format of a contemporary restaurant menu (as a third-level text), aimed at the audience of the restaurant’s visitors.

The case described in this article was realised as a collaboration between the article’s author and Tomas Rimydis, the chef and owner of the restaurant Ertlio Namas in Vilnius, which is recommended in the 2024 Michelin Guide. The dishes mentioned in the Radziwill documents are included in this restaurant’s degustation menu.

Results

Overview of the potential of the Radziwill collection for gastronomy research

According to the nomination form for the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, the “...

Radziwills' Archives and Library Collection was created from the 15th to 20th centuries by members of the Radziwill family who owned as a principal estate of the Niasvizh family. [...] The archival part of the Radziwills' collection is one of the largest collections of documents on the history of Central and Eastern Europe. The Radziwills' archives greatly exceeded other private archives in size and, unlike most of them, have survived almost entirely. A considerable portion of the archival materials are unique. The majority of the nearly 70,000 documents are originals that survive as a single copy. The documents span from the 12th century to the first half of the 20th century [...] The records are in Old Belarusian, Russian, Latin, Polish, German, English, French, Italian and other languages [...] [The documents] provide valuable information for the history of towns and villages, the development of handicrafts, manufactories and industrial enterprises, trades, household and economic relations. Besides, the archive materials contain extensive information on the development of cultural and social relations and the history of daily life, including diaries and memoirs. Due to the fact that many members of the Radziwill family were cultural benefactors and authors of literary and musical works, their archives also provide valuable information for the history of culture in Central and Eastern Europe..." (Radziwills' Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection, 2008).

A portion of the Radziwill archives documents the facts and processes necessary to understand the gastronomic culture of the past. By investigating the collection through this lens, we can describe at least six types of documents that are critical to the study of gastronomic history. The scholarly literature analyses various criteria for grouping sources. This study adopts an approach specific to information science, which allows us to consider the document as a medium for multifaceted, meaningful information that can be analysed, preserved, and reused in contemporary culture. The source information is the empirical data of the study. In this sense, the researcher is not so much interested in the sources themselves but in the information they contain and the extraction and management of that information. Applying this information-based approach, the documents of the Radziwill archives are classified according to their content and their potential to answer questions relevant to the study of gastronomic culture and history as follows:

1. Recipes and descriptions of cooking techniques. These documents describe recipes and cooking techniques, which provide potential insight into one of the key elements of gastronomic culture: taste. Recipes and cooking techniques are crucial to understanding the cultural relationships between different regions of Europe and the world, and the adoption and evolution of dishes in a region. They are also important in reconstruction studies and the communication of gastronomic culture. Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include the set of recipes (cookbook) from the end of the 17th century, "Moda bardzo dobra..." (AGAD, No. 354-35-200), and the 18th-century recipe for white honey mead (NHAB, No. 694-4-1012).

2. Meal and ingredient purchase accounts, account books, ingredient lists, asset inventories,

and lists. These documents are mainly of an accounting nature. They were used for the purchase of foodstuffs or meals, for the issue of products from the warehouses to the kitchen, and for the payment of food provided. Inventories of manors and townhouses form a separate group of documents. Another part of the document group consists of property lists in court documents (e.g. property taken for debts, property destroyed by arson, or stolen property). In the study of gastronomic history, this group of documents elucidates the kitchen's capabilities by identifying the ingredients used in different periods and assessing their price, trade volumes, trade methods, and trade routes. Inventories of manors, houses, and court-derived property lists allow a household-level examination of the infrastructure related to gastronomic culture (buildings and their internal food production facilities) and the range of utensils and tools used for cooking and eating. These documents also make it possible to define and compare the dietary peculiarities of different social strata (e.g. a nobleman's manor or a monastery) and assess what was considered luxury, middle-class, or food of poverty during an historical period. The tax and customs lists allow an analysis of the nature of the economy associated with gastronomic culture in a specific period. Restaurant accounts provide insight into the restaurant culture of a particular period. Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include the accounts of food purchases, such as those of 1758, 1769, and 1783 (NHAB, No. 964-1-58, 59, 60), the list of the confitures in the Biala cellar at the end of the 18th century (NHAB, No. 964-2-5220), the inventory of Janusz Radziwill's belongings that entered the treasury of Dubingiai Manor in 1623 (AGAD, AR No. XXVI-33), and the list of plants in the Radziwills' Italian garden in Vilnius (AGAD, AR, No.X-681).

3. Menus. This group of documents contains lists of meals for the lunch and dinner services of a catering establishment at a given time. In the study of gastronomic history, these documents enable the identification of popular dishes of a period to understand the dietary characteristics of different social strata, compare them with each other, and analyse the composition and combination of dishes. Menus are important in reconstructive research and the communication of gastronomic culture. Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include the menus of the Radziwills of 1782-1789 (LVIA, No. 1280-2-47) and 1809-1812 (NHAB, No. 694-1-58).

4. Egodocuments. Egodocuments are usually defined as first-person writing (memoirs, diaries, letters, autobiographical texts). They are interesting for gastronomic history because of their subjective allusions to food, drink, table culture, and other elements of gastronomic culture, which allow us to understand the functioning of this culture in a specific social environment and analyse the subjective attitude of people in that environment, indicated by admiration, disgust, acceptance, or rejection of gastronomic phenomena. These documents are also of interest for studying the biographies of historical figures (e.g. determining what an historical figure ate, liked, or disliked). Egodocuments may also be of interest in investigating the publication, distribution, and acquisition of gastronomic literature and the economic aspects of gastronomic culture. Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include *Memoires of Boguslaw*

Radziwill of 1661-1666 (AGAD, No. 355-1-4).

5. Medical books and notes. This group, which includes manuscripts for diagnosing and treating various diseases, is dominated by medical themes. However, humoral medicine and dietetics³ had a holistic approach, which included many food and dietetics-related issues. Since humoral medicine did not draw a clear line between food and medicine, the information on ingredients and their properties contained in medical notes is significant for the study of gastronomic history, the understanding of ancient gastronomic culture, and the interpretation of other sources in the history of gastronomy. Several of the recipes contained in medical books are similar to those in cookbooks of the same period. Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include instructions on children's education (including medical education), such as Instruction by Boguslaw Radziwill to the tutors of his daughter, Ludwika Karolina (AGAD, AR No. XI-51).

6. Documentation from food production enterprises. This group includes institutional documents that elucidate the functioning of institutions and organisations involved in food production, food marketing, catering, tableware, and cutlery production. A significant development in this field occurred in Lithuania in the 19th century with the establishment of the first food and drink manufactories. For the study of gastronomic history, these documents allow an analysis of the range (supply) of products produced by the enterprises of a particular period, the specifics of production and trade, the economic aspects of the operation of the enterprises, and product advertising. Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include documentation from one of the first sugar enterprises in the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Ivan town (AGAD, AR No. XIX-J-3, J-4, J-5) and the documents of the distillery of Naliboki Manor (AGAD, AR No. XIX-GN-1).

The typology of written sources of gastronomic history presented in this article is by no means complete. The research has uncovered various individual documents that are of interest. We have placed them in a separate group, called "Varia". Examples of documents of this type in the Radziwill archives include agreements with cuisine professionals (kuchenmaster, cook, baker, beermaker, confiture maker, etc.), such as an agreement with confectioner Fryderyk Dolinger (AGAD, AR No. XXI-59).

From the document's collection to the restaurant menu

Historical gastronomy has a huge communicative potential in contemporary society. This potential permeates several aspects of modern culture, such as the desire for healthy lifestyles, ecological movements, the construction of historical identity, the development of cultural tourism, and modern gastronomic trends such as home cooking, the slow food and natural food movements, and paleo diets. In these contexts, the natural principles of historical gastronomy are almost ideally adapted for contemporary gastronomy-related communities. People in the

³Humoral medicine and dietetics is perceived as the theory of bodily humors and their balancing through diet (<https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/contagion/feature/humoral-theory>).

past did not use semi-prepared products or chemical additives; most of the food was cooked at home on natural wood fires (in the oven, in the fireplace, over the hearth). Most of the raw products were fresh or naturally preserved (fermented, salted, smoked, dried), most of the products were local, and the products were grown using what we now recognise as organic methods. Historical agriculture and livestock farming were characterised by various plant and animal varieties and diversification (no monoculture farming). In addition, historical food was seasonal, with products adapted to the season, gender, and age.

Gastronomic tourism also plays a vital role in this respect. It is an essential and growing part of the tourism industry. For example, according to the 2022 inbound tourism survey conducted by the National Agency for Tourism, “Travel Lithuania”, 77.4 per cent of foreign tourists cited food and drink as reasons they chose to visit Lithuania. Therefore, the case study’s target audience described in the article is Lithuanian and foreign tourists interested in Lithuanian historical haute cuisine (manor). The task aims to reuse the data from the Radziwills archive to create a menu for a modern restaurant operating in the current market and presenting Lithuanian historical cuisine to the target audience.

Adapting the past’s dishes to today’s restaurant industry requires the collaboration of a gastronomy historian and a professional chef. In this case, the documents of the Radziwill archives were analysed by a professional historian, gastronomic technology was consulted, and the dishes were adapted to the tastes of modern consumers by a gastronomic professional (a chef). Their collaboration required several steps:

1. Collecting historical knowledge of past dishes from the documents discussed and classified above. The historical knowledge collected during this stage was checked against other sources from the same or a later period to eliminate mistakes in the documents and elements atypical of the gastronomic culture of the region, whether due to the imagination of the document’s authors, cultural bias, or a misunderstanding of local customs.

2. Identifying the dishes. Historical sources may mention various dishes, but identifying them is often problematic. Although the old names of dishes have been preserved in modern language, some of the names from historical gastronomy are used to refer to entirely different products (e.g. the change in the meanings of the words “bigos” or “borsch”). Terminology used in sources from the same or later periods were applied for identification, allowing us to understand what the dish was called during that specific period.

3. Selecting suitable dishes for the menu. At this stage, the chef, in collaboration with the historian, selected dishes that have the potential to be adapted to the menu of a contemporary restaurant for a specific target audience.

4. Finding or reconstructing a recipe. This is usually done using historical cookbooks known and used in the geographical area of Lithuania. However, in some cases, cookbooks could not be found or the descriptions of dishes were too abstract for modern cooking. In such cases, a reconstruction of the dish’s recipe was attempted. Collecting as many recipes of the same dish

as possible from different periods and geographical areas engendered a comparative study to reconstruct a dish mentioned in a source. Identifying the ingredients of the dish also involved using period-specific terminology to determine the name of a particular ingredient for a specific period.

5. Reconstructing the dish. At this stage, the historian, in collaboration with the chef, sought to recreate the dish as closely as possible. The reconstruction of gastronomic heritage is not a process of recreating an authentic dish as it was, but an experimental process of learning and understanding the past and adapting historical gastronomic culture to modern society. It is often challenging to recreate a completely authentic dish because some raw materials are now impossible or difficult to obtain (e.g. capon, pulard, pastured pigs, beef fat, poppy seed oil, some varieties of vegetables, fruit, spices, and some animals). It is also challenging to find the necessary tools and equipment (for example, stewing in a black oven is not the same as in an electric oven), and old techniques have often been passed on as oral traditions without detailed descriptions. Additionally, the process requires adapting ancient units of measurement, concepts of cooking temperature, utensils, equipment, and cooking time. The collection of documentary heritage information from the same period was applied in this stage.

6. Preparing the dish for production in the restaurant. The reconstruction cooking process involves reproducing a version of the dish as accurately as possible. Still, it does not necessarily correspond to modern tastes or the restaurant's food aesthetics. At this stage, the chef used his knowledge and experience of the reconstruction, in consultation with the historian, to create a version of the historic dish adapted to the current restaurant. This version of the dish was conveyed to the restaurant's kitchen staff through ongoing training.



Figure 1. Reconstructed dish – zrazai (beef rolls), chef Tomas Rimydis, “Ertlio namas”, Vilnius, Lithuania.

The example of the 6-course tasting dinner menu (chef Tomas Rimydis, “Ertlio namas”, Vilnius, Lithuania)

- Homemade bread with beetroots and butter, XVI century.
- Chef’s compliment.
- Sturgeon with eel and crayfish, XVIII century.
- Pheasant with apples, parsley, and rowanberry sauce, XIX century.
- Bread soup with beer and veal, XVII century.
- Poularde with swede, carrots, leaf cabbage, and cabbage sauce, XVIII century.
- Moose with chard, turnips, and boletus sauce, XIX century.
- Pear dessert with plums and Jerusalem artichoke ice cream, XVIII century.

7. Storytelling and training of restaurant staff. Communicating the dish to the restaurant visitors requires historical knowledge. Therefore, a written history of the dish was developed and transmitted to the restaurant staff through regular training sessions.

Conclusion

The article presents how documented elements of past gastronomic culture can be reconstructed and applied to the contemporary tourism and restaurant industry. The “Radziwills’ Archives and Niasvizh (Nieśwież) Library Collection” is a rich collection of knowledge about the gastronomic culture of the past. The analysis of the Radziwill archives in Vilnius, Warsaw, and Minsk enables us to classify the documentary heritage according to the criteria of gastronomic culture. Based on these criteria, we can describe at least six types of documents essential for gastronomic culture research and cite various individual documents of interest for gastronomic history. The step-by-step collaboration between the historian and the chef de cuisine produced a history-knowledge-based menu for a contemporary restaurant. The collaboration also demonstrates the contemporary relevance of documentary heritage and the potential for synergies between UNESCO’s documentary heritage and UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage, expressed as gastronomic heritage.

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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