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Making and selling Greek food in London: migrant hospitality professionals talk about food authenticity over dinner

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ABSTRACT

The 2007/2008 financial crisis more than doubled the number of Greek nationals in London (Pratsinakis et al. 2020, ONS 2022). This transformation is visible in London's foodscapes, as the number of Greek restaurants in the city boomed over the last decade, which was also marked by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper, based on a Research England-funded project, shows how professionals in London's Greek food businesses oscillated between competitive and solidarity positionings in conversations over dinner. The data were collected in focus group interactions and using multi-sited, participatory, multisensory ethnographic tools (Pink 2015). Five Greek hospitality workers and four researchers participated in discussions that took place over dinner in three Greek restaurants in London; these were followed by two online conversations. The data were analysed using concepts from Membership and Conversation Analysis (Smith, Fitzgerald & Housley 2021, Mondada 2018) to examine the negotiation of categorisations situated in the glocal economic conditions. Participants claimed, ascribed and negotiated a range of professional roles (from novice to expert) and other regional and social class identities and contrasting positionings vis-à-vis what is considered "Greek" food, including juxtapositions between homecooked and professionally prepared food and contrasting constructions of authenticity, tradition and modernity in Greek food and hospitality. At the same time, participants also constructed some solidarity positionings as joint members of the Greek food hospitality industry in the UK, looking to forge shared networks that would help them face the shared challenges in staffing and costs created by the wider economic and political forces of Brexit and the post-Covid recession. The participants' limits as to how far they were prepared to go in terms of making intra-sector alliances at a time of crisis provides a

glimpse into the wider neoliberal context of the UK (food) market of free competition, gig economy and gentrification.

Keywords

Food discourse, Greek, migration, heritage, identity

A new kind of pitta bread in town

Souvlaki (σουβλάκι, Greek for ‘skewer’, itself a diminutive of σούβλα ‘spit’) refers to charcoal-grilled chunks of meat, usually pork or chicken, served on a bamboo stick with a sprinkling of salt and oregano. It is the most commonly consumed and widely known Greek street food. It is often served in the form of a pitta bread sandwich, where the meat is enveloped in a purpose-made type of flatbread alongside a combination of vegetables and relishes (Matalas & Yannakoulia 2000). Several differences become apparent if one compares pitta bread sandwiches in Greece and Cyprus. Perhaps the most significant difference has to do with the pitta. Pittas in Greece are round and are used to wrap the meat and vegetables. In Cyprus, pittas are oval-shaped and function as pockets. They are cut open and filled with the meat and its accompaniments. The garnishes differ as well. In Greece, one typically finds tomato, onion and deep-fried potato chips dressed with tzatziki, a thick sauce made of yoghurt, cucumber and garlic. In Cyprus, the oval-shaped pitta is filled with tomato, cucumber, onion and parsley, over which people tend to squeeze fresh lemon juice and finish with tahini. The two sandwiches look and are eaten in rather different ways. The Greek sandwich is eaten not unlike a burrito: one has to hold it firmly with one hand, tear away the wrapping and bite. The Cypriot sandwich is often served on a plate, and people eat it using a fork, as the fillings often overflow from the pitta bread.

Until about the end of the 2000s, one could only find Cypriot-style souvlaki sandwiches in the UK and only if one lived in a part of the country with a Cypriot restaurant. This was due to the 20th century history of migration from Cyprus to the UK and the consequent presence of sizeable Cypriot communities in England’s major cities (Panayi 2007, 2008). By the end of the 2010s, even small rural towns such as Cheltenham, Leamington and Banbury had restaurants that served Greek-style sandwiches. In London, new Greek restaurants popped up at such a fast rate that Londoners were not only getting to know and taste Greek-style souvlaki but were also becoming spoilt for choice, whether they were looking to eat out or order takeaway using one of the increasingly popular mobile phone food applications. The mushrooming of these restaurants was a visible embodiment of the sudden increase in the number of people who had migrated from Greece to the UK due to the Greek government-debt crisis. Between 2011 and 2021, the number of Greek-born UK residents more than doubled, with many new migrants seeking employment in the Greek food industry.

Against this backdrop, we investigated how “new” migrants from Greece use language over, about and around emblematic Greek food like souvlaki to construct

their identities and position themselves in London's diverse food scene as food professionals. Attending particularly to the embodied and sensory nature of food and language (Riley & Paugh 2019), we explored how the foodways – the material and symbolic practices of producing, selling and consuming food – that Greek migrants engaged in were linked to notions of individual and community identity and belonging. To achieve that, we hosted three group dinners for five people who had migrated from Greece to London since 2010 and who were working in the city's hospitality industry at the time of the research. A key focus was how participants used language to construct and constitute the food they made as “authentically” Greek, both generally and specifically, to improve their professional and socioeconomic conditions and the success of their businesses in the aftermath of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. We were interested in the forms that these constructions of authenticity took and the purposes that different forms served for participants.

In this article, we zoom in on one key participant, Filareti, who owns a Greek restaurant in north London. We analyse her discursive constructions of authenticity as they emerged during the three dinner conversations that she participated in, putting forward the term “liquid authenticity” as the most pertinent way to encapsulate the seeming contradictions in Filareti's discourses, which view authenticity as something that is both malleable and fixed at the same time. The article is structured as follows. We first delineate the notion of authenticity from a theoretical point of view. We then provide a brief overview of “new” migration from Greece to the UK, specifically focusing on its impact on London's food scene. We move on to outline the guiding principles and specifics of our methodology in terms of research participants, research sites and the data we collected. We subsequently present our analysis of three main themes in Filareti's authenticity discourses, complementing them with analyses of visual material that we collected as part of our study: (a) Greeks and “others” as (non-)knowers and judges of authenticity, (b) compromising authenticity, and (c) safeguarding authenticity through language policing and institutional protection. We conclude the paper with a discussion of the theoretical contribution of our study.

Authenticity in food discourses

The UK has long led the way in internationalising food consumption patterns, with a proliferation of “new”, “exotic” and “authentic” ethnic cuisines (Warde 1997). Regional and ethnic specificity and the food cultures of the culinary Other, the humble, the unsophisticated and even the vulgar, have long been very appealing both internationally (Appadurai 1988) and, more recently, in Greece (Yiakoumaki 2006a, 2006b). Although there are specific rules that define foodstuffs in categories such as Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication and Traditionally Specific Guaranteed (Skalkos et al. 2021: 3), it is recognised that local meanings and uses of authenticity are hotly contested and should be the object of study (Theodossopoulos 2013: 344). Arguments about what constitutes authentic food are inescapable, especially in the context of ethnic hospitality ventures, one of the fastest-growing food sectors in the UK (Ojo 2018).

The valorisation of regional variation, rural, authentic and traditional food and practice are especially prominent in the restaurant sector. Osterias in Tuscany are branded as offering an authentically local cuisine experience through the use of distinctive local produce (linked to *terroir*), craft skills and embeddedness in the local context (Miele & Murdoch 2002). Similarly, Finnish consumers viewed the most authentic food as local (especially self-produced), but also as embedded in their personal and shared cultural heritage (Autio et al. 2013). For Greek consumers, authentic foodstuff is genuine, local and nostalgic, unprocessed and with traceable provenance (Skalkos et al. 2021). In the context of Panama, authenticity has multiple manifestations; it is linked by local communities to tradition, whereas tourists view authenticity as representativeness (Theodossopoulos 2013). This is in line with Oakeshott's (Oakeshott 1991a [1949a], 1991b [1949b], cited in Alexander 2012) conceptualisation of authenticity as abstract and plural, as inherited practices that tacitly condition all actions and utterances (Alexander 2012).

Authenticity is commodified to market all types of food products and services, from Mexican cookbooks and restaurants (Adapon 2008) to Greek feta cheese (Petridou 2001). MacCannel (1973) shows how tourist settings are staged to appear as the "backstage" and, therefore, as more authentic and desirable. Appadurai (1988) argues that in a highly marketised economy, the criteria of authenticity are necessarily complicated, as authenticity becomes a commodity in itself. For Ball (2003), the criteria for the authentic and the traditional (the two terms are often conflated) are aesthetic and thus hard to codify. Stiles and colleagues (2011), in their exploration of Greek restaurants around the world, found that their informants view authenticity in aesthetic terms of taste. But taste can mask the political, often exclusionary, nature of authenticity. Authenticity is seen, then, as "a claim of presence through a claim of authorship" – it is not about a set of concrete criteria or tests of authenticity but an exploration of who claims authenticity (Stiles et al. 2011: 233).

Greek migration and foodscapes in London

After the 2008 global financial crisis, large-scale South-to-North migration within Europe emerged, including from Greece to the UK (King & Pratsinakis 2020). According to the Office for National Statistics for England and Wales, the number of UK residents born in Greece increased by 133% between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, from 34,389 to 80,120 people. The number of people who reported having Greek as their main language increased by 52.7%, from 50,205 in 2011 to 76,675 in 2021. The arrival of the post-2008 migrants had a noticeable impact on many sections of British society (Clark et al. 2014). Research conducted in Greek-speaking communities in the UK reveals that, following the 2008 financial crisis, many migrants sought employment opportunities within businesses specialising in Greek food products, such as restaurants, cafés, bakeries, food shops and market stalls (Charalambidou 2019, Bakoura 2023, Karatsareas & Charalambidou 2020, Charalambidou & Karatsareas 2023). Many of these migrants subsequently transitioned to entrepreneurship, establishing their ventures to tap into emerging consumer markets resulting from increased migration from Greece. These developments unfold within the broader

context of socio-economic and political challenges shaped by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the neoliberal dynamics of the UK food market, characterised by free competition, the gig economy and gentrification. Overarching UK food consumption trends, including the rise of out-of-home dining, online food ordering, health-conscious eating habits, and the demand for ethical and sustainable food products, exert further influence. These trends intersect with the specific demographic and geographic characteristics of London, further shaping the landscape of Greek food businesses in the city (Filimonau et al. 2022, Rinaldi et al. 2022, Kyroglou & Henn 2022, van Doorn et al. 2023).

In this article, we draw attention to migrants whose trajectories, experiences and social, linguistic and cultural profiles have been ignored, devalued and left out of mainstream narratives – both in academic research and public discourses. In the years following the 2007/2008 financial crisis, migrants from Greece and Italy were portrayed mainly in homogenising terms as groups of young, mobile and highly skilled graduates who used their academic credentials to secure highly profitable jobs in Northern Europe, the USA and elsewhere (Koniordos 2017; cf. Pepe 2021, 2022). Our project challenges this brain-drain myth, focusing on migrants of diverse ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Methodology

In this study, we employed multi-sited participatory sensory ethnography (Budach 2019, Pink 2015) to explore how migrants working in Greek food and hospitality businesses perceive and construct notions of authenticity intertwined with the concepts of taste, identity and language. Our approach rests on the premise that food and language co-exist and are co-created through embodied actions that engage the human senses in multisensorial experiences and become meaningful as symbols of identity for (migrant) individuals and groups alike. In other words, we align with Riley and Paugh (2018) in considering linguistic and alimentary practices as working jointly to bring people together around their perceived similarities or to keep them apart based on their constructed differences. Foodways – that is, practices associated with the preparation and consumption of food (Di Giovine & Brulotte 2014) – and discourses allude to material and symbolic approaches according to which people navigate their physical and social being (Riley & Paugh 2018), while the act of tasting turns into an interactive social activity in which people engage through meaningful practices that are both somatic and linguistic (Mondada 2018). Taste can also be employed as a key criterion for a decision on food authenticity. For example, regional food of the past has been connected with the construction of “real and authentic food experiences” (Autio et al. 2013: 568). Our ethnography was embodied as it created the conditions for mutually experiential multisensorial embodied interactions among the participants, with their bodies and languages co-producing social meaning in a variety of semiotic and material ways in the specific, socially constructed spaces in which we undertook our research (Bucholtz & Hall 2016). Meaning-making had a further material dimension, as objects that were present in the ethnographic sites

commingled with other accompanying resources, creating affordances for rich metapragmatic processes (Canagarajah & Minakova 2023).

Participants

We worked with five participants, two women and three men, who either worked in, owned and/or managed foodscapes that sold Greek food at the time of the research. One was a chef, one was a cook, one was a restaurant manager, and two owned and managed food businesses that they had established. All five participants had migrated from Greece to the UK during the eight years preceding the collection of the ethnographic data. They therefore belonged to what some scholars refer to as the “new” Greek migration, that is, the large group of people who left Greece after 2010 as a result of the Greek government debt crisis (Pratsinakis et al. 2020). Although the number of participants in our study is too small to constitute a representative sample of the tens of thousands of recent Greek migrants in the UK, they reflect the general demographic trends identified by Pratsinakis et al. (2021). Four participants were aged between 25 and 44, aligning with the 70.2% of Greek migrants in the UK in this age group. All participants had a monthly income of between £1,200 and £1,800, similar to 26.6% of Greek migrants. The gender distribution was balanced, given the odd number of participants. However, our participants did not represent the largest cohort of Greek migrants, who predominantly hold MA or PhD degrees (51.6%). Only two participants had a university degree (18.9% of Greek migrants), while the remaining participants had not attended university (12.8% of Greek migrants). Therefore, our sample does not contribute to what is often referred to as Greece’s brain drain. The two degree holders among our participants experienced downward occupational mobility, as they worked in low-level jobs that did not match their qualifications.

In this article, we focus closely on one of the participants, a woman we call Filareti (we use pseudonyms and conceal identifiable information for all participants except the researchers). Filareti was born in Greece in the late 1960s and lived for most of her pre-migration life in a city in the north of the country. In Greece, she trained as a nutritionist and owned non-hospitality-related small and medium-sized enterprises. In 2014, she migrated to London. Her main initial occupation was unrelated to hospitality, although she occasionally made some money by sporadically organising food-related income-generating activities. A few years later, she opened a small-to-medium-sized Greek restaurant in north London, after spending considerable time researching the market and carefully considering the complexities of London’s foodscapes, including those created by different consumers of Greek food. Filareti’s restaurant was among the first London foodscapes to sell Greek food prepared in accordance with foodways prototypically associated with Greece rather than Cyprus. Located on a busy and well-connected high street, it is close to emblematic Greek Cypriot diasporic landmarks, including several other Greek restaurants, which serve food prepared and styled in Cypriot ways. The location of the restaurant, along with the presence or absence of specific auditory or visual symbols – such as blue and white colour combinations, public displays of national symbols like the Greek and

Cypriot flags, and photographs of Greek and Cypriot landmarks – might, therefore, contribute to the expectation of its authenticity. Like all participants in our study, Filareti spoke Greek and English. She arrived in the UK with limited knowledge of English, but she developed her communicative competence in the language for her restaurant business.

Sites, methods and data

We invited the participants to attend three dinners as a group, with each dinner being held at a different Greek restaurant in London over six weeks in the spring of 2022. We specifically chose three restaurants that differed from one another in socioeconomic, historical, regional and symbolic terms. The first restaurant was a family-run business that had been established in the 1980s by Greek Cypriot migrants and served both “Greek” and “Cypriot” dishes, therefore creating associations with the city’s older Greek-speaking mobilities. It catered to a diverse range of customers. The second restaurant was a low-budget eatery that had opened less than five years before the research by an entrepreneur of the so-called “new” Greek migration. Most of its menu consisted of stereotypically Greek fast food, including souvlaki wraps and portions of grilled meat, while the clientele consisted heavily of migrants from Greece. The third restaurant was also a recent addition to London’s food scene but was a more high-end and noticeably corporate establishment that targeted a diverse range of customers who, however, were able to afford above-average prices for food and drink. This restaurant’s menu was the least traditional of the three, featuring emblematic dishes that had been interpreted in novel and often unconventional ways in terms of ingredients and cooking methods.

As researchers, we also participated in the dinners and facilitated group conversations in the three restaurants, strategically drawing on and mobilising the materialities present in each to explore the participants’ perspectives on food, authenticity and Greekness. For example, we asked participants to taste and comment on the types of food they had ordered or to share their gastronomic and cooking practices, verbalising their thoughts through sensory categories and linguistic means (sensory metaphors, metonymies, similes, discursive constructions and narratives). We video- and audio-recorded the dinners and transcribed the interviews. We analysed the transcripts using discourse analysis to examine how Filareti constructs and conceptualises authenticity in Greek food and foodways as the owner of a Greek restaurant in present-day London. We focus the analysis on Filareti’s self-appreciation as it is co-constructed in the contingencies of conversations with the other participants and researchers. We supplement our analysis with visual material we collected as part of our study, including stills from the video recordings of the dinners, photographs we took in Filareti’s restaurant and screenshots of her restaurant’s website.

The determinants of liquid authenticity

Greeks and “others” as (non-)knowers and judges of authenticity

Filareti routinely divided the customers of her restaurant into two groups – individuals of Greek origin and people of non-Greek descent – and elaborated on the divergent (multi)sensory criteria that members of each group draw upon in assessing the culinary authenticity of the dishes she (and other Greek hospitality professionals, as well) create and serve. The senses (taste, smell, touch, vision, hearing) function as the arbiters for the construction of authenticity among both groups, with the authenticity of particular dishes being assessed against a backdrop of previous experiential benchmarks. The senses are, however, prioritised differently by Greeks and non-Greeks, and each group uses different systems and funds of knowledge (cf. Theodossopoulos 2013). Customers of Greek origin valorise elements of taste, especially those ingredients that are deemed pivotal in imparting what they perceive to be an authentic flavour to particular dishes, e.g. cinnamon in moussaka, as is shown in Extract 1. However, Greek customers' evaluations of culinary authenticity are intrinsically linked to their personal biographies and reminiscences of culinary traditions perpetuated within their own familial settings (Sutton 2001). For these customers, food is a “powerful and diffuse locus of memory” (Holtzman 2006: 373). These assessments are naturally inherently subjective and, for that reason, present challenges to Filareti due to the profound heterogeneity of individual experiences, which cannot be realistically satisfied and met in every case. Filareti gestured as she developed these thoughts. Raising both her arms over the level of the dinner table and bending her elbows, she made cyclical, counter-clockwise movements with her hands, moving them towards the direction of the back of her elbows in a visual metaphor of the past; see Figure 1.



Figure 1: Filareti talks about the role of memory in shaping subjective assessments of food authenticity among Greek people.

The dialogue in Extract 1 is part of what Filareti was saying when Figure 1 was taken. Filareti, Kyveli and Vally confer with each other about the spices that can, should or

should not be used in preparing a moussaka, one of the best-known traditional Greek dishes. In a pre-emptive attempt to diffuse the tension that could emerge from their differences, Stratos foregrounds the personal dimension of cooking preferences. Filareti uses Stratos's contribution to link subjective memory with the challenges she faces as her Greek customers assess the culinary authenticity of the dishes she serves in her restaurant.

Extract 1: "Your own are the worst at judging you".

Φιλαρέτη :	Δεν ξέρω για τους άλλους. Εγώ προσωπικά πήρα μαθήματα από τα reviews. Και λέω: «κοίτα να δεις τι λέει τώρα. Μήπως δεν το είχα σκεφτεί;». Άνθρωποι είμαστε, πολλά πράγματα δεν τα σκεφτόμαστε. Α, π.χ., δεν είχε πολλή κανέλα. Για να δοκιμάσω το μουσακά. Γιατί δεν είχε πολλή κανέλα, ας πούμε;	Filareti :	I don't know about the others. Personally, I have taken lessons from reviews. I tell myself: "Look at what they're saying. Perhaps I hadn't thought of that?" We're only human, we don't think of everything. Oh, for example, there was not much cinnamon. Let me try the moussaka. Why didn't it have much cinnamon?
Βάλλη:	Δε βάζουμε κανέλα στο μουσακά, βάζουμε μοσχοκάρυδο στο μουσακά.	Vally:	We don't put cinnamon in the moussaka, we put nutmeg.
Φιλαρέτη :	Και κανέλα.	Filareti :	We put cinnamon, too.
Κυβέλη:	Βασικά τίποτα απ' τα δύο δε βάζουμε.	Kyveli:	Basically, we don't put any of the two.
Φιλαρέτη :	Η γιαγιά μου που ήταν Πολίτισσα έβαζε απ' όλα αυτά.	Filareti :	My grandmother, who hailed from Istanbul, used to add all of those.
Κυβέλη:	Άρα εξαρτάται την περιοχή.	Kyveli:	So it depends on the region.
Φιλαρέτη :	Βεβαίως.	Filareti :	Definitely.
Στράτος:	Βέβαια είναι προσωπικό αυτό.	Stratos:	This is a personal matter, of course.
Φιλαρέτη :	Φυσικά είναι προσωπικό. Μα η γεύση είναι γενικά προσωπική. Έχουμε μάθει	Filareti :	Of course it's a personal matter. Taste in general is something personal. We

	από τις οικογένειές μας, επειδή τα μαγειρεύουμε στα σπίτια μας, να έχουμε άποψη και να λέμε: «μ’ αρέσει αυτό γιατί έχει περισσότερη κανέλα» ή «γιατί έχει λιγότερη κανέλα». Έχουμε τις μνήμες τις δικές μας. Ο Έλληνας είναι ο χειρότερος κριτής σε μας εδώ. Δεν υπάρχει χειρότερος πελάτης και χειρότερος κριτής.		have learned from our families, because we cook [specific dishes] at home, to have an opinion and say: “I like this because it has more cinnamon” or “because it has less cinnamon”. We have our own memories. Greeks are our worst judges here. There’s no worse customer and worse judge.
Στράτος:	Γιατί ξέρει την κουζίνα.	Stratos:	Because they know the cuisine.
Φιλαρέτη :	Όχι. Όχι γιατί ξέρει την κουζίνα. Γιατί έχει μάθει να το τρώει έτσι όπως του τό ’χουνε προσφέρει οι γονείς του και είναι λάθος αυτό.	Filareti :	No. Not because they know the cuisine. But because they have become accustomed to eat [the food] the way it was offered to them by their parents, and this is wrong.
Στράτος:	Καλά, δε μπορείς να κάνεις σύγκριση «η μάνα μου την έκανε έτσι».	Stratos:	Right, but you can’t compare saying, “my mother used to cook it this way”.
Φιλαρέτη :	Θέλει δε θέλει κάνει αυτή τη σύγκριση. Αυτές είναι οι μνήμες του.	Filareti :	They do this comparison whether they want to or not. These are their memories.
Στράτος:	Αλλά άμα πάω σε ένα εστιατόριο, δε θα γράψω σαν κριτική μετά: «α, δεν έχει σχέση με της μάνας μου». Μου φαίνεται τελείως άτοπο αυτό.	Stratos:	But if I go to a restaurant, I won’t write a review afterwards saying: “Oh, it’s nothing like my mother’s”. That seems completely out of place to me.
Φιλαρέτη :	Θα στη δείξω, έχω τέτοια κριτική.	Filareti :	I have one such review, I’ll show it to you.

The extract encapsulates the subjective nature of taste as influenced by familial and personal conditions, with occasional references to regionality. Central to Filareti's critique is the notion that Greek people represent the worst customers and the worst judges, a perspective rooted in their propensity to assess food authenticity (and quality) against their personal biographies and familial experiences. This position seems to be confirmed in practice by her interlocutors, as both Vally (one of the researchers) and Kyveli (one of the hospitality entrepreneurs) assert what "we put" in a moussaka – offering opposing views (to each other and Filareti). This shows how Greek consumers and fellow professionals are quick to offer (initially at least) absolute views on the proper recipe for a Greek dish, presumably basing that on their family histories and past experiences (cf. Charalambidou 2019).

Filareti makes relevant but does not foreground her familial background in shaping her business ethos and culinary practices in the promotional material for her restaurant. The landing page of Filareti's restaurant website includes a personal description of her as the business owner, emphasising her love for cooking, which she is said to have inherited from her *γιαγιά*, the Greek word for grandmother, transliterated as *yiayia* on the website (see Figure 2).

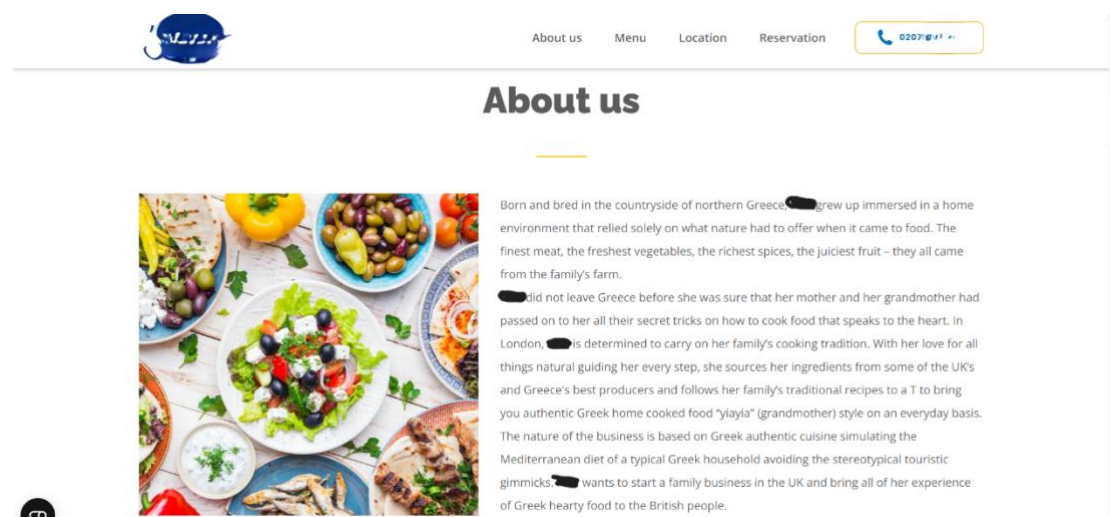


Figure 2: The landing page of Filareti's restaurant

Interestingly, in Figure 2, Filareti mentions her name four times (erased in Figure 2) and repeatedly draws on her familial connections (mother, grandmother, family), presumably to convince her consumers that they will be let into the "backstage" (MacCannel 1973) of a home kitchen, while "stereotypical touristic gimmicks" are avoided. Family influence is, therefore, both a source of explicit critique and backgrounded inspiration, as the very aspects that Filareti finds problematic in her customers are integral to her entrepreneurial journey and her restaurant's founding narrative.

According to Filareti, non-Greek customers differ from Greek customers in that they accord primacy to the visual dimensions of culinary presentation. This, she argued, was the predominant criterion in their assessments of what constituted

authentic Greek food. In Extract 2, she responds to Petros's question about how one can make Greek food in London reminiscent of Greece for people who are not Greek but have visited the country.

Extract 2: Visual impressions count for those not “in the know”

Φιλαρέτη	Πώς να το κάνεις να θυμίζει	Filareti	How to make [the food]
:	Ελλάδα; Όπως ξες, ο	:	reminiscent of Greece? As
	καθένας που θα παραγγείλει		you know, the first thing
	το πρώτο πράγμα που		that everyone who orders
	βλέπει, προτού το γευτεί,		sees before tasting [the
	είναι η εικόνα. Αν είναι		food] is the image. If it's
	περίπου ίδια μ' αυτό που		roughly the same as what
	έχει φάει στην Ελλάδα, οκεί		they've eaten in Greece,
	γι' αυτόν που ξέρει. Αν είναι		that's okay for those in the
	διαφορετική, θα το κοιτάξει.		know. If it's different,
	Θα πει: «θα το δοκιμάσω».		they'll look at it more
	Μετά έρχεται η γεύση. Είναι		closely. They'll say: "I'll
	το δεύτερο κομμάτι αυτό.		try it". Then comes the
	Πρώτα έρχεται η		taste. That's the second
	φωτογραφία και μετά		part. The photograph
	έρχεται η γεύση. Οπότε,		comes first, and taste
	πάει πρώτα στην εικόνα και		follows. So, one turns their
	μετά στη γεύση και λέει		attention first to the visual
	«Μοιάζει με την Ελλάδα» ή		and then to the taste, and
	«Δεν μοιάζει με την		they go "It resembles
	Ελλάδα».		Greece" or "It doesn't
			resemble Greece".

Visual appeal is significant in the initial engagement of non-Greek people with Greek food, echoing the chefs' adage “you eat with your eyes first” (Delwiche 2012). The visual presentation of a dish, such as on an illustrated menu and in photographs that co-constitute the linguistic landscape of restaurants, shapes expectations and predisposes non-Greek customers to certain perceptions even before the actual taste is experienced. This is a departure from previous research on Greek restaurants and traditional foodstuff (e.g. Stiles et al. 2011, Charalambidou 2019) that showed that customers foregrounded taste in assessing authenticity. According to Filareti, taste becomes the medium through which cultural authenticity and resemblance are judged only after the initial visual assessment. Taste is, therefore, not totally absent from the assessments of non-Greeks, but it is relegated to a lower position on the hierarchy of senses that Filareti is constructing.

Filareti's conceptualisation of culinary authenticity is both fluid and syncretic (cf. Alexander 2021, Charalambidou 2019), distinctly oriented towards accommodating the varied preferences of her clientele. She strives to provide both

what she believes Greek customers will judge as authentic based on their memories of Greece and their families and what she considers will attract non-Greek customers to choose her restaurant for their meals. This open, malleable and ultimately commodified approach to authenticity (Adapon 2008, Appadurai 1988) reflects Filareti's acute awareness of the heterogeneity inherent in London's diverse milieu. In order to navigate the complex terrain of cultural diversity and culinary expectations, she mobilises a range of strategic marketing endeavours designed to be as far-reaching as possible. The prominent display of a selected assortment of Greek dishes on her restaurant's website (Figure 3) and her restaurant's foodscape (Figure 4) aims to engage customers who are both familiar and unfamiliar with Greek cuisine. Her delineation between Greeks as knowers and non-Greeks as non-knowers of authentic Greek food further reflects her business orientation, within which authenticity is negotiated across diverse groups of customers. The names of traditional dishes are transliterated in English for those familiar with Greek cuisine, while the descriptions of the dishes and the images are there for those who are less familiar with Greek foodways. In the midst of this space, authenticity emerges as a broad and inclusive concept that is sculpted by a confluence of individual dispositions, contextual variables and subjective lenses.

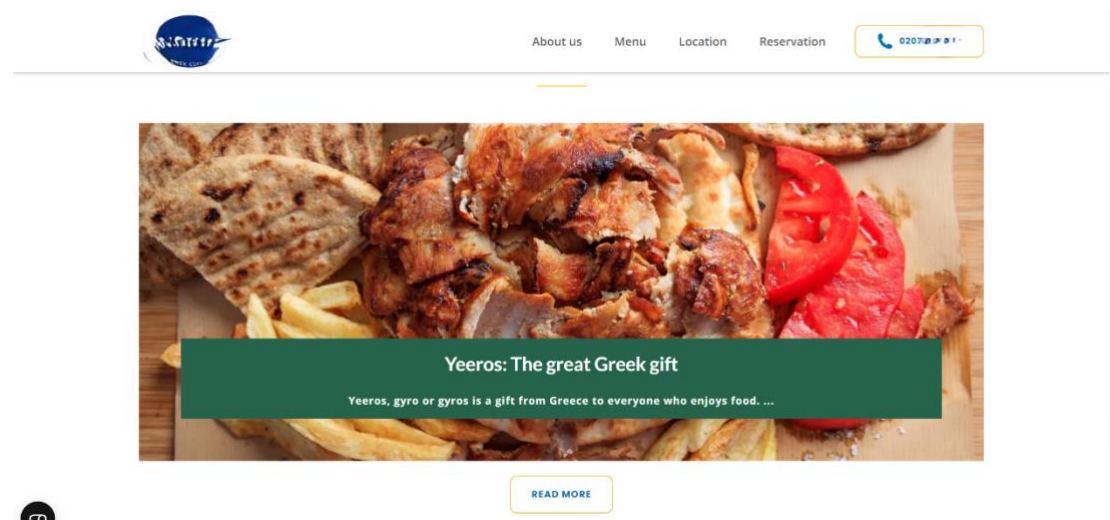


Figure 3: A page on the website of Filareti's restaurant



Figure 4: A menu with photographs on display at Filareti's restaurant

Compromising authenticity

The fluidity and malleability of authenticity are further evident in the ways in which broader socio-economic and political dynamics can shape the notion. This perspective is particularly relevant in examining how Filareti navigated the difficulties that Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic brought about (Filimonau et al. 2022 Rinaldi et al. 2022, van Doorn et al. 2023), radically transforming the conditions under which her restaurant business operated around the time when we conducted our study. The combination of these two critical moments in recent British history saw a steep rise in operational costs, caused primarily by increased import taxes and staff shortages. Maintaining the financial viability of her enterprise required adaptability, resilience and a re-evaluation not only of what constitutes but also of what can be said to be authentic Greek food. Feeling the imperative to ensure business continuity, Filareti opted for a pragmatic synthesis of tradition and adaptation, modulating the criteria used to define Greek culinary authenticity in the face of shifts in the external environment (like the Mexican women working in public kitchens in Abarca 2007). In Extract 3, she comments on the possibility of using a white cheese in her dishes that is not officially called feta, in the sense that it does not bear the protected designation of origin certificate from the European Union. The comments echo debates that took place in Greece in the 1990s when Denmark and Germany tried to block Greece from registering feta as a designation of origin (Petridou 2001). Filareti admits that if importing feta from Greece becomes economically unviable due to Brexit, she will gladly serve non-feta white cheese products to her customers, especially non-Greek ones who do not know the authentic taste and who do not care about the provenance of the cheese, as long as it broadly resembles the real Greek thing. She takes this position in response to Petros's probing questions about whether it would be legitimate to label cheese produced in the UK as Greek feta.

Extract 3: Hellenising feta cheese

Φιλαρέτη :	Μ' αφήνει εμένα να έρθω εδώ, μια μεγάλη εταιρεία και να αρχίσω να παράγω φέτα εδώ. Γιατί να μην το κάνω; Δε θα πει κανένας: «γιατί την παράγεις τη φέτα εδώ πέρα;». Εντάξει, δε θα έχει το... αλλά θά 'ναι μια φέτα. Όπως ήδη την κάνουν τη φέτα εδώ και την πουλάνε στο Tesco και σ' αυτά. Γιατί, αν δεις, είναι από εδώ, δεν είναι από την Ελλάδα. Δε με πειράζει καθόλου εμένα. Ούτε τους Άγγλους τους πειράζει. Χεστήκανε αν έρχεται απ' την Ελλάδα ή όχι. Αρκεί αυτό που τρώνε να μοιάζει λίγο με φέτα. Κι εμένα δε με νοιάζει να σου πω την αλήθεια—με γράφετε κιόλας—άμα θα φάει φέτα απ' την Ελλάδα ή φέτα απ' την Αγγλία. Ούτε με νοιάζει καθόλου.	Filareti :	The laws allow me a big company, to come here, and start producing feta cheese here. Why shouldn't I do it? No one will say: "Why are you producing feta cheese here?" Okay, it won't have the... but it will be feta cheese of some sort. Just like they already make feta cheese here and sell it at Tesco and such. Because, if you check, it's from here, not from Greece. It doesn't bother me at all. Nor do the English mind. They don't give a shit if it comes from Greece or not. As long as what they eat resembles feta cheese a bit. To tell you the truth, I don't care either – you're recording me, too – whether they'll eat feta cheese from Greece or feta cheese from England. It doesn't bother me at all.
Πέτρος:	Άμα είναι από την Αγγλία, θα είναι ελληνική φέτα;	Petros:	If it's from England, will it be Greek feta cheese?
Φιλαρέτη :	Ναι. Γιατί; Εσύ πιστεύεις ότι έρχεται όλη όπως είναι στην Ελλάδα; Ότι δεν έρχεται διαφορετική εδώ;	Filareti :	Yes. Why? Do you believe that all feta cheese is brought here exactly as it is in Greece? That a different type of feta cheese is not brought here?
Πέτρος:	Όμως άμα τη φτιάχνει στην Αγγλία, τι θα την κάνει να είναι ελληνική;	Petros:	But if it's made in England, what will make it Greek?
Φιλαρέτη :	Τίποτα. Θα τη βαφτίσω εγώ και θά 'ρθεις στο μαγαζί μου. Μια χαρά. Δεν	Filareti :	Nothing. I will baptise it [the feta as Greek], and you will come to my restaurant just

κατάλαβα. Έτσι είναι τα
πράγματα. Οι δουλειές
είναι δουλειές. Όλα τα
βαφτίζεις. Κάνεις δίαιτα,
βαφτίζεις τον μπακλαβά
μαρουλάκι και το τρώς.
Έλα τώρα! Τι να κάνουμε;
Έτσι είναι οι δουλειές.

fine. That's the way things
are. Business is business.
You baptise everything.
When you're on a diet, you
baptise baklava, you call it
lettuce, and you eat it. Come
on now! What can we do?
That's how business works.

Filareti challenges the authenticity of feta cheese imports from Greece and positions her views within a broader UK context, in which major supermarket chains like Tesco sell own-brand ethnic produce like Greek-style feta cheese, Cypriot-style halloumi and Italian-style mozzarella. Her use of *baptise* is a common Greek metaphor that indexes the act of attributing ostensibly false characteristics to an object or an event by referring to it using a different linguistic expression (word or phrase). For example, a common saying is «βαφτίζω το κρέας ψάρι» ‘I baptise meat and call it fish’, to excuse eating meat during Lent, when consuming meat is forbidden, but fish may be allowed on certain days. It is often used to express strong disapproval of the actions of others, suggesting that reality has been deliberately and absurdly distorted in a way that knowingly broke the rules to achieve some illicit purpose; for example, eating an extremely sweet dessert when one is supposed to be on a diet. Notably, Filareti uses the verb in the first person, claiming agency in the act of distorting reality. Her readiness to abandon the authenticity of her ingredients and the matter-of-factness with which she justified her decision (“business is business”, “that’s how business works”) exemplify a strategic shift on her part, wherein culinary authenticity assumes a secondary role, subordinate to the pragmatic demands of sustaining business operations in the UK’s new economic and social circumstances. This is a strongly business-oriented perspective, characterised by a dynamic adjustment to the fluctuating needs of the market, consumer preferences and other unforeseen contingencies. It underscores the necessity for flexibility in the volatile restaurant business that Filareti has found herself in, and authenticity – in the sense of an unconditional commitment to specific ethnic ingredients – is part of this process.

Safeguarding authenticity: language policing and institutional protection

At the same time as admitting that evolving circumstances and business priorities may sometimes necessitate culinary compromises, including using non-Greek products to prepare emblematically Greek dishes, Filareti also held that the authenticity of Greek cuisine in London should be maintained and protected through various strategies and safeguarding measures, thus projecting a reifying view of authenticity as an object with clearly defined boundaries. She identified and criticised two specific practices that, in her view, threatened the integrity of Greek food in the culinary scene of the British capital: the use of ingredients that are neither authentically Greek nor of high quality (which is somewhat ironic considering her views on hellenising non-Greek

products that were analysed above) and the use of foreign language terms by culinary professionals when marketing and talking about Greek products to consumers. Focusing on the language, she spoke at length about the importance of differentiating Greek culinary traditions from those of other cultures using Greek-origin terms and food names, despite the potential similarities that Greek and non-Greek foodways may share. In one instance, Ilarionas and Petros were discussing terms that Greek restaurant owners use to describe the dish that in Greek is known as *pita gyros* – a type of sandwich made of meat cooked on a vertical rotisserie, traditionally pork but, more recently, also chicken. Several terms are available in the linguistic marketplace: the Greek-origin γύρος ['jiros] 'gyro', lit. 'turning' and τυλιχτό [tili'xto] lit. 'wrap', the Arabic/Persian/Turkish-origin *kebab*, the Arabic-origin *shawarma* and the English-origin *wrap*. Ilarionas was talking about the affordances and problems with the use of each term when Filareti launched a direct challenge at him for using the term *kebab*. Figure 5 shows Ilarionas describing each term and making round movements with his hands, mimicking the turning of the spit. Extract 4 shows Filareti's interruption and critique.



Figure 5: Ilarionas talks about the terms used to describe gyro.

Extract 4: Policing the language of Greek food

Πέτρος:	Λες ότι για τους ξένους είμαστε μαζί με το κεμπάπ. Εσύ κάνεις κάτι για να ξεχωρίσεις απ' αυτόν τον σωρό;	Petros:	You say that for foreigners, we're just like kebabs. Are you doing anything to stand out from that crowd?
Ιλαρίωνας :	Προφανώς ναι. Το βλέπω ότι είναι το καλύτερο, και όντως είναι. Πολλοί όταν	Ilarionas :	Obviously yes. I see it as being the best, and indeed it is. When they

έρχονται πολλές φορές
ρωτάνε: «τι πουλάτε;». Δεν
καταλαβαίνουν στην αρχή,
δεν ξέρουν πάντα τι είναι το
σουβλάκι. Ή ρωτάνε
«Ελλάδα;». Λέω ναι. Μου
λέει: «δεν έχω φάει.». Του
λέω «wrap» και λέει «ααα
wrap». Κατάλαβες; Οπότε
αυτοί μετά σε μαθαίνουν
και συνεχίζουν. Είναι μέχρι
να δοκιμάσουν στην αρχή.

come, many often ask:
“What do you sell?”
They don’t get it at first,
they don’t always know
what souvlaki is. Or they
ask: “Greece?” I say yes.
They say: “I haven’t
eaten it before”. I tell
them “wrap” and they
say “aaah wrap”. You
understand? So then they
get to know you and
continue to come. It’s
just until they try it at
first.

- | | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| Φιλαρέτη: | Εσύ για να τους βοηθήσεις
θα έλεγες ποτέ «είναι like
kebab»; | Filareti: | Would you ever say “it’s
like kebab” to help them? |
| Ιλαρίωνας
: | Όχι «like kebab». Τους λέω
«like shawarma» για το
κοτόπουλο, όταν δεν έχουν
φάει ποτέ. Δεν είναι το ίδιο,
τους λέω. | Ilarionas
: | No, not “like kebab”. I
tell them “it’s like
shawarma” for the
chicken when they’ve
never had it before. It’s
not the same, I tell them. |
| Φιλαρέτη: | Το ρώτησα έτσι από
περιέργεια. | Filareti | I just asked out of
curiosity. |
| Πέτρος: | Εσύ το λες; | Petros: | Do you say it? |
| Φιλαρέτη: | Όχι βέβαια. Έχω
απαγορεύσει και στο
προσωπικό μου να το
κάνουνε. | Filareti: | Of course not. I’ve even
forbidden my staff from
doing it. |

Filareti is explicitly prescriptivist about using non-Greek labels, thus positioning herself as a guardian of culinary authenticity. Filareti tries to get Ilarionas to “admit” that he uses the word “kebab” by asking if Ilarionas would use the term “like kebab”. Ilarionas avoids answering directly whether he uses the term “kebab” and instead proposes another non-Greek term, “shawarma”. Although both terms are of Turkish and Arabic origin, kebab is more readily recognised by Greek speakers as a “Turkish” term, and perhaps this is the reason why Filareti wants to show how resistant she is to it – given the historical tensions between Greece and Turkey. Ilarionas appears more accepting of the use of Turkish/Arabic terms to describe Greek foods because he

operates in a different context: in a provincial town as opposed to super-diverse London, where he can get a better market share by not insisting on making distinctions between cognate foreign dishes. This highlights the differences that may emerge between a restaurant in a small town and in a large metropolis like London.

Filareti's disapproval of the use of the term kebab reflects her concern that such language might diminish the authenticity of Greek dishes by making them appear to be part of other ethnic foodways, especially ones originating in cultures from which dominant Greek narratives seek to distance themselves – most notably Turkish, but also Arabic. She states, in the strongest of terms, that, in an act of language policy and language policing, she has directed her staff to avoid using any of these terms in order to preserve the integrity of Greek culinary identity and, by extension, of her business, as well. At the same, she reluctantly agrees to use the term *wrap*, an English word, to appeal to non-Greek-speaking customers.

Interestingly, this concession on her part came rather unexpectedly, as shown in Extract 5. Vally and Petros were interested in the ways in which the names of traditional Greek dishes were represented in Kyveli's newly opened restaurant. Kyveli made a very strong case that, if a restaurateur wants to make a legitimate claim to Greek authenticity, everything in their restaurant must be (in) Greek. This includes not only the names of dishes but also the transliteration of Greek words into English. Γεμιστά [jemi'sta] 'rice-stuffed vegetables' can be transliterated as *gemista*, whereby <g> stands for <γ>. This, however, may mislead some non-Greek speakers into pronouncing the name of the dish as [gemi'sta]. In order for the Greek pronunciation to be safeguarded, the word must be transliterated as *yemista*. Filareti then says that she has made a "huge mistake".

Extract 5: "They say all sorts of words, they can say *τυλιχτό*".

Κυβέλη:	Είμαστε Greek home cooking. Έχουμε ελληνικά προϊόντα, είναι τα φαγητά ελληνικά, γράφει yemista κι εξηγούμε τι είναι. Ναι, δε γράφουμε gemista, γράφουμε yemista.	Kyveli:	We are Greek home cooking. We have Greek products, the dishes are Greek, it says yemista, and we explain what it is. Yes, we don't write gemista, we write yemista.
Βάλλη:	Τά 'χετε τα ελληνικά με λατινικούς χαρακτήρες;	Vally:	You have Greek with Latin characters?
Κυβέλη:	Ναι.	Kyveli:	Yes.
Πέτρος:	Δεν είναι δύσκολο; Οι ήχοι κι αυτά;	Petros:	Isn't it difficult? The sounds and all that?
Κυβέλη:	Ναι, αλλά όταν θες να κάνεις embrace to concept του	Kyveli:	Yes, but when you want to embrace the concept of

	μαγειρευτού ελληνικού μαμαδίστικου φαγητού, ε καλό είναι να το κρατάς.		cooking mum's Greek homemade food, it's good to stick to it.
Φιλαρέτη :	Τεράστιο λάθος. Το λέω, το παραδέχομαι. Προσπάθησα να το κάνω, μια αλλαγή στα μενού. Γιατί να μη μάθουν «τυλιχτό»; Δεν κατάλαβα, όλες τις λέξεις τις λένε. (...) Γιατί να το λένε <i>wrap</i> , κατάλαβες; Λίγο πιο εύκολο για αυτούς, αλλά θα το μαθαίνουν τυλιχτό.	Filareti :	Huge mistake. I admit it. I tried to do it, a change in the menus. Why not learn τυλιχτό [<i>wrap</i>]? I don't understand; they say all sorts of words. (...) Why say “ <i>wrap</i> ”, you know? A little easier for them, but they would learn to say τυλιχτό.

The dilemma Filareti faces highlights the tension between making Greek cuisine accessible to a market base that is as large as possible, on the one hand, and maintaining her cuisine's cultural authenticity, on the other. By opting for τυλιχτό over *wrap*, there is a risk of alienating customers unfamiliar with the Greek language, potentially making the menu and her services less approachable. Conversely, using a well-known term like *wrap* could enhance accessibility, but at the cost of diluting the cultural essence that Filareti wishes to preserve. Her acknowledgement that, despite efforts to adopt and use the – somewhat hard to pronounce – Greek term, she ultimately opted for the English word comes as an admission of a grave mistake and with a sense of regret. This shows Filareti's pursuit of sociolinguistic justice, that is, her moral responsibility for “self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups”, in this case, Greeks in the UK in sociopolitical struggles over language (Bucholtz et al. 2014: 145). She expects her customers to be able to learn and use τυλιχτό to refer to her Greek-style gyros wraps in the same way as they have learned and do use words from other languages that refer to other ethnic dishes and foodways in London's diverse foodscapes (Warde 1997).

Another strategy that Filareti mobilised in order to maintain the authenticity of Greek food in London, which was based on a rigid conceptualisation of authenticity, was to seek institutional protection and community support. In Extract 6, she relays how she engaged with the Greek consul and members of London's Greek diaspora about this issue, without achieving much.

Extract 6: “Everyone cooks in any way they like”.

Φιλαρέτη :	Μιλάμε για ελληνικό φαγητό και είναι μεγάλη υπόθεση αυτό που λέμε ελληνικό φαγητό. Κατά πόσο είναι ελληνικό φαγητό, κατά πόσο	Filareti :	We're talking about Greek food, and what we call Greek food is a big deal. To what extent it's Greek food, to what extent we've
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έχουμε κρατήσει τις
παραδόσεις, κατά πόσο...
Είναι μεγάλο θέμα το
ελληνικό φαγητό που δεν το
προστατεύουμε καθόλου.
Είχα μιλήσει παλιότερα και
με τον πρόξενο (...) να το
κρατήσουμε κάπως, να το
προστατέψουμε εδώ. (...)
συζήτησα και με άλλους
ανθρώπους που μου είπαν:
«ξες τι, εδώ μην το ψάχνεις
αυτό γιατί υπάρχουν τόσο
διαφορετικές κουζίνες που
κανείς δεν έχει προστατέψει
την κουζίνα του και τα
βγάζει ο καθένας όπως
θέλει». Έχω τύχει πάρα
πολλές φορές να έρθει
κόσμος να μου πει «έχουμε
φάει μουςακά αλλά δεν ήταν
έτσι». Αυτοί που έχουν πάει
στην Ελλάδα ξέρουν ότι
στην Ελλάδα πάλι δεν είναι
το ίδιο. Αν πάνε σε ένα νησί
είναι τελείως διαφορετικό
αυτό που θα φάνε. Αν πάνε
στην ηπειρωτική Ελλάδα,
στην Αθήνα ή Θεσσαλονίκη,
είναι πάλι τελείως
διαφορετικό αυτό που θα
φάνε. Αφού ούτε στην
Ελλάδα θα φάνε το ίδιο, εδώ
γιατί πρέπει να φάνε το ίδιο
δηλαδή; Δεν κατάλαβα.
Αλλά τουλάχιστον να θυμίζει
Ελλάδα. Να μην είναι
τελείως εκτός.

kept the traditions, to what
extent... Greek food is a
big issue, and we're not
protecting it at all. I had
spoken with the [Greek]
consul at some point (...)
to keep [Greek food]
somehow, to protect it
here. (...). I spoke with
other people, too, who told
me: "you know what,
don't go wasting your time
with this, because there are
so many different cuisines,
and no one has protected
their own, and everyone
cooks in any way they
like". Many times people
have come to me saying:
"We've eaten moussaka
before but it wasn't like
this". Those who have
been to Greece know that
even in Greece it's not
always the same. If they
go to an island, what
they'll eat is completely
different. If they go to
mainland Greece, to
Athens or Thessaloniki,
again it's completely
different what they'll eat.
Since they won't eat the
same even in Greece, why
should they eat the same
here? I don't get it. It
should at least remind
them of Greece. It
shouldn't be completely
out.

The authenticity of Greek foodways in London must be actively and explicitly protected. Filareti, therefore, looked for allies in the form of official representatives of

the Greek state, as well as people without this type of institutional power. Her engagement, however, proved futile, with London emerging as a kind of free-for-all culinary landscape where people have the freedom – too much freedom, in her view – to explore and implement diverse foodways that may depart from more traditional practices, including the naming of dishes. Filareti also brings up the issue of regional variation within Greece – an element that has long been seen as lending authenticity to restaurants (Miele & Murdoch 2002) – but that also mitigates against prescriptivist, homogenising views of national cuisines. Striving for a rigid perception of authenticity in such a context is ultimately impractical and perhaps also unnecessary, with the task of safeguarding authenticity consequently falling on individuals who have a stake in these issues, such as Filareti herself.

Concluding discussion

In this paper, we investigated what counted as Greek culinary authenticity in the present-day London food scene and how it was perceived, experienced and co-constructed by a group of Greek migrant hospitality professionals and the members of our research team over three dinner conversations. Zooming in on one of our key participants, Filareti, we explored how she defended, established and justified her judgments of authenticity to other migrant hospitality professionals and members of the research team during the food talk. We supplemented our analysis of the discursive constructions of authenticity in Greek food and foodways by examining visual material in line with the theoretical anchoring of the study in embodied sociolinguistics (Bucholtz & Hall 2016). This theoretical anchoring underpinned our understanding that food and language co-occurred and that talk about food was entangled with multisensorial practices co-created through embodied actions and interactions mediated by material objects and technologies (Riley & Paugh 2018, Mondada 2018). In dissecting Filareti's constructions of Greek culinary authenticity, we proposed the term “liquid authenticity”, as it captured two seemingly contradictory discourses that shored up her judgements of authenticity: authenticity was understood as both malleable, dynamic, subjective and locally contingent and as fixed, bounded and in need of protection and policing. This conceptualisation of authenticity also drew our attention to who authenticates and under what conditions.

As we showed, Filareti used processes of social categorisation to distinguish between “οἱ Ἕλληνες” (the Greeks) and “οἱ ξένοι” (the foreigners) among her clientele, who were positioned as “knowers” and “non-knowers” of Greek food and foodways respectively. Both groups were homogenised and were represented as prioritising different sensory resources in processes of culinary authentication. As with the Greek Cypriot women observed in Charalambidou's study (2019) on preparing, consuming and assessing the savoury dish of “flaounes”, Greeks mobilised the sense of taste mediated through personal and familial memories and socio-cultural associations. In this respect, family and the figures of the mother and grandmother as intergenerational gendered mediators and arbitrators of authentic culinary experiences were deployed to connect individuals with collective memory and cultural history (see Extracts 1 and 5 and Figure 2). For instance, the figure of Filareti's “Πολίτισσα

γιαγιά” (the grandmother who hailed from Constantinople, present-day Istanbul) referred to in Extract 1 and the implied iconic link with “the refined Constantinopolitan cuisine” (Bozi 2003: 16) aimed to buttress her claim and counter those of the other interlocutors concerning the spices needed in seasoning an “authentic” moussaka. We argue that for Greeks, Greek food and foodways are constructed as “lieux de mémoire” (sites of memory) (Nora 1989) that act as containers of individual, familial and collective memory. Similar to the findings in Autio et al.’s (2013) study of Finnish consumers’ cultural meanings of locally produced foods, the practices of repeatedly preparing, consuming and evaluating Greek food were laced with nostalgia, conjuring images of home cooking (e.g. “cooking mum’s Greek homemade food”, referred to in Extract 5), as they established connections with one’s cultural past and one’s ancestors and family history. These practices were also associated with preserving a shared national/ethnic identity and cultural heritage and re-creating a sense of belonging in the diaspora mediated through taste and memory (Bakoura 2023).

Our study illustrated that for Filareti, foreigners marshalled first sight and then taste to authenticate Greek food and foodways, pointing, we argued, to a sensorial hierarchy of somatic resources. Foreigners were understood to utilise a set of conventionalised visual cues, which often functioned as stereotypical representations of Greekness, conjuring up touristic representations of Greek cuisine and culture (see also Chatzopoulou et al. 2019). Filareti mobilised these visual cues too, for the promotional purposes of her own restaurant, such as in the images of food on the restaurant’s website, menus and décor (see Figures 2-3). Foreigners were constructed as having varying knowledge of Greek cuisine, ranging from those who may have travelled to Greece and were able to compare whether Greek cuisine in London did or did not resemble their culinary experience and memory of Greece, to those who were completely new. The salience of a set of conventionalised visual cues seemed to compensate for foreigners’ (limited) knowledge of Greek cuisine and were deployed to judge the authenticity and quality of the food and the restaurant experience regardless of their culinary expertise.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that preparing, consuming and evaluating food was understood as an embodied, multi-sensorial experience where visual cues were an integral part of broader semiotic, socio-cultural and affective repertoires. Within these broader repertoires, we noticed that linguistic resources seemed to hold a less established and more dynamic position in authenticating food and foodways. Filareti and the other migrant hospitality professionals discussed and debated whether using terms from other ethnic foodways or in English would compromise the authenticity of Greek cuisine. Their discussions extended beyond naming practices to the use of the transliteration of Greek words into English and exposed a plethora of heterogeneous practices. They also revealed the dilemma of socialising foreigners into understanding and using the “correct” Greek terms with the “correct” Greek pronunciation. The desire to delineate and pin down the “correct” linguistic cues was underpinned by strong prescriptivist ideologies of linguistic purity that aimed to expunge those linguistic and cultural elements perceived as non-Greek or as

belonging to other ethnic foodways (such as Turkish or Arabic). Ideologies of linguistic purity and cultural exclusivity were mobilised to create an iconic link between Greek cuisine and language and were strategically deployed in food talk to justify authenticating Greek food and foodways. As we discussed, in practice, this linguistic ideal collided with pragmatic and market-oriented concerns of intelligibility and accessibility. For example, on Filareti's restaurant website, the dish in the image was represented in three different possible transliterations: "yeeros, gyros, gyro" (Figure 3), with "yeeros" being the closest phonetic approximation to the equivalent word in Greek, and "gyro" as the more anglicised version. Indeed, in this example, rather than being prescriptivist (as in Excerpt 4), Filareti exhibited an astute understanding of her diverse clientele (Greeks and foreigners with or without knowledge of Greek cuisine) and espoused linguistic flexibility and creativity. In this respect, our findings contribute to and extend previous studies on Greek culinary authenticity that complicate unitary constructions of authenticity and that have shown how tradition, innovation and change can co-exist and be concurrently marshalled to authenticate Greek food and foodways (Charalambidou 2019, Charalambidou & Karatsareas 2023).

Our study highlighted the interplay between the personal (i.e. individuals' biographies, semiotic repertoires, culinary memories and experiences) and broader socio-economic and political contexts in dynamically informing local understandings of authenticity. Filareti illustrated how embracing market forces and using the English term "wrap" on her own menu runs the risk of compromising culinary authenticity, triggering feelings of regret on her part (see Excerpt 5). At the same time, in a highly marketised and globalised economy, compromising authenticity was justified by the strain Brexit and the pandemic had placed on the hospitality sector in the UK, including the rising cost of sourcing "authentic" ingredients from Greece. In this respect, Filareti's discursive move to baptise the feta as Greek to secure the viability of her business indicated how the inglobalisation of Greek cuisine might modulate the criteria for authenticity and that, under specific conditions, the origins of ingredients might become less important in judgements of authenticity. Our study demonstrated how migrant hospitality professionals like Filareti sought to navigate the complicated waters of culinary authenticity and assert legitimacy in processes of authentication by simultaneously drawing on seemingly incompatible understandings of authenticity tied to ethnicity, language and culture, and market-oriented concerns. In future studies, we aim to extend our focus to customers (with varying degrees of knowledge and experience of Greek food and foodways) and explore the discourses, resources and claims they mobilise to justify their judgements of culinary authenticity, as well as the extent to which and in what ways such judgements might be ratified or contested and by whom.

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