
Culinary Soft Power

Evaluating the Efficacy of
Gastrodiplomacy as a Niche
Strategy for Under-recognized
Nation Brands

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Introduction



Defining Gastrodiplomacy

- Cultural diplomacy through cuisine
 - Uses a nation's characteristic culinary traditions and practices as a cultural export to facilitate greater cross-cultural understanding, ideally resulting in further bilateral interactions
 - In the realm of political economy, as cuisine is used as a form of soft power to address various economic, political and social issues.
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Or Put Simply, Gastrodiplomacy is

“Winning hearts and minds
through the stomach”

—Paul Rockower (2012)

Thailand as a Catalyst

Global Thai Program in 2002:

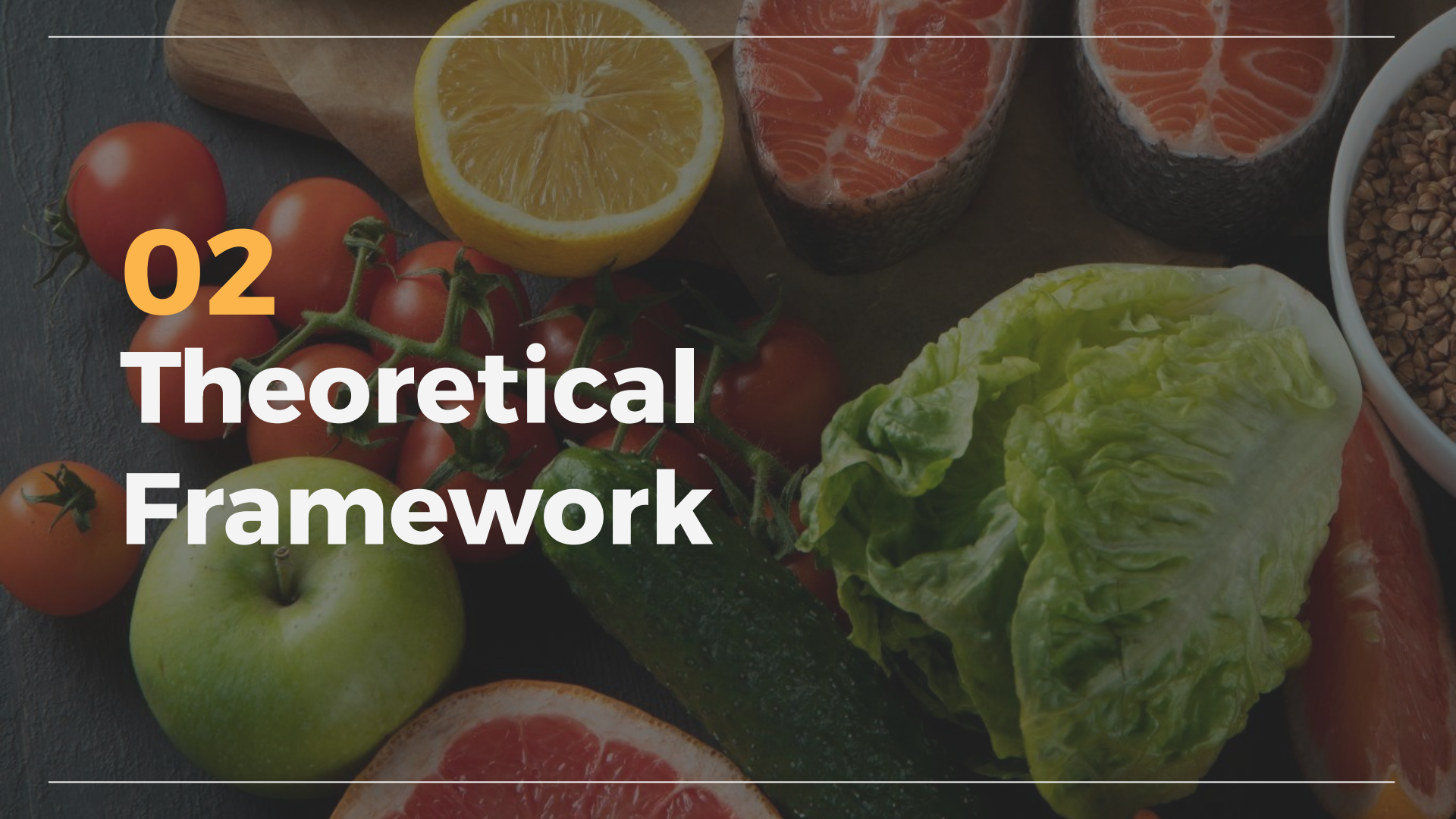
- Widely understood as the first government-backed, G2P Gastrodiplomacy campaign
- Sought to increase overseas Thai restaurants from 5500 in 2002, to 8000 by 2003.
 - By 2024, there are 17,500 Thai restaurants globally
- Accomplished this by streamlining the export of Thai food products, assist in hiring Thai chefs, and offered a financing program for aspiring Thai restaurateurs



Thailand: Kitchen of the World was their second campaign, creating a certification scheme called “Thai Select” which ensured the authenticity and quality of overseas restaurants

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**Theoretical
Framework**



Four Essential, Underpinning Theories

Nye's (2008) Soft Power:

- Public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy rely on soft power
- The power of attraction, rather than coercion (economic or military)
- Gastrodiplomacy aims to cultivate soft power through the culinary

Anholt's (2007) Nation Branding:

- Gastrodiplomacy is a key means to pursuing nation branding
- Seeks to address the “paradox of plenty” through brand management techniques to create a cohesive national image
- In doing so, it can improve the international recognition and reputation of these places.

Desoucey's (2010) Gastronationalism:

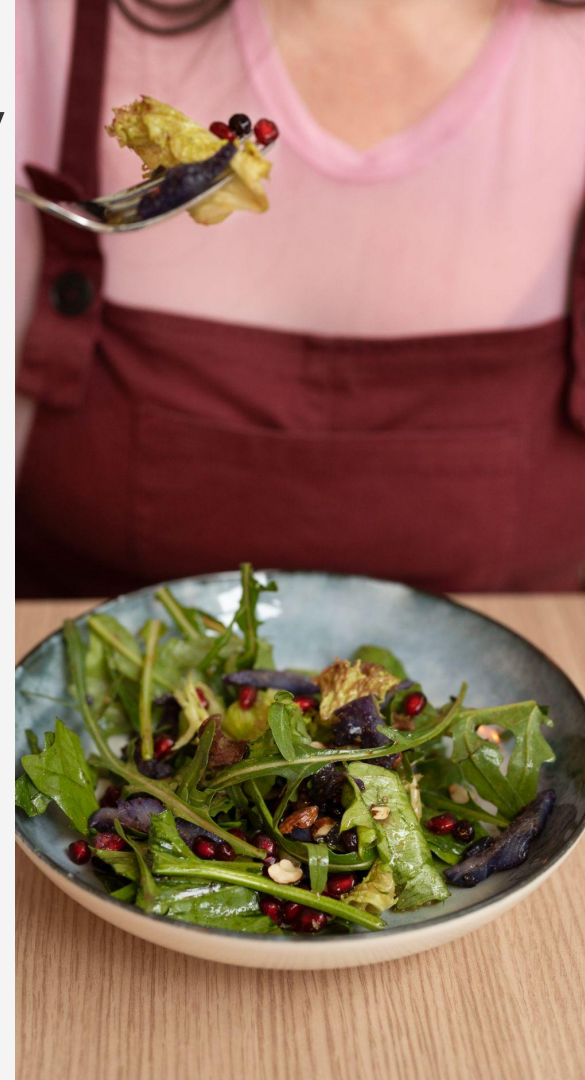
- Globalization has produced growing resistance against cultural homogenization
- Gastronationalism is a new form of identity politics, claiming cultural patrimony over certain culinary products and practices (pg. 435).
- Facilitates the association of food with its country of origin.

Allport's Contact Theory:

- Contact between different or opposing groups can lessen hostility and encourage greater cooperation, under the right conditions
- Food contributes to this by creating a pleasurable and intimate setting for this cross-cultural contact (Chapple-Sokol 2013, pg. 171)

Three Types of Gastrodiplomacy

- Culinary Diplomacy
 - Government-to-government, and behind closed doors
 - The symbolic use of food at the diplomat's table, reserved to elites and officials
- Gastrodiplomacy
 - Describes a government orchestrated campaign to use cuisine as a niche of cultural diplomacy, government-to-people
- Social Gastronomy
 - People-to-people
 - Utilizing cuisine as a means to address social issues through cookbooks, chef personalities, social media, and non-profit organizations



03

**Case Studies: Taiwan
and Palestine**

Why Taiwan and Palestine?



- Scholars have interpreted gastrodiploacy as a potential tool to overcome disabling environments for public diplomacy
 - Includes Rockower (2012), Wilson (2011), and Pham (2013)
 - Both Taiwan and Palestine struggle to overcome their disabling environments for diplomacy, failing to fully harness their soft power potential
 - Hence, gastrodiploacy represents a key opportunity for both of these states to gain more influence and attention on the global stage
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The Potential of Taiwanese Gastrodiplomacy

- Counters the One-China Policy
 - Cuisine uniquely embodies Taiwan's post-colonial and multi-cultural national identity
 - Increases global literacy on Taiwanese culture
 - Demonstrates Taiwan's cultural distinction from mainland China through flavor



Tea egg by Chef Kai Ho, the head chef of Taiwan's first three-star Michelin restaurant, Tairroir.



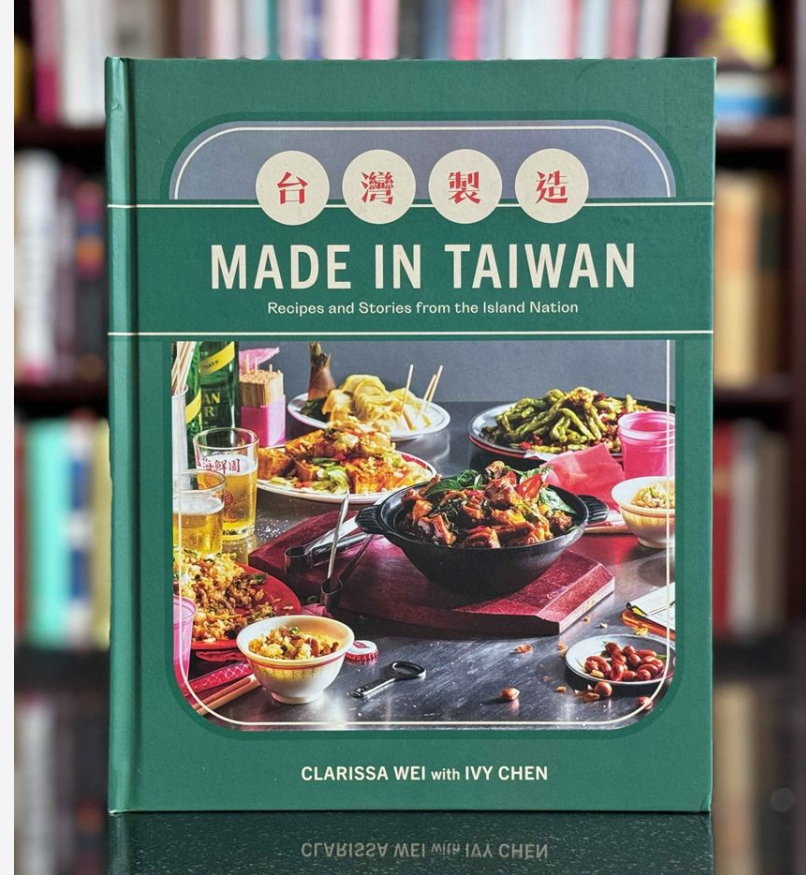
All in Good Taste: Savor the Flavors of Taiwan Campaign

- Taiwan's first official gastrodiplomacy effort
 - Began in 2010 and ended in 2013
 - Budget of \$34 million USD
- Goals:
 - Promote Taiwanese cuisine overseas, creating new restaurants and jobs, encouraging investment, and growing Taiwan brands
- Strategy:
 - Hosting international gourmet events and competitions
 - Organizing culinary tours
 - Encouraging greater food product exports
- Effect:
 - Popularized Taiwanese food abroad and increased tourism

Taiwan's Social Gastronomy

Since 2013, Taiwanese social gastronomy has grown significantly:

- Taiwan's diaspora has become its unofficial ambassadors, sharing Taiwanese food and culinary traditions to encourage greater international literacy of Taiwanese culture
- These social gastronomists have furthered the success of Taiwan's gastrodiploamacy by creating new contact zones through social media, private businesses, and even cookbooks.



Clarissa Wei and Ivy Chen's *Made in Taiwan: Recipes and Stories from the Island Nation* underlines the history of colonialism and its impact on Taiwanese foodways, while also examining the influences of the island's various ethnic cultures in the formation of its national cuisine.

The Potential of Palestinian Gastrodiplomacy

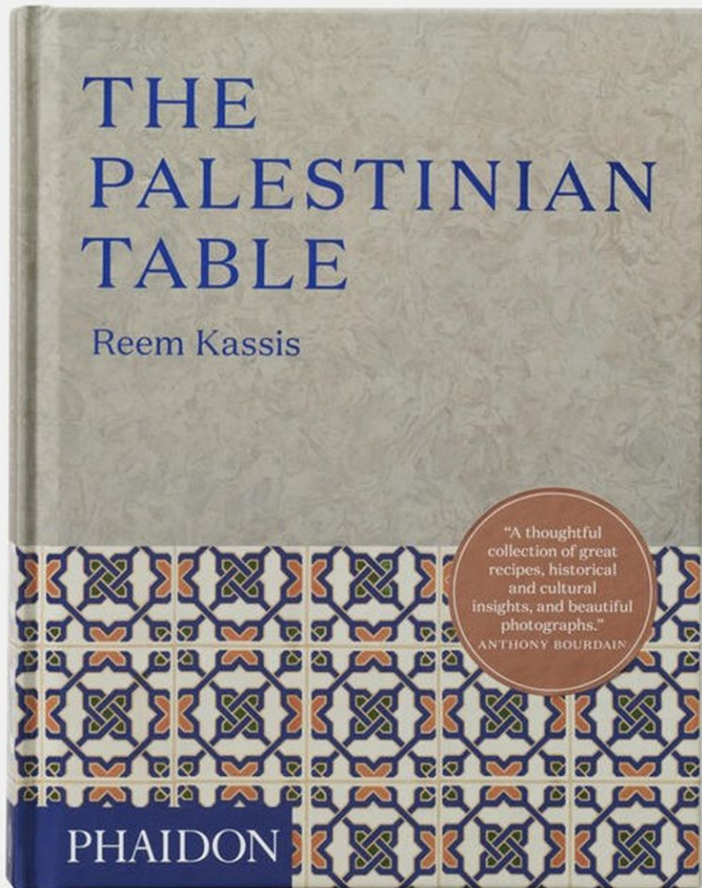
- In response to Israeli culinary appropriation of traditional Arab foods, such as falafel, pita and hummus
- Humanizes international perceptions of Palestinian people by sharing knowledge of their culinary traditions
- Resists Israeli attempts to erase Palestinian culture and identity by providing transnational diaspora with traditional recipes and practices



Anthony Bourdain dining with Yottam Ottolenghi, Michal Baranes and Yakub Barhum, some of the most influential social gastronomists in Israel/Palestine

Palestine as a Unique Case Study of Social Gastronomy

- Cookbook authors such as Laila El-Haddad, Reem Khasis, and Yasmin Khan have transformed these texts into political mediums, using cuisine to humanize global perceptions of Palestinians abroad
 - Counters the diminutive image of Palestinian people as just poor, refugees and beggars.'
- Increases global cross-cultural contact with Palestinian people, countering Israeli attempts to silence them



The Palestinian Table by Reem Kassis is the perfect example of a broader phenomenon of social gastronomy through cookbooks in Palestine.

Criticisms of Taiwan and Palestine's Gastrodiplomacy

Taiwan

- Ideological differences over the nature of Taiwan's national identity have weakened the efficacy of its gastrodiplomacy efforts
- Taiwan's weak and fragmented public diplomacy institutions have also limited the success of its gastrodiplomacy campaigns, failing to paint a cohesive national image through cuisine.

Palestine

- The lack of central government has made it impossible to conduct an official, state-led gastrodiplomacy campaign.
 - Failed to foment any meaningful policy change regarding the fate of the Palestinian people. Social gastronomy can only play a supplemental role in this regard.
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04

Conclusion

A collage of fresh ingredients including a whole fish, salmon fillets, eggs, walnuts, and vegetables. The background is a dark, textured surface with a wooden cutting board. The fish is the central focus, surrounded by various other items like walnuts, eggs, a yellow pepper, and a bowl of chickpeas. The text '04' is in orange and 'Conclusion' is in white.

Lessons from Each Case

Taiwan:

- Taiwanese cuisine offers a compelling example of the island's cultural distinction from mainland China
- Weakened by the domestic bi-partisan ideological disputes and institutional insufficiencies
- Regardless, it has increased the visibility of Taiwanese cuisine at the global dining table, granting the island-nation greater soft power and increasing tourism rates

Palestine:

- Negatively impacted by the lack of effective government and dependence on a legalistic approach.
 - Palestinian social gastronomists have successfully utilized cookbooks and social media as tools of resistance against Israel's cultural oppression of Palestine.
 - In doing so, they have spread awareness of Palestinian culture abroad, humanizing them in the process
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Thanks!

If you have any questions, you
can email them to me at:
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