

Research on the Aesthetics of Traditional Jingchu Cuisine under the Perspective of the Grand Food View

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Abstract: *Under the perspective of the Grand Food View, the aesthetics of traditional Jingchu cuisine showcase rich cultural connotations and unique aesthetic value. This paper systematically reviews the theoretical foundation of the Grand Food View and culinary aesthetics, deeply analyzes the aesthetic characteristics of traditional Jingchu cuisine, and explores its inheritance and innovation in modern society. The study shows that the visual and morphological beauty, gustatory and olfactory beauty, and the artistic and cultural beauty of Jingchu cuisine reflect the diversity of local culinary culture and demonstrate its profound historical and artistic value. Furthermore, this paper proposes innovative pathways and promotion strategies for Jingchu cuisine in modern society, providing new ideas for the protection and development of traditional culinary culture.*

Keywords: *Grand Food View, Jingchu, Traditional Cuisine, Aesthetics, Cultural Heritage, Innovation*

Introduction

In the accelerated process of globalization and modernization, traditional culinary culture faces the dual challenges of inheritance and innovation. The Grand Food View, as a comprehensive and systematic dietary concept, emphasizes the diversity, cultural significance, and health aspects of food, providing new theoretical perspectives and research methods. As an important component of Chinese culinary culture, traditional Jingchu cuisine's aesthetic characteristics and cultural connotations are worth in-depth exploration and research.

1 Theoretical Foundations of the Grand Food View and Culinary Aesthetics

1.1 Definition and Development of the Grand Food View

The Grand Food View (Comprehensive Food Perspective) is a novel dietary concept that emphasizes food as not only a basic necessity for sustaining life but also an integral part of culture, health, and ecology. It integrates theories from nutrition, ecology, cultural studies, and other disciplines, advocating for a diversified, balanced, and sustainable diet.

The core of the Grand Food View lies in comprehensively understanding and valuing the multifaceted

aspects of food. Specifically, it emphasizes the nutritional balance and health benefits of food, encourages a diverse dietary structure, highlights the cultural heritage and regional characteristics of food, respects and protects traditional culinary cultures, and focuses on the ecological impact of food production and consumption, promoting sustainable agriculture and food systems.^[1]

The concept of the Grand Food View originated in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as global environmental and health issues became increasingly severe, prompting a reevaluation of the significance and value of food. The following are key stages in the development of the Grand Food View:

In the late 20th century, research in nutrition and ecology began to focus on the comprehensive impacts of food systems. Scholars introduced concepts like "ecological diet" and "sustainable diet," emphasizing the ecological and health values of food.

In the early 21st century, with the acceleration of globalization, the cultural value of food gained attention. Researchers explored the relationship between food, culture, and identity, proposing the concept of "cultural diet."

In recent years, the principles of the Grand Food View have matured and spread widely. Governments and international organizations advocate for diversified, sustainable dietary policies, while academia has conducted extensive research, providing a solid foundation for the theory and practice of the Grand Food View.

1.2 Concept and Theory of Culinary Aesthetics

Culinary aesthetics (Food Aesthetics) is a discipline that studies the aesthetic characteristics of food and its cultural connotations, encompassing the color, aroma, taste, and form of food, as well as the ambiance and emotional experiences associated with dining. Culinary aesthetics not only focuses on the sensory enjoyment of food but also explores its symbolic significance and value in social and cultural contexts.

The basic concepts of culinary aesthetics include: The color, shape, aroma, and taste of food are fundamental elements that provide sensory enjoyment and aesthetic pleasure. As a cultural practice, food carries rich historical and social meanings. Culinary habits and cooking techniques in different cultural contexts reflect unique aesthetic styles. The dining environment and atmosphere significantly impact the dining experience, including the design of the dining space, choice of tableware, and dining rituals.

The theoretical framework of culinary aesthetics primarily includes the following aspects:

Firstly, culinary aesthetics is based on fundamental aesthetic principles such as harmony, symmetry, and dynamism. These principles guide the cooking and presentation of food, ensuring visual appeal.

Secondly, culinary aesthetics studies food as a cultural symbol. For instance, certain foods hold special symbolic meanings in specific cultures, such as "nian gao" (rice cake) in China, symbolizing good fortune and reunion.

Thirdly, culinary aesthetics focuses on the emotional experiences during dining, including the pleasure of enjoying delicious food and the happiness of sharing meals with family and friends. These emotional experiences enrich the aesthetic value of food.^[2]

2 Aesthetic Characteristics of Traditional Jingchu Cuisine under the Grand Food View

2.1 Beauty of Color and Form

Traditional Jingchu cuisine is renowned for its rich visual effects and intricate form designs. The beauty of color and form is a fundamental element of Jingchu culinary aesthetics, endowing food with artistic charm and cultural connotations through color coordination and shaping design.

2.1.1 Beauty of Color

Jingchu dishes emphasize harmonious and contrasting colors, striving for vivid and striking visual appeal. Color is not only an external manifestation of food but also an embodiment of its intrinsic value. Different ingredients are skillfully paired to achieve visual harmony in the dishes. For example, the red of chili peppers, the green of vegetables, the yellow of tofu, and the white of fish complement each other, enhancing appetite and creating a beautiful visual effect. The choice and combination of colors not only adhere to the natural hues of the ingredients but also consider the color changes during cooking to ensure that the final presentation of the dish is vibrant and aesthetically pleasing.

The expression of color beauty is also evident in special dishes prepared for festivals and celebrations, such as the red and white "Celebration Fish Head," symbolizing good fortune. The red symbolizes festivity and warmth, while the white represents purity and beauty. These color elements enhance the visual appeal of the dishes and convey rich cultural connotations and well-wishes. Similarly, the "Osmanthus Rice Lotus" served during the Mid-Autumn Festival combines the white of the lotus root with the golden yellow of the osmanthus flowers, symbolizing reunion and happiness. The clever use of colors not only makes the dishes delicious but also adds a festive atmosphere and cultural significance.

2.1.2 Beauty of Form

Jingchu cuisine not only pursues aesthetic appeal in color but also pays great attention to the design of food forms. The beauty of form reflects the perfect combination of natural shapes and culinary techniques, showcasing the chef's craftsmanship and creativity. The cutting and plating of ingredients are meticulously designed to highlight their unique form beauty. For example, in "Chopped Chili Fish Head," the fish head is split in half, and chopped chili is spread on top, highlighting the plump shape of the fish head and the vibrant color of the chili. This dish is not only delicious but also visually striking, making it a representative of Jingchu culinary culture.

Furthermore, the beauty of form is also evident in the contrast between the original and processed forms of ingredients. For instance, "Three Delicacies Tofu Skin" contrasts the delicate thinness of tofu skin with the rich and full stuffing, showcasing the softness and fineness of the tofu skin and the abundance and variety of the stuffing. The design of form enhances the visual appeal of the dish and enriches the dining experience, allowing diners to appreciate both the art and culture infused in the food.

2.2 Beauty of Taste and Smell

The beauty of taste and smell is a key characteristic of traditional Jingchu cuisine. Through unique seasoning and cooking techniques, Jingchu dishes provide profound sensory enjoyment in taste and smell. This sensory enjoyment comes not only from the natural flavors of the ingredients but also from the chef's careful seasoning and techniques during cooking.

2.2.1 Beauty of Taste

The beauty of taste in Jingchu cuisine lies in its rich flavor layers and distinct taste characteristics. Jingchu dishes are known for their "spicy and aromatic" flavors, with the use of spices and chili peppers creating intense and complex tastes. Each dish uses different seasonings and cooking methods to present unique flavors, allowing diners to experience a rich gustatory pleasure.^[3]

The spicy and aromatic flavors of Jingchu cuisine come from the skillful use of seasonings such as chili peppers and Sichuan peppercorns. For example, the famous "Wuchang Fish" is steamed to retain the fresh taste of the fish, seasoned with ginger, scallions, and garlic to enhance its delicate texture and fragrant flavor. The essence of this dish lies in preserving the original taste of the fish while enhancing its deliciousness with aromatic seasonings. The "Spicy Crawfish" is seasoned with a secret spicy mix, offering a rich flavor with a blend of spiciness, aroma, and sweetness, providing a full-bodied taste experience with layers of flavor.

Jingchu dishes are also known for their complex flavor profiles achieved through various seasonings and cooking techniques. For instance, "Spicy Crab" combines the freshness of crab meat with the spiciness of chili peppers and the numbing effect of Sichuan peppercorns, enhanced with garlic, ginger, and scallions, creating a surprising taste in every bite. Additionally, "Hot Dry Noodles" from Jingchu cuisine achieve a rich texture through a mix of sesame paste, garlic water, and chili oil, with multiple layers of flavor interweaving in the mouth, leaving a lasting impression.

2.2.2 Beauty of Smell

The beauty of smell in Jingchu cuisine is achieved through the aromas of ingredients and seasonings. Smell plays a crucial role in the dining experience, stimulating appetite and enhancing the overall dining experience. Common spices in traditional Jingchu cuisine, such as Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, and cinnamon, release strong aromas during cooking, making the dishes more enticing.

The use of spices in Jingchu dishes is highly sophisticated, creating unique olfactory experiences through different combinations. For example, in "Chopped Chili Fish Head," the aroma of chopped chili blends with the fresh scent of the fish during steaming, making the dish mouthwatering. The rich aroma of the chili and the fresh scent of the fish head gradually release during steaming, combining to make the dish not only flavorful but also fragrant, greatly increasing appetite.

In Jingchu cuisine, "Slow-cooked Chicken Soup" releases the aroma of chicken and medicinal herbs through slow simmering, resulting in a rich, fragrant soup that is unforgettable. During the cooking process, the fresh aroma of chicken and the fragrance of herbs blend, creating a unique complex aroma. Drinking a mouthful of hot soup fills the mouth with fragrance, providing a warm and satisfying experience. This cooking method preserves the natural aroma of the ingredients and enhances it through slow simmering, making the aroma richer and longer-lasting.

2.3 Beauty of Ambiance and Culture

Traditional Jingchu cuisine not only provides sensory pleasure through color, form, taste, and smell but also emphasizes the expression of ambiance and culture during dining. This reflects the profound cultural heritage and humanistic care of the region. The beauty of ambiance and culture is an important component of Jingchu culinary aesthetics, creating a holistic dining experience through environmental creation, emotional expression, and cultural symbolism.

2.3.1 Ambiance Beauty

Jingchu cuisine pays attention to creating a dining environment and ambiance. During traditional festivals and important occasions, the plating of dishes and dining settings are often filled with poetic and picturesque elements, integrating visual, tactile, and atmospheric aspects to create a unique dining ambiance.

During traditional festivals, Jingchu cuisine conveys festive atmosphere and emotions through specific plating and decorations. For example, "Osmanthus Cake" during the Mid-Autumn Festival symbolizes reunion and happiness, with osmanthus flowers sprinkled on the cake and fresh flowers and fruits placed on the table, creating a warm and romantic ambiance. This festive ambiance provides not only the taste of food but also visual and emotional pleasure and satisfaction. Similarly, "Eight Treasures Rice" during the Spring Festival symbolizes wealth and good fortune, with colorful nuts and candied fruits adorning the rice, conveying festive joy and good wishes. The meticulous preparation and beautiful plating of Eight Treasures Rice symbolize good luck and happiness for the New Year.^[4]

In daily life and special occasions, Jingchu cuisine also emphasizes the setting and ambiance of dining scenes. For example, in family gatherings, a carefully set table and warm lighting create a cozy and harmonious dining environment, enhancing family bonds. Table decorations such as flowers, candle holders, and elegant tableware elevate the sense of ceremony in dining, making an ordinary dinner special and meaningful.

2.3.2 Cultural Beauty

Traditional Jingchu cuisine is deeply influenced by the regional culture and historical background, with culinary habits and dish preparation reflecting unique cultural connotations. Jingchu culture reveres nature and values harmony between humans and nature, which is also reflected in its cuisine, forming a distinct cultural beauty.

Jingchu cuisine reflects the local natural environment and historical culture through ingredient selection and cooking methods. For example, "Lotus Root and Pork Rib Soup" is not only a delicious dish but also symbolizes "integrity" and "reunion." Lotus root, sourced from the lakes and rivers of the Jingchu region, is an important local ingredient. The combination of lotus root and pork ribs is not only nutritious but also symbolizes family unity and harmony, reflecting the family values and ethics in Jingchu culture.

Many dishes in Jingchu cuisine incorporate local folklore and historical legends, representing reverence for ancestors and aspirations for a good life. For instance, "Sticky Rice Chicken" is a traditional delicacy in the Jingchu region and is closely linked to local folklore. Legend has it that sticky rice chicken was an offering for ancestral worship, symbolizing respect and remembrance for ancestors. In modern society, sticky rice chicken remains a must-have dish for festivals and important occasions, representing hopes for a good life and the inheritance of traditional culture.

3 Inheritance and Innovation of Traditional Jingchu Cuisine under the Grand Food View

3.1 Modern Perspective on Jingchu Cuisine

From a modern perspective, traditional Jingchu cuisine faces dual challenges and opportunities in terms of inheritance and development. On one hand, the rapid urbanization process and accelerated pace of life put pressure on the transmission of traditional culinary culture; on the other hand, modern

technology and globalization provide new platforms for the innovation and dissemination of Jingchu cuisine.

3.1.1 Jingchu Cuisine in Modern Life

In modern life, people's demand for health and convenience is increasing, and traditional Jingchu cuisine is adapting to these changes. For example, traditional Jingchu dishes like Chopped Chili Fish Head and Hot Dry Noodles have been modified in terms of cooking methods and ingredient combinations to reduce the amount of oil and salt used, aligning better with modern health dietary concepts. Meanwhile, the development of convenience foods and pre-packaged foods has made traditional delicacies more accessible to households, such as convenient versions of Hot Dry Noodles and ready-to-eat Sticky Rice Chicken.

3.1.2 Modern Dissemination of Jingchu Cuisine

With the widespread use of the internet and social media, Jingchu cuisine has achieved broader dissemination through various digital platforms. The rise of food blogs, short video platforms, and food programs has allowed more people to learn about and taste Jingchu cuisine. For instance, food bloggers on platforms like TikTok and Weibo share the cooking process and tasting experiences of Jingchu dishes, conveying their charm to global audiences, significantly enhancing the recognition and influence of Jingchu cuisine.^[5]

3.2 Innovation Paths for Culinary Culture

Under the grand food view, traditional Jingchu cuisine needs not only to be inherited but also to be constantly innovated to meet the demands and changes of modern society.

3.2.1 Technological Innovation

The application of modern technology provides new possibilities for the innovation of Jingchu cuisine. For example, sous-vide cooking technology can preserve the nutrition and original flavor of ingredients while enhancing the texture and quality of food. Advances in food processing technology also allow traditional foods to be stored and transported more conveniently, such as the application of cold chain logistics technology, ensuring that traditional foods remain fresh during transportation.

3.2.2 Ingredient Innovation

While maintaining traditional flavors, Jingchu cuisine is also actively exploring new ingredient combinations. For instance, adding modern nutritious ingredients like quinoa and avocado to the traditional Lotus Root and Pork Rib Soup not only enriches the nutritional content of the dish but also introduces new taste experiences. This innovation retains the characteristics of traditional cuisine while catering to modern people's health dietary needs.

3.2.3 Integration of Cooking Techniques

Innovation in Jingchu cuisine is also reflected in the integration of cooking techniques. For example, combining Western cooking techniques with traditional Jingchu cuisine to create innovative dishes. Classic Jingchu dishes like Hot Dry Noodles are combined with the preparation techniques of Italian pasta, resulting in "Hot Dry Spaghetti," which retains traditional flavors while adding an exotic touch, appealing to young consumers.

3.3 Promotion and Application of Culinary Aesthetics

As an important part of traditional Jingchu cuisine, culinary aesthetics has broad promotional and application value in modern society.

3.3.1 Combination with Cultural Tourism

Jingchu culinary aesthetics can be combined with cultural tourism to create distinctive culinary tourism routes. Through activities such as food festivals and cultural festivals, Jingchu culinary culture can be integrated with tourism resources to attract domestic and international tourists. For example, the "Jingchu Culinary Culture Festival" held in Jingzhou showcases the rich culinary culture of the Jingchu region, allowing visitors to taste delicacies and participate in cooking experiences and traditional culinary culture lectures, deeply experiencing the charm of Jingchu cuisine.

3.3.2 Cross-Sector Cooperation and Brand Promotion

Through cross-sector cooperation, Jingchu culinary aesthetics can be incorporated into modern brand promotion. For instance, collaborating with fashion brands to design clothing and lifestyle products with Jingchu culinary elements enhances the cultural connotation and added value of the brand. Restaurants can convey the cultural value of Jingchu cuisine to consumers through brand stories and aesthetic packaging, enhancing brand appeal and loyalty.^[6]

3.3.3 Digital Display and Interactive Experience

Utilizing virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, a digital platform for displaying Jingchu culinary aesthetics can be created. Through virtual museums and interactive experiences, users can appreciate the aesthetic charm and cultural connotations of Jingchu cuisine in a virtual environment. For example, users can virtually visit the traditional Jingchu culinary preparation process through VR equipment, experiencing the joy and artistry of cooking.

Conclusion

This study systematically analyzes the aesthetic characteristics of traditional Jingchu cuisine from the perspective of the comprehensive food perspective, exploring its inheritance and innovation paths in modern society. Future research could combine more field surveys and data analysis to delve deeper into specific cases and practical experiences of traditional Jingchu cuisine. Additionally, investigating the promotion and application of Jingchu culinary aesthetics in an international context could enhance its global influence and recognition. Through ongoing in-depth research, this study aims to further advance the inheritance and innovation of traditional Jingchu culinary culture, providing new perspectives and insights for the development of food aesthetics theory.

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