

The Raw, the Cooked and the Other-one

Home-made? The legendary anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss classified the stages of society into the Raw and the Cooked, meaning the wild/simple and the cultured/sophisticated. The wild/uncivilized hunter-gathering meat-eating societies on the one side of the axis; French haute cuisine on the other.

I guess his thesis of dividing society had some validity until or just after the second World War. Since then another category has entered our society. This other one is neither raw/wild nor cooked/cultured in the Lévi-Strauss sense, nor is it an in-between (like for example simply boiled or roasted).

This other food of nowadays is of course cooked, in that it has been processed from the raw (and therefore also undergone some advanced culture). But it is also raw, in the Lévi-Strauss-kind-of-sense, because it has not been (home-) made by the one who is eating it or one of their kin. One needs just to take a stroll along the aisles of the local TESCO, which leads you from authentic shepherds pie mix via Wensleydale cheese crisps to Nick Nairn's hand made white rolls (I wonder how his hand can make so many?).

This new Other-one food is neither haute cuisine, as it is not cooked by oneself, nor is it of course wild or raw (as it is cooked). What is it then? Maybe it's both: haute cuisine in a sense, as it is cooked and highly sophisticated in production; but also raw, as it needs no input from the consumer, the eater. For most of us it is just there.

Böller und Brot's HomeMade films push us to re-appraise the taken for granted experiences of gathering, selecting, preparing and sharing food. Their multi-skills as documentary film-makers, combined with their employment of tools from the arts, design and cookery as well as twists of fate, allow us to subtly discover the Other-one in our food culture. In total they made eight films with 24 local children in TV-cookery-series style.

Only equipped with the ingredients list on the package were the children given the task to shop locally and then hand make Smarties, Frazzles Mars Bars and other universal goodies. To help them along, they were allowed to call some local experts, like the local baker, the chef in the Huntly Coffee House, Dean's shortbread food-designer and also the manufacturer's hotline. What you get in HomeMade is the dialogue. Dialogue about food and about cooking, about colours and about other things. 'Hydrolysed soya protein, potassium chloride? Are you boys trying to make a bomb?' says the TESCO employee when looking through the shopping list.

Claudia Zeiske

Deveron Arts
December 2007