

James Beard as an Engenderer

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Abstract In this paper, we talk about the existence and influence of James Beard, a very respected expert in food critique and American cuisine. We try to show his impact on our history and society.

Keywords Beard, Cooking, Child, Culture

1. Introduction

James Beard, or Beard for short, was born in Portland, America, on May 5, 1903 (The Oregon Encyclopedia 2018, para. 2), and died in New York, from heart failure, on the 21st of January of 1985 (The Oregon Encyclopedia 2018, para. 10).

Beard's last cooking class happened in Oregon, 1981, and his last book was Beard on Pasta (1983).

The English Mary Elizabeth, and the American John Beard did not have any other kid (The Oregon Encyclopedia 2018, para. 2).

The Dean of the American Cookery (The Oregon Encyclopedia 2018, para. 1) ran a cooking show, *I Love to Eat*, from 1946 to 1947 (The Oregon Encyclopedia 2018, para. 6), and that was the first televised cooking show ever [(American Masters PBS 2017, para. 6), (The Oregon Encyclopedia 2018, para. 1), (Polan 2010, p. 23)].

According to Collins (Collins 2010, p. 1), *it was not really seen by many people* even because very few had television sets back then (American Masters PBS 2017, 0:46).

Beard's cookbooks have *a distinctive and compelling voice in appreciating seasonal and regional food done well, without pretension, for pleasure as much as for sustenance* (Polan 2010, p. 24).

Beard changed European into all-American cuisine (Clark 1993, pp. 1-30): *it was perhaps his invocation of an authenticity of the local, which he embodies in appealing memories ('I look back on') conveyed through folksy storytelling* (Polan 2010, p. 24).

We here focus on Beard's value for cultural criticism.

2. Development

Cultural Criticism is a *pedagogical exercise involving an examination of political elements of society in an attempt to tease out the unconscious ideologies held by society members with the intention of creating a more enlightened society* (Rouster 1996, p. 6).

Beard brought more enlightenment by defining American Cuisine, and therefore by decreasing levels of unconscious preference for the European cuisine.

Beard *claimed that corned beef sandwiches, tacos, and roast beef with Yorkshire pudding all belonged together in America* (Sokolov 1993, p. 148). Roasted Spareribs, Roast Wild Duck, and Cecily Brownstone's Country Captain (chicken) are part of his recipes (Jones 1992, pp. 195-196).

Beard created The James Beard Foundation (James Beard Foundation 2018, para. 2) somehow: Child was a close friend. Some (Tower 2016, p. 1) believe Beard and Child loved each other (American Masters PBS 2017, 3:17).

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The American foundation that increases enlightenment (recipes, restaurant finder, blog, etc.) levels is born from Child's love for Beard (James Beard Foundation 2018, para. 2), and is grand: *48 chefs from across the country, all of whom had at one time or another cooked in the famed restaurant of the 1980s, the Quilted Giraffe (it closed in 1992)* (Ferguson 1998, p. 636).

Beard's foundation offers information, scholarships, grants, education, events, and prizes (restaurant & chef, book, broadcast media, journalism, and leadership (*the Oscars of the food world*) as a trademark (James Beard Foundation 2018, para. 1).

Other organisations offer similar products, such as the Australian Culinary Federation (Australian Culinary Federation National Office Inc. 2018, para. 1-4) and the Basque Culinary Center (Basque Culinary Center 2018, para. 1-3), but the Beard's foundation seems to enjoy unprecedented levels of prestige.

Beard's Foundation's Impact Programs create a meaningful political footprint for the organisation that engages *the culinary community in the ongoing process of promoting a sustainable food system*; a system that provides nutritious food for all (James Beard Foundation 2018b, para. 9).

Beard and Greene founded *Citymeals on Wheels* (Citymeals on Wheels 2018, para. 2) together.

In 1981, November, Greene calls the DFTA to *express outrage that, in a city of such abundance, we could not care for our elderly neighbors in need* (Citymeals on Wheels 2018, para. 1).

In December, Greene and Beard raise funds to *prepare and deliver 6,000 meals for their homebound elderly neighbors on Christmas and Hanukkah* (Citymeals on Wheels 2018, para. 2).

That changes the way New Yorkers see food and feeding, and therefore culture.

Citymeals on Wheels is a precursor in terms of name or intentions, but Australia started a similar program in 1954 (Famac Web Services 2018, para. 16), so that we look for other areas of human existence where Beard's contributions could have been well noticed.

Feminism could be one of those.

Beard's actions empowered women at a time of great loss (end of WWII).

Beard praised Child's work (Rotskoff 2012, p. 633), and Child mastered the French cuisine, so that Beard changed the unconscious of The French in a way to perhaps perpetuate the WWII alliance (for the American leaders, *France was only one factor in its European policy* (Hill 1993, p. 1676)).

Beard changes paradigms: women are equal, and may even be superior, to men workwise.

Judith Jones, our Judith, makes Beard notice Child by asking him to assess Child's book (American Masters PBS 2017, 2:24).

Beard's words: *It's remarkable. I wish I'd written it* (on Child's book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Kraig 2013, p. 394).

Beard told Americans how to do a wassail [(American Masters PBS 2017, 3:20), (Shurgot 2010, para. 4)]: we feel compelled to join him as Child offers a piece of toasted and wassailed baguette on TV.

The JiJie (American Masters PBS 2017, 3:22) created a new kitchen culture, where cooking is fun (Behr 2015, 0:00-18:52).

Beard wrote more than 20 cookbooks (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 2018, para. 1). The most important ones are *James Beard's American Cookery* (1972), containing more than 500 of Beard's most successful recipes (Amazon.com, Inc. 2018, para. 5), and *Beard on Bread* (1973); a bestseller containing 100 of Beard's favourite recipes [(American Masters 2017, para. 18), (Penguin Random House 2018, para. 1)].

The impact of Beard's work, 33 years after his death, is measured through what advertises it: FOX News classified *American Cookery* as the 8th best cookbook ever (FOX News Network, LLC 2018, para. 14). Krebs detailed Beard's footprint in criticism (Krebs 2018: para. 7, para. 17, para. 39):

In addition to writing two dozen books and hundreds of articles on gastronomic subjects, Mr. Beard had a weekly syndicated column and was a consultant to several restaurant chains and food and wine suppliers.

He was considered an important influence on many prominent figures in food writing, including Child, Paula Peck, Marcella Hazan, Madhur Jaffrey and Craig Claiborne.

A favorite Beard target was the American meat industry, which, he said, 'produces the finest beef and the worst hams, veal and lamb in the world.'

As a consultant to Restaurant Associates Inc., he helped plan the menus for several New York restaurants, including the Four Seasons, Charlie O's and Charlie Brown's. In 1975 and 1976, he served as a consultant to the operators of the new Windows on the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center.

Creating the first televised cooking show ever is changing culture: now people learn from watching TV whilst before they had to see the cook face-to-face.

That brings knowledge about cooking, and the cook who is presenting, to many people, but does not necessarily imply more enlightenment: a less human cook means lower understanding/intelligence levels instead.

The unconscious ideology implies that respecting the cook - perhaps trading money for knowledge - is a necessity. When acquiring knowledge through the TV show, all is free, and that sometimes implies doing ten things as we watch.

Beard pioneered the movement 'from table to the restaurant' (The Culinary Institute of America 2018, para. 1), and some companies still frame their offers with this slogan (FreshDirect 2018, para. 6).

3. Conclusions

Cultural Criticism is a *pedagogical exercise involving an examination of political elements of society in an attempt to tease out the unconscious ideologies held by society members with the intention of creating a more enlightened society* (Rouster 1996, p. 6).

Beard was a cultural critic because he promoted an all-American cuisine and therefore decreased levels of unconscious preference for the European cuisine.

I Love to Eat did not impress much also because of the amount of television sets available back then (American Masters PBS 2017, 0:46).

Beard's numerous female contacts, and continuous praise to women's efforts in the work front, praise to the level of doing something that was traditionally feminine with joy, brought weakening to the unconscious negative image of working women.

It was important that Beard appeared in public with Child, a master of the French cuisine, and praised her work and existence to such levels: that made Americans like The French in a way to permanently include at least their cuisine in their culture, and that strengthened even more the friendship between the two countries that had just fought together in the WWII.

Beard made us think that shows like Masterchef are OK: he was the first person on earth to have a TV show on cooking.

That changed our society forever: to the good side, men can now help and replace women in the kitchen; cooking is seen as a profession, is advertised as something useful, laborious, and deserving of praise. To the bad side, all comes for free to our sight, we don't pay the cook more respect than we pay to a panel on the road, and they may then be seen as a distant and mechanized item, something like a car.

Beard founded Citymeals on Wheels in NYC, so that he changed the way the disadvantaged elderly are treated: *Citymeals has delivered 56 million nutritious meals since 1981* (Citymeals on Wheels 2018b, para. 6), and their main intention is feeding homebound elderly New Yorkers.

Similar programs exist for many years before Citymeals starts, and Australia has one of those, but the location and the fact that Beard was involved made it possible that The James Beard Foundation donated to it. Beard's name is seen in association with this particular program in the James Beard Foundation's and in the Citymeals' websites.

Beard defined American Cuisine: before him, America ate European food.

FOX News recommends American Cookery as one of the ten best cookbooks ever. Corned beef sandwiches, tacos, roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, Roasted Spareribs, Roast Wild Duck, and Cecily Brownstone's Country Captain, along with quite a few other dishes, more than 1,500, are now part of the American cuisine thanks to Beard.

Beard's life and person give reasons of existence to The James Beard Foundation, and this foundation serves the world in several ways, including annual prizes in food journalism. The categories are restaurant & chef, book, broadcast media, journalism, and leadership. Important vehicles from the mainstream media called them *the Oscars of the food world* (James Beard Foundation 2018, para. 1).

Beard's foundation moves circa 12.5 million dollars per year (Citrincooperman 2017, p. 4) or about one sixth of what the Cancer Council moves (Cancer Council 2017, pp. 10-40). The foundation has about 30 years, and the council has about 60. In compensation, health is to the level of education for most governments, but elaborated food (recipes) is at least one degree away: we have health and education ministries, but we do not have a ministry for cooking.

Beard's foundation sets standards in food criticism: after learning that Sietsema (Sietsema 2015, para. 1) received a James Beard prize on food journalism (WashPostPR 2016, para. 1), but Bruni (The New York Times 2006, para. 1-9) didn't receive prizes from the food industry, we choose reading Sietsema's review.

Beard's foundation still invests in Impact Programs (Beard Foundation 2018b), and those deal with eight main issues, so also food waste: the programs aim at *establishing a more sustainable food system through education, advocacy, and thought leadership* (James Beard Foundation 2018b, para. 1-10).

Beard produced twenty four cookbooks, and *Beard on Bread* is a best-seller.

Beard influenced the way we think about cookbook writers in a meaningful manner because he decided on what food books would be sold in America.

Beard helped define the brand of a few restaurants, since that includes their food: Four Seasons, Charlie O's, Charlie Brown's, and The new Windows on the World (top of World Trade Center) are amongst those.

Beard changed the way critics write about food. Some of those: Child, Peck, Hazan, Jaffrey, and Claiborne.

Beard marked the world forever also with his constant criticism of the American meat industry: *the finest beef and the*

worst hams, veal and lamb in the world (Krebs 2018, para. 17).

Wassailed meant covered on wassail, and Beard made Child teach us how to do a wassail (American Masters PBS 2017, 3:20). Good was seasonal and regional food done well, without pretension, for pleasure as much as for sustenance (Polan 2010, p. 24).

The JiJie established a new kitchen culture, which has, as its most interesting ingredient, fun.

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