

## What is the future of foreign food experiences?

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Terms such as ‘global village’ are often used to indicate that the world is shrinking, and that it becomes increasingly possible to get anything anywhere. While it could be argued that this is a good thing, it can also lead to a depressing homogeneity of high streets, airports, hotels and events. Urry’s (1999) tourist gaze argued that people travel to strange places to experience ‘difference’ but interpret (often mistakenly) what they see through the lens of their own experiences and cultural background in an attempt to make sense of what they see. One of the pleasures of foreign travel is trying new food and culinary experiences (Bell, 2010; Germann Molz, 2007; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Williams et al., 2014). Neill et al. (2016, p. 140) use the term ‘refractive gaze’ to describe people’s reactions to ‘strange food’ because ‘the refractive gaze encapsulates and extends existing gazes through experience, subjectivity, cultural and culinary capital accumulation’. International students are like tourists in that they travel to somewhere new but then are also like local people because they stay for a semester, a year, or even longer. They also bring their own (and differing!) values (Cavagnaro et al., 2018; Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015). The ‘strangeness’ of local food therefore slowly transforms into familiarity, if only as a survival strategy or as a way to gain cultural or culinary capital!

This study considers the responses of a group of international students (mainly Indian, European and Chinese) to food choices while studying hospitality and tourism management in New Zealand. It identifies universal foods, great discoveries and things they will never like, as well as ways in which they managed to continue to eat food from home despite being in a strange environment. This study was both a research study and an opportunity for students to be involved in and learn from a live research study as participants and researchers.

The results of this study are important when considering the future of food tourism. Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2018, p. 166) points out that considering the future ‘encourages students to search, define and negotiate their own understanding of the problem’. Thinking about the future of local foods may help students to identify what is valuable (and therefore is worth protecting and researching) about their own or others’ culinary capital. However, in Haddouche and Salomone (2018) studying Generation Z, there is no mention of food whatsoever – so perhaps it is not a priority for this group?

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