Desserts on 'Italian' franchise restaurants' menus in South Africa

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Abstract

Historical migrations and the current globalisation process have contributed to the diffusion of various cuisines around the world. This process of cuisine diffusion intersects with issues about culture, divergence and convergence of taste and homogenisation (or not) of food culture. Italian food and cuisine, has historically been diffused by a large global migratory movement of the Italian people. Today, Italian restaurants are visible all around the world. However, issues related to the authenticity of Italian cuisine in restaurant around the world is questionable. With these arguments as a background, this article aims to explore the list of Italian desserts in selected assorted Italian franchise restaurants in South African to verify if the proposed desserts can be associated with or wondered to be Italian food (specifically Italian desserts). Literature proposes that ethnic restaurant clients wish to eat authentic national foods. However, business priority can jeopardise this by contaminating the restaurant with 'outsider' food. Despite the numerically important presence of Italian restaurants in South Africa, research in this area appears to be very limited. This article intends to begin a process to close this gap. Results from this article propose that desserts on the menus of Italian franchise restaurants are, almost totally, unrelated to Italy and are in effect 'outsider' food when viewed in the Italian culinary context.

Keywords: Italian restaurants, food; desserts, South Africa, diffusion.

Introduction

Globalisation can be seen as an economic, cultural and political process and it can be understood as the diffusion of Western/American culture leading to a more homogenous world (Potter, 2002:192). However, it may also be proposed that "globalisation is resulting in greater difference", and it can be linked to issues related to uneven development and inequalities (Potter, 2002:192). When viewed in a culinary context, the homogenisation of food culture is not conclusive and local interpretations are present (Flandrin & Montanari, 1999:551). Food is culture in all its stages of production, preparation and "*when it is eaten*" (Montanari, 2006: XI, emphasis in original). Studies related to various aspects of globalisation, food, culture and taste are present (Zaman, Selim & Joarder, 2013; Hassi & Storti, 2012; Ceccarini, 2010; Phillips, 2006; Aizenman & Brooks, 2005; Wright, Nancarrow & Kowk, 2001; Ritzer & Malone, 2000).

Food in Italy is part and parcel of the Italian identity. Within the European context, Italians and also other countries often consider Italian food to be superior (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:181). It has been asserted that "Italian cuisine continues to shape the global evolution of Western-ethnic cuisines" (Camillo & Karim, 2014:103). Today, people can shop and learn about exotic food and have the possibility to "dine on 'authentic' Chinese, Mexican or Italian food, drink 'authentic' Irish beer or French wine, touch 'authentic' musical artifacts at The Hard Rock Café or navigate the jungle at The Rainforest Café" (Lego et al., 2002:62). Ethnic foods are growing in relevance in people's diets and can be "defined as foods that originate from an ethnic group's heritage and culture" (Kim, Youn & Rao, 2017:129). As such, ethnic food and authenticity are important factors to be considered. The importance of the ethnic food market

research on ethnic restaurants is growing (Kim et al., 2017:129). However, extant research in the field has its problems, such as "previous research focusing on food-related attributes is scarce. Such neglect is surprising, given that food is one of the most important factors contributing to customers' perceived authenticity of ethnic restaurants" (Kim et al., 2017:129).

Keeping in mind these above-mentioned background issues, the aim of this article is to explore the list of Italian desserts in selected supposedly Italian franchise restaurants in South African to verify if the proposed desserts can be associated with Italy and considered to be Italian. This analysis was done by listing the desserts in the selected restaurants' franchise and considering each desserts/type of dessert's history/origin. This need is based on the suggestion that "literature on ethnic themed restaurants has already demonstrated that customers who patronize ethnic themed restaurants frequently seek authentic ethnic cultural experiences, and restaurant authenticity crucially influences customer satisfaction" (Tsai & Lu, 2012:304).

This article follows a similar article that investigated the variety of Pizza in South African and US-based franchises in South Africa (Balkaran, Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2016:11). This article is also pertinent as "few articles discuss the cultural significance of a franchising concept" to understand for example, if "cultural homogenization through franchising is part of a trend toward globalization and if so, is it desirable/controllable?" (Alon, 2004:165). Despite the numerically important presence of Italian-claimed restaurants in South Africa, there seems not to be much research about them. This article intends to close this gap. Importantly, it is emphasised that as with a previous study on restaurant menus, this article "will make no attempt to evaluate the quality of the food or even the accuracy of the terms when applied to foods" (Teller, 1969:91), but will specifically investigate if the proposed desserts themselves can be considered to be authentic Italian cuisine or otherwise.

Methodology

This article is based on documents available in the public domain. Restaurant menus and literature from academic journals, books and the internet were all utilised. For the case study, a total of four asserted Italian franchise restaurants were used, namely: Panarottis, Primi Piatti, Mimmos and Nino's. Menus were taken from the internet in three cases (Panarottis, Primi Piatti and Nino's) and directly at the restaurant, in one case, where it was visible in a menu-stand on the tables (Mimmos. It was not possible for the author to find the desserts menu on internet).

The selected franchise restaurants' operations all have various restaurants across South Africa. Primi Piatti has more than 26 restaurants (Primit Piatti, online a); Panarottis has more than 80 franchise operations (Panrottis, online a); Mimmos has more than 22 restaurants (Mimmos, online a); and Nino's has more than 23 Restaurants (Nino's, online a). All the selected brands work on a franchise system. In addition, they all propose to reflect some sort of Italian context (see section on case study).

Literature review

In the literature, the issues about "globalisation of taste and lifestyle is a debated topic" (Balkaran et al., 2016:3). Cultural globalisation has been proposed as "a process involving the increasing domination of one societal or regional culture over all others" (Robertson, 2012:191). However, globalisation can be more flexible and not intrinsically leading to homogenisation. Glocalisation has been proposed as "the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets" (Robertson, 2012:194). From a business perspective, it can be said that "diversity sells" (Robertson, 2012:194). Global marketing is not inconsistent with country based marketing modifications so that, for example, McDonald's offers shrimp in Japan and in India

has developed an Indian-based menu (Ceccarini, 2010:6). The "diversity based on specific cultures, religions or other values remains strong" (Balkaran et al., 2016:3) and local culture remains strong and people "are hybridizing or 'glocalizing' a mixture of global and local cultural influences" (Metin & Kizgin, 2015:107; Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:193). The "global and the local therefore seem to co-exist – with the global advancing its general consumptions patterns while the local is reinterpreting them" (Balkaran et al., 2016:4). However, there are simultaneous proponents envisioning a single homogenous taste and lifestyle global market (Alon, 2004:162).

The menus of food companies constitute the core of their business development and in a franchise restaurant they "become the core around which the entire concept is developed" (Khan, 2005:195). In a restaurant, the "menu is an initial signal to a customer about his/her impending restaurant experience" and it also communicates about the items sold and the brand image of the restaurant (Magnini & Kim, 2016:42). The restaurant's menu "is created in relation to the client, to the atmosphere which stays for the context of the offer" (Drugă & Savin, 2009:112). The standardisation process in menus is visible in many aspects. For example, "McDonald's tries to standardize major items that taste similar irrespective of whether they are purchased in Australia, Africa, Asia or anywhere else" (Khan, 2005:195). Within this standardisation process, variations are again present "based on consumer tastes, preferences, laws, customs and religious requirements" (Khan, 2005:195). Differences within the limits of a standardised context is present.

Restaurants attempt to generate an atmosphere that attracts patrons by intending to "meet and exceed customer expectations" (Muniz et al., 2017:1). Authenticity can be positive for business as it can be "a source of differentiation in a competitive business environment" (Lego, et al., 2002:66). Ethnic restaurants that wish to grow their customer comeback/return/patronage should "improve food quality and authenticity to meet customer expectations" (Tsai & Lu, 2012:306). Previously, it has been noted that the influence on customer choice when adding an Italian theme is that "it appears that the items perceived to be more Italian were selected more often" (Bell et al., 1994:21).

Ethnic restaurants are not just about food, but also about other features such as music and décor (Lego, et al., 2002:66). However, the authenticity of food in ethnic restaurants remains the most important element for customers (Kim et al., 2017:130; Tsai & Lu, 2012:304). Ethnic restaurants "appeal to natives of the homeland, represented by offering familiarity and authenticity in foods served" (Almerico, 2014:4). For others, the dining "experience allows them to explore the novelty of a different and maybe even unfamiliar culinary adventure" (Almerico, 2014:4). "Ethnic foods are called into being in their encounter with the foodways of the *other*. They are defined by *difference.* They only become recognised as such after being 'disembedded' from their locality and re-imbedded into a new context where *difference* makes them visible" (Arvela, 2013:46). Ethnic food is also "a site of struggle where the national is contested and destabilized, as well as re-invented, re-made and re-mixed" (Arvela, 2013:45).

In food, it is unquestionable that "the way various ingredients are combined and cooked is an important element of a national cultural identity" (Cusack, 2000:208). For example, "in most African capitals and big towns it is possible to eat at a range of restaurants presenting a range of national cuisines: Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian and Indian restaurants stand alongside English and Irish pubs. All this will reinforce the notion that all nations have national cuisines" (Cusack, 2000:212). Food is not just about sustenance, it is a central feature of lifestyle and it can differ based on various geographical, cultural and historical factors (Vignali, 2005:108). A 'national cuisine' is frequently constructed "by appropriating and assembling a variety of regional or ethnic recipes and often reflects long and complex culinary histories, as well as domestic ideologies" (Cusack, 2000:207).

Italian identity is rooted in the simultaneous and often competing local, national and cosmopolitan levels (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:181). Italian eating habits "are guided by understandings of their identity within society" (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:187) and Italian people learn from a young age about the role of food in their culture and identity (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:188). In Italy, food is associated with locality and also participating in building a national identity. Therefore, food became the common, and differentiating point, linking Italians around the world (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:189). For example, in Brussels at the turn of the twentieth century, Italian food enterprises proposed food offering "versions of *italianita`* that fed the construction of Italian identities in the city" (de Maret, 2013:126). This discourse is important and serves to underline how a specific food (in this case Italian) boasts meanings beyond its nutritional values, linking a country's local and national contexts to how it produces and maintains its own distinctiveness against other foods/cuisines. A distinctiveness that, it is argued in this article, should be proposed in Italian restaurants.

Italy has conserved "its gastronomic traditions better than many countries which are in the throes of a similar process of modernisation" (Alexander, 2000:556) and "Italian cuisine, as it is known today, is the result of the culinary evolution born of centuries of cultural, social and political changes "(Camillo & Karim, 2014:106). In Italy "food remains a business managed through local guarantees – one only trusts cuisine that has local roots and traditions, not international acclaim" (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:193). Italian cuisine proposes itself as traditional, pure, genuine and simple (Thoms, 2011:10). The image of Italian food is one of "indulgence, good for celebrations, ample in portions, full of variety, and irresistible in dessert selection" (Lee, Hwang &Mustapha, 2014:3). Italian cuisine, like culture, changes. Italian cuisine in restaurants changes all the time (see Camillo et al., 2010:551) and Italian cuisine has to adapt to local taste if a business needs to survive or expand. A Brazilian-Italian cuisine franchise expanding in Mexico has to change its menu to adapt to local taste (Marx Andrade et al., 2013:423). On the other hand, the McDonaldization process seeks "to neutralize factors of tradition by co-opting them into the system. The spread of fast-food restaurants in Italy, including those that market specific products associated with local traditions, evidences that global processes *are* having a powerful homogenizing effect on local cultures (Castellanos & Bergstresser, 2006:193).

"Italian cuisine, because of its adaptability in preparation and the unparalleled taste, remains one of the most popular cuisines in the world" (Camillo et al., 2010:551). It has been proposed that during "recent decades, Italian cuisine has had a greater impact upon the development of eating habits than any other national cuisine. Spaghetti, pizza, tiramisù and espresso are ubiquitous in Europe and North America" (Thoms, 2011:1). Italian food on its own can also be seen as the main actor in food habit convergence when proposing it as

> the smallest common culinary denominator of a European society whose dietary habits are otherwise extremely individualised and commercialised. With all the national differences in the reception of Italian cooking, its structure nevertheless offers throughout Europe – if not the world – a recognisable and therefore seemingly reliable basis, at the same time opening points of identification with its broad range of culinary possibilities (Thoms, 2011:10).

Again, Italian food has been the most adopted in the USA (Albala, 2013:222; about Italian Food in the United States see also Lee et al., 2014:3; Girardelli, 2004). Various factors have been associated with Italian food and its success. In the USA, factors such as the marriage between taste and simplicity and the balance of nutrients; the quality of ingredients; and "the image of authentic Italian restaurants" has been noted (Camillo et al., 2010:550). At the same time, it has been noted that "if terms such as authentic or real are buzzwords in the Italian food industry, this leverage on Italian ethnicity may merely reflect an astute marketing strategy"

(Girardelli, 2004:308). The moment that "popularity of an ethnic food becomes a mainstream phenomenon, those who are willing to profit from an emerging business opportunity can easily commodify the food's ethnic component" (Girardelli, 2004:313). Thus, numerous "ethnic restaurants have become commercialized […] Often the cuisine has melded so much into the host culture that authenticity is no longer a consideration. For example, there is nothing remotely "Italian" conveyed in the décor or menu of a Pizza Hut franchise. Yet some consumers desire a more "authentic" eating experience" (Lego, et al., 2002:66).

The spread and economic success of Italian food and restaurants has problems such as agro-piracy and being "Italian Sounding", creating a "parallel economy of counterfeit foods that recall Italian origin and generate an economic loss for the Italian food industry" (Maltese, Giachino & Bonadonna, 2016:92). This problem has been recognized and measured to counteract it start to emerge. For example, by the Unioncamere (Chambers of Commerce) project related to Italian restaurants. As proposed in the Unioncamere document worth to quote at length as explaining key arguments related to this article's background are explained (Unioncamere, 2011:2, Capitals in original):

> Italian cuisine is the result of a centuries-old historical process of Italian society, always leading to significant moments of human civilization. For an innate inclination to the attention of the Italians to human relationships and the quality of life, the culture of the table has become in the course of time the symbol of hospitality and welcome. The food has taken on a value like art and music. For these reasons, Italian food should be considered a contribution to the heritage of humanity and should be defended and protected from adulteration and falsification to preserve its history, culture, quality and authenticity. With this in mind, Unioncamere, on the basis of the experience of the brand "Italian Hospitality" carried out with the operational support of IS.NA.RT (National Institute for Research on Tourism - A company owned by Chambers of Commerce), promoted the project " ITALIAN HOSPITALITY, ITALIAN RESTAURANTS IN THE WORLD " addressed to all the Italian restaurants abroad, ensuring compliance with quality standards typical of Italian hospitality.

The aims of the project are:

- to develop and promote the traditions of Italian food products and upgrade the culture of Italian food and wine;
- to enhance the image of Italian restaurants abroad that guarantee respect of the quality standards of Italian hospitality;
- to create an international network, providing for the realisation of promotional events of Italian productive excellence.

The same project has been recalled in literature, proposing that "The Italian Hospitality Brand has a particular meaning related to restaurant services abroad […] The project has a two-fold objective. On the one hand, it enhances the activities that meet Italian hospitality standards to develop and promote traditional Italian food and gastronomy abroad. On the other hand, it defends the Italian culture and protects consumers from food fraud" (Maltese et al., 2016:92). Other organizations such as *Associazione Internazionale Ristoranti d'Italia* (ARDI, International Association of Italian Restaurants) (see Girardelli, 2004:308) also move in the same direction, showing the recognized need to establish specific requirements in Italian restaurants.

Desserts in South African Italian franchise restaurants

The website EatOut (EatOut, online) provides a total of 680 Italian Cuisine Restaurants in South Africa. Note that in South Africa there are only 24 Restaurants accredited by the

Ospitalità Italiana (Italian Hospitality) system (see IS.NA.R.T, online). The selected restaurants in this article all assert to be, in one way or another, Italian (see Table 1).

Table 1: Italian 'description' of various franchise restaurants

Restaurants	Italian description
Nino's	"...a Nino's meal is the idea that life, like good food, is meant to be shared. This staple Italian belief is the legacy of restaurant founder, Nino Bompani. An Italian immigrant, Bompani moved to South African shores in the 70s" (Nino's, online b).
Mimmos	"Find that Italian family atmosphere" (Mimmos, online b).
Primi Piatti	"In the pursuit of good taste, we never compromise our values. Because at the core of who we are is authenticity. We make real food. No corners cut. Unless it's a piece of our cheesecake. In the words of Michelin-starred Italian chef, Niko Romito, "Traditional Italian cuisine does not need re-inventing, rather brushing up, updating and accurate interpretation. To discover rather than cover the authenticity of the food elements is the winning formula that guarantees good results, but it is passion that makes it a special dish." The future is rooted in tradition" (Primi Piatti, online b).
Panarottis	"At Panarottis, we're passionate about Italian-style food. And when we prepare it, we use only the finest ingredients!" (Panarottis, online b).

The need is to verify what desserts are available and thereafter evaluate if these desserts can be considered originally and uniquely Italian. The author proposes that Italian restaurants should sell Italian food. Some food/dishes transform as a consequence of cultural changes, evolution and contact with other cultures/cuisines (and should not be impeded or negatively judged), it is proposed that the core of the cuisine should remain Italian. Naturally, this concept applies to any cuisine not just Italian restaurants. Table 2 presents the various desserts as written on the websites or in the menu-stand at restaurant in one case.

Table 2: Desserts list in four selected franchise restaurants

Restaurants	Desserts on menus
Panarottis (Panarottis, online c)	• Fudge Picasso Slice • Carrot Cake • Choc Mud Slide • Saucy Ice Cream Delight • Speciality Shake: Cherry Bomb • Speciality Shake: Tiramisu • Speciality Shake: Nutella • Speciality Shake: Bar-one • Speciality Shake: Crème Brûlée • Speciality Shake: Black Forest • Speciality Shake: Turkish Delight
Nino's (Nino's online c)	• Peppermint Crisp Cake • Bar-One Mousse Cake • Carrot Cake • Fridge Cheesecake • Speciality Cakes (Enquire about our selection)

Primi Piatti (Primi Piatti, online c)	• Bamboozie Shake: Hot Fudge And Bourbon • Bamboozie Shake: Whiet Chocolate, Rum And Mint • Bamboozie Shake: Kahlua And Oreo • Apple Rose • Crème Brûlée • Traditional Malva Pudding • Chocolate Plate • Brownie • Cheesecake		
Mimmos (Mimmos, Gateway)	• Panzookie (chocolate fudge, double choc chip or double choc fudge combo) • Mimmos Chocolate Oreo Sundae • Chcoclate brownie (with Ice cream) • Ice Cream and Hot chocolate sauce • Adventure Shakes:		
	○ **Flavours** ○ Chocolate Hazelnut ○ Mixed Berry ○ White Vanilla Bean	**Toppings** Oreo Turkish Delight Marshmallow	

In Table 2, Panarottis proposes Fudge Picasso Cake and Mimmos, the Panzookie (chocolate fudge, double choc chip or double choc fudge combo). The origin of Fudge has been linked to a mistake in the 1890s while making candy in a company in Philadelphia where following the mistake, the candy-maker swore "Fudge!". And with that exclamation to describe the mistake, fudge was born" (Foltz Jones, 1991:12). The USA origin of fudge is again proposed when mention is made that "fudge is a comparative newcomer to the candy scene–a purely American contribution a little more than a hundred years old" (Benning, 1990:3).

On the other hand, Choc Mud Slide (Panarottis) and Brownie (Primi Piatti and Mimmos – Mimmos proposed with ice cream) seems to have a more traceable origin. Together with fudge, they seem to belong to a 'family' and originated in USA. Recipes are never an invention but they develop over time. Mud Cake is fairly new and it seems "to have sprung off the American parental tree in the early 1970's, along with its cousin, The Mud Pie. Its ancestors are the Brownie (a mud cake is a more sensible sized brownie, that is all) and Fudge, but there must be a few rogue genes in there too, as the early 1970's recipes for Mud Cake also contain marshmallow" (Clarckson, 2007). The mud cake is thought to originally come from "the Southern part of the United States near the Mississippi River", taking the name from the colour of the mud along the river banks (ifood.tv, online). First baked in 1970, the mud cake "is believed to have evolved from the brownie. Fudge is yet another mud coloured chocolate food item which bears similarity to the mud cake" (ifood.tv, online). Thus, Brownies seems to have originated in the USA (Gage, 2010) and it has been mentioned that the first chocolate brownie recipe was published in the revised 1905 edition of the *Boston cooking-school cook-book* (Zanger, 2007:72). The *Boston cooking-school cook-book* in 1896 (Farmer, 1896:424) already presents a brownie recipe.

A carrot cake (Panarottis and Nino's) recipe on the other hand can be seen in the 1827 book *The art of French Cookery* (Beauvilliers, 1827:227). The evolution of carrot cakes passes through recipes from [10th century Arabian cookery] T'Khabis al-jazar (Carrots), through recipes from various books in 1699, 1747, 1803, 1830, 1845, up to a recipe in 1939 (Food timeline, online). The "modern carrot cake most likely descended from Medieval carrot puddings enjoyed by people in Europe. No one really knows where carrot cake came from. It looks like it did evolve from the Carrot Pudding of medieval times" (The Carrot museum, online a). "Carrot pudding is a dish traditional to a wide range of cultures around the world" (The Carrot museum, online b). The indication is that while there is possibly no assurance about the exact origin of carrot cake, Arabs were possibly about the first to make it, while carrot cake can also be seen as belonging to various cultures and countries. While carrot cake can also

be enjoyed in Italy (and Italy could have its original recipe), it seems not to be a specifically Italian original dessert.

Primi Piatti's 'Traditional Malva Pudding' can be associated to South African history. Malva Pudding came from Dutch origin to become a South Africa iconic dessert (Roufs & Roufs, 2014:302). Whereas Bar-one cake (Nino's) takes the idea from the Bar-one snack that "Launched in the 1965 and still one of South Africa's favourite snacks for the fully active individual with a demanding schedule" (Nestle, online). Note that Panarottis sells the 'Speciality Shake: Bar-one'.

Crème Brûlée (in Primi Piatti – Panarottis has '*Speciality Shake:* Crème Brûlée'), while often thought to be of French origin its history is more debated. The University of Cambridge's famous Trinity College is also involved in crème brûlée history, proposing that "The story that crème brûlée itself was invented at the College almost certainly has no basis in fact. But since the later nineteenth century, there has been an association between the pudding known as 'burnt cream' and Trinity College. Instructions for cooking 'Cambridge burnt cream' or even just 'Trinity cream' appear in a number of recipe-books. And to this day Trinity's kitchens often serve a richly filling version of the dish" (Trinity College Cambridge, online). A dispute exists between France and the UK about who was first to make Crème Brûlée (Quigley, 2010). The origin of crème brûlée has also been questioned in relation to Spain and even Creole Louisiana (Cloake, 2012; see also Andrew, 1999:247 about the debate related to the French, English or Spanish relation on the origin of crème brûlée). However, as proposed historically "custards made from eggs and cream were a European commonplace" (Grigson in Cloake, 2012). Italy seems not to enter the picture and not to have any possible claim on being the principal originator of crème brûlée, as much as it could have had another recipe for custard prepared from eggs and cream and as many countries seems to have done in Europe.

Cheesecake (Nino's and Primi Piatti) has a long history. Greece is the primary original birth-place of cheesecake. Specifically, citizens of the island of Samos "invented the cheesecake" (Marcia, 2010:2). It is notable that in a 2nd century cookbook written by Athenaeus of Naucratis, 47 types of cheesecake are described (Simopoulos, 2008:7; Sakellis , 2015). The work of archaeologists has "uncovered cheese moulds on the island of Samos dating back to 2,000 B.C. (Sakellis, 2015). American cheesecake is of more recent origin. While cheesecake has been long associated with New York, ancient Greeks "made their own version of cheesecake over a thousand years before New York even existed as a city" (Sakellis, 2015). After Europeans brought the cheesecake recipe to the USA, the recipe was 're-invented' adding the new locally invented cream cheese and also proposing a novel New York-style cheesecake (Cheesecake.com, online). It is interesting to read quotes from a cheesecake specialised website (Cheesecake.com, online) at length to expose the various matters of cheesecake history:

> The first "cheese cake" may have been created on the Greek island of Samos […] When the Romans conquered Greece, the cheesecake recipe was just one spoil of war. They modified it […] the Romans expanded their empire, they brought cheesecake recipes to the Europeans. Great Britain and Eastern Europe began experimenting with ways to put their own unique spin on cheesecake. In each country of Europe, the recipes started taking on different cultural shapes, using ingredients native to each region. In 1545, the first cookbook was printed. It described the cheesecake as a flour-based sweet food. Even Henry VIII's chef did his part to shape the cheesecake recipe […] It was not until the 18th century, however, that cheesecake would start to look like something we recognize in the United States today […] When Europeans immigrated to America, some brought their cheesecake recipes along.

In the context of ancient Greece, it has been also noted that "Translations often refer to breads and even maza as "cakes," and they were, insofar as they might contain oil, honey, poppy seed or flax seed. However, a "flatcake" including "fruit" unspecified was not a fruitcake in our sense, and "cheesecake" probably resembled focaccia more than anything else" (Burford Cooper, 2004:3; Grainger, 1999: 169 on Greece Cheesecake to be antecedent of Romans). Whatever terminology or different origin, cheesecake can be seen as having originated in Greece and later 're-originated' in the USA. Romans seem only to have a role in its diffusion, not in any original invention (although during Roman diffusion some recipe changes may have occurred). Italians (or Romans in this historical context) seem not to be the initial originator of Cheesecake. In addition, today it can be proposed that each country has its own version of cheesecake, "Italians use ricotta cheese, while the Greeks use mizithra or feta. Germans prefer cottage cheese, while the Japanese use a combination of cornstarch and egg whites" (Cheesecake.com, online).

Regarding the various types of shake, it is interesting, beyond the shake terminology and possible difference in the making of them, to evaluate the flavour of the various shakes as it is mostly the flavour that attracts the customer. Thus, although they may not be specifically categorised as desserts, the various shakes have also been included to provide a more comprehensive analysis. The remaining items include various Speciality shakes (Panarottis), Bamboozie Shakes (Primi Piatti) and Adventure Shakes (Mimmos). These shakes are proposed in an array of flavours and in Mimmos case, Toppings (see Table 2). In the full list of flavours, only two out of 13 flavours, Tiramisu and Nutella (in Panarottis), stand out as Italian. Nutella's history is rooted in Piedmont (specifically the town of Alba) and from there it expanded around the globe (Nutella.com, online). On a curio note, the author of this paper is a native of Piedmont (Italy) and grow up with Nutella! By the same token, Tiramisu is Italian. As much as has been proposed that "the truth is down in black and white: the famous Italian dessert was born in Friuli [Friuli is an Italian Region]" (De Cesare Viola, 2016), internal Italian debate exists about what part of Italy can claim to be the originator of Tiramisu is present (Squires, 2016). Regarding Tiramisu, it has been said that "It's a real icon of happiness. It's the most renowned Italian word in China and it exists in 23 languages. It's a symbol of Italian cuisine around the world as much as pizza, and its genius is in its simplicity" (De Cesare Viola, 2016). The other shake flavours such as Crème Brûlée, Turkish Delight, Black Forest (that is from Germany – see What's Cooking America, online), Bar-one, Hot Fudge and Bourbon, etcetera do not have (as the names sometime also imply) their root and original birth in Italian culinary contexts. The alcoholic beverages Rum (Caribbean), Bourbon (USA) and Kahlua (Mexico) are also not Italian.

Mimmos also has a so-called 'Winter Warmers' that also appear to not be not Italian, as their flavour are chocolate brownie, 'Oreo white Chocolate with marshmallow Fluff' and 'Milktart' (Mimmos, Gateway). The biscuit 'Oreo' was founded in New York City (Boyd &Holcomb, 2012:156), while marshmallow has a history including ancient Egypt, France and the USA (Marshmallow USA, online).

Ice-Cream is present in various desserts: Saucy Ice-Cream Delight (Panarottis) and Ice-Cream and Hot chocolate sauce (Mimmos) and Mimmos Chocolate Oreo Sundae. Italy has an important role in its diffusion and Italy's Ice-Cream type 'gelato', but Ice-Cream history must be recognised to be international. The history of ice cream goes back to second century B.C. It is also associated with Alexander the Great, King Solomon and Nero Claudius Caesar (International Dairy Foods Association – IFDA, Online). The traveller, Marco Polo brought back from his travels to the Far East a recipe close to today's sherbet. However, it is "estimated that this recipe evolved into ice-cream sometime in the 16th century" and England could have discovered ice cream before the Italians (International Dairy Foods Association – IFDA, Online). However, it was the Sicilian, Procopio, that "introduced a recipe blending milk, cream, butter and eggs at Café Procope the first café in Paris" (IFDA, Online). Catherine de' Medici was also instrumental in expanding ice-cream to Europe (Ice-Cream History, online).

Succinctly, "the Persian Empire invented it, the Roman Empire embraced it, Muslim chemists revolutionized it, Renaissance Europe popularized it, and modern day industry enabled everyone to experience it. This is the journey of ice-cream through our history" (Ice Cream History, online). Nevertheless, a relevant Italian made argument is that "Italian-made Gelato today represents one of the most popular ice-cream types in the world" (Ice-Cream History, online). Ice-cream has an international history involving Italians spreading it geographically, but *'gelato"* is more originally Italian. The Sundae was invented in the late 1890s (IFDA, Online). Finally, it is proper to indicate that it is not possible to comment on Nino's Speciality Cakes and it was not possible to collect any proper information about Peppermint Crisp Cake (Nino's) and Apple Rose (Primi Piatti). This gap can represent a limitation of the article.

The various desserts, except for Nutella and Tiramisu flavours and arguably for Ice-Cream (*gelato*), seem not to belong to culinary realities within the Italian context, not to be originally and uniquely Italian. This article recognises that the spread of a cuisine globally is a natural outcome of current and historical world globalisation and movements of people. The spread of a specific cuisine, whatever national, regional, specific population or social group, should be recognised in its historical and current evolutionary context. Simultaneously, and fundamentally, restaurants (or other types of food operations) should maintain specific standards and original connections with the more traditional and authentic (as far as these words are appropriate), specifically ethnic cuisine. This does not mean that cuisine cannot evolve (it evolves) and change (it changes), also fusing with other cultures and cuisines, but the core and basic fundamental principles should remain attached to the specific cuisine. For example, a Brownie or Malva pudding seem not to be linked in any possible ways to Italy. They are not from Italy, they are not an evolution of Italian cuisine and they are not a fusion of Italian cuisine with other culture/cuisines: they are just another cuisine. The issue, of course, is not about taste or quality (for example, the author of this paper, likes Malva pudding or Brownie) but it is about the cuisines/culinary culture that they represent. Naturally, the issues raised here in relation to Italian cuisine is recognised to also be valid for other cuisines. For example, a Greek restaurant in New York should continue to be linked to Greek culinary tradition, it should not sell brownies.

Certainly, if a business perspective is taken into account, it is very possible that a restaurant needs to go outside their specific claimed cuisines and include 'outsider' dishes or ingredients in line with the local taste. Restaurants could be 'forced' to follow the global homogenisation process of taste. Business needs to sell. The difficulty, but possibly a fundamental need, should be to find a balance to maintain a specific cuisine's features while adjusting (fusing) it, when necessary for the business, to local realities. However, this is different from selling 'outsider' dishes altogether. In this context it is also important to reconsider that authenticity can be positive for business as it can be "a source of differentiation in a competitive business environment" (Lego, et al., 2002:66). Ethnic restaurants that wish to grow their customer comeback/return/patronage should "improve food quality and authenticity to meet customer expectations" (Tsai & Lu, 2012:306). Finally, "literature on ethnic themed restaurants has already demonstrated that customers who patronize ethnic themed restaurants frequently seek authentic ethnic cultural experiences, and restaurant authenticity crucially influences customer satisfaction" (Tsai & Lu, 2012:304).

Conclusion

Bearing in mind the background issues of globalisation, cultural identity, ethnic food and restaurants and restaurant menus this article sought to verify whether or not desserts in selected Italian-asserted South African franchises offer recognisable Italian desserts. Italian food is widely available around the world. However, its fashionable status also implies a need to counteract possible misuses of Italian food and cuisine. As such, the need exists to verify that items proposed in Italian restaurants' menus can be considered to be authentic Italian cuisine.

The four selected franchise restaurants boast common characteristics, in that they are present countrywide and they claim to be Italian in orientation. The various desserts were investigated against their historical background in order to verify their origin and the possible link with Italy. The article concludes that the selected restaurants decisively lean towards including in their dessert lists items that are not originally and uniquely of Italian origin. It could be that the restaurants put aside their Italian image in favour of desserts that are possibly thought to sell more easily, in this way favouring a convergence of (desserts) taste.

Cuisine, like culture, changes and evolves independently or by means of contact and exchange with other cultures (cuisines). However, it appears from the results of this article that desserts in the selected restaurants are not related to the evolution and changes of Italian cuisine, but to the introduction *tout court* of food (desserts) that are not Italian but which have originated in other parts of the world, or locally in South Africa. This does not mean that these desserts are of bad quality or taste (this issue if by far beyond the reach of this article and it requires a new comprehensive research), they are however in ways simply beyond any connection with the Italian culinary milieu.

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