The Travelogue Cooking Show in a sub-State Nation:
Representing Scotland in British Food Television

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Abstract

Food television offers a new and unique lens on national identity, the Anglo-Scottish relationship, and their cultural representation in contemporary Britain. This paper is based on analysis of three British travelogue cooking shows, first broadcast between 1995 and 2011, about Scotland and its food. The programmes analysed exemplify and reinforce longstanding cultural constructions of the relationship between England and Scotland as sub-state nations of the UK, as well as illustrating and creating new national scripts, notably in relation to class and gender. These “homeland” travelogue cooking shows consistently associate Scotland with a defined set of local and traditional foods, closely associated with a Romantic construction of Scotland, its history, and landscape. However, the programmes also indicate wider changes in British and Scottish food culture during this period, including the rise of the local food movement and the increasing economic success and cultural confidence of the Scottish food and drink industry. The paper highlights the role of celebrity chefs in the cultural construction of contemporary British sub-state national relationships.

Keywords

food, television, media, travelogue cooking shows, Scotland, Britain, nation, class, gender, Jamie Oliver, Monty Don, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

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1. Introduction

The relationship between food and national identity is the subject of a significant and ever-growing body of research in food studies. Most importantly, the literature establishes that this relationship is extremely complex – in particular, because each case offers a unique example of how the national and sub-national interact with ideas about self and other (Scholliers, 2001: 14-17). This paper takes up the investigation in relation to the complex case of Scotland, a sub-state nation within the UK, heeding Scholliers’s insight that “matters of identity formation appear most clearly when two or more groups confront each other” (2001: 14). Historically independent, Scotland became part of the United Kingdom following the Act of Union in 1707. In the late twentieth century, the Scottish independence movement led to political devolution and the establishment of a new Scottish Parliament in 1999. Scotland’s independence movement has continued under the devolved Scottish National Party (SNP) government, with an (unsuccessful) independence referendum in 2014 and continued pressure for a new one post-Brexit. In parallel with these political developments, the twenty-first century has seen Scottish cultural heritage and contemporary cultural production and creativity foregrounded, including in relation to food and drink. Post-devolution, the Scottish food and drink industry and closely related tourism industry – both highly successful and important to the Scottish economy – are served by dedicated national bodies (notably Scotland Food and Drink) which promote Scotland as a “Land of Food and Drink” and build on longstanding Romantic constructions of Scotland, its landscapes, and heritage (e.g. Huserkova and Tominc, 2015; De Jong and Varley, 2017). All these political and cultural factors make Scotland an especially illuminating case to explore in relation to food and its contemporary cultural representation.

Within the wider literature on food and national identity, this paper is situated among research on food television, and specifically the genre of travelogue cooking shows (discussed further below). Within this genre, Leer (2016) has noted the emergence of a sub-genre here termed “homeland” travelogue cooking shows – in this case, British travelogue cooking series which include episodes about Scotland. In focussing on the “homeland” travelogue cooking show, our paper offers a contemporary analysis of this sub-genre and the specific questions of national identity and sub-national relationships that it poses. Food television – and travelogue cooking shows specifically – can represent a range of complex national cultural and political relationships, which in turn can be examined through the televisual text. Through three examples, this paper demonstrates various ways in which cultural relations between England and Scotland, as well as the place of Scotland within the UK, were represented during two decades of significant political change – disrupting longstanding Romantic stereotypes of Scottishness and Anglo-Scottish relations (notably with reference to class and gender), notwithstanding continuity in the culinary iconography used to represent Scotland. The paper shows how these apparently independent cultural representations of Scotland and Scottish food echo official images and narratives promoted by Scotland’s food industry and tourism marketing boards post-
devolution, while reflecting broader shifts in how food is symbolically represented in media and consumed in contemporary society.

2. Travelogue cooking shows and the case of Scotland

The television programmes discussed in this paper were all produced in the UK, broadcast on UK television networks, and feature British presenters. Nonetheless, they all treat Scotland as a destination for the roving presenter, who travels (implicitly or explicitly) from a southern English centre. Indeed, all the programmes analysed here form episodes in television series in which the presenter travels around Britain, with each episode featuring a different region or place and its food. The sample thus belongs to “a long-standing and well-established subgenre of the television cookery show” that Nikki Strange (1998) calls ‘Tourism-Educational’ or ‘Tour-Ed.,’ a staged gastro-tourism in which the cook-presenter travels, meets people, and learns (or relearns) to cook the cuisines of the host destination” (Bell and Hollows, 2007: 27). The genre is widely (and fondly) noted to have been instigated by British celebrity cook Keith Floyd, who “famously took the cameras out of the kitchen studio and into whichever exotic location he (iconic glass of wine in hand) happened to be cooking in” (Rousseau, 2012: xvi) – although it has its roots in early television travel documentaries, such as Viaggio nella valle del Po [Travels in the Po Valley] aired on RAI, Italy’s national public broadcast network, in the 1950s (Buscemi and Comunian, 2022; Tominc, 2022).

Following Leer and Kjaer (2015), we refer to this genre as the “travelogue cooking show”, a term we find more immediately transparent than “Tour-Ed.” As noted above, the programmes analysed here represent a further, recent sub-genre of the travelogue cooking show: those that tour the presenter’s own country (Leer, 2016) – in this case, Britain. Given the potential confusion of terms such as “home” and “domestic” in the cookery context, we refer to this sub-genre as the “homeland” travelogue cooking show. Leer (2016: 82) suggests that this phenomenon may “be read as part of a broader general trend that focusses on ‘local food’”. Key tropes of the genre include its focus on the rural and the contrast between the mobility of the presenter and the fixity of the locals who feature – a trait also found in travelogue shows presenting foreign regions (such as the American South) to the UK audience (O’Connell, 2018). Discussing Cyril Lignac’s cooking show Le Chef en France, Leer (2016: 82) writes:

Le Chef en France focusses on rural France, where traditional ways of living and being still exist, and each week Lignac visits a new region of the country. […] Lignac’s rural compatriots represent the traditional way of life, a way of life that is closely related to site-specific, inherited practice. This opposition is central to the show, and Lignac is constantly associated with mobility as he is portrayed on his motorbike moving from one destination to
the next. [...] The locals, on the other hand, are immobile and appear to live their whole lives in the same place, in the same way as their ancestors.

Leer (2016: 83) further describes, for example, how Le Chef en France associates traditional rural life “with a certain type of masculinity and male body” – shorter and stronger than Lignac’s urban male body. While these patterns of representation are, to some extent, nationally specific, Leer’s analysis nonetheless offers a helpful backdrop to our own analysis of British homeland travelogue cooking shows and their representation of Scotland, its people, and their food.

As Leer and Kjaer (2015: 310) note, “the travelogue cooking show ties into a more general debate [in food studies] on Western appropriation of ‘other’ (non-white and more ‘primitive’) culinary cultures” – a phenomenon we may refer to as culinary appropriation. As Johnston and Baumann (2010: 98) summarise, although culinary appropriation “represents a cosmopolitan interest in broadening the culinary canon and forming intercultural connections”, it simultaneously “builds on and reproduces certain neo-colonial inequalities”. For example, in the case of travelogue cooking shows, Leer and Kjaer (2015: 323) analyse programmes by celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay (Jamie’s Great Escape and Gordon’s Great Escape), and find that both chefs seek “untouched” and “untamed” culinary encounters, “defined as situations that are decisively non-British/non-Western, and which are pre-modern, primitive and other”. In the homeland travelogue cooking show, although the chef-presenter and the locals are from the same country as one another, familiar constructions persist of the gastronomic Other as authentic, traditional, rural, and fixed (see Bell and Hollows, 2007; and more generally Heldke, 2003), offering inspiration (or even salvation) to the jaded presenter on his quest for self-discovery or renewal. For example, in Le Chef en France, Leer (2016: 83-84) shows that such tropes carry through from the travelogue cooking show genre: “the lives of the rural lower class in France are romanticised and presented as inspiring a celebrity chef to rediscover his ‘lost’ masculinity”. Similarly, in representations of the American South for the British audience, O’Connell (2019: 199) shows how ideas of rugged simplicity and links to the experience of the southern past are replicated in the representation of the region’s culinary culture, particularly in terms of ‘soul food’ and barbecue, which also point toward the gendered way in which this televisual South is predominantly masculine as well as historical.

In this paper we seek to problematise the debate on culinary appropriation with reference to the case of Scotland (a sub-state nation within the UK), using British “homeland” travelogue cooking shows to explore contemporary Anglo-Scottish cultural relations. As critics of culinary appropriation, the research questions we pose nonetheless need to expand beyond whether or not a given text reproduces a neo-colonial relationship with the gastronomic Other (cf. Leer and Kjaer, 2015). The programmes analysed in this paper engage implicitly or explicitly in pressing contemporary debates in Britain
about national identity, and specifically the contested relationship between Scotland and (the rest of) the UK, during a period of significant political change for Scotland. The complex political and historical relationship between Scotland and England disrupts familiar neo-colonial constructions of the gastronomic Other in travelogue cooking shows and elsewhere. Despite some common tropes of the genre, explored above, typical scholarly conclusions about culinary appropriation cannot be drawn for this sample. It is this which makes the gastronomic representation of Scotland within contemporary British culture especially valuable to explore, for both food studies and the wider sociology of nations and nationalism. Moreover, scholars of food media and culture have demonstrated convincingly that celebrity chefs (such as Jamie Oliver) wield significant cultural and political power, not least in promulgating a particular vision of the nation (Cusack, 2014; Tominc, 2023). This paper thus speaks to scholarly debates about the relationship between food, celebrity, media cultures, and national identity.

The three series we discuss here have, in the main, not received sustained scholarly attention. Buscemi’s analysis (2014; 2018) of Jamie’s Great Britain focuses on similarities and differences in its representation of England, Wales, and Scotland. Buscemi (2018: 267) argues that “Oliver represents Scotland as a premodern country, without any influence from modernity, and in which food culture originates exclusively from the Vikings”. However, when compared with representations of Scotland in earlier British food travelogue shows, our own analysis shows that Jamie’s Great Britain is, in fact, remarkable for situating Scottish food culture (also) in contemporary urban settings.

Two of the series we examine feature presenters whose other work has been explored by scholars in media and cultural studies. Bell and Hollows (2011: 183) point out that Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s subsequent River Cottage series constructs a persona which “disavow[s]” and “de-emphasise[s]” his upper-class background and position. In relation to Jamie Oliver, Hollows (2003: 235) argues that “Britishness plays an important role in the construction of Jamie Oliver’s image” in The Naked Chef, drawing on traditional and nostalgic British recipes as well as British pop music. Yet Warin (2011) also shows that Jamie’s Ministry of Food (in which Oliver attempts to transform the diet of families in the socioeconomically depressed northern town of Rotherham) relies on and reinforces longstanding stereotypes associated with the UK’s north, negatively constructed as Other, marginal, industrial, and poor (see also Hollows and Jones, 2010; Jackson et al., 2012). In this paper we explore how these issues of food, class, nation, and place play out elsewhere in the television work of these two celebrity chefs.
3. Media, culture, and food in Scotland

Scotland’s status as a small sub-state nation makes for a complex media landscape, which combines national (London-centric) and indigenous Scottish production. In relation to television drama, Cook (2008: 108) describes this as a “three ring circus”, distinguishing between programmes “about”, “by”, and “for” Scotland, which categories may or may not overlap. Recent research on media in Scotland focuses on indigenous cultural production, a welcome scholarly turn. However, attention to extrinsic British television representations of Scotland remains critically important, given their national and international distribution and influence. This paper therefore builds on the relatively limited body of previous scholarship which highlights key tropes and patterns in the extrinsic media representation of Scotland (Blain and Hutchinson, 2008). Work in the sociology of sport, analysing British media representations of Scottish teams and players, also highlights the continuing reliance on cultural stereotypes and the ongoing construction of Scotland and the Scots as national Others (eg, Reid, 2010; Black and Wigham, 2020).

Research on the relationship between food, culture, and national identity in Scotland is increasing but remains limited. Within tourism studies, Burnett and Danson’s work (2006) on the marketing of Scottish food and drink links this to wider analysis of Scotland “the brand” (McCrone et al., 1995), pointing out that “[t]he tourist image is overwhelmingly skewed to constructions of rurality, tradition and heritage, much derived from ‘Highlands and Islands’ references […] with [their] symbolic associations of ‘pastness’ and ‘peoplelessness’” (Burnett and Danson, 2006: 111, citing McCrone et al., 1995). Likewise, as De Jong and Varley (2017: 216) argue, “a certain characterisation of Scotland as wild, untouched, and unspoilt dominates national policy discourses and images […] Key tourism industry bodies (such as VisitScotland) have worked to distinguish certain types of food and drink aligning with this version of Scotland” – notably highlighting high-quality primary produce such as Angus beef, Scottish salmon, and soft fruits, representing Scotland’s outstanding “natural larder”. Yet in contrast to these official marketing discourses, everyday Scottish diets are, on average, nutritionally poor and their reputation historically negative (De Jong and Varley, 2017: 216) – a widely recognised “Scottish paradox”. Knight’s work on representations of Scottish food and diet in the British press focuses on these negative stereotypes, especially deep-fried foods and the notorious deep-fried Mars bar (Knight, 2016a; Knight, 2016b). Knight shows how such stereotypes link moral and class-based judgements about purported diet and health behaviours to the Scottish nation, and demonstrates their continuity with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century “food slurs” against Scotland that emerged during earlier periods of British political change and Anglo-Scottish tension (Fraser, 2011; Knight and Fraser, 2019). However, Knight’s research has also found that the indigenous Scottish press “pushes back” against negative stereotyping, and that an increasingly confident narrative about Scottish food and cuisine has emerged in Scottish media since devolution. It is in this context that celebrity chefs,
such as Jamie Oliver, negotiate their own take on Scotland and its food in their homeland travelogue cooking shows.

4. Methods and data

The cooking shows discussed in this paper were identified via the British Film Institute (BFI) National Archive, searching for items under Subject categories “cookery” and “food”, and using Synopsis search terms “Scottish”, “Scotland”, or “Scots”. Within the results, we manually selected for national British television programmes (extrinsic representations) as relevant to the research questions here. (Selected Scottish programmes were also viewed for comparison, but are beyond the scope of this paper.) Three programmes were chosen as snapshots through which we can consider and compare representations in relation to the changing cultural and political context:

- **A Cook on the Wild Side** (1995) – produced by KEO Films and commissioned by Channel Four – features Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall (now well known for his River Cottage programmes and books) as presenter and intrepid forager. The Scottish episode (first broadcast 6 September 1995) is structured around Fearnley-Whittingstall’s trip to the West of Scotland and highlights a number of wild Scottish foods which he learns to harvest in the company of Scottish food and drink producers.

- **Don Roaming** (2001) – produced by Flux Media/Flashback Television and commissioned by Channel Four – is presented by Monty Don, best known for his work on gardening. In the episode discussed here (first broadcast 12 December 2001), Don visits the Royal Deeside area of Scotland, around Ballater in the Grampians. His guest and host is 1993 UK MasterChef winner Marion MacFarlane, who prepares a meal in her home for visiting family and friends from London. Don and MacFarlane visit a number of local food producers to buy ingredients for the meal.

- **Jamie’s Great Britain** (2011) – produced by Channel Four/Fresh One Productions – features celebrity chef Jamie Oliver. The relevant episode (first broadcast 29 November 2011) is set in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, where Oliver meets various local chefs, home cooks, and food producers to learn about Scottish food and cuisine. He also demonstrates his own recipes featuring local Scottish produce and twists on traditional Scottish dishes.

The BFI Archive holds the largest accessible collection of British television shows, including off-air video recordings of programmes not otherwise available for research. Within the collection, we did not sample deliberately for travelogue cooking shows; this was an incidental feature of the sample that then led the theoretical approach to analysis. While other British television programmes depict Scottish food (for example, Two Fat Ladies, Hairy Bikers’ Best of British, The Incredible Spice Men,
and – more recently – *Nadiya’s British Food Adventure*), not all of these fall into the travelogue cooking show genre, nor do they all offer clearly extrinsic representations (where presenters are Scottish or live in Scotland). We accept, however, that there may be other similar shows available for analysis. Nonetheless, the selected programmes offer personalities who are well known UK wide (as indicated above), along with a range of production dates, implicit political perspectives, and class positionings – thus showcasing a diverse range of the genre itself. Our analysis focuses on textual representations and especially considers the depiction of Scottish food, visions of the nation and national identity (Scottish and British), the construction of the Anglo-Scottish relationship, and “the way the […] protagonists imagine, meet and evaluate their respective locations and locals” (Leer and Kjaer, 2015: 312).

5. Representing Scotland in British homeland travelogue cooking shows: Three snapshots in time

The three cooking shows discussed here represent a range of modes of Anglo-Scottish relation, some more stereotypical than others. Across the board, class and gender are key mediating factors. Further, the Anglo-Scottish relationship is explicitly explored in two of the three programmes: both *Cook on the Wild Side* and *Jamie’s Great Britain* tentatively (and sometimes anxiously) explore Anglo-Scottish history, contemporary tensions, and Scottish nationalism. Across the three examples, there is clear evidence of change over time, although such claims are necessarily limited given that the programmes analysed here represent snapshots rather than a continuum. While the pre-devolution example relies (albeit ironically) on a Romantic conception of Scotland tied to the Highland landscape, tartan, and tweed, the post-devolution shows feature a much wider range of contemporary Scots, lesser stereotyping, and notably different relationships between presenter and locals. Nonetheless, there is remarkable continuity in the representation of Scottish food itself, relying on a limited set of iconic Scottish ingredients, and all three programmes consistently deploy archetypal Scottish landscapes to represent the Scottish nation and place. As noted above, only the most recent programme, *Jamie’s Great Britain* (2011), represents urban Scotland at all, with its focus on Glasgow and the Clyde.

5.1. *A Cook on the Wild Side*

*A Cook on the Wild Side*, first broadcast in 1995, draws on longstanding Romantic constructions of Scotland tied strongly to the Highland landscape, and an associated iconography of forest, mountain, moor, burn, castle, tweed, and stag – tropes that can be observed in earlier travelogue cooking shows

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2 This could, of course, result from factors other than the changing political and cultural context – such as production style, presenter brand, and development of the genre itself.
about Scotland. As well as landscape, an Anglocentric version of Highland history is used to frame and introduce the representation of Scottish food. However, A Cook on the Wild Side brings an ironic twist to this familiar portrayal, which also serves to undercut the elite English class positioning of Eton-educated presenter Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. The series focuses on wild food and foraging before these became popular food trends. In the episode on Scotland, we see the close relationship between nation and class in the construction of Scotland and Anglo-Scottish relations in British homeland travelogue cooking shows. The episode is set on and around Scotland’s northwest coast, and shots of quintessentially “Scottish” scenery work to frame the representation of Scottish food in national terms from the start. Visual references to archetypal landscapes – lochs and sea lochs, rocky shorelines and slopes, and rugged heather-clad mountains – work together to signal Scotland as place. Fearnley-Whittingstall’s opening voiceover further emphasises a familiar Romantic (if inaccurate) construction of Scotland as untouched wilderness:

“For really wild food, you need a real wilderness, and there isn’t a lot of that left. But here in the highlands of Scotland we’ve got just about the nearest thing to it.”

Although the episode is ostensibly about Scotland and its food, it is also very much about Fearnley-Whittingstall himself, in line with the genre conventions of the travelogue cooking show. In this case, a particular representation of Scotland is pressed into the service of Fearnley-Whittingstall’s own (somewhat ironic) self-construction as rock-star chef and intrepid forager. Despite his well-known “posh” background, his opening voiceover distances Fearnley-Whittingstall from the upper-class shooting party stereotypically associated with Scotland. As he tells us, “[t]his is home to the grouse and the red deer, expensive quarry for exclusive sportsmen – so it isn’t for me. But there is another wilderness where the food is still completely free.” We then see Fearnley-Whittingstall driving through a typical Scottish landscape: his long unkempt hair, sunglasses, the rock soundtrack to which he sings along on the car stereo, the semi-open vehicle, blue sky, sun, and rugged landscape all serve to construct (somewhat ironically) an image of a young man on a roadtrip. In this scenario, Romantic conventions for the representation of Scotland join forces with the contemporary masculine narrative of the roadtrip, also predicated on Romantic conventions of self-discovery, travel, and “wild”

3 These include, for example, Simply the Best: A Celebration of British Food (Cadiz Films, 1991). Written and presented by British hotelier, restaurateur, and writer Kit Chapman, Simply the Best offers an uncritical depiction of a traditional, landed upper-class Scottish Highland lifestyle. The episode “Game in Scotland” is based around a traditional shooting party at Cromlix House and estate near Dunblane, and focuses on Scotland’s landed classes, their royal connections, and the continuities between past and present. Here the construction of a timeless, traditional Scotland serves as a repository for historical British landed privilege and class relations – reified, reproduced, and incorporated in the form of the traditional shoot meal.

4 There is a brief reference to the Isle of Mull but it is not clear whether the entire episode is set there.
landscapes. Together these associations serve to bolster Fearnley-Whittingstall’s masculinity and accrue him a particular form of cultural capital predicated on liberation from conventional social forms and scripts. They also work to frame the subsequent representation of wild food harvesting or foraging as “cool”, masculine, authentic, and liberated – in part based on a distancing from elite class formations that have otherwise framed the representation of the Scottish Highlands for an English audience. This sense of Scotland as a culinary, cultural, and even spiritual resource for the jaded Englishman is strengthened by subsequent references to Scotland as a “wild food nirvana”, to its shellfish as “the wild bounty I’ve long been dreaming of”, and Fearnley-Whittingstall’s claim that he feels “entitled to a bit of a plunder” – framing his journey as something between spiritual quest, Boy’s-Own adventure, and Viking raid (cf. Buscemi, 2018).

These representational patterns continue as Fearnley-Whittingstall meets various local food producers during the course of the episode. However, they are also undercut by the programme’s constant, rather anxious humour and “banter” around Anglo-Scottish relations. The first local to feature is scallop diver John Montgomery, whose Scottishness is immediately and somewhat aggressively foregrounded in an interchange with Fearnley-Whittingstall about their differing (Scottish versus English) pronunciations of the word “scallop”. When Fearnley-Whittingstall eats a raw, still live and “twitching” scallop, Montgomery comments that this is “verging on the barbaric,” playfully reversing the longstanding cultural construction of the Scots as barbarians. Towards the end of the episode, Fearnley-Whittingstall joins a team of local men picking heather to make traditional heather ale. This group is very strongly constructed in terms of rugged and authentic Scottish masculinity, via their physical prowess as heather pickers, long wild hair and beards, kilts, piercings, and strong west coast accents. Fearnley-Whittingstall’s participation prompts an extended series of semi-playful jibes which focus in particular on his “posh” English name. When one of the pickers asks, “What is your real name anyhow?”, Fearnley-Whittingstall replies, in a comedic attempt to “pass” as Scottish: “My real name? It’s Hugh McFearnley McWhittingstall.” To this the other man replies laconically: “Aye – and the rest.” In the final scene of the episode the group sits around a campfire on a beach, as one of their number plays the accordion and sings. The song uses the Gaelic expression pòg mo thòin (kiss my arse) with reference to the taxman, Westminster, midges, and “Hugh Fearnley-Whittingless-Whittington-er-um…” As the credits roll, Fearnley-Whittingstall (who purports not to know the meaning of the song, but suspects its intentions) asks: “This isn’t very friendly, is it?” To this the picker replies with unreadable irony, and to general laughter: “We’re incredibly friendly to everyone. […] We think of you and we hold you in a very special place.” These interchanges throughout the episode ironically, yet somewhat anxiously, foreground British sub-state national tensions (historic and contemporary) and their relationship with class and gender.
5.2. Don Roaming

A *Cook on the Wild Side* ironically plays on stereotypical constructions of Scotland, the Scots, and Anglo-Scottish relations. Yet despite its irony, the programme never escapes these stereotypes to represent an unromanticised modern Scotland and its people. By contrast, *Don Roaming* (2001) presents quite a different image of a modern Scottish cook/chef, 1993 UK MasterChef winner Marion MacFarlane, who hosts Monty Don in her home in Ballater. Given the representation of local Scots in *A Cook on the Wild Side*, as discussed above, it is significant that MacFarlane is middle-class, female, and (implicitly) mobile (as evidenced by her MasterChef win). As Don explains: “Like me, [MacFarlane]’s passionate about traditional local food, and has asked me to help her prepare a small dinner party that she’s having for family and friends” – guests visiting from London. The menu MacFarlane prepares features iconic, even stereotypical, Scottish ingredients and dishes: haggis, neeps, and tatties moulds; salmon stuffed with crab; and cranachan. Yet the fact that this menu is chosen by MacFarlane herself (or, at least, is said to be) is significant in terms of whose construction of Scotland and Scottish food is offered to the viewer. Moreover, MacFarlane’s approach to these traditional foods and dishes is deliberately “modern”, certainly not fixed or timeless. As she explains, “there’s a lot of wonderful bits to traditional Scottish cooking. But I think they’ve just got to be brought up into the new millennium […] give them a new sort of makeover. That’s all you’re really trying to do.” In similar vein, although haggis is a traditional Scottish food (albeit not a favourite everyday dish for most people), MacFarlane states that she often cooks it, bringing it discursively into the contemporary Scottish middle-class kitchen. This construction of haggis as ordinary is seconded by Don as presenter:

> Although anyone south of the border might think of haggis as something unusual, at least, in fact it’s a very comforting sort of dish, it’s something that gets you grounded. And haggis and tatties are good basic food.

*Don Roaming* also constructs quite a different version of the Anglo-Scottish relationship from the two earlier programmes discussed above, as represented by the relationship between Don and MacFarlane. What we witness here is a dialogue about good food, but also a tutelage on Scottish food in which MacFarlane is authoritative – that authority deriving from her MasterChef win, and her expertise as a

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5 Haggis is a stereotypically Scottish dish made from “sheep’s heart, liver and lungs […] minced with suet, oatmeal, onions and spices, then crammed into the animal’s stomach-bag […] and boiled” (Fraser, 2011: 2). Fraser (2011) offers an extended cultural history of its deployment in both extrinsic and intrinsic representations of the Scots (see also Fraser and Knight, 2019). Haggis is traditionally served with turnips (“neeps”) and potatoes (“tatties”) – the vegetable referred to as “neep” or turnip in Scotland is generally known as swede further south.

6 Cranachan is a Scottish dessert made of oats, berries, cream, whisky, and honey.
highly experienced Scottish home cook. In other words, the programme allows an authoritative Scottish voice to speak extensively about Scottish food within a British travelogue cooking show. This may seem unexceptional, but Don Roaming is the only programme discussed in this paper of which this can be said. While Don as presenter is by no means ignorant, there is no sense that he brings expertise to teach the locals; his presentation is self-effacing, modest, and interested to learn. For instance, in the butcher’s shop where MacFarlane takes him to buy haggis, Don asks with self-effacing laughter: “I sort of know what haggis is – but being an Englishman, explain to me simply what is haggis.” During the out-takes as the credits roll, we also see the butcher gently making fun of Don, telling him that haggis is “a little furry creature that runs about the hills” – to which Don responds, “You’re not taking me seriously, are you?!”. In some respects, these moments are reminiscent of the Anglo-Scottish banter of A Cook on the Wild Side. Yet the absence of stereotyping in the portrayal of local Scottish food producers, the authority accorded to local expert MacFarlane, and Don’s unassuming demeanour result in an entirely different dynamic, in which MacFarlane teaches Don about Scottish food traditions and what is being done with them today.

Significantly, Don Roaming also features recognisably contemporary constructions of Scottish food which stress Scotland’s outstanding “natural larder”. When Don asks, “Why do you think this area is special in terms of food and produce?” MacFarlane replies:

> I think because it’s got one of the best natural larders in the world. I mean as far as I’m concerned we’ve got it all here […] we’ve got the game, we’ve got the fish, shellfish, wild mushrooms, oats – I mean we’ve got everything that you could possibly want here.

In part, the emergence of this construction of Scottish food in a British travelogue cooking show in 2001 reflects the turn-of-the-millenium trend in UK food culture for local food, an explicit agenda for the Don Roaming series. As Don says in a voiceover as the meal is eaten, “the fact that all the raw ingredients were local, bought straight from the source […] played a special part in my personal enjoyment of the whole experience.” But MacFarlane’s comments also reflect discourses emerging and strengthening specifically within Scotland at this time (and now formalised in the marketing of industry leadership body Scotland Food & Drink), highlighting Scotland’s assets in this area (see Knight, 2016b). There is certainly an emphasis in this episode on traditional production methods: for instance, Don learns about traditional oat production at Alford Mill, which still uses the original furnace and water mill with minimal mechanisation. Yet this is presented as subsidiary to the unique and outstanding quality of the product. Likewise, while the choice of salmon and crab is taken for

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7 It is worth noting that this contrasts, appropriately, with the quiet authority of Don’s persona as lead presenter (since 2002) of BBC flagship programme Gardeners’ World, for which he is now best known.
granted within the programme as part of a Scottish menu, Don explains that “Scottish salmon and seafood is famously good” – again emphasising quality over either tradition or national symbolism.

5.3. Jamie’s Great Britain

*Jamie’s Great Britain* (2011), the final episode of which is set in the West of Scotland, represents a considerable departure from the two other programmes discussed, in that it is the only show to feature urban Scotland – in the form of the nation’s largest city, Glasgow. As in other travelogues, the introduction to the episode features a montage signalling place (Scotland) for the viewer – but unlike the previous programmes discussed, the montage here features urban streetscapes and architecture as well as the familiar Scottish rural landscapes and produce. An introductory voiceover gestures toward contemporary Scottish nationalism and highlights Glasgow as a vibrant modern city, alongside references to cultural stereotypes and archetypal landscapes:

    Scotland, a country right up to its sporran in world-class produce and fiercely proud of its independent traditions; brilliant. […] I’m on the west coast, an unmistakable landscape of rugged mountains and wild waterways that have left a food legacy which is totally distinctive and crammed with surprises. […] I’m off to Glasgow, a brilliant city, buzzing with new ideas.

Later in the programme, we see further carefully composed shots of Glasgow’s modern architecture and engineering, and fashionable young people on a night out, visually gesturing toward Glasgow’s strengths in art, design, and nightlife. This construction of Glasgow (qua Scotland) arguably reflects an expanding cultural repertoire for the representation of Scotland on British television post-devolution. The framing here is unselfconscious and disrupts the predominant representation of Scotland in British travelogue cooking shows via rural landscapes and traditional food – although it should be noted that this can in part be attributed to Oliver’s brand as a young, energetic city lad, as well as (relatedly) the characteristics of contemporary lifestyle programming, which foregrounds the celebrity presenter and their personal experience of place.

As in previous programmes, there is nonetheless a strong focus on the beauty of the Scottish landscape – repeatedly highlighted in typical shots of forests, mountains, lochs, rivers, and highland cattle – and the quality of Scotland’s natural produce. However, here the economic importance of primary food production to Scotland is stressed (for example, Oliver quotes the value of scallops to the Scottish economy), reflecting the increasing success of the Scottish food and drink sector post-devolution. Later in the programme, Oliver’s voiceover echoes the marketing messages of Scotland Food & Drink, also noted above in relation to *Don Roaming*:

    “The Scottish landscape is a wonderful living larder, jam-packed with natural nutrition. […] Scotland has some of the world’s finest scenery, but it’s not an oil painting. This landscape’s
alive, bristling with wild birds and animals, every one of them living inspiration for a chef in search of fresh local produce for his pot”.

As in *Don Roaming*, although *Jamie’s Great Britain* focuses on a limited set of traditional Scottish ingredients and dishes, these are explicitly updated for the new millennium. Visiting Glasgow’s highly regarded Ubiquitous Chip restaurant, Oliver explains: “This restaurant shares my passion for taking traditional local recipes and evolving them with a twist” – such as haggis with West Indian allspice, which we see prepared in the restaurant’s kitchen. Conversely, Oliver later prepares his own “MacMoule marinière”, a “Scottish-inspired version of a French classic”.

Indeed, one of the significant aspects of *Jamie’s Great Britain* for the purposes of this analysis is that the vast majority of the time, it is Oliver who teaches his local Scottish guests, and us as viewers, how to cook Scottish food. This stands in particular contrast to *Don Roaming*, discussed above, where Scottish guest Marion MacFarlane is the tutor and authority. For example, in a feature on scallop-diving in the Clyde, Oliver cooks a dish of seared scallops with black pudding and clapshot on board the boat, while the divers watch with happy interest. Likewise, in a recipe interlude to camera later, Oliver cooks “Scottish potato scones” (tattie scones) with scrambled eggs and smoked salmon. In these sequences, Oliver is constructed unproblematically as the chef-expert; there is no suggestion that he has learned, or might need to learn, how to cook Scottish dishes from a local. The representation of Oliver as an authority on Scottish food (qua British food) serves a complex construction of national identity within the programme, in which Oliver is strongly identified as British, and an ambassador for a multicultural yet proudly British vision of the nation. Within this vision, the programme deploys Scottish food, cuisine, and identity in the service of “British” values of quality, pride, tradition, and diversity. This interplay relies on Oliver’s prior status as national icon from shows such as *The Naked Chef, Jamie’s Kitchen*, and *Jamie’s Ministry of Food* (see Hollows and Jones, 2010: 317) – as well as the centrality of the celebrity icon in contemporary lifestyle programming, as noted above. The complexity of this national relation is summed up when Oliver comments to camera, on his tattie scones, scrambled eggs, and smoked salmon: “I’d give that to the Queen!” Here, Scottish food and cuisine serves as a cultural resource in a patriotic vision of the British nation, within a contemporary media culture which enables the celebrity chef to cook for royalty. The elephant in the room is the Scottish independence movement (culminating in the 2014 referendum, just a few years after *Jamie’s Great Britain* was produced), not to mention Scotland’s

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8 This new take on the old is also a feature of the Scottish episode of *Nadiya’s British Food Adventure* (2017), in which cook-presenter Nadiya Hussain cooks dishes (a curry, bhaji, and a veggie haggis tarte tatin) reflecting her own ethnic background using locally produced Scottish ingredients.
lesser support for the British monarchy and majority preference to remain in the European Union, in contrast with its southern neighbour.

Finally, and in keeping with *A Cook on the Wild Side*, it is worth noting that the construction of Scotland in *Jamie’s Great Britain* is almost entirely masculine. However, what is different here is the class context and the lack of romanticisation of Scottish masculinity: the producers Jamie interviews are presented in a straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, focussing on their food practices and knowledge. As appropriate to their work and the setting, these men are dressed in fleeces, wellies, and outdoor gear; the kilts and ostentatiously wild hair of the locals in *A Cook on the Wild Side* are notably absent. In the final feature of the episode on game shooting, the focus is on the beaters as “working men” (although there are in fact several women in the party), and Oliver himself takes part as a beater rather than a gun. In terms of Anglo-Scottish relations, as represented by the relationship between Oliver and the locals, what this sequence constructs is a relation of working man’s equality. Elsewhere, Oliver explicitly constructs the Anglo-Scottish relationship as a brotherly one, when adding whisky to his MacMoule marinère: “This is a homage to our native brothers, so it’d be rude not to!” The links between gender and nation are also highlighted in an interlude in which Oliver bakes Ecclefechan tart before meeting up with male friends for a “wee dram of whisky”. Taking a sip of whisky while preparing the dessert, Oliver comments to camera, tongue in cheek: “Don’t you just love Scotland?” These sequences represent a complex interplay between the stereotypical Anglo-Scottish relation where the upper-class English visitor consumes Scotland via its food and drink, contemporary Scottish tourism discourses, and the “lad” culture of contemporary Britain. In this representational melange, Scotland is clearly Other – yet an accessible, consumable Other within the British nation.

6. Conclusions

The three British homeland travelogue cooking shows discussed here display diverse constructions of Scottishness and the Anglo-Scottish relationship, demonstrating ways in which wider trends in food, tourism, and politics may be observed via British food television, in terms of genre, gender, and nation – from the timeless “Scotland” of lochs, wild Highlands, and rugged masculinity portrayed in *A Cook on the Wild Side*, to the vibrant dynamism of contemporary Glasgow represented in *Jamie’s Great Britain*. Likewise, we see changing constructions of Scottish food itself: *Don Roaming* and *Jamie’s Great Britain* offer deliberately new twists on traditional dishes to bring Scottish food “into the new millennium”. We also see a shift in the imagined location of Scottish food, from the rural Highlands to contemporary urban foodsapes. In relation to class, one strand in the extrinsic construction of Scottish food has historically been tied to a particular (classed) conception of Anglo-Scottish relations, derived from an upper-class British cultural history within which Scotland features
as masculine Romantic escape. As we have shown, in these relatively recent television programmes, a loosening of the class framing enables Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall to play ironically with these conceptions of Scotland and Anglo-Scottish relations in *A Cook on the Wild Side*, and subsequently allows Monty Don and Jamie Oliver to create alternative representations of middle- and working-class Scottish food and cuisine in the twenty-first century. Although beyond the scope of our analysis here, it is worth noting that the project of expanding available representations of Scotland and its food – in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity – is subsequently taken up in later travelogue cooking shows, such as *Nadiya’s British Food Adventure* (2017).

Amongst other implications, all these representational developments open up a wider range of gender roles for Scottish subjects in relation to food. Romantic visions of Scotland and its food are almost exclusively male, and serve to bolster upper-class (English) masculinity. However, more recent and more nuanced representations of Scottish food include more women, and appear to serve Scottish femininities. In *Don Roaming* in particular (and occasionally in *Jamie’s Great Britain*), we see women as food and cooking authorities, whose cultural and practical knowledge is respected and given voice. By contrast, men continue to be represented mainly as food producers, with strong connections to land/scape. It remains notable, however, that it is only in *Don Roaming* that an authoritative Scottish voice (that of Marion MacFarlane) is enabled to speak extensively on Scottish food, and where a Scottish subject takes the role of host rather than a “bit part” in the representation of Scotland’s food. While this is partly a practical challenge of the travelogue cooking show format, with multiple local contributors to each programme, it also reflects the taken-for-granted contrast in travelogue cooking shows between the fixity of the locals and the mobility of the presenter (Leer, 2016). Likewise, the nature of the genre, and the centralisation of British television production in London, inherently construct Scotland as marginal to a national centre elsewhere – yet this is also a familiar geographic relation in the British cultural imaginary.

Thus despite changes over the period, the extrinsic representations discussed here remain a far cry from indigenous Scottish food programmes of the 1990s and 2000s – notably *Scotland’s Larder* with Derek Cooper (Cinécosse, 1998) – which present an unselfconscious and highly detailed picture of Scotland’s diverse food industry and culture. Across the three programmes analysed here, there is a consistent and relatively limited range of foods, drinks, and dishes that are used to signal Scotland. Alongside traditional desserts such as cranachan and cloutie dumpling, key ingredients include salmon, smokies, shellfish, game, haggis, neeps, tatties, oats, barley, soft fruits, and whisky.9 We also see the persistence of a longstanding Romantic iconography of Scotland, notably archetypal Highland landscapes of loch and mountain. Over time, these persistent culinary and visual tropes are

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9 Cloutie dumpling (pronounced, and sometimes spelled, *clootie*) is a sweet pudding cooked in a cloth (Scots *clout*). *Smokies* refers to smoked haddock.
increasingly linked to emerging local food discourses that extend well beyond Scotland, and which here parallel the official (and highly successful) marketing campaigns of Scottish food and tourism industry bodies highlighting Scotland’s outstanding “natural larder”.

To what extent we can make claims for wider change over time in the representation of Scottish food culture, based on these three cases, is arguable. However, the developments observed here are certainly suggestive and align with findings elsewhere. Further research is needed on intrinsic Scottish representations of food and drink in both the pre- and post-devolution periods, including the post-Brexit era with its fresh demands for a further independence referendum. Our analysis here also suggests further research avenues in relation to the industry contexts of production shaping both extrinsic and intrinsic representations, and audience reception – not least given the profound changes in the political landscape over the last decade, as well as the rise in social over traditional media forms, with active “audience” participation in the creation of representations on Instagram, TikTok, and other popular platforms. Unlike television, these offer Scottish audiences (as well as others) opportunities to examine and represent Scotland and its food in all the diversity in which it is perceived – further complicating the already knotty representational politics of Scotland in relation to the UK.

This paper, however, shows that it is critically important to continue research on extrinsic cultural representations of Scotland, alongside attention to indigenous cultural production. In demonstrating how the complexity of the Anglo-Scottish relationship plays out on food television, our analysis contributes to the ongoing scholarly exploration of food culture as a new critical lens onto contemporary sub-state national relationships. Conversely, Scotland serves as an important example for food scholars, showing how homeland travelogue cooking shows and celebrity chefs construct changing national identities and national relationships via food and cuisine.

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8. References


