Food and Culture

EDIBLE IDENTITIES BLOG/ESSAY

Cultural Significance of a Food Blog/Essay (600-1000 words):

Students will explore the relationship between food and identity, both collective and personal. The blog post should critically examine how food is intertwined with the formation and expression of identity, considering how specific foods or eating practices reflect personal, familial, or cultural connections. Additionally, students should analyze how food represents broader social, political, or historical contexts. Reflecting on how food has influenced or shaped their own identity, students are encouraged to explore how food serves as a form of personal or collective representation.

Although you may draw from personal experience, your analysis must be grounded in research, not speculation. Explore how food carries symbolic meanings tied to personal experiences, and support your insights with evidence from course readings and credible sources. Make sure to connect your observations to key themes discussed in the course. The blog should be well-written, concise, and engaging, aimed at an audience with a basic understanding of food studies and cultural identity. To earn an A grade, the blog must include references to at least four course readings. Students with video or podcast production skills may opt to create a multimedia project instead of a blog, but prior approval from Professor Erik is required.

Topics

Personal & Familial Identity:

- What specific foods or meals are significant in your personal or family life?
- How do your food choices reflect your cultural or familial heritage?
- Are there any foods that hold special memories or traditions for you?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Cultural & Social Identity:

- How does food function as a marker of cultural identity?
- How do different cultures express identity through food preparation, consumption, and rituals?
- In what ways does food create a sense of belonging or exclusion in social settings?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Food and Broader Contexts:

- How has food been used as a tool for political resistance or activism?
- What historical events have shaped the way certain foods are perceived or consumed today?
- How does globalization affect cultural food identities?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Representation & Meaning:

- How is food represented in media, and how does that influence cultural perceptions of identity?
- How do dietary choices (e.g., vegetarianism, veganism, religious dietary restrictions) intersect with personal or collective identity?
- How can food be a form of self-expression?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Reflection on Personal Identity:

- Has your relationship with food changed over time? If so, how?
- How does your food identity differ in different social contexts (e.g., at home vs. with friends)?
- What role does food play in shaping your understanding of yourself and your community?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Power, Privilege, and Accessibility:

- How do factors such as race, class, and gender shape food identities and access to culturally significant foods?
- In what ways does food gentrification impact cultural food identities and traditions?
- How does food insecurity influence the ability to maintain cultural food traditions?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Food and Embodiment:

- How does food intersect with body image and social expectations about health, beauty, and identity?
- How do cultural attitudes toward eating habits shape personal food choices and identity?
- What role does sensory experience (taste, smell, texture) play in shaping memories and food identities?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Diaspora, Migration, and Hybrid Identities:

- How do migrant and diasporic communities negotiate their food identities in new cultural contexts?
- What tensions arise between maintaining traditional foodways and adapting to new environments?
- How do fusion cuisines emerge, and what do they reveal about cultural exchange and adaptation?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Food and Ritual:

- How do religious or spiritual food practices shape identity and community belonging?
- What role do rituals (e.g., holiday meals, fasting, feasts) play in reinforcing or reshaping food identities?
- How do food taboos reflect cultural or religious worldviews?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

The Commodification of Food Identity:

- How do corporations and brands appropriate cultural foods for profit, and what are the ethical concerns?
- How does the commercialization of "ethnic" foods impact cultural authenticity and representation?
- What happens when traditional foods are rebranded as health trends (e.g., quinoa, turmeric, kimchi)?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

The Performative Nature of Food and Identity

- How can food preparation and consumption be understood as performative acts that construct and reinforce identity?
- Using performance theory, how do individuals "perform" cultural identity through food choices, dining etiquette, or culinary traditions?
- How do public food events (e.g., festivals, cooking shows, restaurant experiences) function as staged performances of cultural authenticity?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Topics

Sensory Culture, Aesthetics, and Food as Art

- How do sensory experiences (taste, smell, texture, visual presentation) shape cultural and personal perceptions of food?
- What role do aesthetics play in food culture, from artistic plating to elaborate food displays in restaurants and media?
- How does the rise of social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) shape contemporary food aesthetics and influence food identity?

If you write about one of these topics, what readings can help your analysis?

Suggested Structure

Hook/Introduction

Main argument

Support

Evidence

Address counter-evidence

Hook/Conclusion

Rubric

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Example of Blog Post