

‘Ex’domestic Foodways: A Study of the Food Vlogs

Dr Ashwathi¹

¹Department of Languages (English), Jain Deemed to be University, Bangalore, Karnataka, 560069, India.

Email: ashwathi@jainuniversity.ac.in¹

Abstract

The easy access to the digital space and the spatial limitations imposed by Covid 19 had made vlogging a source of income and leisure and a way to access the physical space beyond confinement. There has been significant increase in the number of food vloggers as well, even post-pandemic, irrespective of their gender and gender roles, who included both cooking and reviewing the dishes and diners. Many of the food vloggers engaged in the act of cooking have taken beyond the kitchen and sometimes include their friends or conclude the video by “eating together” with their friends. In this context, what does it mean to cook in an “open space”? How does that focus on the labour involved in the entire act? Does the physicality of the space in this process of aestheticization redefines the labour involved in domestic chores? The paper tries to argue that the act of cooking into the non-kitchen shifts the focus from drudgery of domestic chores simultaneously making it an act to showcase the “culinary skill and knowledge” and thereby obliterates the labour associated with it in the domestic space.

Keywords: Culinary space; Digital platform; Food vlogging; Gender; Labour.

1. Introduction

The spatial restraints during the times of covid- 19 provided a launching pad for those who had cooking skills, barring aside the tensions associated with class and food security along the same time and even after that. Online contents around food include commentary, Mukbangs, or even visual ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response). The online food vlogging space witnessed an emergence of a diverse range of contents during this time. Cooking vlogs saw home cooks and chefs sharing recipes and culinary tips; the Mukbang vlogs, which involve consuming large portions of food in an engrossing performance, gained popularity as a form of vicarious dining experience. ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) food vlogs that capture up-close sounds of cooking and eating also emerged as a niche genre promising relaxation and sensory stimulation. There were also many influencers who clubbed travelling with it. People will travel to different distant places both for the aesthetics of the place and the of engaging in culinary acts in such Spaces. Cooking merged as a trend due to multiple reasons especially during Covid 19 lockdown. For some it was a way to spend time with the family, for some it was entertainment and getting innovative and some

alongside learning simple recipes for survival with the limited ingredients available, especially the bachelors, they were also sharing it for the amateurs like them (George 2020). There were also chefs such as, Suresh Pillai encouraging people to cook with the handful of ingredients they had with them and simultaneously promoting the idea of “responsible and sustainable eating” (George 2020). Interestingly, the food vloggers, even before the Covid- 19, also added to it the sense of space to make them look more appealing and arguably relaxing too, which is the vantage point of this paper. They would take it to the crofts, riverside, fields, sometimes included friends-to cook or share the food- and use stones instead of utensils to cook trying to add ‘vibe’ to the whole process of cooking, often in aesthetically pleasing ways far removed from the everyday home kitchen. This trend coincides with a cultural shift in which cooking is moving out of the domestic sphere and becoming a social, recreational activity. And, these are completely opposite to the drudgery experienced in kitchen as a mundane activity. Another kind of the food vlogs that appeared fascinating were the choreographed ones, where in the rustic setting, surrounded by traditional modes and tools of cooking,



mostly women will be engaged in cooking, looking calm, relaxed and neatly clad in their traditional cloths. In the context of vlogging, travelling to distant places for the sake of cooking and incorporating the space element for the aesthetics, could be considered as transitional and subversive. Moreover, it also allows for cultural hybridity and change reiterating that culinary places need not be spatially limited and gendered. But it could not be overlooked that these shift in space happen only for a shorter while. Even if approached from Bhabha's theory of liminality which might allow for this fluidity, this kind of subversion obscures the labour invested for cooking in domestic space and all the other chores associated with that gendered domestic space. With the changing times where men have also started sharing the domestic chores yet the term 'home-maker', used instead of the traditional 'housewife', assumedly invest a lot of time in the kitchen, especially with the seeping in of the idea of work from home and it has remained repressive and abject. Moreover, it is overlooked that cooking just constitutes the collective idea of work within the domestic space which, also includes other work as cleaning, sweeping, moping, the role as the caregiver and many more things that has affective and economic value. Just like the theory of liminality, using the philosophical concept of "being-in-the-world" (Dasein), as articulated by Martin Heidegger, it could be suggested that the kitchen space becomes a site of "dwelling," where vloggers engage in the act of "worlding" – shaping and giving meaning to their culinary experiences through their spatial interactions and performances. But while doing this they also end up giving meaning to its immobile counterpart 'dwelling' within the domestic space. The act of cooking in an "open space" in food vlogs shift the focus from the drudgery of domestic chores to showcasing culinary skills and knowledge, thereby obliterating the labour associated with it in the domestic space. The modern food vlogs reframe cooking as a gender-neutral leisure activity by relocating it to public, natural spaces and abstracting it from its gendered history. Specifically, by moving cooking out of the kitchen, using found natural objects instead of domestic tools, framing cooking as recreation rather than duty, food vlogs detach cooking

from its gendered meanings and its role in emphasising the gender stereotypes. However, this decontextualization also erases the labour and history of cooking as women's work. Thus, while food vlogs hold potential for progress and subversion, they also risk romanticizing cooking in problematic ways. This paper argues that food vlogs "de-domesticate" cooking in ways that challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Contemporary vloggers are moving far away, both figuratively and physically, from the traditional domestic kitchen space. They are substantiating new, more aesthetically pleasing spaces with varied, soothing affordances for the 'perfect' frame. This shift decontextualizes cooking from its gendered history as "women's work" in the domestic sphere, though the bodily labour involved often remains invisible or romanticized. It also argues that the act of cooking in an "open space" by food vloggers challenge traditional notions of domestic labour and redefines the perception of cooking as a skilled and aestheticized activity. The study of the spatial dynamics in food vlogs demonstrates the need to understand the interplay between culinary practices, cultural expressions and the evolving digital landscape. Cooking, which is a necessary act for sustenance, transcends into the discourse of identities, values and histories as well. The analysis of the spatial arrangements and interactions in the culinary spaces depicted in the vlogs will help understand the meanings and the cultural narratives embedded in these culinary performances. Though the social dynamics and the power relations within the domestic space has been evolving, the spatial organization and the jaunt or spree that the food vloggers make provide an insight into the negotiation of identities, the assertion of authority and the subversion of the societal norms simultaneously. From the technical perspective, the spatial dynamics within these vlogs are shaped by the affordances and constraints of the medium itself, such as camera angles, editing techniques, and the virtual presence of an audience, which nevertheless is not the focus in this paper. This study also illuminates the lived experience and the embodied practices in the domestic space, their engagement with the world and its manifestation through these privilege platforms.

1.1. Critical Overview of Food Vlogging

As suggested by Levi- Strauss (1969) food transcends the role of a means of sustenance to a “language” to communicate cultural values, traditions and social norms. The visual narratives produced and the personal experiences made by the vloggers provide insights into the culinary practices and the symbolic meanings attached to food and culinary performances in the contemporary cultures. It exposes the viewers to diverse cuisines, culinary traditions and techniques and campaigns for a global perspective allowing to embrace the diversity. From an economic standpoint, food vlogging has emerged as a significant industry, generating revenue streams for content creators, influencing consumer behaviour, and shaping marketing strategies for food-related businesses as well (Irfan, 2022). At the same time, there are contemporary studies that confer autobiographical status to vlogging and food vlogging illuminates it as a mode of self-expression, identity formation, and community building through cooking and serving. By projecting personal narratives around their culinary journeys, it allows the audience to connect with those videos and the individuals’ experiences, thereby contributing to their economic objectives as well. In line with the philosophical framework of intersubjectivity, this idea underscores the value of shared backgrounds and mutual interpretation in shaping personal and societal identities with regard to culinary performances. With the dominance of the ideology which forces the culinary space to look passive, the social agents who struggle to inscribe the space in a certain way also remain only as object of the constitutive acts as argued by Judith Butler. It has been clearly illustrated by how historically the domestic chores has been considered feminine in nature by the patriarchal norms while on the other side the public aspects of the culinary world, such as the professional kitchens and the celebrity chefs has always been a male dominated space ((Druckman, 2010; Harris and Giuffre, 2015). Ghosh and Reddy (2021) explore how women in India redefine domestic cooking as a form of resistance and agency, challenging traditional notions of women's domestic labour. Moisio et al. (2004) analyse how homemade food production is tied to constructions of family

identity and gendered domestic roles. Rousseau (2012) examines the role of celebrity chefs and food media in shaping everyday domestic practices and politics around food, while Swenson (2009) analyses gender representations in television programs focused on cooking and food. Finally, the edited collection by Voski Avakian and Haber (2005) provides feminist perspectives on women’s roles in food production, consumption and representations. This affects the ways social agents perceive the culinary space as gendered hence potentially limiting the agency and thereby reinforcing the existing power structures (Cairns and Johnston, 2015). Inness (2001) provides a historical overview of the gendered associations between women and domestic cooking in American culture, while Neuhaus (2003) examines the gendered representations of cooking in American cookbooks and media, as a feminine attribute and not as talent. In relation to the online platforms, Duffy and Hund (2015) analyse how female social media influencers, including food vloggers, brand themselves as entrepreneurial and creative, potentially obscuring the labour behind their content, thereby underscoring what Butler had stated before. Cairns et al. (2010) examine how gender dynamics play out in amateur “foodie” cooking spaces and practices. The edited volume titled Food and Media: Practices, Distinctions and Heterotopias by Leer and Povlsen (2016) contains chapters exploring food, media representations, and spatial-social dynamics. The feminist critics like DeVault (1991) have argued that women’s work has been devalued and made invisible, and their efforts and skills has hardly been recognized and the idea “labour of love” significantly promotes this lack (Oakley, 1974). Despite enough work on the gendering of cooking in the domestic space, the media and popular culture have repeatedly re-emphasized the association between women, cooking or providing food, nurturance, and love (Inness, 2001). The persistence of the system of women “feeding the family”, and burdening them with various titles like Annapoorna, as believed in the Hindu culture, has also burdened women, especially working women, by setting it as a standard to become the ideal mother and wife. On the other hand, a few scholars have already claimed that social media

allows women to reframe domestic skills as sources of pleasure, creativity, and profitability rather than obligatory unpaid labour (Abidin, 2017; Duffy & Hund, 2015) thus crafting the culinary space a site of resistance and negotiation where gender norms are constantly being contested and redefined (Inness, 2001; Neuhaus, 2003). In these kinds of approaches, the focus is completely shifted onto the creative display of cooking skills through social media (Cox and Blake, 2011) than onto the social repercussions of these kind of constructs. Homemaking and nurturing, food preparation, and arranging elaborate lunch boxes for children have become the popular 'content' for social media (Song et al. 2020; Lindridge et al. 2020). However, the profit motive and the aspiration to embody the aesthetics pose the risk of obscuring the reality of domestic work (Duffy and Hund 2015) and complicated gendered meanings. Moreover, the discussion on open space cooking brings attention to the intersection of studies on social media and the performance of domesticity as well. Social media enables selective curation of social and cultural ideals of life, femininity, and domesticity (Abidin 2017). The "immaterial digital labour" involved in projecting the blissful domesticity or motherhood is also made invisible (Abidin 2017, pg. 4). The labelling of cooking and creating videos as a hobby, promoted through these videos and many advertisements has also erased the daily grind of feeding the family. This study tries to amplify the traditional feminist critique of the devaluation and invisibility of women's domestic labour brought by the social media, while also highlighting the potential pitfalls and complexities that arise from the profit motives, aestheticization, and digital labour involved in the performances of domesticity in the social media. [1-10] In Sanskrit, *anna* means "food" or "grains" and *pūrṇa* means "full, complete and perfect." Therefore, *annapoorna* is someone who is filled with or possessed of food and is a manifestation of the Hindu goddess Parvati, who epitomize food and nourishment. [11-15]

1.2. Theoretical framework

The changing representations of cooking spaces in media and popular culture reflect the evolving attitudes towards domestic spaces and their gendered

associations. Space is a fascinating trope when the visual reiteration of cooking is concerned. When cooking reality shows, now a genre in itself (Mahbub, 2023), were first broadcasted on radio in the early 20th century, they were set inside a fairly kept kitchen space with walls showing off different cooking pans, spoons, slabs with kitchen appliances, and required meat and vegetables, as seen in the shows of Julia Child, constructing the 'ideal' kitchen. It was more or less the same in the Indian cookery shows as well, [24] such as in the *Khana Khazana* that was aired on Zee TV in the 1990s, hosted by Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, that went to more than 600 episodes. Julia Child's *The French Chef*, an American cooking show aired between 1963-1973, was didactic in nature, focusing on domesticating women and food within the modern homely kitchen space. It was more realistic and relatable as the unedited video showed her 'blunders and mistakes', giving it a touch of authenticity. However, the show was still aimed at helping housewives with recipes, hence 'educational' in nature rather than purely for entertainment, which came later in the century. The shift towards entertainment (and marketing) happened only after the 20th century when television became an accessible commodity, with shows such as *MasterChef India* in 2010 and cooking set its foot into pop culture with the widespread access to social media platforms (Mahbub, 2023). The availability of new affordances has also changed the way kitchen spaces are located and function and thus articulating or hiding the gendered stereotyping. The study of culinary space, domestic labour, family dynamics, and the intersections of gender, race, and other social divisions has been approached from diverse theoretical perspectives. Foundational works like Kimberley Crenshaw's "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989) and Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix's "Ain't I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality" (2004) introduced the concept of intersectionality, highlighting the connection between different systems of oppression like racism and sexism that creates unique experiences for women of colour and lower socioeconomic classes, which cannot be fully captured by treating race and gender as separate categories, hence, emphasising the

need for a global understanding of how domesticity shapes women's lives differently. Applying an intersectional lens, scholars like Patricia Hill Collins (1998), bell hooks (1990), and Brah and Phoenix (2004) analysed the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality and other social positions in shaping the ideologies and experiences of domesticity and family life. This provided a crucial counterpoint to earlier feminist works like Ann Oakley's *The Sociology of Housework* (1974) and Christine Delphy's *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression* (1984), who focused on the systematic gender oppression through the devaluation and exploitation of women's domestic labour within patriarchal capitalist societies. While these feminist scholars' critiques unveiled the subordinating dynamics of unpaid household work, economic perspectives put forth by Garry Becker in 1981 viewed that the gendered division of labour in market and domestic spheres happened on the basis of the comparative advantages. [23] Historical analyses as seen in the 1987 text *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall traced how ideologies of rigid separate spheres and feminine domesticity became deep-rooted among the Western middle classes. Many contemporary works have further complicated the analysis, deconstructing the idealization of home as a purely nurturing space by highlighting its complexities, power relations and changing boundaries with the rise of dual-income households and digital work encroaching into personal or intimate realms (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Hochschild 1997; Gregg 2011). Melissa Gregg particularly argues that the rise of digital technologies and knowledge-based work has fundamentally transformed the relationship between work and intimate life, blurring the boundaries between the two spheres and work's increasing encroachment into the domestic and personal realms, facilitated by technology. Gregg's concept of "presence bleed," which refers to the constant availability and connectivity expected of workers, even during non-work hours and in domestic spaces. This blurring of boundaries is exacerbated by the rise of precarious forms of employment, such as freelancing and gig

work, where workers are expected to be constantly available and responsive to potential job opportunities has burdened, especially women, as the expectations of constant availability and emotional labour disproportionately fall on them. Emerging scholarship increasingly acknowledges the complexity of domestic labour and family life, recognizing these spaces as intersections of various social divisions and power dynamics. This perspective challenges simplistic gendered or economic explanations for diverse lived experiences. The concept of space and how it is socially constructed has significant implications for understanding the gendered nature of domestic spaces like the kitchen. Henry Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding how space is socially constructed and imbued with meanings. Lefebvre's argument about the social production of space and its relationship to ideology and power differs from the other theorists. While other theorists focused on analysing gender, race, class oppression through the lens of domestic labour, family dynamics, and its relation to the social media, Lefebvre's central argument was about how physical spaces themselves are socially constructed and permeated with meanings by dominant ideological forces. [27] Lefebvre conceptualized space as dynamic, serving as a backdrop for human experiences - what he termed the "social space." According to Lefebvre, social space is actively produced, articulated and emphasized by social, political and economic forces. He argues that space is not a passive receptacle, but rather is continuously created, transformed and utilized by social actors based on various interests and forces. He contends that the dominant ideology influences the division of labour and the division of space, even though space is often perceived as inactive and understood only through immediate representations. Lefebvre asserts that social space actively structures human activities and behaviour, including the physical aspects such as architecture and locational relations, as well as the symbolic meanings and routines of life. Lefebvre also conceptualized the production of space as a site of struggle between competing interests and ideologies

contending to shape spaces according to their social vision, highlighting space as an arena where power relations play out. The competition over the production of space is depicted as a struggle between different interests seeking to inscribe their social vision on territory, with significant implications for the organization of society and the distribution of power. Lefebvre's ideas provide a useful lens for examining the gendered nature of domestic spaces like the kitchen. Historically, the kitchen was closely connected to domesticity and perceived as a space for "women's work." It was often located away from the centre of the house, and seen as "chaotic" and smoky. The ideology of "feeding the family" [28] has burdened women, especially working women, by setting standards for being an ideal mother and wife. Feminist scholars have drawn on Lefebvre's concepts to critique how domestic spaces like the kitchen have been shaped by patriarchal ideologies that associate them with women's work and devalue the labour involved. So, Lefebvre's ideas about the social production of space and the inscription of dominant ideologies onto physical territories can be applied to analyse the gendered nature of domestic spaces like home and kitchen while other theorists analysed intersecting oppressions more broadly. [16]

2. Method

The term 'ex'domestic' used in the title is a conscious appropriation constructed to align to the key argument of the paper. In the term "exdomestic", the prefix "ex" suggests a transition or a shift outward from the domestic, that is, something that has its origins in the domestic realm but extends beyond its constraints. It implies a movement or progression outward from the domestic space but with origins rooted in that space initially. [24] This study follows a qualitative analysis of a diverse set of randomly chosen videos from the YouTube as it allows for more detailed and comprehensive content and has its contents around for longer. These videos include several episodes of Julia Child's *The French Chef*, a travel- food vlog, a completely choreographed video of a woman cooking in a completely rustic scenario, and a series of videos featuring a group of men cooking in bulk to charity homes. Many reports claim that there was a boom of food vloggers, especially

during the times of covid (Das, 2020; Antony, 2022; and Khushboo, 2024). Though the videos are chosen randomly and they try to represent the specific kind of various categories found online. These videos provide chances to use the video content of both popular and less known content creators to get insights into the practice of aestheticization at different levels of viewership and influence aiding in open ended inquiry. [17-20]

3. Results and Discussion

In the videos of Julia Child's *The French Chef*, an American cookery show, which aired for close to 10 years from 1963, each episode was named based on the core ingredient of the recipe or the recipes itself, such as "The Potato Show", "The Poach an Egg" etc. Child appeared formally and modestly dressed in all her episodes. To make it sound a more interesting she included many historical details and also tried to crack subtle jokes in between the act of cooking. Such as in the episode titled "The Potato Show" she mentioned about the cultural history around potato and the details around the Great Famine. In another episode on Lasagne, she says – "you have to be careful not to chop your fingers as it was not part of the recipe", probably to break the monotony of the cooking act. In the same episode, she was entering into an already active kitchen which had something boiling in the pot. She might have probably excused herself for a minute or a few to sort something else which is generally a 'normal' shuttle that women make in the domestic space. And it gives the audience that feeling of her being part of the home or her everyday space, making it easy for the audience to connect to her. She also does not forget to provide the viewers, particularly women with certain tips that would help them in the kitchen, such as telling them how to identify fresh eggs and how to maintain that, etc. Just like other cookery shows, all the required ingredients were ready, and she did not have to do the dishes either. She also ensures to add a little [25] "French way" to the dishes and her style of cooking. However, newer cooking-themed programs, such as *Masterchef* (1990), have started challenging these deep- rooted stereotypes by shifting representations of cooking into new contexts outside home- such as the reality competition shows, cooking over



campfires etc. gets coded as strong, self-sufficiency, hence, gradually [21] expanding the symbolic meanings attached to the act of cooking. In another YouTube channel titled, “Chef in the Woods”, travel in their Royal Enfield 350 to different picturesque outdoor locations like hilltops and riverside to cook meals. They are a group of men shown foraging and carrying necessary tools and other required utensils, such as “chef knife, ceramic bowl, ferro rod, wooden bowls, all other important utensils for cooking, 10-liter Portable water folding jar” (Chef in the Woods, 2024). They gathered basic things like woods and husk to cook with a distant landscape of mountains as the background. In between they also appear sipping tea with some fritters, enjoying the distant sight while the food is getting cooked. Their video has an adventurous carefree vibe as men cook amidst the nature. It transforms cooking into a recreational play by omitting any indicators of domestic labour. The beautiful locations and natural settings remove cooking from contexts of necessity or mundane household chore. Another similar video channel with a group men engaged in culinary activities is Village Food Channel (VFC) sharing the food with the immediately available people of his village. Two fascinating things about this group of men is that they go for bulk cooking and the food cooked goes to either orphanages or old age homes. They also claim that a part of the income that they receive from the YouTube goes to charity. It is not clear if they do bulk cooking for the charity homes and record the entire process as an ancillary job or if since they do a bulk cooking, donating to charity homes contribute to a cause. However, they have also recently extended their help to the people of Wayanad after the deadly landslides from late July, 2024, by providing them with food. In contrast, a few channels by women are more critically fascinating. “Life in Wetland” is one among such channels that celebrates the rustic and ritualistic style of cooking. The female host, neatly clad in a saree, first collects the ‘raw’ materials and ingredients required for cooking from the scratch. For instance, she is shown rowing in the [22] river to catch the prawn for the recipe. Instead of using the modern methods, she preferably chose to give everything a traditional ‘touch’- starting from the

stove to the grinder to the dishes. Moreover, the host has ample time and displays a lot of patience to knead the mud for the traditionally baked river prawn for her daughter. Almost all the videos end with her calling her daughter to indulge in the food prepared, hence filling her with the satisfaction of the ideal mother who prepares the food with utmost care and calmness to ultimately nourish her child or daughter. It’s a solitary work for her and apparently spends a lot of time on cooking and achieving the perfection in cooking, presentation and serving. There is no sense of urgency and it re- emphasizes the stereotype of a modest, ideal woman who cooks happily to nourish her family, especially her children. This is ‘well appreciated’ by the comments following these videos. Another prominent content chosen by women food vloggers is kids’ lunchbox recipes. In this mental labour, women frequently take on the cognitive and emotional burden of household management such as planning meals, keeping track of family schedules, anticipating needs, and orchestrating domestic responsibilities. This invisible labour is a key aspect of how domesticity gets performed and experienced. The paper argues that transgressing cooking spaces from kitchen to outer spaces and using different modes in culinary activities, normalize the act of cooking and adds the label of skill to it, removing gendered stereotypes around the domesticated cooking space. This simultaneously revises the space of leisure and socializing around the skill and act of cooking. However, relocating food within such spaces obliterates the labour associated with it in the domestic space. The engagement that happens with the display of culinary skills and the affordances in the physical space only limits it to that specific moment which mostly ends with the individual or the group enjoying and appreciating the food. The transgression omits the signs of domestic labour from the representational space and the affordance changes the meaning of social space when cooking happens in an open physical space. It is argued that the discursive meaning given to the physical space by its appropriation in the act of cooking omits the labour aspect present in the lived space or actual domestic experience. Since the representational space is a lived space, the conferred



meaning might only be grasped unilaterally. It is in turn re-affirmed by advertisements. Though there are studies now that critique the aestheticization of women's labour in the kitchen (Ray 2009), the change in physical space has on the other side aestheticized culinary skills, separating itself from the drudgery of work and the aspect of labour. As a result, it redefines and proposes cooking as a voluntary action and not a mandatory labour (Ghosh 2021). It could be argued that there is a conscious production of cooking space, inaccessible to the mundane participants of domestic work, and it is made possible by changing the affordances in the specific physical space. In the domestic space, objects participating in the representational space include every random thing such as a kitchen slab, normal gas stove (modern/traditional), all utensils, the dishwashing sink and detergent, used plates, washed plates, appliances such as fridge, mixer grinder, and hence goes the list. Unlike the open space which has only the specific things required for the particular recipe as mentioned before. The shift in physical space - from kitchen to non-kitchen - creates an abstract space devoid of nuances of historical, natural or bodily distinctions. An abstract space is created alongside the social space of the natural setting, where despite social interactions and human experiences, it appears more homogenized in terms of its affordance, conceived only for its functional utility, distinguishing the natural and social difference, more controlled in its purpose and the mediator, and where skill translates to profitability. Cooking is no longer strictly confined to the private domestic sphere, but gets performed as a public act of creative expression in communal outdoor spaces through these avenues.

Conclusion

Spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre criticized how abstract visual representations of space often obscure the complex, contradictory realities of how spaces are experienced and produced through everyday lived practices. Food vlogs that relocate cooking outside the home offer a highly curated representation of space. It transforms the act of cooking from domestic duty to recreational leisure activity and artistic performance, erasing the relevance of culinary skills as unpaid labour in the capitalist world,

simultaneously crucial for nourishment and within home. Feminist critics have similarly critiqued representations of space that treat it as static, apolitical, and devoid of power relations that shape how spaces get produced and make meanings. The rejection of the home kitchen in favour of idealized public outdoor cooking spaces could be considered as an aspiration for individual mobility, creative expression, and escape from the confines of domestic obligations. Yet, they also render invisible the gendered expectations and uneven distributions of household work that persist in reality. While the cultivation of culinary skills as a pleasurable performance might superficially appear to challenge patriarchal associations of cooking with feminine duty and obligation, it simultaneously obscures the mundane, repetitive, and undervalued labour that continues to unevenly fall on women in domestic space. It also has profound implications for how the gendered division of domestic work is socially perceived and reproduced through these new digitally validated outdoor spaces. The tensions and inequalities around gender roles do not suddenly disappear by changing the physical scenery in which cooking takes place and it is illustrated by the advertisements these days. These exquisite spatial representations of outdoor cooking raise questions about intersections of gender, class, and accessibility as well. The ability to regularly and easily travel to remote picturesque settings or scripting and staging them for the sake of culinary performance requires significant resources, mobility, and privileges that are not available across socioeconomic lines. The hosts of many popular outdoor cooking vlogs will often drive long distances to carefully select the perfect remote location for their off-the-grid kitchen setup, utilizing high-end cooking equipment and tools that contrast starkly with the realities of those who must cook makeshift meals on public sidewalks and park benches out of necessity rather than leisure. [26]

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