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From cooking equipment to food culture. A comparative study.

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Abstract: Although the study of food culture and its worldwide dynamics has increased in the past 20 years, the study of cooking still remains an under-represented theme in this literature. This situation is surprising, because cooking practices are one of the most important expressions of food culture, and of a culture in a larger sense. The present pilot study aims at exploring the possibility of gaining some knowledge about food culture dynamics through a qualitative approach of material culture linked to cooking. The method combines a questionnaire and a collection of pictures. The investigators were students in culinary arts from different schools member of the Institut Paul Bocuse Worldwide Alliance network, and a researcher from a partner school in Mexico. They recruited families with at least one child between 1 and 12 years old and took a picture of the cooking space and of the different equipment used for cooking. Householders were asked to classify the equipment regarding their frequency of use: frequent (at least twice a week), relative (twice a month to once per week), rare (twice a year to once a month) or never (once a year or less). This pilot study raised the importance of the terminology, confirming the difficulties to define "cooking", whether it is related to the place, the equipment or the practices. It also revealed that many local specificities seem still to exist, despite the globalization process.

Keywords: Cooking practices, food pictures, cooking equipment.

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