

Spanish Culinary Autochtony & Culinary Modernity: María Mestayer de Echagüe's *La cocina completa & Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*

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Abstract:

Penning her culinary texts in the first few decades of the twentieth century, María Mestayer de Echagüe's (1879-1949) culinary discourse can be situated against the backdrop of Spanish culinary nationalization and culinary modernization, two more often than not incompatible culinary projects. While *Platos Escogidos de la cocina vasca* involved the revindication of Spanish culinary traditions and a focus on Spanish regional, local cuisines, *Cocina completa* was indebted to French cuisine, the benchmark for culinary modernity.

Keywords:

María Mestayer de Echagüe – *La cocina completa* – *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* – culinary modernity – culinary autochtony

arly-twentieth-century gastronome and restaurateur María Mestayer de Echagüe (1878-1949), who used the penname Marquesa de Parabere both for the culinary texts she wrote and the two restaurants she opened in Madrid, made an outstanding contribution to Spain's epicurean scene. Born in Bilbao in 1878 to the French consul in this city, de Echagüe's upbringing and personal connections with France meant that she moved seamlessly between French and Spanish culture. The impact of this mixed cultural heritage is evident, as we will see in this article, in her different culinary activities. Author of one of Spain's bestselling cookery books, *La cocina completa* (1933), and owner of the iconic high-end eatery *El parabere*, first opened in Madrid in 1936 and then again in 1941 after the Spanish civil war, de Echagüe's success is without a doubt due to her adherence to the dominant French culinary trends of the time. Notwithstanding the foreignness (and French influence) of de Echagüe's culinary production, she is also celebrated for her promotion of Basque cuisine in her cookery book *La cocina vasca*, first published in 1935. The appreciation for culinary regionalism in this latter publication, in particular Basque cuisine, means that many of de Echagüe's fellow Basques now consider her an

important figure in the history of their cuisine. As I will show in this article, however, this focus on the culinary culture of her own region of origin in *La cocina vasca* stands at odds with her aforementioned bestselling cookery book which, as a highly modern French-inspired compendium of recipes, remained all but silent on the topic of Spain's regional cuisines.

While contradictions such as this one, in de Echagüe's culinary endeavours are related to her own personal situation, which saw her live in two cultures simultaneously, I would also like to consider the tensions inherent to de Echagüe's culinary discourse in relation to the wider Spanish foodscape at the time. Indeed, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, many Spanish culinary writers from the late nineteenth-century and first few decades of the twentieth century attempted to negotiate the competing interests of two quite different culinary projects; that is, the modernisation of Spanish cuisine and Spanish culinary nationalisation/autochthony (Anderson 2009 & 2010). For Spain, like most of Western Europe and North America, France had essentially laid the blueprint for culinary modernity (Mennell 1985: 134).¹ Nevertheless, in addition to this widespread dependence on France for modern culinary paradigms, in Spain the hegemony of French cuisine was even more salient than in most other countries due to a series of historical and cultural factors. For example, ever since the advent of the Bourbon monarchy at the beginning of the eighteenth century, there had been a marked fashion for French culture amongst the upper echelons of Spanish society, including a trend for French cuisine: "apareció un nuevo modo de ver la vida ante los ojos de los españoles que sucumbieron ante el encanto del espíritu francés. Las casas nobles fueron aceptando en mayor o menor grado las innovaciones que llegaban de Francia, trajeron cocineros franceses y sus banquetes se servían a la moda gala." (Martínez Llopis 340). From the middle of the nineteenth century, the market for culinary texts and cookery books in Spain was also very much under the influence of French cuisine, in particular its paradigmatic culinary texts, due to a centralisation of cultural processes, which meant that Paris became the cultural referent for peripheral European countries like Spain (see Martí-López).²

The saturation of French culinary texts on the Spanish market meant that reader expectations about the form and content of culinary texts, in particular modern cookery books, were determined by these foreign texts. Indeed, Spanish writers of other popular

¹ The conviction that the French were the gastronomic powerhouse of the time can be seen, for example, in Phileas Gilbert's vision for a French culinary academy devoted to the turn-of-the-century principle of a universal cuisine. According to Gilbert, 'alimentary riches from the entire world would flow to the school, which, in turn, would distribute them, marked by that stamp of genius our culinary luminaries know how to impress upon whatever leaves their hands, to the great good fortune of our modern gourmets' (qtd in Pitte 3).

² According to Martí López, France and England achieved an unprecedented cultural hegemony over other 'less-developed' countries at this time because, 'for the first time, European literary processes were subjected to a ruthless centralization, which effectively established the artistic dominance of Paris and London' (33).

cultural forms, such as the serial novel, strove to meet consumer expectations by imitating French literature as Elisa Martí-López tells us.³ Spanish cookery book authors also emulated the French culinary texts, which had been responsible for shaping their readers' views about culinary modernity and modern cookery books. Because of the inherent foreignness of these cookery books, several important Spanish gastronomes and historians of Spanish gastronomy, such as Miguel Martínez Llopis, Dionisio Pérez (otherwise known as 'Post-Thebussem') and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, have disregarded them as inconsequential to the evolution of an autochthonous model of Spanish cuisine. However, I would like to reconsider this appraisal of cookery books, such as de Garcíarena y Muñoz's *La cocina moderna* (1857), Guillermo Moyano's *El cocinero español* (1867), *La gran economía de las familias* (1869), Ángel Muro Goiri's *El prácticón* (1894), Emilia Pardo Bazán's *La cocina española moderna* (1917) and María Mestayer de Echagüe's *La cocina completa* (1933), as somehow insignificant to the evolution of Spanish gastronomy. Firstly, even if it were the case that these culinary authors had been uniform in their dependence on French cuisine, it is perhaps more fruitful to think of their imitation of French culinary texts and dependence on France's modern culinary paradigms as an example of this wider centralisation of cultural processes, which as Martí López so lucidly illustrates shapes popular literary forms too. In addition to the importance of situating this reliance on French culinary modernity against the backdrop of this intra-European cultural dynamic, I also think that we should not lose sight of the fact that these culinary texts were all published at very different times. Indeed, de Echagüe's bestselling cookery book did not appear on the market until nearly 65 years after Moyano's compendium of modern recipes. Therefore, although I agree with Martínez Llopis' conclusions—for example, that the influence of French cuisine in Spain was a defining feature of this country's foodscape throughout this entire period—I would argue that there is a pivotal moment within this timeframe that we can use to separate cookery books such as the aforementioned ones. Indeed, as I am sure other critics of *fin-de-siecle* Spanish culinary and gastronomic texts would agree, Dr Thebussem and the King's Chef's exchange of letters about the state of Spanish cuisine (initially published in 1876 in *La Ilustración española y americana* and then some eight years later as *La mesa moderna*) represents nothing short of a turning point in the history of Spanish cuisine.

The newness of Dr Thebussem's and the King's Chef's 'discussion' about Spanish cuisine can be felt both in the importance these pioneering gastronomes place on challenging the hegemony of French cuisine and on their imperative to future

³ Discussing the strategies adopted by Spanish authors during this time, Martí-López points to imitation, as a "discursive resolution to a crisis originated by the awareness of a provincial separation from modern cultural processes, and the driving force shaping the culture of new and peripheral countries such as Spain" (28). For Martí López, Spanish writers needed to copy French literature because reader expectations had to a certain degree been formed by the saturation of French literature on the Spanish market.

Spanish culinary writers and gastronomes to promote Spain's regional culinary cultures in order to create a sense of national culinary cohesion, amongst other things. The original letters between these two men were hugely popular with the Spanish reading public and, as Dr Thebussem explains in the prologue to *La mesa moderna*, it was at the request of his readers that he decided to compile a book out of this correspondence (7). As many historians of Spanish gastronomy have correctly noted, the views on Spanish cuisine at the heart of this seminal text were later taken up by renowned gastronome Dionisio Pérez in the late nineteen twenties and early thirties (Vázquez Montalbán; Martínez Llopis; Luján). Indeed, by using the pseudonym 'Post Thebussem' for all four of the culinary texts he penned—*Dónde comerá usted bien* (1929) *Guía del buen comer español* (1929), *Naranjas* (1930) and *La cocina clásica española* (posthumously published in 1936)—Pérez clearly demonstrated his allegiance with Dr Thebussem and the King's Chef. In addition to paying homage to these pioneering gastronomes in his choice of gastronomic alias, he also wrote the book showcasing Spain's regional culinary cultures, which these two earlier writers saw as pivotal to both the nationalisation and revindication of Spanish cuisine.

In tracing the evolution of an autochthonous model of Spanish cuisine, historians and critics of Spanish gastronomy have tended to disregard most culinary texts and cookery books published between *La mesa moderna* in 1888 and *Guía del buen comer español* in 1929 as inconsequential because they did nothing to promote Spain's regional cuisines, and instead continued to 'borrow' substantially from seminal French culinary texts. Indeed, writing about this period in the history of Spanish cuisine in his first chapter of his aforementioned guide, 'La cocina nacional española,' Pérez laments 'que ha sido ésta la más dañosa época para el renacimiento de la cocina española, perdiendo toda su eficacia aquella iniciada campaña de Thebussem y Castro y Serrano' (10). Although Pérez makes this criticism of culinary authors, such as Muro and Pardo Bazán (whom he specifically mentions) before the publication of de Echagüe's *La cocina completa* in 1933, it is likely that he would have disapproved of her because she too promoted French cuisine more than Spanish cuisine in her hugely popular modern French-inspired cookery book. Indeed, in his extensive history of Spanish cuisine, important historian Martínez Llopis makes very similar comments about Muro and De Echagüe's cookery books, noting in the case of each book its popularity and Francophile content. (377, 432). It is also significant that, unlike many of the other entries in Martínez Llopis' extensive history of Spanish cuisine, the ones he dedicates to de Echagüe and Muro are perfunctory, to say the least, and do not make mention of the significance of these authors to the evolution of Spanish gastronomy. Certainly, it is possible to infer from his silence on these culinary authors' roles in advancing Spanish cuisine that the foreignness of their culinary discourse means that they are somehow seen as inconsequential to autochthonous constructs of Spanish cuisine.

Although authors such as de Echagüe, Muro and Pardo Bazán do emulate French cuisine in their cookery books, they also find ways of imbuing their culinary

discourse with references to the nationalisation of Spanish cuisine, culinary autochthony and the revindication of regional cuisines.⁴ Indeed, the many references which Muro makes to Dr Thebussem and the King's Chef's culinary nationalisation as well as to nation-building in a wider sense in *El prácticón* are a sure sign that he was influenced by Spain's pioneering gastronomes. Similarly, although Pardo Bazán attempts to construct a French-inspired modern cuisine for Spain in *La cocina española moderna*, the first cookery book in this pair, *La cocina española antigua* promotes Spanish cuisine over French cuisine and is committed to the revindication of regional cuisines; María Paz Moreno comments on this aspect of *La cocina española antigua*, noting that Pardo Bazán, 'toma decidido partido por la cocina española, destacando la calidad del pescado, la fruta y las aves españolas, así como los embutidos y el arroz' (222).

As this article demonstrates, the competing discourses of culinary modernity and culinary nationalisation/culinary autochthony were also of central importance to de Echagüe because, like her culinary predecessors, she too attempted to accommodate the tensions inherent in Spain's foodscape. Indeed, as an important restaurateur and author of highly-successful compendium of modern recipes, de Echagüe created a very French-inspired culinary discourse and gastronomic identity for herself. Notwithstanding the Frenchness of her own modern culinary endeavours, she also published a book of Basque recipes, thereby promoting Spain's regional culinary foodscape. As my analysis of these two aspects of de Echagüe's culinary endeavours demonstrates, she was highly cognizant of the differences between modern cuisines and traditional, regional cuisines. At one level, the contrast between these two opposing culinary configurations can be noted quite simply in the different visibility accorded to Spanish and French cuisine in *La cocina completa* and *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*. In addition to this, however, the 'freedom' from place inherent to modern cuisine (Parkhurst Ferguson 17) means that in *La cocina completa*, de Echagüe barely addresses Spain's regional cuisines, a feature of this modern compendium of recipes that clearly stands at odds with *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*.

As mentioned at the outset of this article, de Echagüe's embrace of such different culinary projects was, without a doubt, also influenced by her own background and life events. Daughter of the French consul general in Bilbao and Seville, de Echagüe spent much of her childhood between these two cities, eventually settling in the former upon her marriage to Ramón de Echagüe in 1901. Like most women of her social class at this time—Pardo Bazán comes to mind as another example⁵—she attended the best

⁴ I also note that *El Gorro Blanco* (a turn-of-the-century Spanish newspaper dedicated to professional cuisine) manages this tension between the Franco-pile cuisine at the heart of professional modern cuisine and the emerging focus on culinary autochthony in Spanish gastronomy at this time. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that iconic French recipes are published alongside excerpts from *La mesa moderna*.

⁵ On this aspect of Pardo Bazán's education, Pilar Faus writes, 'a la vista de la las sobresalientes dotes intelectuales de la niña Emilia, sus padres decidieron pasar los inviernos en Madrid para que, en

schools, which instructed students in the French language and culture. The Francophile focus of de Echagüe's elite schooling obviously served to reinforce her cultural and linguistic competence in French, which resulted from her own family connections with France. In addition to having access to the country's most prestigious schools, it has also been noted that as a result of her family's position, de Echagüe had the opportunity from an early age 'conoce[r] los mejores restaurantes' both in Spain and France, which is said to have ignited her interest in gastronomy, especially haute cuisine (see José Garzón Sáez 2). As a result of frequenting such high-end restaurants, over the years de Echagüe established friendships with a number of important French and Spanish chefs of the time—including Henri-Paul Pellaprat, Head of the Cordon Bleu cookery school in Paris and Teodoro Bardají—'con los que intercambia conocimientos y sostiene correspondencia' (Garzón Sáez 2). Notwithstanding the fact that de Echagüe's interest in gastronomy was ignited from this young age, it was as a result of her marriage to Ramón de Echagüe that she became more involved in culinary affairs in the role she assumed overseeing the meals, both daily and festive, in her new home. Like most women of her social class, although de Echagüe did not do the cooking herself, 'dirige y confecciona los menús, supervisando la compra y realización' (Garzón Sáez 2).

It was during the time spent overseeing the domestic and culinary affairs of the household, that de Echagüe began to collect recipes and make notes that in time would form part of her bestselling cookery book. Indeed, as de Echagüe herself noted in the prologue to *La cocina completa*, she spent nearly two decades preparing this cookery book, 'hará más de veinte que comencé su recopilación' (9). The emphasis on the time and meticulous care employed in the production of *La cocina completa* is significant because it is a mark of de Echagüe's dependence on modern French cuisine, as is her use of the book's prologue to highlight such aspects of her culinary discourse. As a culinary professional, de Echagüe would have been more than aware of the importance of the prologues in French and French-inspired cookery books of her era to 'convey a heightened consciousness of culinary and social change and stake out each authors' place in that development' (Parkhurst Ferguson, 'Writing out of the Kitchen' 49). De Echagüe's prologue certainly serves this function, for although it is just over one page long, it provides her with ample opportunity to 'take her place' as a culinary modern. Indeed, de Echagüe places great importance on emphasising the newness of her culinary discourse, which is evident in the use of adjectives such as 'novísimo' and 'más modernas' (9) to describe her culinary system. Thus, while, *La cocina completa* follows in the tradition of other Spanish cookery books such as Muro's similarly French-inspired *El prácticón*, de Echagüe attempts to differentiate her own compendium of recipes from earlier Spanish ones by stressing its newness.

calidad de medio pensionista, pudiera asistir al colegio francés <a la sazón flor y nata de los colegios elegantes>' (79).

Interestingly, one of the defining features of modern French cuisine was, according to Parkhurst Ferguson, the way in which its chefs and food writers turned culinary activity into an ‘occupation with articulated rules’ (‘Writing out of the Kitchen’ 52). The emphasis placed by France’s culinary moderns on being as rigorous as possible in their culinary endeavours is clearly an important feature of de Echagüe’s culinary discourse. This is clear both in the reference to the high degree of care she took in writing *La cocina completa* and in the directive to her readers that they too should be as attentive as possible when following her recipes. Opening her prologue to this cookery book with an allusion to the rigour of her culinary activity, de Echagüe assures readers that ‘cuantas recetas integran esta obra han sido experimentadas por mí’ (9), many of which, she writes, have received, ‘la aprobación de tan excelentes y renombrados cocineros como Teodoro Bardají, Francisco Mullor . . . H Pellapat, Gastón Derys y otros’ (9). De Echagüe’s mention of the eight or more leading French and Spanish chefs of the time who had condoned her recipes was a reminder to her readers of her own connections with this elite group of culinary professionals. Situating herself alongside these culinary professionals, not just by referring to their positive appraisal of her recipes but also through her own treatment of cuisine as a rigorous, almost scientific endeavour, de Echagüe commands the respect of her readers.⁶

De Echagüe’s systematisation of cuisine in her prologue is further proof of her allegiance to culinary professionals, in particular those who had been influenced by modern French cuisine. It was a hallmark of France’s pioneering culinary moderns to deliberately fix their cuisines into a system. Thus, by constructing a culinary system for her own cuisine, de Echagüe once again shows just how much her cookery book was influenced by modern French cuisine. Explaining her system, she writes:

Mi libro está estructurado según las normas más modernas; primeramente lo he separado en capítulos, cada cual referente a un manjar o a una de las modalidades del complejo arte de la cocina, y, segundo, le he aplicado el novísimo sistema, que reclamo como exclusivamente mío, de encabezar cada manjar con el procedimiento a seguir para limpiarlo, o prepararlo, o para cocerlo; luego, en las sucesivas recetas del mismo, suponiéndolo ya en condiciones, me limito a explicar las características de los diversos condumios o aderezos que le son propios. (‘La cocina completa’ 9)

⁶ It is of course also significant that de Echagüe used such an aristocratic penname for all of her culinary endeavours, both for her cookery books and the restaurants she opened. Indeed, De Echagüe added a great deal of class authority to her cultural and professional currency through the use of the pseudonym. The didactic tone of *La cocina completa* corroborates the view, made plausible by de Echagüe’s choice of pen name. This suggests that she consciously fostered this air of authority and that it was an important part of her popular formula.

De Echagüe's system, as she describes it, is based on the premise that most dishes are a variant of some other dish. Therefore, many of her recipes are only a few lines long, for they merely explain how each particular dish varies from the core recipe of each grouping. In line with the self-prophesed modernity of her cookery book, de Echagüe's desire to systematise her cuisine is one of the most salient features of her culinary discourse. As can be inferred from the above quotation, a key aspect of de Echagüe's systematization is the rationalization of her recipes; that is, de Echagüe was committed to not providing redundant information. If a technique had been explained once, to avoid repetition the reader was referred back to the original recipe.

The effect of de Echagüe's systematisation on her culinary discourse can be felt first and foremost in relation to culinary regionalism. Indeed, her division of recipes into groups with a core recipe and secondary dish sets up a culinary hierarchy of sorts because of the way it attributes importance to her primary dishes (with full instructions appended to these recipes) and less importance to secondary or variant dishes. De Echagüe's separation of recipes into primary and secondary tiers impacts on the presentation of regional cuisines because regional recipes are normally presented as a variant of a Spanish dish. Indeed, where de Echagüe does include a regional variant of a dish, it often comes after the core dish, which is normally designated in terms of a nationality, such as French, Italian or Spanish. De Echagüe's treatment of the centre/periphery dynamic is reminiscent of France's national cuisine, which treated regional cuisines as subordinate parts of a greater whole (see Parkhurst Ferguson "Is Paris France?").

De Echagüe's silence on regional cuisines is not merely to be found in her treatment of these cuisines as subordinate variants of 'national' dishes, it is also apparent in the fact that she does not include nearly as many regional or, indeed, Spanish recipes as foreign ones in her cookery book. For example, in the section dedicated to soups and *consomés* in *La cocina completa*, only 11 of the 70 recipes included make reference either to their region of origin or to Spanishness (either in the title or in the recipe itself). In contrast to the small amount of visibility accorded to Spain's regional recipes, de Echagüe's text offers over 40 recipes for international (mainly French) dishes that clearly indicate their country of origin, achieved in most cases by including an adjective of nationality or reference to a foreign place, person or ingredient in the title. De Echagüe's treatment of international cuisines certainly gives the impression that compared to other nations Spain has little to offer in terms of cuisine. Even when dishes commonly cooked in Spain are included in *La cocina completa*, the fact that there is normally no mention of where they come from means that the reader is not made immediately aware of their place of origin.

Out of all the international dishes that de Echagüe includes in this cookery book, by far the vast majority of them are French. In addition to providing so many iconic French recipes, such as 'Pains e mousse' (433-44), 'Las salsas chaudfroids' (226-7) and 'Foie de veau a la Burgeoise' (585), de Echagüe also teaches her readers about a

number of different techniques, utensils and foodstuffs typical to modern French cuisine. Indeed, in Chapter 6, entitled ‘La técnica,’ de Echagüe takes the time to carefully translate and explain key terms from French cuisine that she frequently use in her cookery book. ‘Bridar,’ she writes, is the Spanish translation of the French ‘brider,’ a cooking style that ‘[c]onsiste en cocer en forma especial cualquier volátil para que sobresalga el pecho y tenga mejor presentación’ (66). As we can see from these examples, one of the primary aims of de Echagüe’s *La cocina completa* was to train her Spanish readers in the art of modern French culinary techniques and cooking styles. Adapting French cuisine to the Spanish table—which, according to de Echagaue, is one of the achievements of this cookery book—essentially involves little more than translating French culinary terms, techniques and recipes. It does not mean that she makes any significant changes to the original French item or technique, as could have perhaps been inferred from her claim to have ‘adaptándolos al gusto español’ (10). Indeed, even in relation to the use of butter, a point discussed by many other Spanish culinary writers of the time, she does not discuss the disadvantages of using as much butter as called for in the original French recipe because of the poor quality of this foodstuff in Spain as, for example, Pardo Bazán does in *La cocina moderna*. The fact that de Echagüe was so keen to follow French recipes and techniques as closely as possible means that she ultimately failed to take the exigencies of the Spanish foodscape into account. Indeed, as we have seen here, her primary aim was maintaining the integrity of modern French cuisine.

Notwithstanding the Frenchness of *La cocina completa*, it was highly successful with Spanish readers, like Muro’s similarly French-inspired *El practicón*. Indeed, as a result of the popularity of de Echagüe’s modern compendium of recipes, her editor encouraged her to move to Madrid and open a restaurant, which she did in 1936, calling it Parabere. True to the associations between its name and the fine French dining advocated in the culinary texts authored under this pseudonym, de Echagüe’s popular restaurant served the kind of food one would expect to find in a high-end Parisian restaurant. However, she was forced to close this establishment due to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. In 1940, she opened up her second Parabere, “en la Calle Villanueva, esquina Claudio Coello” (33). Like the former restaurant, this was

un local de lujo, que rápidamente se pone de moda, muy concurrido por políticos, aristócratas, artistas, toreros, comerciantes y hombres de negocio. Al ambiente distinguido hay que añadir una buena cocina, basada en alimentos que recibe de Francia gracias a su prima. (Garzón Sáez 3)

In addition to the restaurant’s provision of French-inspired cuisine, it has also been noted that there were other visible signs of its Frenchness, such as the French consul’s decision to put a French flag at the entry, which signified France’s protection of de

Echagüe. In spite of the rationing of food, common during the post-war period, de Echagüe found ways of maintaining a sense of luxury in her restaurant, such as having expensive foodstuffs sent to her from France and overcoming the ‘plato único’ restriction placed on restaurants by serving different courses on the same plate at the same time. Notwithstanding these initiatives to escape the poverty and restrictions of the post-war period, after three years of business, de Echagüe was forced to close *Parabere* due to financial difficulties.

As discussed, there is much evidence of the Frenchness, of de Echagüe’s culinary discourse. De Echagüe’s highly Francophile culinary persona was underscored by the almost French identity of her restaurant *Parabere*, which not only served haute French cuisine but also fostered an atmosphere of luxury much more in line with the social fabric of France at the time than the impoverished conditions of post-war Spain. Given this salient dependence on French cuisine in two of her most important culinary endeavours, at first glance de Echagüe’s decision to write a cookery book dedicated to Basque cuisine in 1935 (just one year before opening the first of the two *Paraberes*) could appear somewhat incongruous. As mentioned earlier, however, in addition to the fashion for French cuisine, Spain’s epicurean scene was also characterised by an increasing awareness of the need to revindicate Spanish cuisine. Key to this process was the promotion of Spanish cuisine as the sum of its richly diverse regional culinary cultures—a project first initiated by Dr Thebussem and the King’s Chef in their exchange of letters in 1876 and then taken up in full force up by Pérez in the 1930s.

As she was clearly very much in tune with the Spanish foodscape of the time, it is almost certain that de Echagüe was aware of this increasing focus on Spain’s regional cuisines in the emerging field of Spanish gastronomy, which I do not believe can be considered inconsequential to her decision to write *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*. In addition to the heightened presence of Spain’s regional culinary cultures in seminal gastronomic texts such as *La mesa moderna* (1888) and *Guía del buen comer español* (1929), regional cuisines also started to be given more visibility in cookery books themselves. Indeed, in 1933 de Echagüe’s fellow Basque culinary professional Nicolasa Pradera wrote a cookery book, *La cocina de Nicolasa*, dedicated to the promotion of her region’s cuisine, which at that time was already celebrated as one of the richest in Spain. Unlike de Echagüe who wrote her own prologue to her compendium of Basque recipes, Pradera wrote no introductory preamble to *La cocina de Nicolasa*. Instead, eminent Spanish intellectual Gregorio Marañón (1887-1960) prefaced this Basque cookery book with his own nine-page prologue, which congratulated Pradera for promoting a more positive image of Basque and Spanish cuisine amongst Spaniards and foreigners alike. It is clear that for Marañón, the visibility accorded to Basque and Spanish cuisine in *La cocina de Nicolasa* contributed not only to improving contemporaneous images of Spanish cuisine in circulation, but also to aiding Spain’s integration into Europe as a modern nation state.

Therefore, although both Pradera's and de Echagüe's cookery books were dedicated to the promotion of Basque cuisine, their prologues frame them as different kinds of texts. Indeed, Marañón's introductory essay to *La cocina de Nicolasa* situates this cookery book in terms of the wider focus on modernisation and national regeneration in Spain at this time. In this sense, Pradera's text can be seen as both symbol and agent of the country's broader modernising processes. In contrast to this, de Echagüe's prologue to *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* is significantly devoid of any references to modernisation, either a political or culinary nature. Given both the blueprint set in Pradera's text for links between the promotion of Spain's regional cuisines and political and cultural modernization and, indeed, de Echagüe's own self-professed preference for culinary modernity, it seems slightly surprising that she didn't address modernisation in any of its guises in the prologue to her compendium of Basque recipes.

Notwithstanding this apparent anomaly, de Echagüe's decision not to refer to political or cultural modernisation (or, indeed, to her already celebrated identity as a culinary modern) can be taken as a sign of how cognisant she was of the different types of cuisines that her cookery books promoted. Indeed, in the prologue to *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*, de Echagüe underscores how different this culinary text is from *La cocina completa*. Worrying that some of her readers may criticise her for leaving out certain dishes or important culinary material, she explains that this compendium of Basque recipes is not meant to be viewed in the same way as *La cocina completa*: "Adelantándome a la crítica advierto que éste no es propiamente un 'libro de cocina' es el compendio completo, creo yo, de los buenos platos vascos pero nada más . . . jamás pretendí al recopilar estas recetas el hacer otro libro más de cocina, pues para esto ahí está mi libro *La Cocina Completa*" (2). This comment is significant because it reveals the differences de Echagüe herself perceived between writing a modern cookery book like *La cocina completa* and one dedicated to her own regional cuisine. As she insists, readers of *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* should forgive any possible omissions because she never meant to be as thorough and exhaustive in this publication as in her earlier cookery book, which as we will remember she approached in a rigorous, almost military fashion.

In line with the more relaxed approach de Echagüe takes to writing her compendium of the best Basque recipes, she is also notably more informal with her readers in this book than in *La cocina completa*. As my analysis of this former culinary text suggested, de Echagüe adopted an authoritative role with her readers, always addressing them with an air of distance. In contrast to the formality of *La cocina completa*, in *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*, de Echagüe establishes a sense of intimacy with her readers, in particular those from the Basque country, by dedicating her cookery book 'a mis queridos paisanos' (1).

The contrasting tones of these two cookery books can be considered in terms of much wider differences between modern and regional cuisines. Indeed, according to Parkhurst Ferguson's definitions of important culinary configurations, modern and traditional cuisines should be seen as opposed. Although peasant cuisines are

considered, 'the ultimate traditional cuisine, regional cuisines,' she is quick to point out, are very similar to peasant cuisines ('A Cultural Field in the Making' 30). As Parkhurst Ferguson sees it, modern cuisine, unlike traditional peasant and regional cuisines, can be characterised by its 'luxury, formalization, invention, experimentation and reliance on advanced technology' (30). In addition to these important differences, while modern cuisines 'depend upon extensive communication with a heterogeneous and anonymous public,' ('A Cultural Field in the Making' 30) in traditional regional and peasant cuisines, 'recipes are handed down from one generation to a next or shared among neighbours' (ibid).

Significantly, the differences inherent in the culinary discourse of both de Echagüe's cookery books reflect the dichotomous relationship between modern and traditional cuisines, explained here by Parkhurst Ferguson. Indeed, de Echagüe's own emphasis on the systematisation, technique and experimentation in her prologue to her highly-modern *La cocina completa* holds true to this seminal food scholar's definition of culinary modernity as a highly formalised culinary configuration. Similarly, in line with the polarisation of modern cuisine and traditional regional cuisine, de Echagüe makes no mention of the formalisation of cuisine in *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*, indeed taking a much less structured approach. In addition to this, the familiarity of regional cuisines that Parkhurst Ferguson underscores, in particular the way that the recipes of these local cuisines are transmitted amongst family members and neighbours can be detected in de Echagüe's compendium of Basque recipes, in particular in the more personal way she addresses her readers. Indeed, although in reality de Echagüe's *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* relies on the same advanced technology and communication with an anonymous public as *La cocina completa*, the sense of intimacy she forges with her readers in her book of Basque recipes mirrors the way that regional cuisines are communicated orally amongst friends and family, as Parkhurst Ferguson tells us.

In line with the more familiar feel of *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca*, de Echagüe does not refer to the professionalization of cuisine in this culinary text in the same way as she does in *La cocina completa*. While she promises her readers that she has actually tested all of the recipes in both of these texts, in her compendium of Basque recipes, she makes no mention at all of the famous chefs of the time who had tried and approved of her dishes. Once again, one has the sense that de Echagüe's approach to writing about Basque cuisine in *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* was governed more by what she recognised to be the most important features of traditional cuisines than by her own undeniably clear preference for culinary modernity. Indeed, as if aware of the fact that traditional, regional cuisines predated modern cuisine, it somehow becomes incongruous to de Echagüe to imbue *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* with references to the professionalization of cuisine when this phenomenon itself was the product of a much newer culinary configuration.

In addition to these important contrasts between the culinary personas de Echagüe constructs for herself in the prologues to *La cocina completa* and *Platos escogidos de*

la cocina vasca, the type of cuisine promoted in these two cookery books also differs. As my discussion has outlined, de Echagüe's compendium of modern recipes not only provided significantly more recipes for international (French) dishes than for Spanish and regional recipes, but also enhanced the visibility of the foreign recipes by making explicit reference to their country of origin in their titles. This privileging of cosmopolitan culinary cultures in *La cocina completa* supports Parkhurst Ferguson's conclusion that modern cuisines were 'free from place and therefore open to culinary imports' (23). Obviously this freedom from place represented a culinary evolution because it marked the transition from traditional culinary practices to modern cuisine. Proud, therefore, of the way in which modern cuisines transcended traditional notions of place, many culinary authors made self-conscious attempts to highlight this aspect of their cookery books. I would suggest that the way in which de Echagüe accords more visibility to international recipes should be taken as a sign of how cognisant she was of the perceived superiority of her cosmopolitanism. Interestingly, Muro also emphasises the international nature of his bestselling cookery book, even mentioning in his prologue the benefits of a cosmopolitan diet in terms of hygiene and health.

In contrast to the focus on the internationalisation of cuisine in *La cocina completa*, in *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* there is, as the title of this book of recipes would suggest, an exclusive focus on culinary regionalism. From the outset of this book of Basque recipes, de Echagüe makes her commitment to Basque cuisine known. Indeed, as we can infer from the following comment, she is conscious of the fact that in writing about Basque cuisine she will help to enhance its profile: '[E]l objeto de esta pequeña recopilación de las mejores recetas vascas, es darlas a conocer al público' (10). As Parkhurst Ferguson asserts, the inherent ephemerality of culinary practices means that to reach beyond their originating group of diners, they need to be written about ('A Cultural Field in the Making' 26). Some scholars celebrate regional cuisines as the only real cuisines because they represent what people actually eat rather than being little more than intellectualised textual artifices, as they write about national cuisines (see Mintz; Revel). This dichotomy between authentic regional cuisines and textually dependent national cuisines tends to obfuscate the fact that '[e]ven regional cuisines relied on texts to be constituted as such' (Parkhurst Ferguson 'A Cultural Field in the Making' 42). Certainly, de Echagüe's appreciation of the importance of circulating texts about Basque cuisine suggests that she too was aware that if her regional cuisine were to be promoted outside of its immediate surroundings, it would need, first, to be written about.

De Echagüe's naming of her recipes in *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* also reveals a commitment to constructing and promoting an entity that would come to be recognised as Basque cuisine, both within and outside of the Basque country. Therefore, in contrast to the lack of attention to regional cuisines in *La cocina completa*, de Echagüe reinforces the Basqueness of her recipes by including an adjective of place or reference

to a Basque person of note or iconic Basque ingredient in the titles of a number of her recipes.

Indeed, de Echagüe's promotion of Basque cuisine in *Platos escogidos de la cocina vasca* has led present-day critics and foodies to congratulate her for her important contribution to the evolution of Basque cuisine as one of today's most renowned cuisines. On this point, Olga Macías Muñoz writes, for example, that, 'La vanguardia actual de la Gastronomía en el País Vasco . . . hunde sus raíces en una rica tradición de . . . mujeres como la Marquesa de Parabere . . . que supieron captar la esencia de la tradición culinaria ' (1). Interestingly, de Echagüe's attempts to accommodate both culinary modernity and culinary autochthony in her cookery books and restaurants is not completely dissimilar to the way in which today's top avant-garde chefs from the Basque country steadfastly recognise the importance of traditional culinary traditions and practices to their ultra-modern culinary creations. Although, therefore, de Echagüe's commitment to culinary modernity and culinary autochthony creates, as we have seen in this article, tensions in her culinary discourse, her fusion of these different culinary configurations has certainly proved the test of time and can perhaps be seen as forming the bedrock of one of the world's leading cuisines.

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