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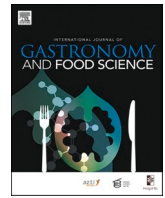
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The transference of cuisine and michelin rated Chinese restaurants: A Chef's perspective of chineseness in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

The second paper in a series of research focusing on the transference of cuisine and Michelin rated restaurants Hong Kong, known as a culinary paradise in Asia, has seen a rise in high end Chinese restaurants opening around the city within the Michelin Guide. These restaurants represent some of the most innovative and highest quality Chinese cuisine in the region. The chefs of these restaurants are artisans that expertly try to maintain the integrity of Chinese cuisine while pushing the boundaries of becoming Michelin. This study continues the works of exploring Michelin cuisine while analyzing the changes and challenges chefs face in Hong Kong with regards to cuisine taken from a chef's perspective. This research is set apart from the rest in that the focus is on the chefs as craftsmen and not their consumers or their perception of the chef's cuisine. The expanding background of this study means to provide new insights into how chefs work with food. This applied industry research was conducted using secondary data through the COVID-19 pandemic utilizing interviews with chefs, their menus, and their perception of Chinese cuisine.

1. Introduction

The Michelin Guide is deemed one of the world's foremost dining authorities with its objective, professional, and systematic rating process. Michelin starred restaurants are even perceived as the symbol of high-quality food, unique dining experience, and good value for money (Michelin, 2020). As its been renowned for more than one century for the consistent and objective output of guidebooks, some researchers have begun to conduct studies related to the guide. Previous research studied how Michelin-star Japanese restaurants' cuisines transferred from Japan to Hong Kong while maintaining their identity and authenticity (Baldwin, 2017). The research also pointed out the challenges during the transference process, such as cultural differences, ingredients, and availability of talent between the Japanese and Hong Kong markets. Looking at multiple indigenous Chinese cuisines in Hong Kong, they fill up a large portion of the Michelin-star and Bib Gourmand list, which is more than 50% and 75%, respectively, from 2019 to 2022 (Michelin, ; Michelin, 2020). Chinese cuisines like Cantonese cuisine, Noodles and Congee, Chinese barbecue, Shanghainese cuisine, Chiu Chow cuisine, and Sichuan cuisine can be easily found on the list. There is scarce research looking at how these renowned, traditional Chinese restaurants' transference across decades to today's version when facing societal evolution, economic change, and seeped in foreign cultures, especially in terms of chefs' views and culinary perspectives. For instance, Char siu (Chinese barbecued pork) style roasted toothfish was

once served in Duddell's, which is a 3-star Michelin Chinese restaurant (Duddell, 2018). An iconic and traditional Cantonese cooking technique (Chinese barbecue) met with foreign ingredients (toothfish), which turned out to be a paradigm-shifting item in Hong Kong's restaurant scene. This is the way the chefs in Duddell's utilized their experience and creativity to use modern ingredients without losing the Cantonese flavors and identity.

This research aims to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the difficulties Michelin-rated Chinese chefs encounter while transferring Chinese cuisine across decades, without compromising its essence, authenticity, and identity. The research questions formulated from the 2017 study have been used and updated for continuity.

1. What are the challenges that Michelin chefs have encountered in Chinese cuisine?
 - Outside influence brings cultural challenges
 - Technical or skills-based challenges
 - Change of taste expectation of guests and new generational palate
2. What should Michelin chefs do to make successful transference of indigenous Chinese restaurant cuisine?

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2. Review of literature

2.1. Deficiencies in past literature

The review of literature seeks to introduce topics that are directly related to the transference of cuisine. Baldwin's 2017 interpretation of Japaneseness brought forth research that looks at the efforts made by Japanese chefs and restaurateurs who pioneered and successfully moved their intended cuisine from one place to another, specifically in Hong Kong. Lee and Ko's 2022 paper examined the culinary capital of Michelin restaurants worldwide, with a partial scope on Hong Kong through the lens of online media reviews via customer feedback. The most recent work from Huang et al. (2023) examined Hong Kong as one-third of the Michelin triangle that is Macau, Hong Kong, and Singapore. This paper examined the characteristics of Michelin-starred restaurants in general via social media outlets. These studies, while incredibly enlightening on the topic, had little to no direct contact with chefs in their culinary element from their perspective. Much of the existing research utilizes the perspective of the consumer and therefore deters from the existing "Transference of Cuisine" framework. As the focus of this research is to address the gap in chef-driven applied practical research, previous research is lacking in this area. Baldwin's (2017) study sought to address the problems, issues, and solutions that arise for Japanese chefs maintaining the authenticity, identity, and integrity of their cuisine. This research intends to examine and address the gap in the transference of Chinese cuisine in Michelin-rated restaurants.

2.2. The transference of cuisine

Food is both a substance and a symbol. It not only provides physical nutrition but also bring meaning to perceptions of cooking and dining (Wilk, 1999). Foods containing the characteristics of a group's identity, culture, as well as their histories, form that cuisine. When transferring a cuisine from one place to another place, there is an interaction and cultural negotiation between the foreign identity and the local culture (Farmer, 2010). When the homogenization process occurs, that cuisine could have elements added or taken away from its production and execution. The identity of a cuisine becomes fluid and malleable when exposed to a new cultural environment. Previous research on the transference of Michelin-rated Japanese restaurants in Hong Kong (Baldwin, 2017) discovered that some Michelin-rated Japanese chefs in Hong Kong innovated their cuisine regarding the flavor combination and the ingredients without sacrificing the essence of "Japaneseness"; and others even incorporated ingredients and cooking methods outside of traditional Japanese cuisine. These restaurants are still considered authentic Japanese cuisine by their peers, such as Michelin-rated Ta Vie (Japanese French restaurant) and Tokuyoshi (Japanese Italian restaurant).

Therefore, shifting the transference of cuisine from one place to another within the same location, for example, the transference of cuisine from other provinces in China to Hong Kong, the acculturation process is also inevitable. Cultural anthropologists illustrated a type of cuisine, Hakka cuisine, that had successful transference but faded away from the Chinese cuisine market. Originating from the Guangdong province, it was introduced into the Hong Kong market in the 1940s–50s and gradually grew in popularity due to the similar dining practices between Hakkas and Hongkongers (Cheung, 2005). The high demand of Hongkongers for food being high in that age also contributed to the successful transference of Hakka cuisine into the Hong Kong market. Cheung (2005) mentioned that Hakka cuisine, which is highly composed of meats, has a signature approach to their preparation, for example, soy simmered Pork belly with preserved vegetables. As time went on, Hongkongers began longing for more diverse dining experiences, as well as establishing a concern for healthier and mindful cuisine. Hakka cuisine failed to homogenize within the culture at that time, and the response from locals evolved. Culture was seen as a critical

factor in Hakka cuisine fading in the Hong Kong market over time. Other Chinese cuisines, like the local Cantonese cuisine, also faced an inevitable challenge. In order to successfully transfer the cuisine, chefs must continually consider the local culture. With the nature of "East meets West" in Hong Kong, foreign culinary influence seeping into the culture would have an impact on the nature of the cuisine.

2.3. Bridging culture through culinary identity

Cuisine cultures are not fixed but rather a non-stop mixing process when facing foreign cultures, social change, as well as economic change (Klein, 2007). Examining Chinese cuisine in Hong Kong from a historical perspective, it has been shaped by the longtime **British colonization, migrations (mainland, Southeast Asia), as well as trade flows**. The pluralistic environment and multicultural element provide an ecosystem for Chinese cuisine to thrive in Hong Kong by bridging and hybridizing with regional as well as foreign culinary identities.

Southern Chinese cuisine is always deemed as the cuisine of the Pearl Delta River region, which Hong Kong is within that region. Southern Chinese cuisine in Hong Kong is renowned for its essence of freshness (*San Sin*), seasonality (*Si Ling*), sweetness (*tim*), as well as mild harmonized taste (*Qin Dan, Wo Mei*) when using the ingredients and formulating the taste. These are contributed by the abundance of resources available for creating the cuisine because of Hong Kong's sub-tropical climate, coastal advantage, as well as flourishing international trade flows. Chefs can get the freshest, most diverse ingredients and spices regionally and from around the globe. On the other hand, the cuisine on the other side of China, called Northern Chinese, is very different from Southern Chinese cuisine. People described Northern Chinese cuisine as stimulating (*Ci Gik*), spicy (*Laat*), salty (*Haam*), as well as heavy (*Nung*). Even with such significant differences in the flavor profile between Southern and Northern cuisine, Northern provincial cuisines have been thriving in Hong Kong since the mid-20th century (Cheng, 2003). Restaurants that serve Peking, Shanghai, and Sichuan cuisines have been very popular. They occupied a considerable area of the culinary map in Hong Kong for Chinese cuisine. Some Southern Chinese chefs even borrow culinary preparation skills from Northern Chinese cuisines for their cuisine innovation. For instance, the very traditional northern item, 'sweet and sour squirrel fish' is a deep-fried mandarin fish cut into a squirrel shape with sweet and sour sauce poured on top (Shi & Zhao, 2006, p. 176–178). Southern chefs thought the squirrel shape was not elegant and delicate enough for serving, therefore, the fish was trimmed into finer pieces to look like chrysanthemums, and the dish was called 'chrysanthemum fish' by the Southern chefs (Yeung, 2017). The cooking and flavoring methods remained the same as in the North. This is a classic example of culinary bridging, which brings out the unique characteristics between northern and southern Chinese cuisine. Northern Chinese cuisine chefs indicated that the 'taste' of the dish was the most important, while Southerners care more about the harmonious combination of 'color, aroma, taste, shape, and mouth feeling' of the dishes (Klein, 2007). The seemingly paradoxical cooking philosophy between Northern and Southern Chinese cuisines is bridged subtly in Hong Kong, which is a pluralistic cultural environment.

Western culinary culture is also a long-standing influence in Hong Kong since the British colonial period. Westerners pay a lot of attention to the presentation, ambiance, as well as the aroma of foods. As Klein stated in his research (2007), most Southerners, especially Cantonese speakers (i.e., Hong Kong people), like to try new foodstuffs as being open-minded is one of their characteristics. Some Chinese chefs in Hong Kong hybridized Western ingredients, cooking methods, and sauces into Southern Chinese cuisine. For instance, ingredients such as asparagus, black truffle, Australian wagyu, and foie gras, etc., are intensively adopted by Chinese Michelin-rated chefs in Hong Kong like T'ang Court, and Yan Toh Heen. The adoption and fusion process of these ingredients between Western and Chinese cuisine will surely contribute to the

innovation of the flavor profile of Chinese cuisine. One of the key perspectives this research trying to discover is how far Michelin-rated Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong bridge their cuisines with outside culinary identities.

2.4. Hong Kong gastronomy and culinary history

Hong Kong's gastronomic map has been shaped for more than a century, which spans the British colonial era, the late 1970s–1990s economic thriving period, and modernization. During the British colonial era, Western-style restaurants were brought to Hong Kong in 1846, which mainly provided food services to the **upper class** (Cheng, 2003, p.128, p.128). The traditional tea houses and Dai Pai Dongs were local prevalence eateries at the time. These latter two were more affordable eating places for the public of Hong Kong. The tea houses provided Dim Sum, fried noodles, steamed rice with chicken feet and spare ribs, etc., whilst the Dai Pai Dongs provided plenty of deep-fried, fried, and Chiu Chau-style brined items. Later, between the early to mid-20th century, the gastronomy map became more diverse in Hong Kong. The congee and **noodles shops** (Cheng, 2003, p.120, p.120), sorbet cafés and coffee shops (Bing Sat) (Cheng, 2003, p.129, p.129), **small eateries** (*Siu Gun: serving Chinese a la carte items, congee & noodles, catering*) (Cheng, 2003, p.92, p.92), **low-priced tea rooms** (Cheng, 2003, p.80, p.80), **off-premise catering** (Cheng, 2003, p.72), and **Chinese restaurants** (*Zau Lau*) (Cheng, 2003, p.44, p.44), thrived for a half-century. At that time, an abundant selection of gastronomic delights was available for all communities from low to high income.

During the late 1970s–1990s economic thriving period, there was plenty of influx of gastronomic businesses from mainland China and Southeast Asia, while some of the existing eateries in Hong Kong transformed into new kinds of gastronomic businesses. The well-established northern provincial eateries, as well as eateries from **neighborhood provinces** (Cheng, 2003, p. 89; *Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 1999; P.7*). These restaurateurs brought time-honored items like Peking roast duck, Shanghai steamed dumplings (*Siu Lung Bao*), and **Poached fish fillet in chili oil** (Cheng, 2003, p. 88) to Hong Kong. Additional eateries from Southeast Asia such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia contributed to Hong Kong's gastronomic map as well. Well-known and flavorful Thai and Vietnamese foods include Pat Thai, char-grilled pork, Vietnam beef curry, as well as Vietnamese chicken rice noodles and Nasi Goreng from Indonesia. The influx of these cuisines, without a doubt, diversified the gastronomic profile in terms of flavor combination, utilization of ingredients, as well as culinary techniques in Hong Kong. With such external gastronomic influence and competition, some of the existing eateries started diminishing. For instance, the tea houses, tea rooms, as well as off-premises catering services lost their place within Hong Kong's restaurant scene. Chinese restaurants (*Zau Lau*) became the replacement for these declined tea houses. Sorbet cafés (Bing Sat) and Tea cafés (**Cha Chaan Teng**) (*Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 1999, P. 7, P. 7*), which derived from Western-style eateries, also began to flourish. The essence of the East meets West food and drink preparation methods can be easily found in such eateries.

The emergence of fast-food chains, both local and foreign, in the late 20th century was brought on by the process of **modernization and globalization** (*Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 1999, P. 9, P. 9*), for example, Café de Coral, Maxim's, Fairwood, McDonald's, as well as Pizza hut. (*Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 1999, P. 9, P. 9*). These businesses provide standardized foodstuffs with consistent quality, affordable prices, and high service efficiency. This was the symbol of modernization of the gastronomic and culinary world in Hong Kong. Different types of eateries, including Chinese restaurants, started to employ technology to maintain the quality and consistency of their culinary preparation. For instance, barbecue chefs in Chinese cuisines tend to apply propane gas or electricity-driven ovens instead of charcoal-driven ovens to get more consistent cooking results.

In the recent decade, international cuisines have flourished in Hong

Kong, benefitting from the prosperity of frequent economic activities globally. Many culinary concepts, food ingredients, and cooking techniques were brought into the gastronomic world of Hong Kong. These seep-in elements were adopted by plenty of Chinese restaurants quickly. For instance, Michelin-rated Chinese restaurants like DUDELL'S, and Bo Innovation intensively used foreign food ingredients, like Foie Gras (France), Caviar (Russia), Matsutake mushroom (Japan), and Iberico pork (Spain), in their traditional Chinese items. For Bo innovation, the chef even incorporated the concept of molecular gastronomy techniques such as soy sauce spherification into their Chinese menu. The historical issues and outside seeping into the culinary culture did significantly influence the indigenous Chinese cuisine, thereby shaping the gastronomic and culinary picture today. The hybridizing process will be continued as time flows.

2.5. Culinary authenticity and "chineseness"

The word authenticity is a difficult concept to define clearly because of its manifold nature (Lin et al., 2017). Objectivism, constructivism, and postmodernism approaches are frequently discussed concepts in the hospitality industry regarding authenticity. From the objectivism approach, authenticity can be measured by a series of objective criteria (Appadurai, 1986). For instance, an ethnic cuisine was prepared by natives in keeping with the traditional recipe, preparation method, ingredients, and cooking ware used for the cuisine without any adjustment, which can be considered objective authenticity (Ebster and Guist, 2005). Authenticity under the constructivism approach is less rigid, changeable, and heavily dependent on the context of society (Cohen, 1988; Salamone, 1997). Chefs' knowledge, experience, and existing image of the culinary art of a cuisine are of paramount importance to evoke peoples' inference on authentic gastronomic experiences. The post-modern approach to authenticity sees the joyfulness and enjoyability of a product as the key criteria for an authentic experience (Cohen, 1995).

In the culinary and restaurant industry, like Michelin-star restaurants, authenticity is not a single approach like each of the above. It is a mixed approach called staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). In this notion, culinary authenticity is not only about the application of traditional preparation methods, recipes, sauces, and ingredients but also about the dedication to bringing experience and joy to audiences (Borghini et al., 2023). For instance, in Chinese culinary arts in Hong Kong, some of the dish preparation methods have changed while the seasoning, flavoring and ingredients were maintained; some of the ingredients of a dish would change to premium ones, while the traditional preparation methods are maintained. Innovating and changing without losing the essence of tradition and staged authenticity is everywhere within Michelin-star restaurants.

2.6. The Michelin Guide in Hong Kong

The Michelin guide has stood as a symbol of culinary quality and excellence for more than a century since the first version was published in France in 1900 (Michelin, 2017). The book is a globally renowned guide for fabulous gastronomic and culinary experiences, which covers more than 30 countries and cities. It was introduced in Hong Kong in 2008. The professional and well-trained inspectors, their 5 objective assessment criteria, and the comprehensive rating system are the key elements of the guide. There are 10 typical types of cuisines listed on the Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau, and 5 out of 10 cuisines are Chinese cuisines such as Cantonese, Noodles and Congee, Cantonese roast meats (Chinese BBQ items), Chiu Chow, and Hakkanese cuisine (Michelin,). These establishments were rated by designated criteria like quality of the ingredients used, mastery of flavor and cooking techniques, chef's personality in his cuisine, value for money, and consistency between visits (Michelin,). Qualified establishments will be awarded the star (1–3 stars), entitled Bib Gourmand, or Michelin Plate.

The awards will be reviewed annually, and it is possible to add or remove star(s) from the awarded establishments. In a nutshell, the guide is a map of good food, quality dining experience, and today's trends.

3. Methodology

For the original form of the study qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and restaurant production observations were desired to explore the research topic in terms of Chefs' perspectives, adopted from Baldwin (2017). In this iteration of the study, data was collected from various sources namely semi-structured interviews with chefs or managers from Michelin-rated Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong, and drawn from a collection of open sources (e.g., videos, marketing materials, photographs, literature, Trip Advisor, Facebook, Instagram, 土炮, 飲食男女, Hong Kong Talter). However, due to Hong Kong's strict COVID-19 restrictions and their impact on restaurants during the study (lengthy closures and seating requirements), the methodological approach was modified. Secondary data was used in place of the original interview method as the primary mode of data collection and analysis. Researchers utilized existing newspaper and digital media interviews in place of semi-structured interviews. Due to the COVID-19 situation and restrictions in Hong Kong, the researchers chose not to attempt to contact chefs for phone or email interviews out of respect. Restaurant production observations were abandoned due to COVID-19 forced restaurant closures. As the research or literature related to Michelin-rated Chinese cuisines is limited, obtaining data from different sources provided a means to support the research questions and provide a better understanding of the study. The research questions are listed below:

What are the challenges that Michelin chefs have encountered in Chinese cuisine?

- Outside influence brings cultural challenges
 - Technical or skills-based challenges
 - Change of taste expectation of guests and new generational palate

What should Michelin chefs do to make successful transference of indigenous Chinese restaurant cuisine?

Table 1 indicates the targeted restaurants of the study (see Table 2).

10 Michelin-rated Chinese restaurants were selected from the Michelin Guide Hong Kong Tatler, 2012 (Table 1). These selected targets included Cantonese cuisine, Shanghainese cuisine, Hakka cuisine, and contemporary Chinese cuisine. In addition, as shown in (Table 1), these restaurants have a relatively long history of serving Chinese food in Hong Kong. For example, the youngest study target, 'Jardin de Jade (Wan Chai)', has been operating in Hong Kong for more than 9 years, and the oldest is 'Chuen Cheung Kui', which has been serving Hakka cuisine in Hong Kong for more than 50 years. Furthermore, the

Table 1
Study targets of Michelin Chinese restaurants.

Name	Established	Years of operation	References
Bo Innovation	2005	15 years	(Yip, 2009)
Chuen Cheung Kui	1960's	>50 years	(Guide, 2020a,b,c,d,e)
Jardin de Jade (Wan Chai)	2010	>9 years	(Invest Hong Kong, 2017)
Lung King Heen	2002	18 years	(Michelin, 2016)
Ming Court	2005	~15 years	(Hong Kong Tatler, 2018)
Shang Palace	1980's	>35 years	(Guide, 2020a,b,c,d,e)
T'ang Court	1990's	~30 years	(Guide, 2020a,b,c,d,e)
Yan Toh Heen	1984	>25 years	Leung (2014)
Yat Tung Heen (Jordan)	1990	~30 years	(Guide, 2020a,b,c,d,e)
Yee Tung Heen	1993	>25 years	(Guide, 2019b Guide, 2019)

Table 2
Chef interview sources.

Restaurants	Interviews topic	Sources
Bo Innovation	World's Top Chefs - Alvin Leung/Bo Innovation. By Classic Fine Foods	Filmages Limited (2013) (Pepper, n.a.)
	Bo innovation's Alvin leung on eating dogs, water beetles, and why Hong Kong Street food does not exist anymore	Wong (2016)
	Alvin Leung: "If you don't get wiser, you should not get older. You should just die." Chef Alvin Leung: Creativity is needed to stand out and compete	(Eastwind magazine, 2015) (Guide, 2018)
Lung King Heen	Chan Yan Tak's (Lung King Heen, 3 Michelin Stars) steamed sea bass fillet in fermented bean sauce	(Quackenbush, 2018)
	'We're Not Educated.' The untold story of Lung King Heen, the world's first Michelin Three-Star Chinese restaurant.	Time (2018)
Shang Palace	Cantonese-style crispy chicken by chef Cheung	(Kowloon Shangri-La, 2019a,b,c)
	Chef Cheung and his inspiration	(Kowloon Shangri-La, 2019a,b,c)
T'ang Court	Dine with Chef Kwong at the Michelin 3-Star Cantonese restaurant - [HYESOO IN HONG KONG]	Hallyu World Official (2017)
	T'ang Court Star-studded Memories of Chef Kwong- An Innovative Veteran of Traditional Cantonese Cuisine	(Michelin Guide, n.a.)
	The Michelin Guide insider series: Rooted in tradition	(Guide, 2017Guide, 2017)

Michelin-rated restaurants selected for the study have been on the Michelin Guide Hong Kong Macau (Bib Gourmand to 3 Michelin stars) for at least 2 consecutive years to 12 consecutive years (Appendix I). These well-established and renowned restaurants, with their experienced chef team, are valuable sources of knowledge to acquire data for research.

3.1. Data collection and analysis

Secondary data from two aspects were studied to obtain data for the research objectives. These were published chef interviews and menus of selected Michelin-rated restaurants. For the chef interviews, Michelin chefs from 4 renowned Michelin Chinese restaurants of the 10 restaurants listed were selected, and their 12 public interviews were retrieved (Table. ii). The interviews provide in-depth details for the research. The four restaurants are Bo Innovation, Lung King Heen, Ming Court, and Shang Palace. All four restaurants have obtained Michelin stars for 12 consecutive years (2009–2020) since the first Michelin Guide Hong Kong Macau 1st edition (Appendix I). They are all renowned Chinese restaurants in the city or even globally. For instance, Lung King Heen is the first 3-star Michelin restaurant in Hong Kong and their team managed to maintain the 3-stars for 12 consecutive years; the contemporary Chinese restaurant, Bo Innovation, had been rated as a 3-star Michelin restaurant for 6 consecutive years, 2-stars for 4 times, and 1-star twice.

Before the analysis process, videos, and external media were translated and transcribed into English from Cantonese. The interview questions were adopted from Baldwin (2017) to help address the research. Researchers reviewed the videos and transcripts to find answers that closely associated with the research questions. A review of existing media about Michelin Chinese restaurants was conducted using 9 videos and 4 passages extracted from open sources. The materials were used to understand the challenges encountered by the chefs, and what they did to successfully maintain the authentic Chinese cuisine offering

without losing the essence of Chineseness in Hong Kong throughout the past decade. There were 4 categories of questions, including chefs' views on the preparation of their cuisine, challenges with preparing their cuisine, the chef's inspiration for their cuisine, and the way they trained and educated their chef team. The data from the interviews were coded according to the 4 categories below. For instance, the following transcript is from an interview with a chef from Bo Innovation, where two key pieces of information can be coded under the chef's view in the preparation of their cuisine. The chef insisted on the innovation of his dishes, without compromising the essence of traditional Chinese cuisine. Besides, he needs the absolute best ingredients to prepare the best result of his dishes creation.

The (1) philosophy is innovation but, in this process, you must always look back on tradition. In my team, I have a traditional chef who helps me with some of the traditional cooking, and of course I have some very young and new chefs, which take the tradition and add on new ideas. (2) Chinese cooking requires the freshest ingredients, in fact, the local people here go to the market every day. Ingredients are fundamental to my cuisine, I require the absolute best to give me ultimately the best taste (Filmages Limited, 2013).

Data was also collected from the menus of the 10 restaurants. Two menus from each restaurant from different years were selected for analysis (Table 3). According to previous research by Lin, Ren, and Chen (2017) it shows that food is the greatest influencing factor on the authentic Cantonese dining experience. In the selected menus for this study, the research team analyzed the 'ingredients', 'cooking methods', and 'taste combinations' of the 10 restaurants, which are the subcategories. These are only a few influencing factors of authentic dining experience (Hudgins, 2005; Jang et al., 2012). The menu offered by the restaurants in the earlier years is referred to as the 'old menu', while the menu offered in later years is the 'new menu'. The 'old menu' and the 'new menu' are the primary codes that hold the three subcategories outlined above. Within the subcategories, there are two codes to analyze the menu data, these are 'innovative, bridging, foreign inspired' or 'traditional Chinese'. Elements in the menu that are not common in traditional Chinese cuisine or are from foreign cultures will be coded as 'innovative, bridging, foreign inspired', whilst elements that are prevalent in traditional Chinese cuisines will be coded as 'traditional Chinese'. For example, a menu item from the Che, 2018 menu from Bo Innovation shown below, (1) & (2) are ingredients originating from outside of China, and these are coded as 'innovative, bridging, foreign inspired' under the ingredients category for old menu; (3) & (4) are the traditional ingredients in Chinese cuisine, which were coded as 'traditional Chinese' under the ingredients category for old menu. The NVivo 12 software was used to help with data analysis.

Table 3
Michelin Chinese restaurants menus for study.

Restaurant Name	Michelin Listing	Type of Restaurant	Menu Years Reviewed
Bo Innovation	**	Innovative	2008 & 2018
Cheun Cheung Kui	Bib Gourmand	Hakkanese	2013 & 2019
Jardin de Jade (Wan Chai)	*	Shanghainese	2011 & 2018
Lung King Heen	**	Cantonese	2011 & 2018
Ming Court	*	Cantonese	2012 & 2020
Shang Palace	*	Cantonese	2012 & 2019
T'ang Court	***	Cantonese	2014 & 2019
Yan Toh Heen	**/Closed	Dim Sum	2011 & 2019
Yat Tung Heen (Jordan)	*	Cantonese	2011 & 2020
Yee Tung Heen	**/Closed	Cantonese	2013 & 2019

- (1) WAGYU M9 + , (2) black truffle (3) soy (4) "cheung fun" (Spike HK, 2008)

4. Findings

The traditional elements used in the menus in each subcategory (*ingredients, cooking method, taste combination*) slightly decreased when compared between old and new menus. According to (Table 4), the 'ingredients', 'cooking methods', and 'taste combination' elements decreased from the **old menu (T)** 201, 84, & 89 references to the **new menu (T)** 192, 77, & 69 references. While the 'innovation, bridging, foreign inspired' elements in each subcategory (*ingredients, cooking method, taste combination*) between the old and new menus increased significantly. According to (Table 4), 'ingredients', 'cooking methods', and 'taste combination' increased from the **old menu (I)** 45, 17, & 21 references to the **new menu (I)** 63, 32, & 36 references. The (I) elements of 'ingredients', 'cooking methods', and 'taste combination' of the new menu increased by 40%, 88%, and 71%, respectively.

In addition, the chefs' views from 4 out of 10 restaurants (Table 5), there are 10 references related to chefs' views on the preparation of their cuisine, 4 references related to the challenges with the preparation of their cuisine, 6 references related to the inspiration of their cuisine, and 9 references related to the views of the chefs to train their chef team.

5. Discussion

5.1. Food

5.1.1. Ingredients

The variation of traditional Chinese ingredients used, between the old and new menus, are not significant in the 10 Michelin-rated Chinese restaurants. The most frequently used traditional Chinese ingredients such as pork, chicken, rice, egg, lotus leaf, mushroom, etc., were both intensively applied in the old and new menus. For example, for pork-related items, there was braised pork belly in Hakkanese cuisine, salted pork belly and pork dumplings in Shanghai cuisine, and barbecued pork and suckling pig in Cantonese cuisine. This was also the same for chicken-related items, such as salt-baked chicken in Hakkanese cuisine, double-boiled chicken soup, and crispy chicken in Cantonese cuisine. These ingredients were applied to the 10 Michelin restaurants to prepare very traditional Chinese items. It implicated that the traditional Chinese cuisine offered by these restaurants had not compromised the traditional elements of the cuisine as time passed. Apart from being the top Michelin Chinese restaurants in the city, traditional ingredients are not the only elements in the restaurants' menus. Some foreign-seeped-in ingredients were also bridged into the menus' items by the chefs. For example, the most applied ingredients are A3 Saga-gyu beef (from the Saga prefecture of Japan), Wagyu beef, M9 Wagyu beef (high fat and marbling), foie gras, truffle, and cod. Between the old and new menus, the restaurants' team increased the application of I elements significantly. Other than the frequently used I ingredients mentioned above, the study's results also showed more ingredients, which are unfamiliar in Chinese cuisine, like yuzu, toro, sea urchin, and Iberico pork, etc.

5.1.2. Cooking methods

The traditional cooking methods occupied a large proportion of the menu in both old and new menus in the 10 Michelin restaurants, and the variation was not significant. Most applied traditional Chinese cooking methods like deep fried, wok stir-fried, braised, barbecued, double boiled, and steamed, which can be easily identified in the old and new menus. However, the application of innovative, bridging, and foreign inspired (I) cooking methods increased its proportion significantly in the new menus when compared with the old. Freeze-drying, gelatinization, spherification, flavor extraction, etc., these (I) cooking methods were increasingly applied in preparing Chinese cuisine. Especially in the new menus of the restaurants, the application of (I) cooking methods were

Table 4

Comparison of I and T elements applied between old and new menu.

	Old menu (T)	New menu(T)	Old menu(I)	New menu(I)	Remarks
Ingredients	201	192	45	63	T=Traditional Chinese
Cooking methods	84	77	17	32	I = Innovative, bridging, foreign inspired
Taste combination	89	69	21	36	

Table 5

Chefs' views from interviews on the transference of their cuisine.

	Number of references	Key messages
Preparation of cuisine	10	Tradition/new ideas/experiment/detail/balance taste & creativity/Cantonese methods cook foreign ingredients/focus on taste, smell, & eye-catching/no food additives/rotted in tradition/make ordinary ingredients to tasty food
Challenges with preparation of the cuisines	4	Food trends come and go/people's tastes more diverse & sophisticated/some traditional items need today's tech to make it available all year round/tech is not always good like slicing turnips for turnip cakes
Inspirations	6	Innovation & look back to tradition/Chinese culture/items of old day/think what the customer think/change/everyday life
Training chef	9	Do the experiment over/eating chef & experience other people's food/take the good observe the bad/inspire each other/don't pressure staff & think at customer's view/experience, perseverance and concentration/up to customers/do more work and put heart into it to accumulate more exp/observe

even more diverse for preparing Chinese cuisines.

5.1.3. Taste combination

The number of traditional Chinese taste elements in the new menus had decreased when compared with old menus. However, the very classic, basic, and dominant Chinese taste elements were still there. The taste of sweet and sour, oyster sauce, soy sauce, X.O. sauce, Chin Kiang vinegar, salt, sesame, Osmanthus, and Hua Diao wine, etc. All these tastes are essential parts of Chinese cuisine, and they were not abandoned by the Michelin chefs as time passed. At the same time, the I elements were from foreign cultures continuously influencing Chinese chefs to prepare their cuisine. The I elements of taste were increased from 21 references to 36 references in the menus. The chefs can adopt the outside taste elements wisely into their cuisine. For instance, the flavors of scallions, mayonnaise, black truffle, miso, yuzu, sea urchin, curry, Shochu, cheese, mustard, etc., are found in many dishes. These tastes and flavor combinations are common in the local Hong Kong Michelin restaurants or Western countries but not in Chinese culture. These cultural influences and taste profile changes of the market have made these preparations desirable.

The chef from Bo Innovation mentioned in his interview (2020),¹ that food trends come and go quickly and are not easy to predict. This is a big challenge to every Michelin Chinese restaurant that follows the guests' dining expectations, while maintaining the Chinese essence of their restaurants. The chef mentioned in another interview, that the philosophy of his Chinese cuisine offerings is innovative but always looking back on tradition. He has a chef team with talents for both innovation and traditional Chinese craftsmanship. His philosophy is also

coherent with another Michelin chef from Lung King Heen² who mentioned that 'the only constant is change, every time you adapt and breakthrough, you become a new you.'³ He managed to adopt foreign ingredients but cook in a Chinese way in his cuisine. Bridging between the foreign and local elements, it is a very common picture of Michelin Chinese restaurants in both the old and new menus.

Even for the chef from Lung King Heen whose philosophy in cooking is 'rooted in tradition', the chef from T'ang Court, insists on making his cuisine in a very traditional Chinese way to maintain the quality of dishes, like his signature Chinese item, the turnip cake.⁴ He emphasizes using the traditional way to prepare and cook the turnip to make the ordinary ingredients tasty and valuable. However, even with very traditional chefs like in the restaurant T'sang Court, adopting and bridging his cuisine with I elements was also an inevitable process. It is just about the proportion of innovation. For instance, cod fish, Japanese Wagyu beef, and Japanese Matsutake mushrooms. These foreign imported elements were also found in his cuisine. Furthermore, Chef Cheung from Shang Palace uses technology nowadays to make the time-consuming and seasonal dishes (e.g., crispy chicken (Zaa Zi Gai)) available all year round with consistent quality.

As mentioned before, when transferring a cuisine, there is an interaction and cultural negotiation (Farrer, 2010). This study showed that even the chefs with very traditional philosophies, also inevitably undergo the homogenization process as time passes and the cultural environment changes. For example, the change in people's tastes and dining preferences are getting more diverse and sophisticated as mentioned by the chef of Bo Innovation. The interaction and cultural negotiation between traditional Chinese cuisine, foreign-seeped-in elements, and the local cultural environment has occurred. This has become today's Michelin Chinese cuisine offering in Hong Kong. The study is also in coherence with Cwiertka (2003), where cuisine culture is a non-stop mixing process instead of fixed things when facing foreign culture, social change, as well as economic change. The scene nowadays sees Michelin Chinese cuisines in Hong Kong as not being the final version, and the cultural interaction and negotiation process is still ongoing.

The homogenization between traditional Chinese cuisine and I elements does not harm but adds value to the authenticity and Chineseness of the Michelin Chinese cuisine offering. The study results show that Michelin Chinese chefs keep innovating their Chinese cuisine while adopting I elements and satisfying the diverse taste expectations of customers. The results, which echo Ebster and Guist (2005), show that the authentic dining experience is not only about the application of traditional elements but also considering the overall experiences and joyfulness of audiences.

6. Conclusion

The research shows that the top Michelin Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong faced challenges in maintaining their authentic Chinese cuisine offering. The unpredictable trends, culturally sophisticated customers with diverse taste preferences, and the seep-in cultural influences in Chinese cuisine offering are the dominant factors identified

¹ <https://www.pepper.ph/bo-innovations-alvin-leung/>.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3uOgswXdmM>.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JHjNzDppo>.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev-skPeoOHM&t=6s>.

from the open data sources collected for chef interviews. The analysis of food categories has shown that these elements influenced chefs to provide authentic Chinese cuisine with innovative accents. The practitioners, managers, or restaurateurs should pay attention to these challenges if they would like to offer authentic, memorable, and joyful Chinese dining experiences in a competitive market like Hong Kong. Only sticking to traditional Chinese cuisine practices is not enough to deliver staged authenticity and memorable experiences to guests. A good combination of a chef team with both innovative talents and experienced traditional Chinese chefs are key to keep the offering of Chinese cuisine moving with today's culturally diverse guests. Thus, the chef team can provide innovation but at the same time look at the traditional Chinese culture to keep the essence and integrity of traditional Chinese cuisine. In addition, the team should not be afraid to practice experiencing cuisine creation and observe and gain inspiration from daily life. Putting some elements into Chinese cuisine, which is related to past cultural experiences of the customer base, is a good way to resonate with the guests and give them a good show. Michelin chefs should bear in mind that objective authenticity is never the top priority for offering a memorable authentic Chinese dining experience to the guests. Instead, the joyfulness and linkage to their experience and cultural background matters, especially for the new generation of chefs and consumers. The bridging process can be the foreign elements with traditional Chinese craftsmanship, or the very traditional Chinese food elements with foreign and innovative preparation techniques. The proportion between traditional elements and I elements will depend on the major customer base of the Michelin Chinese restaurants.

6.1. Limitations

This study focuses on Michelin Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong thus, the results are not fully applicable to other cuisines in Hong Kong. In addition, the results might not apply to Michelin restaurants outside of Hong Kong as the customers in other regions have different cultural backgrounds and experiences, resulting in a different conclusion. Furthermore, only ingredients, taste combinations, and cooking methods had been studied. Further studies could focus on more categories such as the restaurant's ambiance, staff, etc., to obtain deeper insights into the transference of Michelin Chinese cuisines and the bridging process of cuisine from past to present in Hong Kong.

Finally, unpredicted situations or dramatic change in social culture, environment, or economy also very significantly impacts the transference of Michelin Chinese cuisine offerings, for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak at the end of 2019. The timeline of how unexpected global issues impact the transference of local Michelin Chinese cuisine offerings is an interesting but sophisticated topic worthy of further study.

Future research and contribution

Future research on the topic of the "Transference of Cuisine" is very

Appendix. I: Selected Michelin restaurants for study

Name	Established	Type of cuisine	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bo Innovation	2005 (15 years)	Contemporary Chinese cuisine	**	*	*	**	**	***	***	***	***	***	***	**
Chuen Cheung Kui	60's (>50 years)	Hakkinese cuisine	-	-	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Jardin de Jade (Wan Chai)	2010 (>9 years)	Shanghainese cuisine	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lung King Heen	2002 (18 years)	Cantonese cuisine	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Ming Court	2005 (~15 years)	Cantonese cuisine	*	**	**	**	**	*	*	**	**	*	*	*

(continued on next page)

bright and diverse. Hong Kong as a culinary capital will continue to be a research hot spot for gastronomy but other cities like Tokyo, Paris, New York, and London would be interesting areas to continue this study. The model of industry-applied research can be applied to restaurant companies looking into entering the Hong Kong market or similar areas. For chefs, this research will help their creative process for recipe development and the local palate. Chefs will also be able to produce traditional recipes or improvise them to be more modern while retaining their essence and culinary history. In the area of gastronomy research and scholarship, this research can demonstrate the links that exist between the restaurant industry, operational practices, and the academic community. Within the culinary education field, the research on the transference of cuisine can serve as a platform for teaching international cuisines. Continued research in this area will give culinary educators a better level of understanding of the traditions of food preparation. Chefs and culinarians will have the insight to innovate and develop new dishes within their operations. Educators will then be able to bring these concepts into their culinary classrooms to train the future generation of chefs.

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Author statement

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To expand the realm of culinary practical research scholarship, this paper seeks to contribute to the existing work on Michelin restaurants within the discipline of gastronomy. The focus of this paper is to help outline the practical theory of Michelin star cuisine and its adherence to culinary traditions and authenticity as presented by Baldwin, 2017 work on the Transference of Cuisine and Michelin Rated restaurants in Hong Kong.

Declaration of competing interest

I declare an interest in having this paper published within the International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

(continued)

Name	Established	Type of cuisine	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Shang Palace	80's (>35 years)	Cantonese cuisine	**	**	*	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	*	*
T'ang Court	90's (~30 years)	Cantonese cuisine	**	**	**	*	*	**	**	***	***	***	***	***
Yan Toh Heen	1984 (>25 years)	Cantonese cuisine	-	*	*	*	*	**	**	**	**	**	**	*
Yat Tung Heen (Jordan)	1990 (~30 years)	Cantonese cuisine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*	*
Yee Tung Heen	1993 (>25 years)	Cantonese cuisine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	*	-

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