

"Cultural Diversity and National Identity: Elementary School Lunch Menus in France"  
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European nation-states are more diverse than ever before and cultural influences from immigration, Europeanization and globalization are increasingly challenging the nation-state as a central cultural point of reference. However, it is unclear how these challenges are being resolved. Will the historical national cultures remain dominant by marginalizing the new forms of cultural diversity? Will cultural diversity become an established part of the mainstream national culture? Or, perhaps mainstream national cultures will no longer exist because they will fragment into segregated subcultures. In this paper, I address these questions by analyzing the composition of elementary school lunches in France. My results indicate that French elementary school lunch menus are mostly influenced by the historic nation-state culture. Yet foreign cultures are also present and non-European immigration, Europeanization and globalization all influence French school lunches. However, in each case, the range of foreign influences is limited to a narrow set of countries and, for the most part, a narrow set of specific dishes. This suggests that mainstream French gastronomic culture may maintain its broad relevance by judiciously accepting a limited range of new cultural influences. These findings have implications for our understanding of cultural diversity and the nation-state in contemporary Europe.