

Lallani, Shayan S. "The World on a Ship: Producing Cosmopolitan Dining on Mass-Market Cruises." *Food, Culture & Society* 22, no. 4 (2019): 485-504.

Abstract: This article analyzes how mass-market cruise lines mobilize food, laborers, and built environments to offer passengers cosmopolitanism with the purpose of maintaining a unique business model. It is argued that while companies target a growing demand for culturally immersive dining experiences, they do not seek to offer complete immersion in any one culture but cosmopolitanism through a combination of multiple themed establishments on a mobile platform. Culinary themes are installed using labor and built environments, for instance through the placement of visual and material culture in eateries. While some onboard dining experiences are themed around the cultures of nations on the ship's itinerary, many evoke international cultures. In studying how mass-market cruise ships as mobile spaces of containment combine both international and localized dining experiences to offer the "world on a ship," scholars of tourism can better understand how touristic companies produce cosmopolitanism at destinations.

Keywords: Culinary tourism; cruise industry; cosmopolitanism; immersive dining; cultural tourism

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Introduction

On July 23rd, 2017, the *Carnival Magic* set sail from Port Canaveral, Florida. At over 300 meters long and capable of carrying 3,690 guests alongside 1,367 crew members (Carnival Cruise Line 2018c), the ship I was boarding was a floating resort. The mass-market cruises that have dominated the modern (post-1970) cruise industry in the United States are vastly different from the cruises that mostly elite passengers took in the first half of the century (Lawton and Butler 1987). Those ships that allowed their wealthy clientele opportunities to travel in the lap of luxury and to consume the amenities that came with it, for instance fine music over a French dinner (Cashman 2014), largely fell in the mid-century as the shipping industry underwent decline and well-off passengers turned to air travel as a more modern way of affirming social status. Most companies were acquired by corporations that advertised cruising as a luxurious activity to middle-class clientele (Lawton and Butler 1987, 335-36; Klein 2005, 9). Appealing to the middle-class market meant that the activity lost much of the remaining association it had to elite identity. In turn, cruise tourism had become a largely middle-class phenomenon by the 1970s (Lallani 2017), especially as new companies like Carnival Cruise Line (CCL), Royal Caribbean International (RCI), and Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL)—the largest and most successful cruise companies today (Dowling and Weeden 2017)—focused on marketing to non-elite passengers. By the 1990s, mass-market cruise ships featured many of the amenities that one would expect to find in land-based resorts (Klein 2005, 9-16; Peake 2017). By the twenty-first century, cruise ships like the *Carnival Magic* had become holiday destinations in and of themselves (Weaver 2006) (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The scale of modern mass-market cruise ships. Photograph by the author (2018).

Yet, it is the amenity of food that captivates many passengers on mass-market cruises. Given that companies boast an upward of a dozen eateries aboard each of their ships, dining in onboard buffets, cafes, bars, fast food joints, and fine dining restaurants is a major activity. Mass-market lines make a point of offering a variety of food throughout the day. Indeed, Carnival's Pizzeria del Capitano is open around-the-clock (Carnival Cruise Line 2018f). However, the promise of food is about much more than making sure passengers are well-fed. Mass-market cruise ships include a variety of ethnically and geographically themed eateries, allowing travelers to eat as a way of metaphorically touring various nations as they literally tour.¹ They will visit three or four nations over the next week—a common itinerary—and the ship itself is perpetually mobile (Lallani 2017).

This article examines onboard dining experiences to ask how we can think of mass-market cruise ships as cosmopolitan spaces. While the mobilities of pedestrians, trains, and

aircrafts have been given a great deal of scholarly attention, those of ships have not received the same treatment (Anim-Addo et al. 2014).² As various scholars of ocean studies and mobilities have noted, it is important to examine how ships connect distant societies but equally pertinent to study them as spaces where important cultural exchanges take place during the voyage itself (Dusinberre and Wenzlhuemer 2016; Gilroy 1993, 4; Hasty and Peters 2012; Mack 2013; Monios and Wilmsmeier 2018; Pugh 2016; Sheller and Urry 2006; Hannam et al. 2006). Some have studied onboard activities in-depth (Mack 2013; Peters 2014; Cashman 2014), most pertinent to this article being the work of geographer Adam Weaver (2005) who conceptualized mass-market cruise ships as mobile tourist enclaves and spaces of containment where corporations can capture more revenue from tourists. This is especially true of cruise ships, Weaver noted, because passengers spend most of the voyage on the ship itself and they are therefore often isolated from other places to spend their money. However, not enough attention has been given to how onboard experiences facilitate tourists' explorations of the broader world. Jennie Germann Molz (2007) examined how around-the-world travelers dined to perform cultural competence as a part of cosmopolitan identity. Weaver's theory on spaces of containment can be used together with Molz's framework to study how, through onboard dining, cruise lines offer passengers possibilities for "metaphorical travel" on the ship itself. Mass-market cruise tourists spend the majority of their time on the ship unlike around-the-world travelers or resort-goers who have more opportunities to leave tourist enclaves. As such, mass-market lines are able to construct theme parks rife with international cultural encounters through dining for an audience who is relatively captive.

After reviewing literature on cosmopolitanism, this article considers how mass-market cruise lines mobilize food, laborers, and built environments to offer passengers cosmopolitanism

with the purpose of maintaining a unique business model. It is argued that although companies target a growing demand for culturally immersive dining experiences in American society more broadly, the end goal is not to offer complete immersion in any one culture but to combine multiple such experiences on a constantly mobile platform to facilitate cosmopolitanism for passengers in a contained space. Cruise lines seeking to offer the “world on a ship” employ networks incorporating objects, spaces, and humans.

This article does not claim to offer a holistic account of dining in the mass-market cruise industry. Instead, it seeks to highlight the importance of studying onboard cultural encounters (rather than those at ports). This work also aims to show through case studies why dining is an apt means to study cultural production on mass-market cruises, and how scholars can use the framework of cruise dining to contribute to studies on cosmopolitanism—especially as the phenomenon pertains to tourism. I conclude that, because mass-market cruise ships are “spaces of containment” (Weaver 2005) and mobile as “floating resorts,” they are particularly important arenas to examine how varied actors come together to produce cosmopolitanism in touristic settings. Further, as an industry where the passenger demographic is increasingly diverse along racial lines (CLIA 2017c), examining differences in the reception of cultural encounters by mass-market cruise travelers can be equally useful.

Methodology

This article demonstrates through a range of sources and examples as they apply to mass-market cruise dining how scholars can examine the production of cosmopolitanism in touristic settings, as well as how travelers respond to different manifestations of cultural immersion.

Sources used in this work refer to Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International, and Norwegian Cruise Line. These three mass-market companies hold 80 percent of the global market share (Dowling and Weeden 2017). Empirical sources used to consider how they produce culturally immersive dining include websites, menus, and photographs from those companies. These sources are used to demonstrate how mass-market cruise lines portray cultural encounters for passengers.

To consider the perspectives of cruise passengers themselves, I turn to the website Cruise Critic.³ Founded in 1995 and acquired by TripAdvisor in 2007, Cruise Critic boasts over five million monthly visitors from around the world. It serves as a medium to help cruise travelers connect with one another (“About Us”). Posts in its “Cruise Foodies” sub-forum date back to 2004. At over two thousand threads, this resource reveals how tourists responded to cruise lines’ attempts to market immersive dining to them. Statistical data is uncommon due to the forum’s anonymity. However, users in the “Cruise Foodies” section commonly listed nationality on their profiles. While they came from across the globe, most were from the United States. Additionally, users there commonly spoke to sailing with mass-market lines like Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International, and Norwegian Cruise Line; luxury and ultra-luxury lines like Windstar and Seabourn were mentioned relatively rarely. Users also frequently listed their favorite cruise lines in their profiles, making it easier to identify mass-market passengers. In my analysis I first narrowed posts down to those that mentioned mass-market lines, excluding posts that spoke to experiences with luxury companies. I then searched for posts posing open-ended questions to cruisers about their favorite foods, memorable culinary events, and cultural encounters. Those responses show how passengers viewed dining as a way of augmenting their tour of the world on

a perpetually mobile resort. To maintain anonymity, usernames have been redacted in this analysis.

The findings of this article apply to the US-Caribbean mass-market cruise industry. It would be difficult to apply its conclusions to premium companies like Holland America Line and Princess Cruises, or luxury and ultra-luxury lines like Windstar and Seabourn. Companies that charge passengers more money inherently have higher budgets to produce immersive cultural encounters. Elite customers also have demands that differ from their mass-market counterparts. For instance, those sailing with Windstar may desire luxury as opposed to cultural immersion. Indeed, it is more common with luxury lines to offer passengers more exclusive tourism opportunities, like shoreside tours that make use of helicopters and specialist naturalist tour guides (Smith 2006, 240-41). By that same token, while mass-market cruise lines like CCL, RCI, and NCL sail from countries other than the United States—especially quickly-expanding Australian and Chinese markets (Dowling and Weeden 2017, 18-9; CLIA 2017a; CLIA 2017b)—the conclusions here do not apply to those markets because it cannot be assumed that non-American clientele have similar dining expectations. For example, it is less common for mass-market lines to use frozen fish for the Chinese market; fish is more often kept alive or flown over fresh to resupply points (Véronneau and Roy 2009, 134). Conceptions of cultural familiarity and exoticism are also subjective and based on one's own cultural affiliations. As such, conclusions made for the American market according to the cultural orientations of those passengers cannot readily be transferred to another. Further, the American cruise market is increasingly diverse along racial lines. According to a 2017 study by the Cruise Line International Association (CLIA) (2017c), many passengers identify as Asian/Asian American, Latino/Hispanic, or Black/African American. It is therefore more difficult to apply findings

related to the construction of cosmopolitanism for such a diverse clientele to another market, where racial demographics may vary significantly.

Lastly, conclusions about the US-Caribbean mass-market cruise industry cannot be applied to other destination frequented by those passengers, for instance Alaska. The ingredients needed to offer passengers a range of immersive dining experiences are available owing to complex, mobile supply chains advanced by modern information technology that make low-cost, dynamic resupplies possible in the first place (Levinson 2016). The ways in which these resupplies take place vary from market-to-market. Indeed, cruise lines prospecting a new market may deploy scouts a year in advance to secure contacts with local suppliers (Véronneau and Roy 2009, 137). Thus, the logistical realities of supply and service chains between Alaska and the Caribbean as they relate to the production of cosmopolitan dining can differ in important ways. Take for instance Princess Cruises—a brand of Carnival Corporation & PLC—which in 2015 announced its intention to “fully immerse guests in the Great Alaska experience” through food when the ship docked in Alaska. Princess partnered with “local experts” to “allow guests to eat like a local.” The company would, with the help of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, offer guests a selection of “authentic” Alaskan fare such as king crab, king salmon, and halibut. The goal would be to “capture a true taste of the North” and, according to Princess Cruises President Jan Swartz, to bring “the last frontier onboard” (Carnival Corporation & PLC 2015). Because cruise line partnerships with local entrepreneurs and suppliers vary significantly from region-to-region, a case study on mass-market cruising in the Caribbean cannot reliably be applied to Alaska even if Americans are the primary clientele in both cases.

Cosmopolitanism & Touristic Consumption

This section will review some of the literature on cosmopolitanism as it pertains to tourism and the consumption of cultural products like food.

Late-twentieth-century globalization posed a challenge to methodological nationalism and its assumption of the nation, state, and society as natural entities (Beck 2011). Goods, information, and people crossed national borders at unprecedented levels. To be sure, economic globalization did not begin nor end in that era. However, the distinctly cost-effective and rapid form of globalization that we know today largely emerged with the prominence of diesel energy in the postwar era (Smil 2010). Soon thereafter, planes became important in driving global tourism, as well as in maintaining broader networks of trade (Adey 2010; Connolly 2009). One can now fly at the touch of a few buttons on a mobile phone, paying with a credit card, and landing in another nation hours later. One can thereafter video-call family to be with them emotionally, while simultaneously being distant in physical proximity (Larsen et al. 2006; Adey and Bissell 2010). Air travel combined with information technology made the world much smaller and facilitated cosmopolitan cultural orientations (Dierikx 2008, 73; Rothman 2003).

Sociologist Ulrich Beck (2002) argues that cosmopolitanism is something that people experience daily owing to those factors that make the world appear smaller, as opposed to a state that people consciously aim for. Everyday we consume products and media that make us a part of global societies and processes. Take for instance a food of national significance that one comes across in a grocery store. Because today's supply chains are long and global (Levinson 2016), odds are that this food contains ingredients that were either sourced from or produced—at least in part—outside of that nation. Beck's conception of cosmopolitanism is not an abstract

attitude or an identity to have, but an unintended consequence of social actors becoming increasingly dependent on others across national boundaries.

Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz's (1990) view of cosmopolitanism stands in opposition to Beck's. Hannerz describes cosmopolitanism as a state of mind or a cultural orientation. For Hannerz, cosmopolitanism is something that people can actively choose to embody rather than an element that acts upon daily life regardless of choice. He argues that people can perform cosmopolitanism by being aesthetically and intellectually open to otherness. A cosmopolitan is competent in that he or she can navigate another culture's system of meanings expertly and venture into it readily, thereafter reflecting on the experience thoughtfully. While this involves surrendering oneself to the more foreign culture, it is but a part of the sense of mastery because the cosmopolitan can decide when to perform that cultural identity and when to revert at will. Hannerz asks who exactly can be a cosmopolitan. Mobility is not the only factor. Cosmopolitans seek cultural immersion and do not want to be identifiable as citizens of their home countries. Thus, Hannerz differentiates cosmopolitans from tourists who are often highly identifiable and tend to spectate upon—rather than participate in—local experiences. According to him, exiles are not cosmopolitans because they are forced from the homeland, nor are labor migrants who usually travel for higher-paying jobs. Hannerz asserts that expatriates most closely embody a cosmopolitan orientation. They choose to live abroad, have the agency to go home whenever they please, and can afford to experiment with cultural immersion without losing a sense of self. He notes the connection between cosmopolitanism and intellectualism; those who partake in local cultures can take cultural capital home with them when they leave. Special knowledge about local goods or practices can serve as a trophy of one's travels, but such knowledges can also be redistributed in decontextualized ways.

Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen (2010) note similar about cultural goods in their work on the performance of tourism. Travelers often perform the role of tourist in westernized enclaves abroad (Hannerz 1990, 245). However, people can also experience other societies from home. Innovations in mass media and communication technology make it possible to consume representations of other cultures through one's television (Szerszynski and Urry 2002). At the same time, the consolidation of supply chains through innovations in the sectors of transportation and communication mean that cultural products from the world over have become available in daily life (Levison 2016; Molz 2011). Haldrup and Larsen (2010) examine how postwar globalization has affected the cosmopolitan orientations of tourists and society more broadly. After experiencing other cultures abroad, tourists can bring home photographs and souvenirs, and write about their experiences on social media to further reaffirm that they have "been there and done that." These become tokens of the tourist's experiences, but the meanings attached to them are destabilized as they are brought back home. Haldrup and Larsen conclude that touristic performances and experiences are a potent way for cosmopolitan orientations to become a part of daily life.⁴ Thus, while tourists can consume souvenirs to perform a cosmopolitan identity, those objects also make life more cosmopolitan for consumers by obscuring local/global boundaries, even if that was not the desired outcome in their initial consumption.

Sociologist Jennie Germann Molz (2011) shows how corporations commodify the desire to embody cosmopolitan identity. Those seeking cultural difference can instead encounter symbolic appropriation from those cultures which deemphasize local histories by eschewing context. Other times, exoticism is exaggerated to make products more attractive. Popular tourist cities have come to realize that, to remain competitive destinations, they must market themselves as cosmopolitan, additionally offering state-of-the-art accommodation and transportation. But

that global orientation must be balanced with distinct elements from local cultures to offer tourists a unique visit. Cities may be forced to use homogenized architecture that meets so-called industry standards, while simultaneously selling local products to meet touristic expectations and to assure their continued success. Partaking in this form of cosmopolitanism requires both cultural and financial capital. However, as Molz notes, commodifying cultural difference has the notable downside of reducing such difference because cultures are forced to conform more neatly to global norms—the perfect balance between exotic but not *too* unfamiliar.

In her study on culinary tourism, Molz (2007) examines through the framework of Hannerz (1990) how tourists dine while traveling to perform the role of culturally-competent cosmopolitan. She argues that, through the consumption of fare they perceive as unfamiliar, tourists embody the cosmopolitan openness to other cultures that Hannerz (1990) noted. And by eating a variety of dishes with various cultural affiliations throughout their trip, travelers also symbolically consume the global.

Molz's work is especially applicable to the study of dining on mass-market cruise ships. Her framework can be used to ask whether the literal mobility of the ship affects the production of cosmopolitanism in that touristic destination. What challenges do cruise lines face in constructing cosmopolitan experiences onboard their ships, especially related to logistics, affordability, and sometimes conflicting demands from passengers with increasingly diverse cultural affiliations (CLIA 2017c)? Having reviewed some of the literature on cosmopolitanism as it pertains to touristic consumption, I now conceptualize the space aboard mass-market cruise ships as cosmopolitan.

Mass-Market Cruise Ships as Cosmopolitan Spaces

Many mass-market cruise ships serving the American market offer food evoking a range of different cultures. Ethnically themed dining experiences have become desirable in the United States more widely because of various factors, mostly based in the late twentieth century. The ethnic revival significantly influenced the commodification of ethnicity (Halter 2000), as did subsequent interest in ethnic food which manifested in the foodie movement (Johnston and Baumann 2010). It can be argued that mass-market cruise lines, like other corporations who produced or sold ethnic fare on a large scale, noted the growing demand for it in the 1970s and increasingly offered it to their clientele. In this way, those lines adapted to middle-class preferences. In turn, food advertised using references to exoticism became more common yet on cruises in the decades to come (Lallani 2017).

Today's super-sized ships offer no shortage of immersive dining experiences. Carnival boasts many such establishments across its fleet. Bonsai Teppanyaki offers "traditional tastes" (Carnival Cruise Line 2018b). One can have Mexican fare at BlueIguana Cantina (Carnival Cruise Line 2018a), or Italian at Cucina Del Capitano in a "rustic Italian country-home" setting (Carnival Cruise Line 2018d). Jiji Asian Kitchen entices guests with "good food" alongside "good fortune" (Carnival Cruise Line 2018e). The food at Tandoor will transport diners "straight to the heart of India" (Carnival Cruise Line 2018g). Carnival also has "Port of Call" dinner menus which describe the culinary history of the nation that passengers toured earlier that day, thereafter offering dishes evocative of that nation's culinary culture to allow diners to metaphorically revisit those lands (Lallani 2017, 171-72).

Royal Caribbean ships, too, offer a wide selection of ethnically themed dining. Passengers might encounter Giovanni's Table, where they have the opportunity to "tour all of

Italy” (Royal Caribbean International 2018a). Jamie’s Italian boasts “seasonal ingredients” and “authentic recipes” (Royal Caribbean International 2018b). Especially adventurous diners can enjoy the “Far East Feast” at Izumi (Royal Caribbean International 2018c). Some ships contain Samba Grill, a Brazilian steakhouse where meats are served “in the tradition of southern Brazil’s gauchos” (Royal Caribbean International 2018e).

Finally, one’s cruise aboard a Norwegian ship might entail Moderno, an “authentic Brazilian steakhouse” (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018d) or La Cucina, a “vibrant Italian ristorante” (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018b). Teppanyaki is an “authentic Japanese Hibachi restaurant” (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018f). The menu at Food Republic changes to evoke varying international cultures. According to their website, passengers can metaphorically “Travel to Peru” through ceviche or explore Japan with sushi. Dining here is an opportunity to “travel the world” (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018a).

Thus, three of the largest cruise lines today offer passengers opportunities to sample not just the cuisines of the nations they will physically visit when the ship calls at ports, but to metaphorically experience the cultures of countries across the globe. These encounters are constructed in “spaces of containment” (Weaver 2005) to evoke the world on a ship for passengers.

I now examine how cosmopolitanism is produced through themed dining experiences by considering three empirical examples, one from each major cruise line. I use those examples to show how scholars can examine cruise dining to interrogate how touristic companies mobilize cultural products, workers, and built space in different ways to produce cosmopolitanism. While most of my analysis of passenger responses to culturally immersive dining takes place in a later

section, in some cases I have employed such accounts to augment my analysis of the following case studies.

Metaphorical Travel: Carnival's Port of Call Menus

Carnival has recently started to offer passengers “Port of Call” menus at dinner. Alongside the standard dinner menu, these alternate ones briefly describe a recently visited port-area’s historical cuisine, thereafter allowing guests to choose from a few dishes evoking that region. So, for a cruise that will visit four ports over the next week, passengers will often have four opportunities to experience those ports at dinner, hours after they debarked the ship to physically explore those cultures.

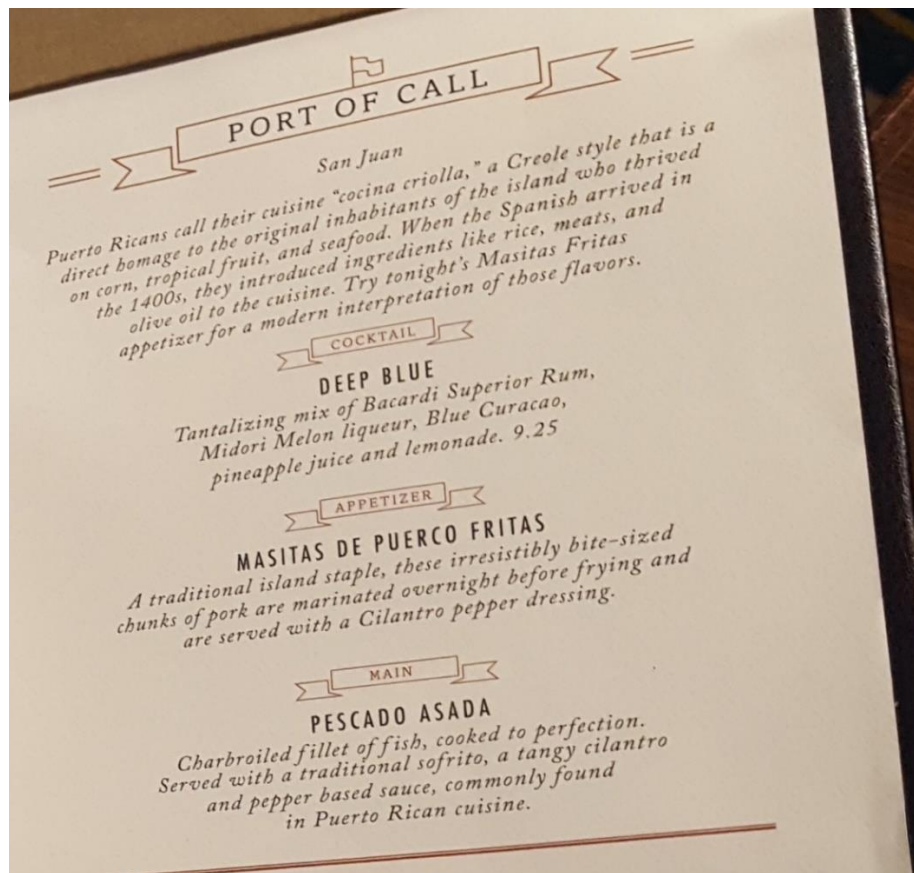


Figure 2. “San Juan Port of Call menu” onboard the *Carnival Sunshine*. Used with permission from Carnival Cruise Line. Photograph by the author (2018).

Take for instance the Port of Call menu for San Juan, Puerto Rico (Figure 2). It tells diners that “Puerto Ricans call their cuisine "cocina criolla," a Creole style that is direct homage to the original inhabitants of the island who thrived on corn, tropical fruit, and seafood. When the Spanish arrived in the 1400s, they introduced ingredients like rice, meats, and olive oil to the cuisine.” If the point is to offer cultural immersion, the cruise line must bring passengers into a network with various other elements including but not limited to the food itself, waitstaff, the menu, and the surrounding architecture. This specific menu is not just laden with descriptors of the exotic. It conveys those meanings by telling guests what Puerto Ricans call their cuisine, encouraging diners to attempt pronouncing "cocina criolla.” It engages diners by bringing them into the network, but it arguably does so in mediated ways. In stating that “the Spanish arrived in the 1400s” and “introduced” their ingredients to indigenous peoples, it can be argued that the colonial aspects of that particular cultural encounter have been sanitized. The evidence also suggests that the island’s diverse foodways have been homogenized. “Masistas De Puerco Fritas” is described as an “island staple," while the “Pescado Asada” is mentioned as a part of “Puerto Rican cuisine.” If these dishes are meant to evoke the city of San Juan for passengers, the menu’s diction instead suggests that the food is being connected to the island at large, potentially washing over the cultural diversity of its other areas (Appadurai 1988).

Similarly, the menu for St. Kitts and Nevis informs patrons that “The style of cooking is fairly simple.” That description of the fare arguably contrasts the relatively complex dishes that have traditionally been linked to the luxurious fashion of French haute cuisine, which constituted fine dining the world over and arrived in major American cities by the late eighteenth century (Haley 2016, 216-17; Spang 2000, 75-85). French haute required both financial and cultural capital, as well as modern technology, to produce. Modern technology was also needed to

disseminate French culinary knowledge (Trubek 2001). And because French cuisine had its own language, it could go anywhere while taking with it French history, culture, and geography (Ferguson 2006, 74-79). The possession of—and the avenues to—distribute such knowledge were, if nothing else, shows of Western modernity. Thus, the use of “simple” to describe the food on the St. Kitts and Nevis menu suggests its opposition to the “modern” and its connection to an anachronistic space, just as the United Fruit Company advertised its Latin American and Caribbean cruises as opportunities for passengers to encounter a picturesque, preindustrial space almost a century ago (Martin 2016; Cocks 2007).

Employees, too, are mobilized by mass-market lines to produce immersive dining. It would be prohibitively cost-intensive for cruise lines to find workers from specific nations like Saint Kitts and Nevis, thereafter allocating them to work in the main dining room for the specific days and times that the ship will be visiting those respective ports. Instead, Christine B.N. Chin claims that many mass-market cruise lines have created a “Mini United Nations.” Facilitated by “flags of convenience,” it is possible for cruise lines to hire workers from around the world. She argues that workers are commonly hired and placed based on their nationality, in relation to the type of labor that passengers may expect a group to engage in (Chin 2008b). Restaurants on many mass-market cruise ships tend to be serviced by visible ethnic minorities (Chin 2008a, 133). Dining on supposedly authentic fare from St. Kitts and Nevis while surrounded by an increasingly racially diverse passenger base (CLIA 2017c) and workers who appear to be from around the world—combined with sailing on a constantly mobile ship traveling far from home—can evoke cosmopolitanism for passengers.

The placement or lack of specific ethnicities of employees in given spaces of consumption changes how passengers think about dining experiences. Take for instance one

Cruise Critic user who, on a thread about the prominence of Indian food on Carnival ships, suggested to another individual that it was possible to check the nationality of the head chef before booking the cruise to obtain a culinary experience more aligned with one's preferences. In another thread on the same site, a user compared the unsatisfactory Chinese food on their first cruise, "I got the feeling who ever cooked them had no idea what they were cooking," to the fantastic Chinese fare on their second cruise wherein "it came out that the cook was from China." Both responses highlight the importance that tourists place on the cultural identities of culinary laborers in their conceptions of the quality of onboard dining. In a different thread—one pertaining to the availability of vegan and vegetarian food on RCI ships—one Cruise Critic respondent stated, "A good tip, as most of the cooks are from around the world, it is nice to ask for them to make you something vegan/vegetarian that is native to their region/country." For them, the international makeup of dining staff on RCI was key to enjoying a variety of vegan and vegetarian food.

A range of actors are mobilized to produce cosmopolitanism. As exemplified, passengers interpret the resulting dining experiences in varying ways according to their own cultural orientations and expectations. Diners may interpret Carnival's Port of Call menu as an opportunity to partake in the cultures of St. Kitts and Nevis. They may also view it as encountering the tropical Caribbean, or consuming otherness more broadly to perform the identity of world citizen. The latter is much more plausible when we consider that Carnival offers a range of immersive dining experiences alongside Port of Call menus. Combined, those international dining opportunities contribute to evoking the world on a ship.

Performative Labor: Royal Caribbean's Izumi

Royal Caribbean's webpage for Izumi claims it to be a Japanese restaurant, but simultaneously describes the experience here as "exotic Asian-inspired" (Royal Caribbean International 2018c). The company might employ exoticism partly because Japanese cuisine is all but familiar for many Americans thanks to historical immigrant foodways (Haley 2016, 219). If Royal Caribbean seeks to reinforce a cosmopolitan identity through dining, they must first rebrand the cuisine at Izumi as foreign. The food itself is mostly of Japanese influence with some modifications, perhaps to appeal more to American tastes like the "Champagne Lobster in Yuzu Wrap," or the offering of "Snow Crab California" (Royal Caribbean International 2018d). As folklorist Lucy M. Long (2004, 34; Cohen and Avieli 2004) notes, exoticism is profitable but there must be a fine balance between the familiar and unfamiliar so the dining experience is not made unpalatable, especially for anyone who may continue to perceive Japanese fare as decisively foreign.

Royal Caribbean also themes space and labor, potentially to satisfy those who perceive Izumi's food as too familiar. As a photograph shows, would-be diners encounter ten katanas and a large Japanese character immediately before entering the restaurant on one ship (Cruise Critic 2016). Various paintings, which can be interpreted as being orientalist in theme, line the walls and other parts of the establishment in another vessel. One contains a script of Japanese characters (Logitravel 2018; Cruise Escapes Blog 2014). These artifacts ask diners to immerse themselves in this Japanese experience, but most would not be able to understand the Japanese writing used to theme those spaces. To further engage with their surroundings, guests may turn to the chef to ask what the various characters represent. As suggested by a photograph (Logitravel 2018), he appears to be of Asian descent and bears a hat displaying more Japanese

characters yet. He even wears the chef's jacket, a symbol of culinary authority that implies he has the knowledge to disseminate authentic Japanese cuisine. The chef performs Japanese identity for diners, certainly by looking the part but also by using his knife to cut sushi rolls in specific ways to evoke culinary artistry, captivating and thus immersing onlookers through spectacle (Szabo 2014, 18-24) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Waitstaff singing in the main dining room of the *Carnival Magic*, and one example of the performative aspects of service that restaurant employees undertake. Used with permission from Carnival Cruise Line. Photograph by the author (2017).

Passengers board the ship with their own assumptions about what constitutes Japanese culture, owing to the global circulation of cultural representations through various media avenues (Szerszynski and Urry 2002). This is one potential means whereby mass-market cruise lines can attempt to predict what their guests expect even before the cruise begins (Berger 2004, 72-74),

and theming is one way of delivering on those predictions. Without workers who evoke Japan for passengers, Izumi would suddenly be a lot less “Japanese.” Similarly, the surrounding material and visual culture encourages passengers to become a part of the culture, even if that involves asking staff members how to interpret the Japanese characters, or who painted that work of art, or about the katana’s history. Nonhumans influence how passengers think about cultural encounters and how they relay their experience to surrounding humans including staff members, but also their fellow diners. Relaying can be vocal—asking questions or making remarks—but it does not have to be; gazing is another way of expressing how one perceives the experience and confirming one’s own affiliations to others witnessing the event (Urry and Larsen 2011).

Passengers might desire to dine at Izumi for an authentic taste of Japan. Indeed, one Cruise Critic user contrasted the kind of dining experience they wanted from Izumi with supermarket Japanese fare, implying a desire for traditionality. Others might instead dine here to experience the “Far East Feast” that Izumi’s webpage mentioned (Royal Caribbean International 2018c). They may not seek to metaphorically tour Japan, but to encounter otherness more broadly—the “Far East.” Royal Caribbean mobilized this project and the various actors therein—paintings, katanas, chopsticks, employees and their attire, the knives that cut sushi rolls as onlookers gaze upon the spectacle, menus, and Japanese characters—to offer passengers a taste of Japan or of the “Far East.” Izumi is but one example of themed dining. Most Royal Caribbean ships offer numerous such encounters. Combined with the various other onboard restaurants that do similar but with different cultural themes, as well as a ship that is constantly mobile, Royal Caribbean mobilizes dining and the various actors involved therein to render each experience immersive and in turn to offer cosmopolitanism—a way of touring the world without leaving the ship.

Agrarianism at Sea: Norwegian's La Cucina

While Norwegian Cruise Line could have called their Italian restaurant “The Kitchen,” naming it La Cucina instead means that passengers can partake in the culture before they even open the menu. The menu also asks passengers to engage with Italian identity by rendering the headings culturally evocative, for instance sections labeled “Antipasto, Insalata & Zuppa,” and “Entrata” (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018c). These are simple gestures, but ones that are not so foreign that they would alienate diners who could not affirm their participation in the culture through translation.

Simplicity is the theme in La Cucina. The menu is in relatively plain black text with a white background (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018c). The wooden sign, stone pillars, and greenery lining panels on the roof suggest a rustic countryside setting (Norwegian Cruise Line Epic 2018). Some of the tables are slabs of wood, while the wooden benches are lined with a lightly patterned cloth. One part of the flooring is comprised of plain bricks (Beyond Ships 2018). The rustic environment is probably not coincidental. Norwegian even tells would-be diners of the “freshly baked artisan farm bread” on their website (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018b). Rusticity is often evoked as a marketing tool to distance food from corporate production, instead connecting it to the small-scale (Johnston and Baumann 2010, 76-84). The material culture of the restaurant alongside Norwegian's description of the dining experience suggests rusticity is used for similar purposes here.

Labor is relatively invisible in the photographs of La Cucina, nor does it seem to be mentioned on Norwegian's webpage for the restaurant. This might be a coincidence, but it is probably not. After all, the intimate built space can be viewed as a means of promoting interactions with those whom one is already familiar with like friends and family. Norwegian's

official YouTube video for La Cucina even states that this is “where friends become family and meals turn into conversations.” Throughout the video people are seen intimately laughing and sharing meals (Norwegian Cruise Line 2016). Given the focus on communal culinary labor in many Italian families (Cancian 2012, 210-12; Lallani 2018), it becomes more likely that depictions of labor are purposefully excluded in favor of an emphasis on family and closeness, thus evoking an immersive Italian dining experience in that way.

Examining a meal in La Cucina shows how Norwegian offers immersion in Italian culture. Rustic elements like stone pillars, greenery, and the long wooden tables evoke an Italian countryside setting vis-à-vis simplicity—producing a nostalgia for the agrarian, largely family-based divisions of labor that used to be more prominent prior to industrialization. A meal here would be a lot less intimate if space had not been arranged in these specific ways to network customers, food, and material culture together. The technology needed to secure the supply chains that bring small-scale grains onboard, as well as the special ovens used to prepare “freshly baked artisan farm bread” promised on NCL’s website also contribute importantly to the dining experience (Norwegian Cruise Line 2018b). While it would be difficult for La Cucina alone to produce cosmopolitan dining, the mobility of the ship traversing waters far from home as well as the various other themed establishments in a contained space make it possible to produce the world on a ship.

Passenger Responses to Themed Dining

User responses on the “Cruise Foodies” section of the website Cruise Critic can be used to examine how passengers perceived the mass-market cruise industry’s shift towards culturally themed dining experiences. Studying these responses can reveal for instance whether passengers

benefited from opportunities to encounter international cultures within close proximity of one another, or preferred onboard dining that evoked the cultures of nations on the itinerary.

In a thread about non-speciality onboard restaurants, one Cruise Critic user who sailed with Norwegian Cruise Line stated that they “love many different cuisines: sushi/Japanese, steak, authentic Mexican...Indian, Italian...Latin American (authentic and fusion), authentic Chinese, Asian fusion.” This user demonstrated a preference for foods that evoke a range of international cultures. At the same time, they were not looking for “deep-fried stuff, hot dogs” and did not desire to have “American/Americanized food every day for a whole week.” They contrasted the perceived authenticity of the fare they sought with “mass-market chain restaurant like Olive Garden, Outback, Red Lobster.” The contrast between the multiple uses of “authentic” with “American/Americanized” suggests a preference for that which was not commonplace for this individual and their family. Similar sentiment was reflected in other threads. In one discussion about the availability of English bacon on Holland America Line ships, one user commended the line’s decision to offer foods from cultures that this passenger perceived as exotic, “I wish other cruise lines would change things up every now and then and offer more and different foods from around the world.” This individual had Norwegian listed as their favorite cruise line, suggesting that Holland America offered opportunities to encounter unfamiliar cultures as a premium cruise line that Norwegian did not yet. Another Cruise Critic member, a frequent passenger with Carnival, agreed with that individual and noted in response, “a cruise is the perfect place to try something new.” Another yet responded that they wished Carnival would offer a full English or Irish breakfast. In a different discussion about cruise food that referenced local cultures, one individual stated that, in their view, many North Americans cruise “because they can have a tiny

taste or glimpse of other cultures.” In this user’s experience, a significant number of North Americans sought global dining experiences that they perceived as decisively foreign.

Some also desired onboard dining experiences that evoked the cultures of cruise port nations. In a thread about Carnival’s Indian restaurant, Tandoor, one individual stated, “When someone takes a Southern Caribbean cruise, one is not expecting to have Indian food every day...The ships should cater to the area people are visiting for authenticity.” The ship may well be a space to encounter cultures perceived to be foreign. But for this user, cruise lines “should” facilitate encounters between guests and the cultures of nations the ship will be sailing to. While all-inclusive resorts offer dishes evoking locality, cruise lines have the additional challenge of offering such encounters with the cultures of multiple nations because these are mobile resorts that commonly sail to three or four nations over the length of the trip. Yet, other users were more suspicious of onboard encounters with local cultures. One member outright described their understanding of the logistical challenges behind attempting to reproduce “authentic” fare onboard, “the locals use fresh ingredients and the ship is required by the CDC to use frozen or canned,” concluding that it is not surprising that locals can produce more authentic dishes than cruise line chefs. Another member asserted that one must look off the ship for local food, with dozens of other discussions on the most authentic local fare at various Caribbean islands. Those responses suggest that, because the ship is perpetually mobile, some viewed it as a means to travel to less commodified cultural encounters. Indeed, CCL, RCI, and NCL all cater to such demands through culinary shore excursions. These are short trips arranged through cruise lines wherein local tour guides take passengers past cruise ports to back regions—where locals reside (MacCannell 2013; 1973)—and allow them to partake in such activities as cooking classes, demonstrations, and tastings with local inhabitants.

Other Cruise Critic users still more broadly questioned the authenticity of onboard dining referencing international cultures. For instance, land-based Italian-American fare was commonly used as a point of comparison to judge the authenticity of RCI's Giovanni's Table. Giovanni's was described by some as "a glorified Olive Garden" and "Olive Garden of the Seas." While many others enjoyed their dining experiences at Giovanni's, its authenticity was nevertheless called into question. One individual described it as "decent Italian American," though "not good/authentic to the Old Country Italian." Another in the same discussion stated that it is "Better than Olive Garden. Not better than my mother's." Similarly, in a different thread, a user suggested that they desired a shift away from what they viewed as the homogeneity of onboard dining, "mainstream cruiselines [sic] have the same menus on ALL of their ships, regardless of where you're sailing." To find "local flavor," they recommended sailing with "the smaller, luxury lines."

A thread discussing Carnival's introduction of the Tandoor restaurant shows the complexity of offering opportunities to encounter the world on a ship through dining in relation to passenger conceptions of exoticism and familiarity. Many criticized the company for offering too much Indian food, particularly in the buffets. The thread garnered hundreds of responses. "What is it with Indian food on buffets?," asked the author. "I can stand one day. But 4 out of 5 Come on!" Another responded with "I was afraid to say anything...Nasty stuff!" Some complained about the smell of curry, while the author of the thread also discussed this "cruise filled with Curry [sic]." The backlash targeted the penetration of Indian culture through the rest of the ship. As those responses show, mass-market lines offering opportunities to encounter cultures from around the world in contained spaces must also mediate those experiences to make sure that they are not perceived as overly exotic and thus unpalatable.

Conclusion

This article has considered through three examples how mass-market cruise lines produce cosmopolitanism on ships through dining, as well as how user accounts from Cruise Critic can be used to examine passenger reception of international culinary encounters onboard. It has been argued that, as spaces of containment (Weaver 2005) and mobile resorts, mass-market cruise ships are important arenas for scholars to examine the production of cosmopolitanism in touristic settings, and traveler responses to those encounters.

As do other corporations, many mass-market cruise lines employ cosmopolitanism to attract customers. Literature from CCL, RCI, and NCL show how those cruise lines combine laborers, spaces, and objects placed around the built environment to produce culturally immersive dining. It would be difficult for a single eatery to offer cosmopolitanism convincingly on its own. But some vessels boast over a dozen restaurants with multiple themed establishments each. Combined with a constantly mobile and contained ship that takes passengers to various nations that they may perceive as foreign, onboard eateries contribute importantly to producing the world on a ship.

Passenger accounts from Cruise Critic suggest that the contained nature of mass-market cruise ships is both an advantage and disadvantage to the production of culturally immersive dining experiences. Responses varied considerably according to the cultural orientations of tourists. Some viewed the inclusion of multiple themed dining opportunities in contained spaces as opportunities to experience the world. One could metaphorically tour India, Italy, Japan and Puerto Rico over a few hours. Others were more interested in enjoying fare evoking the cultures of nations on the itinerary. Others still viewed some opportunities for immersive dining as overly exotic and thus unpalatable, complaining for instance about the penetration of overly foreign

aromas throughout the rest of the ship. The contained nature of the ship was a disadvantage for those individuals.

Owing to its relatively anonymous nature, Cruise Critic posed some limitations for this analysis. Indeed, it was nearly impossible to find a user's own race or ethnicity referenced in posts. The American mass-market cruise industry is increasingly diverse along those lines (CLIA 2017c). Thus, being aware of the respondent's cultural affiliations is contextually important to analyzing why they viewed onboard dining as familiar, cosmopolitan, or perhaps overly exotic. To this point, scholars studying the production of cosmopolitanism on mass-market cruises may find it useful to augment those anonymous responses with more personalized sources like semi-structured interviews.

Notes

1. Lucy M. Long discusses how food can be used to travel without leaving home in *Culinary Tourism* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).
2. On discussions about mobilities, take for instance Chandra D. Bhimull's work on how those traveling in planes during the 1930s viewed colonized individuals differently by performing aboveness, "Reshaping Empire: Airline Travelers and Colonial Encounters in the 1930s," *Transfers* 3, no. 1 (2013): 45-64; *Empire in the Air: Airline Travel and the African Diaspora*. (New York University Press, 2017). See Wolfgang Schivelbusch who examines how nineteenth-century railway travelers experienced space/time compression for one example of railway mobilities, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014). For the politics of automobile travel in postwar America see Cotton Seiler, "Statist Means to Individualist Ends: Subjectivity, Automobility, and the Cold-War State," *American Studies* 44, No. 3 (2003): 5-36; Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1050-81. Christopher Schaberg analyzes how airport passengers consume texts in those spaces in *The Textual Life of Airports: Reading the Culture of Flight*. (New York: Continuum, 2012).
3. © 2019 The Independent Traveler, Inc d/b/a Cruise Critic was used for analysis and visualisation. All passenger accounts included in this article were obtained from Cruise Critic.
4. For more background on the place of social media in tourism, see Jennie Germann Molz, *Travel Connections: Tourism, Technology, and Togetherness in a Mobile World* (London: Routledge, 2012).

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