



Full Length Research Article

PERCEIVED ROLE OF GARNISHING AND COLOURING IN FOOD SERVICE AND FOOD PRESENTATION BY STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The use of garnishes and colourful materials like sliced eggs, onions, tomatoes and the likes when presenting food for consumption appeal to the eyes to promote appetite thereby encouraging dietary intake and better nutritional status in the long run. This study examines the role of garnishing and colouring in food service as perceived by the consumers. Two hundred respondents were randomly sampled from four tertiary institutions located in the various local government areas within Oyo town and its environs. Background information revealed a composition of respondents with various age ranges, course of study and ethnic. Their responses to selected questions confirmed that garnishing and colouring are related to food acceptability and that garnishes have nutritional benefits among other things. It was therefore concluded that garnishing of food has social and psychological undertone and should be encouraged in food presentation and services. Hence, the hospitality industry should promote socio cultural aspects of nutrition in terms of peculiarity of food presentation in every culture. Traditional and local garnishes for food should also be examined for their beneficial roles and then resuscitated for general and commercial uses.

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INTRODUCTION

Presentation and taste of food are linked and these can suppress or stimulate the appetite. In addition to flavour and aroma, food colour or appearance are contributory to dietary intake and nutritional status of the consumers (<http://www.wardipedia.org/> 2012). Garnishing is the art of embellishing or decorating a prepared food or drink with consumable items of fruits and vegetable or with inedible items to make food more visually appealing, attractive and appetizing (<http://www.vegetablefruit.com>). This is a normal phenomenon for unique table setting in hotels and restaurants. The materials used are usually relevant to the food and are selected to augment visual impact, enhance colour or for flavour (Food Encyclopaedia, 2012). Garnishing could be placed under, over or around the food depending on the type of dish. Most often, a garnish is readily identified with specific dish and such dish may appear incomplete without that particular garnish. Shamil (2010) and Dhanya (2012) noted that food garnish should be natural and nutritionally relevant; like melon, cucumber, pepper, tomato,

onion, carrot, celery, parsley, lemon, basil, pineapple, mushroom, pickle, cherries, green herbs, sugar, nut, egg, cocoa powder, cheese, chocolate, cinnamon, strawberry and the likes. Food presentation entails processing, modifying, arranging, and decorating food to enhance its aesthetic appeal. Most chefs are highly committed to the visual presentation of food at every stage of preparation. Garnishing of food is however not limited to party or event. Good presentation of food is an important aspect of a memorable meal and children also have eyes for colourful varieties as well as adults. Even though garnishing of daily diet may not be easy, psychological and social satisfaction are necessary in addition to nutritional needs at every meal. A good balancing of colour, shape, texture and flavour is necessary in food presentation. In spite of aroma and flavour, symmetric and asymmetric composition with contrasting and complementing arrangement are necessary input (<http://www.slide share.net>). Varieties in shape and appearance are also exciting and appealing. The garnish is therefore expected to fit the plate and the colour scheme. Two or three colours are more interesting than single colour. Foods that are monochromatic would need appropriate addition of colour to sparkle the plate. However, when heavily patterned plates are used, garnishing may be minimal to prevent over-colouring.

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Until the 20th century, food colouring could only be obtained from what are found in nature ([http://homecooking.about.com/od/food history.htm](http://homecooking.about.com/od/food%20history.htm)). Modern food colouring were cited as having their own problems (<http://web.archive.org/2006>). Excessive use of certain dyes can cause illness. While natural or vegetable colourings are generally considered safe, the potential hazards of artificial and synthetic colourings continue to be a subject of controversy. Food and Drugs Association has at one time or the other banned certain food colours whenever they are suspected to be carcinogenic or tested to be toxic (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/healthpolicy/30fda.html>). This criticism made many foods that used dye to become less popular. It is however a re-assurance that whichever food colouring gets approval or certification is genuinely safe, in food or other household items (Barrows, Lipman and Bailey, 2009). Cai and Corke (1999) explained that food colour are richly evocative and inextricably blended with the flavour, texture and cultural values of foods. Such colours may be derived from plant pigments as natural or browning from cooking effect or they may be additives.

Lilicarp (1997) also mentioned the colour and lighting scheme of the food service area (table accessories, table cover, place mat, serviette etc) which should attract and please customers in the restaurants. Schlossers (2012) describes how the colour of food affects how people experience its taste. That is appearance of food influence consumers' perception of the taste. Brightly looking food is perceived to be tastier than pale looking food (Kinton, Cecerani and Foskett, 1999). Statement of the problem: The review of literatures has examined the concept of garnishing and colouring of food. However, all the time and effort that go into planning and preparation of meal could turn a failure if such food is not well presented for the consumer or if the food fails to appeal to the supposed consumers. A dish may contain valuable and nutritious items of food, but if it is not attractive and appetizing, it will not catch the eyes and palate moreso if it is presented for invalids or young children who may be selective in their intakes. The face value of any food is in its surface appearance and colour, thus a well planned meal may not be complete without the appropriate garnish. The significance of this study is to arouse the interest of homemakers to the use of garnishes and also encourage the consumers (young and old) to appreciate the cultural value and aesthetic quality of food that could improve dietary intake and nutritional status.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this work seeks to determine the aesthetic role of garnishing in food service as perceived by students of tertiary institutions.

Research Question

What are the roles of garnishing and colouring in food planning and presentation?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study location includes four tertiary institutions within Oyo town and the environs; Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) in Atiba Local Government area, Federal College of Education

(FCE) (Special) in Afijio Local Government area, Federal School of Surveying (FSS) in Oyo East Local Government area and also Emmanuel Alayande College of Education (EACOED) at Oyo West and Atiba Local Government area.

The study employed a descriptive survey design that sought information from the respondents on issue at stake without manipulating the existing variables. The study population comprised of all the bonafide students of the four tertiary institutions in Oyo town and environ. However, fifty students each were systematically selected from each of the institutions to make up two hundred (200) respondents. The instrument for data collection was a self designed pre-tested and validated questionnaire format with two sections; A on background information of respondents and B on four Likert scale response about food garnishing and colouring. Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). Face and content validity followed the procedure of Osuala (1991). In addition, suggestions of two lecturers in Food Science & Technology and Human Nutrition were obtained on the study. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, twenty students were selected from the school of Vocational and Technical Education, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education (Isokun Campus) to pre-test the instrument. This was done twice at intervals of three weeks and the responses gave a test-retest reliability of 0.89. Procedure for data collection involved distribution of questionnaire to the respondents through departmental representatives and returning them through the same means within the same week to ensure maximum rate of return which was confirmed as 100%. The treated questionnaires were gathered together for analysis and processing in line with the respondents' opinion. Expected mean to ascertain and confirm response is $x > 2.50$ for the modified Likert scale.

RESULTS

From the Table 1, the following composition of the respondents revealed that 35% were below the age of twenty, also 35% were between twenty and twenty-five years while only 30% were above the age of twenty-five. In addition, the respondents were drawn from the various discipline and course of study like Arts (15%) Social Sciences (20%), Languages (15%), Education (10%), Vocational (25%) and Sciences (15%). The various ethnic groups; Hausa (20%), Igbo (35%), Yoruba (45%) with other minority groups ensures blend of ideas and perceptions which may not be peculiar to any particular culture thus removing bias in the general opinion. It was gathered that 35% of the respondents rely on school canteen for feeding, 20% patronize local Bukateria, 10% visit restaurants while 35% take time to cook their foods by themselves. In all, above 65% of them eat foods prepared and presented to them by others; eating away from home. Table 2 reflects the idea of the respondents on the perceived role of garnishing and colour uses in food presentation. Garnishing enhances colour and appearance of food (mean of 3.80) and also improves taste and nutrients (mean of 3.00), certain dishes are not complete without garnishes (mean of 3.45), because garnishing is a major aspect of food presentation (mean of 3.40). Garnishing should be for special occasions (mean of 1.90) invariably imply that garnishing should not only be for special occasions. Colour is a major determinant of food presentation (mean of 3.40) and young

Table 1. Background Information on Respondents

| a. | Age range | ACU | FSS | FCE | EACOED | Mean |
|----|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------|
| | Below 20 years | 25 (50.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 35.0 |
| | 20-25 years | 20 (40.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 35.0 |
| | Above 25 years | 5 (10.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 25 (50.0%) | 30.0 |
| B | Course of study | | | | | |
| | Arts | 10 (20.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 15.0 |
| | Social sciences | 10 (20.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 20.0 |
| | Languages | 10 (20.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 15.0 |
| | Education | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 10.0 |
| | Vocational | 10 (20.0%) | 30 (60.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 25.0 |
| | Sciences | 10 (20.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 15.0 |
| C | Ethnicity | | | | | |
| | Hausa | 10 (20.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 20.0 |
| | Igbo | 20 (40.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 35.0 |
| | Yoruba | 20 (40.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 30 (60.0%) | 45.0 |
| | Non-Nigerian | | | | | |
| D | Mode/ means of feeding | | | | | |
| | School canteen | 45 (90.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 35.0 |
| | Bukataria (local) | 0 (0.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 15 (30.0%) | 10 (20.0%) | 20.0 |
| | Self cooked food | 0 (0.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 20 (40.0%) | 30 (60.0%) | 35.0 |
| | Restaurants | 5 (10.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 5 (10.0%) | 10.0 |

Table 2. Opinion of respondents on the role of garnishing and colour in food presentation

| S/N | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | Mean |
|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1. | Garnishing enhances colour and appearance of food. | 160 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 3.80 |
| 2. | Garnishing improves the taste and nutrients in the food. | 120 | 60 | 20 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 3. | Certain dishes are not complete without garnishes. | 120 | 50 | 30 | 0 | 3.45 |
| 4. | Garnishing is a major aspect of food presentation. | 100 | 80 | 80 | 20 | 3.40 |
| 5. | Garnishing should be reserved for special occasions. | 20 | 20 | 40 | 120 | 1.90 |
| 6. | Colour is a major determinant of food presentation and consumption. | 100 | 80 | 20 | 0 | 3.40 |
| 7. | Young children are more attracted to colourful food than adults. | 50 | 100 | 50 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 8. | There are peculiar colours (appearance) for every food item. | 100 | 80 | 20 | 0 | 3.40 |
| 9. | Food additives increase the nutritional properties of food. | 50 | 100 | 50 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 10. | Food regulatory agencies (NAFDAC etc) help to ensure safety of food additives. | 50 | 150 | 0 | 0 | 3.25 |
| 11. | Most food colour and flavour cause side effect/symptomatic reactions. | 20 | 80 | 80 | 20 | 2.50 |
| 12. | Artificial colourings are harmful to the health. | 0 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 2.50 |

children are more attracted to colourful food (mean of 3.00) more so every food item has peculiar colour (mean of 3.40). Food additives increase nutritional aspect of food (mean of 3.00) and NAFDAC with other agencies monitor the use of food additives (mean of 3.25). However, most food additives cause side effect and artificial colours are also injurious to the health (mean of 2.50). This last statement is controversial with means at borderline for the fact that the means fall short of expected value though equal to 2.50 but not greater than 2.50 (>2.50 not \geq 2.50).

DISCUSSION

The concept of garnishing and food colouring had been established from the various review of related literature and has been corroborated by some authors (<http://www.wardipedia.org/2012>, Shamil (2010) and <http://gomestric.com/cooking/garnishing/html>). Garnishing and colouring relates with food acceptability and promotes the aesthetic role of garnishing in food service. Opinion statements, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 with weighted means of 3.80, 3.45, 3.40, 3.40 and 3.00 respectively ascertain these facts that garnishing enhance colour and food aesthetic while also determining attitude to presented food thus helping the appetite as noted by Schlossers (2012) and Kinton, Cecerani and Foskett (1999). The nutritional benefit of garnishing is highlighted in statements 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 with weighted means of 3.00, 3.45, inverted 3.20, 3.40 and 3.00 respectively.

This was corroborated by <http://www.wardipedia.org/2012>. The importance of colour and garnish in food presentation as perceived by consumers is positively expressed in statements one to ten of table 1, with each weighted mean above the expected average. In addition, the inverted mean of negative statement 5 supports the idea of Shamil (2010) and Schlossers (2012). The totality of this work and its significance is to encourage and create awareness on the beneficial roles of food garnishes. Even though certain physiochemical and symptomatic reactions may be negatively perceived as observed in statements 11 and 12, the relevant bodies (statement 10) are up to their task in controlling and monitoring public and commercial uses of food garnishes. This was also cited by Cai and Corker (1999) and Barrows, Lipman and Bailey (2009).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that garnishes in food presentation are social and psychological. Some foods are incomplete without certain garnishes because there are particular garnishes that are culturally identified with specific dishes. Generally, aesthetic appearance of food helps to promote appetite and thereby ensure better nutritional status and well being. There is therefore no age barrier or ethnical differences in the perception of food. Colourful appearance of food enhances the acceptability by various consumers the entire world over.

It is therefore recommended that:-

- (i) traditional and local garnishes for food be examined and investigated by nutritionist
- (ii) cultural value of traditional diets be resuscitated by nutritionist and home economist
- (iii) the hospitality industry promote the socio-cultural aspects of dietary intake
- (iv) teachers of nutrition be practical and down to earth in imbibing and demonstrating appropriate food service and presentation that are nutritionally acceptable
- (v) home makers especially at grass root level be made aware of the beneficial roles of garnishing.

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