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The future of food experiences

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16.1 Drivers for future development

The difficulty in addressing the future is, that the future is not simply the optimized present, it can also mean to break with the status quo to provoke a change (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 50). Of course, no one knows exactly what the future will look like. Therefore it seems reasonable to elaborate why, when, and how certain incidents will occur (Yeoman, McMahon-Beattie, & Wheatley, 2015, p. 4).

Food is one of the core components of a nation's culture and identity, with its history, symbols, myths, and discourses (Bell, 1997, p. 82; Smith, 1995, as cited by Yeoman et al., 2015) and is closely linked to social relationships and cultural norms (Scott & Vallen, 2019). Consequently food cultures have changed repeatedly. Social, cultural, economic, technological, climate, and political factors were and are decisive for this change in food culture (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 12). Thus the initial point of this chapter is to consider the current social, cultural, economic, technological, climate, and political drivers of change to anticipate future developments in food consumption. Scholars point out that the society is currently in a transition from the experience economy, that came up in the 1980s (Pine & Gilmore, 1990), through the knowledge economy (Brand & Rocchi, 2011) to the transformation economy, which was already anticipated in the original studies of Pine and Gilmore. Regarding the emerging transformation economy, Brand and Rocchi (2011) argue that the future economic imperative will be built on sustainable, profitable, ethical, and fair business practices based on cooperation, value networks, and the exchange of ethical values between different stakeholders. Furthermore the authors outline a consumer mindset that is changing from self-realization to a meaningful life.

Looking toward drivers of transformation, the so-called megatrends indicate the subjects that will be shaping mankind for a long time to come. As constants of development in global society, megatrends comprise several decades. They are drivers of change, affect every single person, and encompass all levels of global society: business and politics as well as science, technology, and culture (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 14). Hence, from a general point of view, megatrends provide the background of change. Digitalization, globalization, ecologization, demographic change, politics, and socioeconomic values doubtlessly cause a profound
transformation worldwide and pose serious challenges to mankind, as they already have and will continue to have severe impacts on our lives (Seyler, 2020, p. 6). Since the digitalization has an impact on all relevant areas of society, such as politics, economy, science, technology, and culture, and thus leads to fundamental social changes (Zukunftsinstitut, n.d.) and it can be regarded as a central force and driver of change in general. Megatrends with a major impact on our food behavior are connectivity, urbanization, individualization, gender shift, neoeccology, health, and new work (Zukunftsinstitut, 2018; as cited by Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 14) (Fig. 16.1).

On the other side, food trends show lifestyles and desires, offer orientation, and provide solutions for current problems. Food trends are always carried out by people, but however, they are shaped by the profound, global, and long-term changes in megatrends (Zukunftsinstitut, n.d.). Food has become a powerful means of communication in our time (Ali, Ferdinand, & Chidzey, 2017, pp. 75—76; Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 7). Food trends can therefore function as “barometers” and can help to identify developments that are affecting society at large (Zukunftsinstitut, n.d.), in our everyday eating habits they offer answers to numerous problems and needs that are triggered by social change (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 15).

### 16.2 Future developments of food culture

#### 16.2.1 The postmodernist mankind

Food consumption experience plays an essential role in a postmodernist world (Yeoman et al., 2015, p. 265). In analogy to the ongoing social, economic, and technological transformation, also food consumption behavior is subject to profound
changes (Casini, Contini, Romano, & Scozzafava, 2015). Hirst and Tressider (2012, p. 82) state that the phenome of rootlessness of the postindustrial, modern world brings out the relevance of diverse food experiences that meet the needs of the modern consumer, who may find himself in very different situations, places, and settings within a short period of time. For example, consumers are involved in long working days, which often relate to long-distance travel or commuting times. Consequently consumers’ eating behavior shifts as well as the shopping behavior (Hirst & Tressider, 2012, p. 82–84). Hence, an equal coexistence of food consumption occurs, such as fast food consumption, consumption of finished products from retail or takeaways, restaurant visits, and online shopping with delivery at home or pick-ups at the retail market. On a business trip the consumer maybe invited to enjoy typical regional food and beverages with business partners in a restaurant. While being at home for the weekend, food experiences provide a platform for social interaction and enjoyment with families and friends (Chitakunye & Takhar, 2014).

Changing work and lifestyle choices directly influence food consumption behavior. Due to the worldwide growth of single-person households (Hay, 2015, p. 195; Statista, 2020), changes in the construct of the family as well as the development of a 365/24/7 society, substantial changes in food consumption behavior are becoming apparent (Hay, 2015, p. 194). The out of home consumption of food is increasing, mostly among single males (Casini et al., 2015). The meaning of regular three daily meals is becoming less important (Hay, 2015, p. 194; Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 28–29). Instead, it becomes complemented by offers that meet the demands of individual work and lifestyle patterns, such as single dinner offers, access to food independent of time and place, the development of digital platforms that bring together friends and families scattered around the world via holograms, and enable a shared food experience independent of place (Hay, 2015). In this context, Zukunftsinstitut (2020, p. 34) sees the trend of snackification as minimeals emerging driven by the abovementioned megatrends. Defined meals dissolve into spontaneous eating opportunities that are not tied to specific times. These are eaten at home and away from home, often alone or with situational eating partners. The decision what to eat is made spontaneously, according to availability, time, and desire. This brings with it the fact that gastronomy is increasingly coming under competition from the retail trade, as retailers are also jumping on the snackification trend. To increase the quality and length of time customers spend in the stores, more and more retailers are offering gastronomy services in their stores (Lehner, 2015; Pandey & Verma, 2015). The growing demand for minimeals is leading to new types of food service concepts, supermarkets and retailers are responding with innovative “on-the-go” offers (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 38–39), for example, the supermarket chain “Rewe” in Germany. With “Rewe to go,” the supermarket chain offers a diverse product range for home or immediate consumption at central locations such as train stations, gas stations, and highly frequented city locations. And that almost around the clock and anytime to go. The offer includes the categories “breakfast,” “coffee to go,” “cooking,” “picnic,” “on the road,” and “with friends” (Rewe, n.d.). Also the online giant Amazon has responded to this demand for innovating “on-the-go”
offers with a physical store concept. In the categories “breakfast,” “lunch,” and “dinner,” customers can cover their needs in To Go Shops near-by (Amazon, n.d.). At the same time, delivery services with “Ready to Cook” offerings are gaining in importance (e.g., Hello Fresh, n.d.).

In addition to system gastronomy, the classic snack bars, and retailers, there are more and more lateral entrants who offer new creations of fast food with food trucks and street food stations. These similarly fast food, but often healthier, offers can cannibalize traditional snack bars and restaurants. Lateral entrants offer more flexible opening hours and the possibility of bringing the restaurant on wheels to the customer instead of the customer having to move to the restaurant and being able to drive flexibly to changing places of consumer demand. Gastronomy will have to adapt their food concepts toward healthy, vegan, and sustainable fast food as well as to portion sizes and service times.

But also the following questions come up: can fast food be personalized to individual taste? What would the perfect fast food meal look like? Coca-Cola, for example, has already installed several thousand free-style vending machines where consumers can premix and individualize their soft drink to their personal taste via app. All they have to do is scan the code at the vending machine and the product is filled in (Coca Cola, n.d.(a), n.d.(b)). This innovative idea can be transferred to the food sector. Providers and delivery services such as fast-food chains, take away restaurants, food trucks, snack bars, and even restaurants could offer both, the app-based selection of food and taste features, as well as mood- and lifestyle-related offers such as “food to relax,” “food to move a mountain,” “food against anger,” and so on.

It is likely that the rhythm of eating three meals daily meals will get abolished in the future. Generally speaking, the gastronomy observes a shifting in the boundaries in the gastronomy, for example, between the individual courses of a menu, between the service, cook and the guests, and between the guest itself (Schwert, 2018). While for a long time the customer was considered “the king,” the paradigm has shifted to considering the guest as “a friend.” This development satisfies on the one hand the growing number of people living alone or eating alone during a business trip, for example, and also addresses the desire for social closeness in urban regions. This idea is confirmed by the work of Hay (2015, pp. 201–203), who has highlighted 10 trends of managing single dinners. These trends reflect two tendencies in development: on the one hand, the single diner, who likes to eat alone in an undisturbed ambience without feeling isolated, for example, in special single-person restaurants or regular restaurants with private single-person booths. On the other hand, there is also the guest who eats alone and wants to come into contact with other people who are strangers to him, to escape the feeling of “singling out.” The fine balance between closeness and distance will also be reflected in restaurant concepts in the future.

16.2.2 Authenticity and local food

With regard to globalization, on the one hand an increase in international economic interrelationships can be seen, but contrary also a localization that is expressed in
the strengthening of local identities and autonomies on the other hand (Yusuf, 1999). The idea of local food culture is well known, as each country and particular regions are characterized by their national and regional iconic dishes (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016) and there is a continuing trend in food consumption behavior, which implies an increasing consumer interest in local foods (Mirosa & Lawson, 2012). A systematic literature review on the conception and definition of local food and its systemic positioning in the agrifood production can be found in Rinaldi (2017). In summary, Martinez et al. as cited by (Rinaldi, 2017, p. 5) define local food as “food produced, processed and distributed within a geographical boundary that consumers associate with their own community.” More consumers are increasingly expressing concerns about the environmental aspects of food production and consumption (Zhang, Liu, Sayogo, Picazo-Vela, & Luna-Reyes, 2016). Local foods are generally interpreted by consumers as food that is produced in a social and ecological sustainability way (Rinaldi, 2017), which helps to build trust between producers and consumers (Steffen & Doppler, 2019). Furthermore local food, integrated into alternative agricultural and food networks, “may represent a niche for rural entrepreneurs who are willing to build a closer relationship with customers” (Rinaldi, 2017, p. 5), which in turn leads to consumer satisfaction (Steffen & Doppler, 2019) and food well-being (Scott & Vallen, 2019).

In the context of local products, also the concept of authenticity has become a relevant criterion for customers buying decisions in general (Gilmore and Pine, 2007, as cited by Kim & Jang, 2016) and food in particular (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Authenticity is generally defined as “that which is believed or accepted to be genuine or real” (Taylor, 1991, p. 17, as cited by Kim & Jang, 2016), being either a staged reconstruction, for example, the ethnic restaurants in foreign countries (Kim & Jang, 2016) or reflecting a return to local food, its preparation, and presentation and the traditional food culture in a region (e.g., Aaltojärvi, Kontukoski, & Hopia, 2018; Chen & Huang, 2018; Ertugral, Cetin, Karagoz, Balık, Dincer, & Sengel, 2015; Kim & Iwashita, 2016; Lin & Mao, 2015; Privitera, Nedelcu, & Nicula, 2018; Sidali, Kastenholz, & Bianchi, 2015; Sims, 2009; Tsai, 2016). In gastronomy, poor authenticity is one of the critical factors that make restaurants, hotels and other tourism companies unsuccessful (Parsa, Self, Njite, & King, 2005). Authenticity of ethnic restaurants, for example, depends on (1) being true to itself and (2) being what it says it is, (3) the servicescape represented by the employees, (4) original dishes and taste, and (5) atmospherics related to employees (Kim & Jang, 2016). Although authentic dishes and tastes are represented via local food, which is perceived to be authentic, pure, and traditional (Kauppinen-Räisänen, Gummerus, & Lehtola, 2013), the atmospherics and the truthfulness can be reached by creating a narrative and themes. For example, the fine dining restaurant “The Fat Duck” comprises a journey the guest immediately starts once a reservation has been made (The World’s 50 Best Restaurants, 2017; The Fat Duck, n.d.). This journey reflects the owner’s Heston Blumenthal most significant holiday memories of his childhood, translated into a magical journey through a luxurious 15 course menu. Other examples show that authentic food experiences can be created with locally and organically produced food. In Norbert Nierkofler’s three-star
Michelin restaurant in Südtirol, Italy, for example, only food organically produced in the region is used. The chef calls his concept “Cook the Mountain,” with reference to the idea of supporting sustainable agriculture in the region (Beller, 2019). The result is a narrative of its own, a story about tradition, origin, heritage, and healthy food.

Zukunfts Institut (2020, p. 18) describes this appearance of a radical shift away from the standard as the “brutal local,” in which the avant-garde focuses on radical seasonality, wild food, and fermentation. The concept of the “brutal local” has emerged from an intensification, which was originally expressed as a response to globalization in the recollection of the peculiarities of regional cuisine and which has been further specified and innovatively promoted in the use of locally produced, seasonal raw materials. This also shows a deliberate avoidance of consumption of, for example, overseas products in favor of selected local products.

The slow food movement can also be seen in the context of authenticity. According to the slow food movement (slowfood.com), raw materials are used to prepare food that has been produced good, clean, and fair and that supports the sustainability of food. Slow food is prepared according to a recipe that is authentic and representative of the cultural tradition of the place and its people, where the cooking method and the equipment used (equipment) are reflected in traditional practices (Munjal, Sharma, & Menon, 2016). The movement of local food, slow food, and organic food also raises the question of the entire food supply chain, from production to consumption as a relevant part of the food experience. Information that the retailers as well as the gastronomy and caterers are required to make available to the consumer, for example, in the form of informative storytelling or with innovative digital solutions such as apps, QR codes, and Youtube channels.

Moscardo, Minihan, and O’Leary (2015, p. 215) confirm this consumer demand for knowledge in the context of food tourism experiences. They developed a conceptual framework with learning and knowledge as a core element of all food tourism experiences. The framework refers to three experiential dimensions, focusing first on place versus personal dimension, second on food versus fun dimension, and third differentiating between backstage versus frontstage experiences. The backstage focus on place refers to food themed tours and experiences, the food focus to food classes, while the frontstage focus on personal triggers fine dining experiences with iconic local chefs. The fun focus expresses itself, for example, in food festivals and food events. Food attractions and production tours combine the focus on place and fun and organic and sustainable produced food focus on personal and food (Moscardo et al., 2015, p. 215). Thus this model can also be applied for events. From an experience-oriented perspective, local food representing the place of origin, as well as local landscape and culture, become fundamental elements to create a food experience, where food quality, service quality, fun, and entertainment play an important role to create emotional experiences (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012).

But local, authentic, and organic food does not necessarily mean that production takes place in rural areas. Cities will be the preferred and predominant way of life in the future and food will consequently be produced in cities, also to avoid transport routes and to produce food at the place of demand. Microfarming and urban gardening projects already bear witness to this
development (e.g., Mikrolandwirtschaft.org, n.d.). The Controlled Environment Agriculture operates in closed systems, greenhouses, or vertical farms—artificially created cultivation areas that rise up into the height, for example, along building facades—and produces plants or animals as well as products from other climate zones locally and fresh. Harvesting can take place several times a year and is unaffected by weather and climate changes and is setting the terms seasonally and locally in a new context (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 77).

From an outreach point of view it is also interesting to mention that such technical urban farms become experience spaces in cities where principles of agricultural life-cycle management and climate-friendly food production can be experienced and learned (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, pp. 60–89) gives a good insight into current projects worldwide.

### 16.2.3 Value cocreation

Value cocreation has become a relevant area of business, referring to the phenomena of individualization and singularization as shown above. Academically value cocreation can be anchored in the theory of service dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo, Lusch, Akaka, & He, 2010; also see www.sdlogic.net). The SDL starts with the premise, that the traditional differentiation between goods and services is no longer valid. Instead, the theory considers the exchange processes between market participants, for example, suppliers, manufacturers, and customers. Physical goods are seen as tangible distributors of the service, or in other words, the physical goods are “service suppliers.” The concept takes into account the fact that consumers do not demand physical goods, but rather the service associated with their consumption, for example, healthy eating and enjoyment while eating a fish (Drengner, 2020). Getz, Robinson, Andersson, and Vujicic (2014, p. 173f) give a profound overview of the SDL in the context of food tourism, whereas examples for value cocreation are

- Cooking classes (e.g., Kochbox, n.d.).
- Kitchen parties, where visitors look over the chefs’ shoulders in their natural surroundings and consume the prepared foods standing directly in the kitchen or presented as a flying buffet menu (e.g., Deidesheimer Hof, n.d.).
- Themed stagings in which the food matches, for example, the hosts biography (e.g., The Fat Duck, n.d.).
- Outstanding food experiences such as dining in underwater restaurants, where consumers eat sitting in the middle of the scenery of the underwater world; here the location is the vehicle for an extraordinary luxury food experience (e.g., Under, n.d.).

In summary Fig. 16.2 shows the discussed drivers of change that will sharp food experiences in a postmodernists world.

### 16.2.4 Food experience in a post Corona future

In March 2020, the Corona virus Covid-19 led to economic and social shutdown worldwide, which resulted in severe social isolation of people. Travel and business
trips were prohibited and cancelled worldwide, professional and private life was largely transferred to home office. It is assumed that the social isolation and suddenly enforced digitalisation in all life areas triggered by Covid-19 will also have an influence on eating culture. While a “destructuring” of food consumption was experienced in western societies in the pre-Corona era (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020), the corona-induced dissolution of everyday life triggered a renaissance and a return to traditional eating habits. Regular eating with people provides structure and stability to everyday life (Albrecht, Kara and Lobenstein, 2019), especially in uncertain situations. Thus, due to the Corona regulations, social distancing and the closure of restaurants it was observed, that people mainly ate at home and regularly sat down at a table again. In a country like Germany, in which take-away was allowed during the restaurant closure, people were forced to return to their home to consume the food. Others did not want to get a delivery or take-away and re-discovered cooking and baking as a leisure or family activity. It is to be assumed that eating together, both in commercial and non-commercial spaces at home and away from home, will experience a new appreciation as “Quality Time” in the post-Corona period. Especially the developments of the virtual common experience mentioned in this chapter gained considerably in importance during the long period of social isolation. The discussed trend of snackification and the destructuring of everyday eating (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020) could, on the other hand, lose significance and lead to a more structured common

Figure 16.2 Conceptual framework of the drivers of change.
eating experience. Delivery services and so-called ghost restaurants have clearly gained in prominence during the Corona crisis. Also in view of globalisation, the risks and limits of which became clear in the course of the Corona crisis on many levels, such as along global supply chains and in tourism, a localisation of consumption can be observed, which is expressed in the strengthening of local identities and autonomies (Anthes et al., 2020). The Corona crisis can significantly intensify this development of re-regionalisation, strengthening regional networks and local food production. Weeks of social distancing transformed the private living space into a digital media laboratory (Reitz, 2020), in which the public and the professional world penetrated through digital channels into the last corners of the private living space. The world-including the professional world-moved into our homes digitally and at the same moment the public space was empty. Social interactions of all kinds were banished to the private sphere of the home and, above all, to digital channels. This shift results in an ironical distortion of the private and public. Consequently, Corona has also shown in a precarious way that once private space has become public space through digitalization and that public space, e.g. a restaurant, can become a new place of retreat in which the digital is deliberately excluded while celebrating a meal together. The future of shared dining experiences in a post-Corona era remains a large field of research, which has only been addressed here with regard to digitalization and localization as the driving forces of change. It is likely that eating experiences will in future be more strongly influenced by the longing for security, community and structure. It can be assumed that food is staged as an anchor of security. Experiences in a sophisticated, quiet, familiar atmosphere, both at home and in restaurants, is likely to grow in importance.

16.2.5 Thinking out of the box

As mentioned above, future is not the optimized present. It is therefore advisable that researchers exploring the future of the food experience detach themselves from established industry thinking and let themselves be surprised and inspired by other disciplines and structures, for example, by lateral entrants. Art and food design, for example, can make a relevant contribution, that leads to irritation and thus opens up spaces for new narratives and solutions (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 42). For example, the Dutch choreographer Nanine Linning worked in 2018 at the Heidelberg Theater together with the food designer Remco Vellinga in her choreography “Khora.” Visitors of the dance production received three different small samples, specially designed for the sensory perceptions of taste, haptic tingling and crackling as an acoustic stimulus, inspired by the elements water, fire, and air. The aim of this food experience was to intensify the sensory experiences during the dance companies’ performance and led to a hypersensory experience. At the end of the play, the company surprised with a special performance: the dancers hung upside down from the ceiling of the stage, serving specially created “Khora Sparkling Wine” for the visitors and thus addressing the element of earth by reversing gravity (Theater
Heidelberg Germany, 2018, own visit on April 26, 2018). In this context explorative questions arise, such as:

- Can a sound create a taste? How does the favorite jazz or classical music playlist taste then?
- Could a data mix of, for example, sound, light, movement, and text create food as known from 3D-printing?
- Can we heal ourselves with food, whether we can eat our way out of situations and into new situations? Why not get recommendations for certain moods, individual food ingredients that take the eater out of his world of thoughts and moods, for example via app from preferred retailers or restaurants?
- And how would that taste individually?

Combined with the abovementioned trend of urban food, vertical gardening concepts could bring food as an artwork to the walls of our homes and workplaces (e.g., “the edible living room” see ponix-systems.at, as cited by Zukunftsinstitut, 2020, p. 85).

Even the dancers hanging upside down and serving champagne in the theater in Heidelberg introduce a radical change of perspective and override learned patterns of action which lead to the following questions:

- What does it mean to be served?
- What special skills does the person in charge of service have?
- Is service a matter of course or an expression of an exclusive, personal relationship between guest and host?
- Under what conditions must the service people work?
- How can a consumer and guest take responsibility for the working conditions?
- Where are the boundaries between service and consumption? Are there any boundaries at all? Or is every guest also part of the whole team?
- Can the guest cook by himself in a restaurant?
- Can the restaurant kitchen be just a location in which the guest cocreates?
- Can the guest bring home-grown ingredients to the restaurant and the cook creates the experience?
- Can retailers or restaurants offer self-cooking stations?

This staged food experience could also lead to the idea, how food experiences might develop in future: interpreting the service of offering food and the table as a stage along the ideas of Pine and Gilmore (1990) and value cocreation (Vargo & Lusch, 2017) the physical boundaries between the supplier and guest will be removed.

Furthermore following the above discussed development further, one comes across with the idea of a “Super App,” that horizontally integrates a variety of services and completely maps the everyday life of consumers in one single application. From messengers, online shopping and on-site payment systems to services such as mobility services, overnight accommodation as well as food orders in alignment with health and movement data, preferences, and dietary requirements. Personal digital profiles based on user behavior and mood analysis from voice recordings, which are continuously and colearningly created, could also provide recommendations for food. A
personal assistant, comparable to, for example, Siri and Alexa, digitally coordinates the harvest of fresh foods and purchase of other ingredients, the delivery, and the activation of cooking machines in smart homes, table seat reservations in the desired ambience and the desired food with people of suitable mood and interests, or people who live nearby and are invited home to the kitchen. This scenario is motivated by the idea of process automation based on smart data: from the demand to individual menu or restaurant suggestions, the order or the booking, the food supply, the preparation and invitation of neighbors, family and friends, nearby or via holograms for example. The question which remains about the likelihood that this scenario will occur is whether consumers will approve this idea and accept a machine to coordinate their lives for their own benefit. Moreover, data protection issues would have to be brought in line with such scenarios.

16.2.6 Managerial implications

The future of food experiences remains a huge field of research, which has only been touched on here with regard to some drivers of change. However, these drivers of change can give practitioners ideas to create innovative concepts for food experiences in the field of digital versus physical experiences, slow versus fast food, quality time meals versus on-the-go and take-away—both healthy and highly individualized—single versus family and friends style, and hypersensory versus simple food and taste experiences.

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