

**IDENTITY AND ACCULTURATION:
THE CASE OF FOOD CONSUMPTION
BY GREENLANDERS IN DENMARK**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The paper focuses on the acculturation strategies employed by Greenlandic consumers living in Denmark and in particular how food products enter into a discourse of identity construction. The study of Greenlandic consumers in Denmark provides insight into acculturation processes for consumers with a more or less dual cultural background (due to the strong Danish cultural influence in Greenland). This duality of cultural identity means that Greenlandic immigrants' consumption reflects a well-known negotiation of Danish and Greenlandic consumer cultures under new conditions, rather than a classic acculturation process as in, eg, Peñalosa's (1994) study of Mexican immigrants in the United States.

2. Our research is based on depth interviews with 20 Greenlandic consumers living in Denmark. It demonstrates how food products are given another symbolic meaning when consumers cross cultural borders between Denmark and Greenland and how food products become part of a discourse of identity. The interviews focused on border crossings between the two cultures, consumption patterns in the two cultures, special meanings linking certain types of consumer behaviour to one culture or the other, and expectations for the future development of a "Greenlandic consumer society". A trained member of the Greenlandic community made the interviews to ensure maximum empathy between interviewer and informant.

3. The informants had a clear dichotomous explanation of Greenlandic versus Danish food culture. In general, Greenlandic and Danish culture were organised around the natural versus the cultural. Greenlandic culture, and the Greenlandic society, is organised around the natural environments in which the Greenlanders live. The provision of food is seen as the major organising vehicle for the Greenlandic society in that social relations are structured around the acquisition, consumption and disposal of food.

4. Food consumption in Greenlandic food culture was organised around experience of scarcity – scarcity of the provisions of the Greenlandic natural environment as well as the provisions available in the retail environment. The experience of Danish food culture was dominated by a discourse of abundance – although the informants experienced scarcity of Greenlandic food products when in Denmark.

5. The symbolic values of Greenlandic food were tied to authenticity, and consumption of Greenlandic food was often associated with festivity. Danish food was characterised as exotic and was seen as more utilitarian. The informants' food discourse was analysed according to James' (1996) four categories of food discourse (Global Food, Nostalgic Food, Exotic Food and Creolized Food). This showed how the meaning of authentic and exotic foods are fluid as new food ingredients move from one discourse to another and thereby become authenticized.

Introduction	1
Consumer acculturation of Greenlandic people in Denmark	1
The situation of the Greenlandic people in Denmark	2
Method	2
Greenlandic and Danish: Some general perceived differences	3
Food and the consumption process	4
Acquisition, consumption and disposal of food	7
Conclusion: Food discourses	13
References	16

INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on the acculturation strategies employed by Greenlandic consumers living in Denmark and in particular how food products enter into a discourse of identity construction. The study of Greenlandic consumers in Denmark provides insight into acculturation processes for consumers with a more or less dual cultural background (due to the strong Danish cultural influence in Greenland). This duality of cultural identity means that Greenlandic immigrants' consumption reflects a well-known negotiation of Danish and Greenlandic consumer cultures under new conditions, rather than a classic acculturation process as in, eg, Peñalosa's (1994) study of Mexican immigrants in the United States.

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CONSUMER ACCULTURATION OF GREENLANDIC PEOPLE IN DENMARK

Economic growth, the breakdown of the Soviet-dominated economic and political systems, and globalization processes in general (Appadurai 1990) have led to a new kind of socialization process – the socialization into becoming a consumer as an adult. Several researchers have investigated this process with a focus on the so-called transforming economies (cf. Belk & Paun, 1995; Ger, Belk & Lascu, 1993; Lofman, 1993; Schultz & Pecotich 1995).

A related process takes place in connection with the growing migration among the world's cultures, most of which goes from societies with fewer consumption opportunities in general to societies with more consumption opportunities. Basically, the consumption system represents a domain in which immigrants on the one hand may seek to hold on to certain patterns from their own home culture, but on the other hand often find themselves in a completely different system with different possibilities and restraints, norms and taboos. In spite of the relevance for understanding problems of assimilation, integration and segregation, this type of research in consumer acculturation processes has only rarely been carried out in industrialized countries.

A few notable exceptions are the studies by Peñalosa (1994) on Mexican immigrants in the United States, by Joy, et al (1995) on Italian immigrants in Canada, by Caglar (1995) on Turkish immigrants in Germany, and by Ger and Østergaard (1998) on second-generation Turkish immigrants in Denmark. The latter is typical of the predominant focus in several European research environments on the relatively large group of immigrants from the Middle East. However, in Denmark there is an interesting but hitherto unexplored opportunity to discuss consumer acculturation of a relatively numerous population, especially compared to the total number of people of this particular cultural background. These individuals are born Danish citizens but nevertheless find themselves in an immigrant situation, settling in a completely different cultural, geographical and sometimes also linguistic setting: Greenlanders of Inuit origin. Many live in Denmark temporarily, especially to get an education, but some settle permanently there because of new life opportunities, spouses, or career possibilities.

Many of these studies show that the old assimilationist model that assumed immigrants would be absorbed into dominant cultural contexts over time is no longer born out empirically. Instead, the alternative acculturation approach suggests that increasingly immigrants are the architects of their own identities; they vary in their adaptation to the values and ideas native to the receiving culture. Of course, individual acculturation is constrained by structural and psychological forces within the dominant culture and on the relative bargaining power of the immigrant and receiving cultures. Positioning oneself between cultures, between borders, is a difficult existential challenge. This is a highly subjective one in which economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals are mobilized to establish identity positions. It is also an ironic one in which the culture of origin is often socially reconstructed as part of an attempt to provide a stable anchor for identity in a new, fluid social context (Bouchet 1995; Caglar 1995; Ger & Østergaard 1998).

THE SITUATION OF THE GREENLANDIC PEOPLE IN DENMARK

In the 14th century Greenland became part of the colonies under Danish rule as part of the legacy of the Norse Viking settlements from around the year 1000 and onwards. Eventually, the Norse settlers died out in the 15th century but missionaries sent by the Danish crown and clergy re-colonized the area from 1721. It remained a colony until 1953, when it became an integrated part of Denmark with the same status as other Danish counties. Since 1979, Greenland has had a home rule government with a portfolio including most local matters but it remains a part of Denmark and is also economically dependent on subsidies from the Danish government. Fishing is the all-dominating trade and accounts for 95 percent of total exports, but in the hunter districts of the outer areas, the seal and whale catch is of great importance, and it actually forms a stable subsistence base for one fifth of the population¹.

Approximately 55,000 people live in Greenland, predominantly of Inuit ethnicity, but many people are of mixed Danish-Inuit origin. Around 20 percent of this population (most of them Danes or people of mixed origin) were born outside Greenland. Given the small population, many young Greenlanders go to Denmark for various educational programs since a critical mass to maintain such programs in Greenland does not exist. Furthermore, many are attracted by the job opportunities and the easier access to a consumer lifestyle and to international travel in Denmark compared to Greenland. Greenlanders who are in Denmark temporarily for educational reasons or more permanently settled for private or professional reasons form the basis of our sample.

METHOD

We conducted twenty depth interviews with Greenlandic immigrants in four Danish cities. The informants, 14 women and 6 men between 22 and 67 years of age, were recruited partly through voluntary responses to invitations to be an informant, posted on the notice board in the Greenlandic community houses in the various cities, partly by snowball effect. This, we realise, represents a profound bias in our sampling, since only relatively well functioning people are ex-

¹ Information from the Greenland Guide Indeks: <http://www.greenland-guide.dk/>

pected to have the psychological courage and energy to join the project as an informant. And although the situation is ameliorating, a stereotypical portrayal of the Greenlander in Denmark is the alcoholic, unemployed “social case”. However, such losers in the process of cultural border crossings are, though sometimes highly visible in the streets due to their different ethnic appearance, the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, this stereotype continues to shape Danes’ images of the Greenlandic people.

The interviews focused on border crossings between the two cultures, consumption patterns in the two cultures, special meanings linking certain types of consumer behaviour to one culture or the other, and expectations for the future development of a “Greenlandic consumer society”. A trained member of the Greenlandic community made the interviews to ensure maximum empathy between interviewer and informant. Furthermore, Greenlandic being a very different language from the Indo-European group of languages, it was necessary to have some expertise in translating the meaning of various specific Greenlandic expressions employed occasionally, even though the interviews were all made in Danish. Average duration of the interviews was about 90 minutes.

GREENLANDIC AND DANISH: SOME GENERAL PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES

Greenlandic immigrants to mainland Denmark constitute an unusual social category in many respects. Their border crossings and re-crossings occur in a context in which both tourism and experiential consumption generally are dominant trends, and thus immigrants’ stories are inflected with the touristic gaze (Urry, 1990) on the one hand, and the desire for authenticity that drives the emergent “experience economy” on the other hand. The relaxation of the Danification policy and the absence of Act-of-God and economic privations that motivate so many other modern migrants mean that Greenlandic immigrants are to some degree relieved of the responsibility of making a definitive choice between a Danish or Greenlandic way of life. In a way their choice becomes another market choice, culture consumed as it was (Firat 1995). These culture choices result in various combinations of Greenlandic and Danish, from the quasi-nationalistic focus on and pride in what is seen as authentic, Greenlandic culture to the “Danish cookie”. In table 1, some of the findings from the general study are shown, as they can serve as an important background for understanding the building blocks of identity negotiation and their influence on various aspects of Greenlandic food acculturation in Denmark. A more thorough analysis of the general findings can be found in Askegaard and Arnould (forthcoming).

Table 1. Summary of main general findings

	Greenlandic	Danish
General perceptions of culture	Rooted in nature	Rooted in cultural forms
<i>- space</i>	Openness; close relationship between identity and nature	Closedness; busy environment => claustrophobia
<i>- time</i>	Dependent on natural conditions; spontaneity	Planned; scheduled
<i>- social relations</i>	Openness to other people; large informal networks; spontaneous social events	Planned interaction; privacy
<i>- stereotypical cultural identity</i>	The Inuit	The Westerner
<i>- experience of culture</i>	Immediate, spontaneous	Contrived, schematized
<i>Consumer culture</i>	(Withering) gift economy	Status and money economy

The dichotomous categories of Greenlandic and Danish cultural identity and the way they are characterised as nature and culture respectively refer to only identificatory perceptions. They do not necessarily equate to everyday experience in Greenlandic and Danish societies. One could say that part of Greenlandic society is danified (or westernised), and Greenlandic cultural enclaves exist in Denmark for the informants. Living in Denmark does not necessarily make the individual less Greenlandic for itself, nor does living in Greenland necessarily make you more Greenlandic. The life worlds of the respondents do, however, involve the dichotomy explicated above, in the ongoing negotiation of identity: a negotiation particularly active at the time of border crossings during which food consumption is used symbolically.

FOOD AND THE CONSUMPTION PROCESS

This introductory discussion about Greenlandic foodways will be based on the general impression our interviews have left us with as well as various other sources of information concerning Greenlandic food and its contrast to Western/Danish food culture. Let us make it very clear that both in terms of raw materials and preparation methods, there are some very significant differences between Arctic and European cuisine.

Traditional Greenlandic food consists mainly of what the local hunting and fishing conditions could offer, obviously depending on the seasons. The following, lengthy quotation may illustrate the major difference between European cuisine and traditional Greenlandic delicacies.

“Dried ammassat (small salmon-type fish), dried trout, bullhead, and halibut. Delicacies from the summer catch might be dried seal and white whale meat [mattak]. Special titbits were considered to be stale, slightly decomposed white whale tail fin and flippers. Dried reindeer meat with preserved tallow. Stomach and sections of gut filled with seal blood, which were then dried to make so-called caramels. Berries preserved in crystal-clear oil from seal blubber. [Or] frozen, gathered after frost has set in. Herbs such as rose root and willow herb, especially oil preserved in skin bags. Some people would mix it with the vitamin rich content of a reindeer’s stomach. [...] Fresh provisions for a feast were: boiled seal meat, a variety of plucked sea birds; Greenland halibut and red mullet, which must be boiled just before the meal.” (quoted in Janda & Bækgaard, p. 54)

Needless to say, today’s Greenlandic diet does not consist solely of such provisions from local nature. Since the second colonization in the 18th century, there has been a steady trade between Greenland and the outside world, organized through the trade monopoly KGH (the Royal Greenlandic Trading Company, today known under its acronym in Greenlandic: KNI). Thus, Greenlandic food culture has largely been shaped also by the (limited) variety of goods bought in the KGH trading posts in most of the country’s towns and villages. This influence can be read in what is today the classic Greenlandic “Suasaat” (soup): a way of preparing meat (with bones), boiling it with rice, onions, salt and pepper, then serving meat and the rice soup in two separate plates. Also the ritual of “kaffemik” (coffeeparty) is a reminiscence of the importance of imported goods and the supply offered by the monopoly. As noted by one Greenlandic immigrant: *“Once in a while, I get a craving for figs, a strong longing for the sweetness of figs, probably because it was some of the only “candy” available in the KGH store when I was a child.”* (Quoted in Nilsson, 1982, p. 52.)

The identity construction among the informants could be expected to be a result of different acculturation outcomes based on a cultural dichotomy (eg culture of origin versus culture of immigration as proposed by Peñaloza, 1994) where the “true” Greenlandic cultural identity is imagined to reside in “Greenland”. However, as already pointed out, in the case of Greenlandic consumers in Denmark the cultural domains are not so clear cut. The influence of Danish trade has been strong and growing at least throughout the 20th century. Danish food, for example, is widely available in Greenland and is often cheaper than traditional Greenlandic food products and is therefore used for everyday meals, whereas traditional Greenlandic food products are consumed on special occasions.

The informants’ identification with Greenlandic and Danish culture is not connected to particular places (ie Danish culture in Denmark and Greenlandic culture in Greenland). Rather, the food consumption as identification and differentiation refers to abstract cultural categories. One could say that because Danish and Greenlandic culture (as expressed by availability and consumption of food products) exist in both “places”, the symbolic value of food must refer to abstract cultural categories. Furthermore, the meaning that Greenlandic food carries

varies with the location of consumption due to different consumption and identity contexts. In this sense, the cultures from which the symbolic value of food consumption gets its meaning can be said to be de-territorialized – a key characteristic of globalization.

Greenlandic food products are consumed both when in Denmark and in Greenland – they enter, however, into different discourses and consumption rituals depending on the location of consumption. The Greenlandic consumers, therefore, have varying consumption practices depending on where they are and why. That is, the consumption practices and the symbolic meanings of food products vary with the location – ie Denmark or Greenland – and these practices also vary with the purpose of location – ie permanent residence, longer stays (eg education), holidays. Many informants underline the importance of being in nature when eating its fresh offerings, a newly caught fish or a freshly killed seal. They talk about the view of the mountains or the sea, that “goes along” with the food and from which the food originates. Furthermore, a close link between nature and the intrinsic quality of the food is evoked, as in the following example *“In the meat from a newly shot reindeer, you can really taste the fresh greens, it ate. Or the herbs we take out from the gizzard of the grouse to dry – that is all the good stuff which the grouse carefully selected for itself. That counts for the finest spice in Greenlandic food.”* (Quoted in Nilsson, 1982, p. 53.)

In contrast to the Greenlandic “unity with nature” feeling of community, Greenlandic food, when consumed in Denmark, takes on a quite different meaning. Identity formation processes among Greenlandic immigrants are influenced by something that differentiates them from other immigrant populations studied in consumer research such as Turks in Germany, Italians in Canada, or Mexicans in the US (Caglar 1995; Joy, et al. 1995, Peñaloza 1994). Greenlanders are limited in number at home; in Denmark, their number is even smaller and their tiny communities are scattered in Denmark’s major towns and cities, Copenhagen, Århus, Odense, Aalborg and so on. As a result Greenlandic immigrants in Denmark, unlike these other groups, are confronted with a profound loss of one of the key anchors of identity, community. Greenlandic food, therefore, obtains a different value when consumed in Denmark since it is an experience lacking the spontaneous and social contexts that surround such consumption in Greenland. On the other hand, on more rare and specific occasions it helps regenerate different kinds of community.

As the discussion of Bell and Valentine (1997) so aptly demonstrates, food consumption has the power to create “communities of affiliation” on a variety of levels and in a variety of ways. For Greenlanders in Denmark, there are two main types of communities based on the food culture. One, which is more concrete, reflects the well-known “ghetto-effect” of clustering of immigrants of similar origin and, in terms of food, is expressed through gatherings with compatriots around a “real” Greenlandic meal. This can be either on festive occasions, or the gathering may in itself be the occasion which engenders the Greenlandic cooking. The other one, which is more abstract, is created through the simple feeling of being reminded of one’s foreignness, and thus about one’s “community of origin”. This is thus a community often created in the absence of compatriots, sometimes expressed positively in the Danes’ encouragement of immigrants to be a positive stereotype: to speak Greenlandic, dress Greenlandic, eat Greenlandic; possibly in a sort of combined search for the exotic and authentic

“other” and a “backbone bad consciousness” of being the old (and present?) colonial “masters”. Among Greenlanders this generates a “feeling of otherness”, which is sometimes hard to accept even if it is well meant. Of course, the otherness can also be expressed negatively by Danes, who are repelled by certain aspects of Greenlandic (food) culture, but in a way such “criticism” seems easier to handle and reject than the “positive stereotype”, as illustrated by the following quote *“Sometimes I long desperately for cod gills – many people laugh at me but I love the fresh taste of seaweed and salt water. Should that be any more strange than people here who eat oysters?”* (Quoted in Nilsson, 1982, p. 52.)

Food consumption is often linked to a diverse range of social and personal activities: a consequence of the fact that the Greenlandic economy was largely (and still is to a large extent) built around hunting and fishing. Greenlandic food is associated with the gift economy and the ancient hunting and fishing traditions of Greenland. The traditional village communities shared whatever catch was made, and success in hunting or fishing was always a major social event. Hence, Greenlandic food is not just a symbolic container that represents culture of origin when eaten. The whole consumption process – ie acquisition, consummation and disposal (Holbrook 1987) – of food products acted as a major organising vehicle for traditional Greenlandic society. This continues to have a deep impact on the food culture and the food acculturation processes of Greenlanders in Denmark. In the following part we will illustrate how the whole consumption process of food is linked to a diverse range of cultural activities and consequently becomes a constitutive part of what our respondents perceive as Greenlandic culture. We have thus chosen to organize our analysis around Holbrook’s three aspects of consumption.

ACQUISITION, CONSUMMATION AND DISPOSAL OF FOOD

Acquisition of food

The fishing and hunting tradition is still very important for the way food acquisition is perceived. In Greenland, when a good catch has been made or, as we shall see, when a young person shoots his first seal, a spontaneous celebration often takes place in which family, friends and acquaintances from the community joins in eating and partying. Thus, the acquisition of food is an element in the structuring social life in the community, dispensing other activities and everyday routines.

The rituals surrounding food consumption can occasion culture clashes. The following quote, in which an informant is caught between the requirements of his Greenlandic (mother’s) family and his Danish father, illustrates how the perception of time in Danish and Greenlandic culture differ – time in Greenlandic culture is organised *around a food ritual* whereas in Danish culture *food rituals are organised in accordance to a time schedule*:

“I remember my first cultural clash in Greenland. It was my first seal. My grandparents (mother’s side) had a big party. So I didn’t come home for dinner, and my father made a big deal out of that. You had to be punctual for dinner. He could not accept that you can forget all about time when a big event like this one occurs.” (Male, age: 34.)

Another example of differing acquisition methods is the tradition of “going to the board” where local fishermen will sell their catch:

I: You say that you eat Greenlandic food, but is there any particular Greenlandic food that you really miss down here?

R: Yes, of course. Although I can buy Greenlandic food here at work, like seal, dried fish and mattak and those kinds of things, I really miss being able to go down to the board and buy fresh goods and then go home and cook them [...] You know freshly caught fish, cod, red-fish, father-lasher and catfish, and lumpsucker and seal and birds, you know freshly-caught, I really miss that. (Female, age 36.)

The board used to be the local retail environment where goods and money were exchanged. Now, in the experience of our respondents, the board acts as a sort of delicatessen where an authentic Greenlandic experience can be had in the form of buying freshly caught food. The board helps maintain the hunting and fishing traditions of Greenlandic culture in the collective memory of consumers. Thus, when the institution of the board is not there, the food culture also changes.

“Sure, you cannot get fresh fish down here in Denmark, you cannot just go to the “board” and by a kilo of this or that according to season, so in that sense there is no doubt that I have changed my food culture. Started to go to supermarkets where you could get everything instead of catching something yourself.” (Male, age: 34.)

Although many informants miss Greenlandic food and some of the rituals connected to it, they do see some advantages in living in Denmark with regards to the availability of food:

“[I find] more exotic goods which you won’t find as much back home, especially not in Ilulissat or smaller towns and villages, just to mention that. And you see a lot in magazines, also about food, and see all these things that you can now acquire down here [in Denmark] – American food and ... you name it. And new recipes, new possibilities for cooking, Mexican food and such things. Those you cannot try at home, since, of course, there are certain ingredients you cannot get.” (Female, age: 34.)

On the other hand, availability has its problematic sides as well. One aspect which is lost to Greenlanders in Denmark is seasonality. The absence of nature in connection with the food culture means a loss of this age-old experience of dependence on the season for the availability of certain food items. Some of our informants evoked this, but it was most clearly expressed by a Greenlander interviewed in Nilsson (1982) “*My stomach still follows the seasons. I think it is built into my body from my childhood. In the summer I long for raw reindeer meat and the sourish, half-digested content from the newly cut up reindeer’s stomach, it tastes like some kind of fresh salad with yoghurt. Lots of good vitamin C. In the spring, I want various birds and fresh eggs with dark yolk, and freshly caught trout. And in the winter seal with a good soup*” (Quoted in Nilsson, 1982, p. 52.)

The possibilities of acquiring food, Greenlandic or other, for Greenlanders in Denmark reflect a dichotomy of scarcity and abundance. There is a scarcity of what they like the most – Greenlandic food – both because of the limited availability and the price level. On the other hand, there is an abundance of everything else. However, the scarcity is somewhat ambiguous, since scarcity in itself is inherent to traditional Greenlandic food culture, where the availability of food could not be taken for granted. The provision of various food items in the traditional Greenlandic diet was and is dependent both on season, weather and on the hunter's fortune. So nothing can be taken for granted in terms of availability, which is a sharp contrast to the consumer society.

Consummation

As mentioned earlier, Greenlandic food is often consumed on festive occasions. In everyday life Greenlanders – also in Greenland – primarily eat Danish food bought at the supermarket. Therefore, residents in Denmark associate Greenlandic food with traditions of celebration, whether they be spontaneous parties held to celebrate one family's good fortune in shooting a seal; a planned party such as a birthday party or as weekend food when the family is allowed to spoil itself. Greenlanders residing in Denmark are also given Greenlandic food as gifts when in Greenland on short breaks. This used to be the only way for them to obtain food products but Greenlandic food is now becoming available in shops at Greenlandic Community Houses across Denmark. In this regard, it is not insignificant that Greenlandic food used to be available mainly through the network of kin relationships that connected immigrants to the island. Now, it is more widely available on the mainland through commercial channels. At a stroke the link between food and the gift economy is cut, and a critical integument of that economy is reduced to a consumer choice like any other (Firat, 1995). Thus, the Greenlandic emigrant may experience the double alienation of living in a consumer society in mainland Denmark and of experiencing Greenland as a touristic experience on holiday.

As discussed earlier, the close tie to nature in the consumption process of food is perceived to be met, sometimes with admiration (positive stereotyping), but most of the times with negative reactions in the more "culturally imbued" Denmark, as exemplified by the following quote from a Greenlandic woman interviewed in another context: *"Many Danes turn up their nose at Greenlandic food, and I remember my days at the teachers' college, when my friends shuddered and said 'Phew, do you eat things like that, dried fish and reindeer stomach?'"* (Quoted in Nilsson, 1982, p. 52.)

From the Greenlandic side, Danish food is associated with a diverse range of products – from the quintessential Danish dish "fried streaky bacon with parsley sauce" to (the availability of) fresh vegetables to globalized dishes such as spaghetti bolognese, pizza and lasagne. Pork dishes, a major part of traditional Danish cuisine, is generally held in low esteem, with the preferred meats of expatriate Greenlanders being beef or lamb. Danish food, when appraised, is associated more utilitarian value in the form of availability, diversity and freshness (the latter for fruits and vegetables only). Danish food is more or less characterised as all food that is not associated with Greenlandic fishing and hunting. To the informants Danish food represents the West in the form of a

creolized food culture and Greenlandic food represent the authentic Greenlandic way of life. These two perceptions illustrate the situation of Greenlandic immigrants where they are in an ongoing negotiation of identity balancing between the (perceived) authentic Inuit culture and a “global citizen’s” cosmopolitan consumer culture.

“Danish food that I like? Hm, T-bone steak or something with bones in it. I don’t like just meat, not the lean, dry things. It must be pure fat and bones [...] because in Greenland we do not like lean meat, the taste is in the bones, the taste is in the fat, and we are not so afraid of bones, fishbones...” (Female, age 60.)

This quote reflects both the Greenlandic taste for bones; for preparation and serving methods that make the food look and taste as natural (non-processed) as possible. But also the creolization process of Danish food, since the T-bone steak is a post WW II introduction in Danish butcher’s variety of cuts.

The consumption of Danish food is considered a relatively utilitarian act, although there is an awareness of Danish food culture being highly ritualized. Many informants see themselves as relatively peripheral to this, and refer to a different kind of ritualization of food: the togetherness. Thus, Greenlanders seem to experience Danish or western food culture as highly dependent on the presence of other artefacts. In the Danish context this could be the usage of special plates for various dishes, the decoration and presentation of the dishes, tablecloths, napkins, candles, etc. The Greenlandic system of communicating the community and the togetherness around the table is considered simpler: *“We did not eat specific food for parties when I was a child. If the game or the fish was fresh, then that was the party food. We don’t have so many rituals around the food as people here in Western Europe, we ate for saturation. Then, we went from the table to the living room. That was the party, being together around the coffee table, chatting, laughing, telling stories, looking at photos. And then, if Greenlandic cake was served, there would really be a party”.* (Quoted in Nilsson, 1982, p. 54.)

All in all, the consumption of food in itself, and the community created by the sharing of food is seen as sufficient. This may be linked to the discussion of abundance and scarcity above. As the quote seems to indicate, “food” is first and foremost seen as a necessity. And traditionally, when the food was finally caught or shot and brought home to the village, the mere presence of food was an occasion for partying. Cake and coffee, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of the superfluous as regards nutrition, and as a luxury since the ingredients had to be bought at the store with whatever little money the household had. Coffee is, of course, another Danish introduction to Greenlandic food culture, and the importance of the “kaffemik”, the festive gathering around the coffee table witnesses the Greenlandic taking over the extremely important institution of “the coffee table”, which plays a major role in the way Danes furnish their homes, especially their living rooms (cf. Djursaa & Kragh, forthcoming).

Disposal

Many of the artefacts that Greenlanders carry with them (such as tupilaks² etc.) are produced with the remains of food products such as bone or tooth. These products then enter the gift economy and can become tokens of personal identity (obviously much disposal also occurs through industrial waste management as in Denmark).

Through the use of such cultural identity markers in the host country Greenlandic immigrant identity formation becomes highly self-reflexive. One aspect of the Greenlandic immigrant identity work is found in their expectations of, and desires to avoid, cultural misunderstanding, that then lead to acculturative behavioural modifications – as in this case where the artefacts produced by remains of the Greenlandic food consumption system is perceived to be a potential source of negative reaction from the mainland “Other”:

“When I came from Greenland, I brought my jewellery, I can’t live without it. I don’t wear it here, but I had to bring them. They are various amulets and the like, made from bone or stone [...] I take them out occasionally and look at them, but, uh-oh, I don’t wear them because I think it is a bit... In Qaqortoq, I often wear them but here in Denmark people look at me and think: “What is it made from? Oh, It’s made of bone! Poor animal!” So maybe it is mostly to spare people from that, that I don’t wear it. A bear’s claw I have or something like that would scare them to death. “Are you into voodoo or something like that?” So you are a little afraid of what people might think. You don’t want them to believe you’re some kind of cannibal.” (Occupation: student, gender: female, age: 25, residence: from the Disco Bay, living temporarily in Vanløse.)

The general attitude towards disposal seems to reflect the harsh living conditions in Greenland, where everything from, for instance, the seal is used. What is edible is eaten, even in more or less decayed states which has probably contributed to the likes for half-decomposed food, and skin and bones are used for tools and clothing. When this attitude is confronted with the abundance and the waste production of a consumer society, some people seem to be filled with disgust for what is seen as superficial and materialistic ways of life. Others, however, may have problems in handling the abundance, and having developed no “waste culture”, they have no schemes for handling waste so that garbage is thrown everywhere. This, in turn, contributes to the negative stereotypes of the Greenlandic “social case” in Denmark.

Summing up

The acquisition, consummation and disposal of food enter into the organisation of social relations. One interesting fact in this connection is that in Greenland, the food traditionally goes through a very limited chain of distribution and production – one could say that food consumption is much closer to its origin, namely nature. When this is held up against the fact that our respondents largely associate their experience and identification with Greenland in terms of

² A tupilak is a small grotesque figure carved in narwhale or walrus tooth or reindeer antler. They were originally evil spirits, but today they have become material expressions of “Greenlandicness” as well as popular souvenirs.

nature and the natural we can see how food consumption is part of this definition of Greenlandic cultural identity as something to do with nature.

Danish (western) food products and the consumption thereof are characterised by a much more extensive distribution, manufacturing and marketing process and is therefore not associated with nature and the natural. Both when consumed in Denmark and Greenland Danish food is associated with the ordinary, whereas Greenlandic food is part of extraordinary events. Below the characterisations that our respondents gave of Greenlandic and Danish culture in general as well as of food specifically summarise the perceived dichotomous relation between Danish and Greenlandic cultural identity – between nature and culture.

Table 2. Summary of perception of Danish and Greenlandic food cultures

<i>Food consumption</i>	Greenland	Denmark
<i>– types of food</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat (seal, lamb, reindeer, whale) & fish • Unique, “authentic” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat (pork) and vegetables • Creolized
<i>– production</i>	Fresh/natural	Processed; imported/cultural
<i>– consumption</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Natural” time schemes and environments • Extraordinary food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cultural” time schemes and environments • Everyday food
<i>– distribution</i>	The board, gifts/sharing (GL), Greenlandic House (DK)	The supermarket
<i>– disposal</i>	Processed into artefacts (gift economy); nothing disposed	Waste producing consumer society
<i>– function</i>	Structure and occasion social relations	Utilitarian (for Greenlanders) Highly ritualized (for Danes)
<i>– symbolic value</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarcity (expense, availability) • Cultural experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundance • Utilitarian, exotic

CONCLUSION: FOOD DISCOURSES

The negotiation of identities in Greenlandic food cultures is just as complex as suggested by James (1996) for the British environment, comprising discourses of globalism, of exoticism, of creolization and of nostalgia. James' categories of discourse are basically organised around two dimensions – scope and compatibility. Using these two dimensions the discourses can be organised in a two-by-two matrix as is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. James' (1996) food discourses in a two-by-two matrix

		COMPATIBILITY	
		YES	NO
SCOPE	GLOBAL	1. Global	2. Expatriate
	LOCAL	3. Creolization	4. Nostalgia

Below we draw on the primary and secondary data used for this paper to explain the food discourses among immigrant Greenlandic consumers.

Global food

Although the informants make many references to authentic Greenlandic food, they nevertheless have been exposed to global food for a considerable length of time via the imported goods from Denmark made available at KGH. Over time this has obviously resulted in changes in diet. As has been noted earlier the everyday meals of the Greenlanders are often characterised as “Danish”. Some of these imported foods – like the example of dried figs – have become part of Greenlandic food culture. However, the range of global products has been rather limited – one example is the fact that Coca-Cola was not introduced to the Greenlandic market until the late nineties. Moving to Denmark, our informants were exposed to a wider range of global food – in terms of dishes and ingredients – through the media and availability in the retail environment. The informants associate these globalized food products (eg. pizza) with Danish food – probably since this is the first experience of the globalized food culture for many of them. The experience is one of unlimited choice and availability – an experience unfamiliar to them from their native retail environment where scarcity characterises the availability of global and Danish as well as Greenlandic food. In one sense our informants make little distinction between Danish and global food, but they do point to what they perceive to be quintessential Danish food (see Expatriate food below).

Expatriate food (exoticism)

Discourse on Expatriate food is similar to that of Nostalgia (see below) in one aspect, namely that it involves perceived authenticity. The difference between the discourses is what this perception of authenticity refers to – in the Expatriate discourse one consumes food that is perceived to represent an authentic Other; in the Nostalgia discourse food represents the authentic Self. The concept of exoticism does not necessarily equate to something positive and thereby aspirational. For many of our informants the typical Danish dish involves pork which in general our informants dislike. As noted earlier, fried streaky bacon with parsley sauce is mentioned frequently as an authentic Danish dish although it is unlikely that this equates to the reality of dinner tables in contemporary Denmark.

Food creolization

The mixture, or fusion, of food from various culinary cultures is another discourse which is part of the globalization of food culture. Here food cultures from various areas of the world are mixed producing dishes like “Chinese pizza” or “curry fish and chips” (James 1996). In our study there was no explicit reference as to how Greenlandic food was mixed with food products from other areas of the world. The informants made very clear distinctions between what they perceived as being authentic Greenlandic food and all other kinds of food – as has been noted earlier they more or less characterised all other kinds of food as Danish although some kinds of food were perceived to be more “truly” Danish (pork) than others (eg Mexican food). However, implicitly in their accounts of what constitutes Greenlandic food, they make references to dishes which contain ingredients not found in the Greenlandic natural environment. The existence of imported food from Denmark (and thereby from the rest of the world) has indeed creolized traditional Greenlandic dishes.

Food nostalgia

Nostalgia was probably the most common theme among the informants – a longing for Greenlandic food, as well as a longing for the contexts of consumption (the board, eating Greenlandic food in nature or close to nature). The informants often referred to the social contexts of food consumption such as the rituals of acquisition (going to the board) as well as the actual consumption of Greenlandic food. Moreover their accounts of what constitutes Greenlandic food abounded with examples of various food ingredients and meals and their accounts were also highly emotive in their appraisal of Greenlandic food. So, in their perception there was a very clear idea of what kinds of food represented their authentic Self. However, the informants expressed that although Greenlandic food could be obtained in Denmark, consuming it in a foreign environment was somehow not the same experience as consuming it in Greenland. The informants could not, therefore, obtain what they experienced as authentic Greenlandic food consumption when in Denmark.

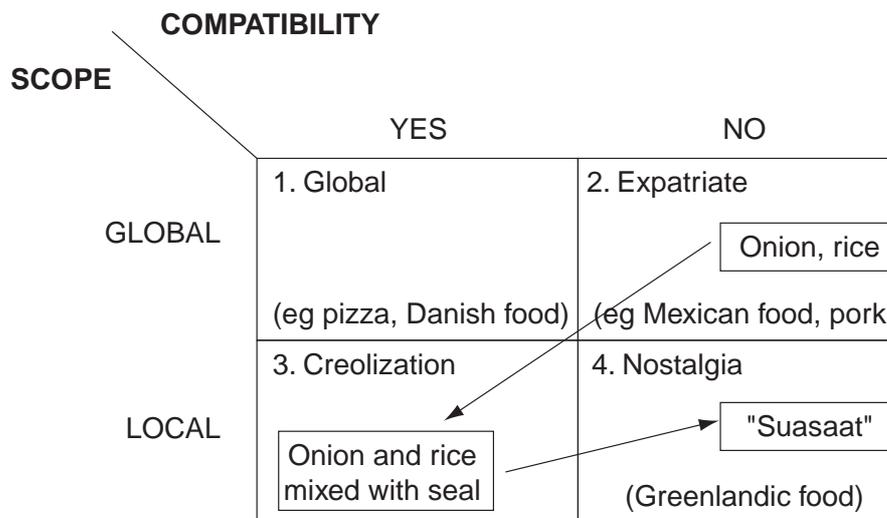
Final Remarks: Movement of meals, movement of meaning

James' framework provides a useful basis for summarising our informants' perceptions of food as well as a good analytical tool that enables us to probe deeper into informants' accounts of perception of food in relation to cultural identity. On the basis of the application of the framework we also believe that it enables us to point out the dynamics involved in food discourses as food products can move from one discourse to another. In Figure 2 we have added examples of the food products that were involved in the discourses of our informants as well as an example of movement of food between discourses.

The figure shows how the "authentic" Greenlandic dish Suasaat (as mentioned earlier) has developed. The ingredients rice and onions have been imported to Greenland and were probably perceived as rather exotic at the time. The ingredients are then mixed with local ingredients (meat) creating a creolized dish which, over time, enters into the discourse of nostalgia.

The example given above is illustrative of one kind of movement. Other dynamics may also be at play in the globalization of food culture, for example when food products move from discourses of authenticity to the discourse of globalism (such as hamburgers or pizza).

Figure 2. The dynamics of food discourse in Greenlandic food culture



The dynamic nature of food discourse shows us that the concept of authenticity can only exist as a perceptual construct on the basis of how a culture views its "Self" and "Others". It also shows that creolization does not necessarily lead to an increasing homogenization of (food) culture since creolized consumption can become authenticized and consequently reinforcing existing cultural identity.

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