Introduction

What is patriotism but the love of the good things we ate in
our childhood.
                                        —*Lin Yutang*

Food reveals our souls. Like Marcel Proust reminiscing about a
madeleine or Calvin Trillin astonished at a plate of ribs, we are entan-
gled in our meals. The connection between identity and consumption
gives food a central role in the creation of community,[1] and we use our
diet to convey images of public identity (Bourdieu 1984; MacClancy
1992). The routinization of feeding is one of the central requirements
of families (DeVault 1991) and other social systems. The existence of
profit-making organizations to process and serve food reveals some-
thing crucial about capitalist, industrial society. As is true for mills,
foundries, and hospitals, the growth of restaurants—the hospitality in-
dustry—is implicated in the economic changes in the West in the past
two centuries. Given their ubiquity and our frequency of contact with
them, restaurants represent the apotheosis of free-market capitalism,
production lines, a consumption economy, and interorganizational
linkages. The production, service, and consumption of food is a nexus
of central sociological constructs—organization, resources, authority,
community, rhetoric, gender, and status.

   Yet, for all their potential allure, restaurants have rarely been stud-
ied sociologically (but see Whyte 1946; Gross 1958; Hannon and Free-
man 1989). Cooks, despite continual, though mediated, contact in our
quotidian lives, are invisible workers in occupational sociology.

   While wishing to capture the flavor of this work environment, I
have equally salient theoretical aims. I wish to present an organiza-

tional sociology that is grounded in interactionist and cultural concerns, but does justice to the reality of the organization and the equal, insistent reality of the environment outside the organization. Alan Wolfe (1991) labels my generation of organizational ethnographers the "new institutionalists" (see Dimaggio and Powell 1991). These scholars look behind the generalizations and abstractions of institutional theory to examine how institutions operate in practice. While I first heard the term used by Wolfe, the moniker captures part of the impetus for this volume. Through my ethnography I present a perspective that accounts for features of the organizational literature (e.g., Scott 1992) while remaining true to the lived experiences of workers who labor behind the kitchen door. An interactionist approach need not eschew organizational and system constraints, and can address the political economy. In the past two decades, while embracing the basic precepts of an interpretivist perspective, I have confronted questions that had often been left to structural sociologists.[2] This book explores several features of organizational sociology, providing some basis for future research.

The font of my analysis is the negotiated order perspective: that approach to the interactionist understanding of organizations pioneered by Anselm Strauss and his colleagues from the University of Chicago, such as Donald Roy and Howard Becker, some three decades ago (Colomy and Brown 1995). Strauss's studies of psychiatric hospitals (Strauss et al. 1963; Strauss et al. 1964)[3] are classics and contribute to an ongoing research project (e.g., Corbin and Strauss 1993). The most detailed treatment of this approach, which expands it beyond the confines of a single work setting, is found in Strauss's *Negotiations* (1978), in which he develops a theory of organization and structural negotiations. While Strauss did not emphasize the impact of external forces and social constraints in shaping trajectories of work and did not provide a single detailed case, his theory provides a base for any interactionist examination of organizations. Strauss is at pains to explain the flexibility within organizations and the conditions under which this flexibility is likely to appear. Others have expanded the negotiated order approach (Maines 1977; Fine 1984), examining it in a variety of empirical arenas (see Farberman 1975; Denzin 1977; Kleinman 1982; Levy 1982; Lynxwiler, Shover, and Clelland 1983; Hosticka 1979; Mesler 1989) and demonstrating how negotiation pervades a range of organizational and institutional environments. The negotiated order approach represents one of several theoretical apparatuses that at-

tempts to link micro- and macroexplanations. It provides an under-
standing of how interaction emerges from structure and, in turn, how
interaction becomes structured (Busch 1980, 1982): how the effects of
interaction become patterned, creating social structure (see Fine 1991;
Sewell 1992). Erving Goffman remarks:

> All the world is not a stage—certainly the theater isn't entirely. (Whether
> you organize a theater or an aircraft factory, you need to find places for
> cars to park and coats to be checked, and these had better be real places,
> which, incidentally, had better carry real insurance against theft.) Presum-
> ably, a "definition of the situation" is almost always to be found, but those
> who are in the situation ordinarily do not *create* this definition, even
> though their society often can be said to do so; ordinarily, all they do is to
> assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act ac-
> cordingly. True, we personally negotiate aspects of all arrangements under
> which we live, but often once these are negotiated, we continue on mechan-
> ically as though the matter had always been settled.
>
> (Goffman 1974, pp. 1–2)

As Goffman indicates, a consequential reality exists to which people
pay heed, even when negotiating around the edges. People are able to
define situations, but these definitions have consequences. For organi-
zations, ecology, political economy, and authority hierarchy have this
character. Micronegotiations that are so compelling to interactionists
are organized by an obdurate, enveloping reality. To understand per-
sons and their settings, we must oscillate between their "free" acts and
the larger environments in which these actions occur. Anthony Gid-
dens (1984, p. xxvi; see Collins 1981) notes: "The opposition between
'micro' and 'macro' is best reconceptualized as concerning how inter-
action in contexts of co-presence is structurally implicated in systems
of broad time-space distanciation—in other words, how such systems
span large sectors of time-space." Several critical assumptions under-
gird the development of the negotiated order perspective. First, in this
view all social order is negotiated order; that is, it is impossible to
imagine organization without negotiation. All organizations are com-
posed of actors, and even when we do not focus on their actions, they
can subvert or support structural effects. Second, specific negotiations
are contingent on the structure of the organization and the field in
which the organization operates. Negotiations follow lines of power
and communication, and are patterned and nonrandom. Third, negoti-
ations have temporal limits and are renewed, revised, and reconstituted
over time. The revisions may occur unpredictably, but the revisions

themselves are often predictable post hoc if one examines changes in the organizational structure or ecology. Negotiations are historically contingent. Fourth, structural changes in the organization require a revision of the negotiated order. In other words, the structure of the organization and micropolitics of the negotiated order are closely and causally related (Herzfeld 1992). Strauss writes: "The negotiated order on any given day could be conceived of as the sum total of the organization's rules and policies, along with whatever agreements, understandings, pacts, contracts, and other working arrangements currently obtained. These include agreements at every level of organization, of every clique and coalition, and include covert as well as overt agreements" (1978, p. 2). Although this passage does not address the historical contingency of the negotiations, the ongoing and consequential character of these understandings is crucial. Strauss's later work (1991) on articulation and arcs of work attempts to bring temporality into the negotiation process.

Within a "negotiation framework," two broad issues are crucial: (1) How organizational, economic, and environmental constraints affect choices and behaviors of workers in their daily routines—how "life worlds" are colored by constraints (Fine 1991). How structure affects culinary doings—the mundane experience of the occupation. (2) How all occupations involve a concern with "quality" production, and how these aesthetic standards are negotiated in practice. As I describe in chapter 6, all art is work, and all work is art. A delicate balance exists between action and constraint—what in other sociological venues is labeled the problem of agency and structure (e.g., Dawe 1978; Archer 1988; Fine 1992a). Before discussing each theme, I situate my analysis in the history of restaurants.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESTAURANTS AND CUISINE

If restaurants didn't exist, they'd have to be invented.
Because a restaurant takes a basic drive, the simple act
of eating, and transforms it into a civilized ritual—a
ritual involving hospitality and imagination and satis-
faction and graciousness and warmth.
                                                        —Joe Baum

Gastronomy has a distinguished pedigree, a history as lengthy as human political and economic history, but not always as well docu-

mented. Food has long been produced by "specialists" outside the family in "civilized society" (Mennell, Murcott, and Otterloo 1992).[4] The ancient Greeks wrote of cookery as art (Bowden 1975, p. 2), and some suggest that the Chinese were concerned with "cuisine" at nearly the same period (Anderson and Anderson 1988; Chang 1977; Tiger 1985) and, according to others, subsequently started the first "serious" restaurants during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–907) (Ackerman 1990, p. 133). The great and gross banquets of the Roman Era and early Middle Ages are well known (Mennell 1985; Elias 1978; Wheaton 1983). By the Middle Ages cookbooks existed, street foods were sold to the public, and kings and nobles employed chefs to run their kitchens. Some medieval chefs such as Taillevent were famed throughout courtly society.[5] If they were not as esteemed as artists, they were still ranked above craftsmen.

Cooking was not accorded equal status in all nations at all times ("Cook's Interview: Anne Willan" 1985, p. 19; "Cook's Interview: Richard Olney" 1986, p. 22); and France and China (and, according to some, Italy) are reputed to have established a "true" aesthetic, or court, cuisine. It has been a commonplace that English cookery and French cuisine differ substantially, much to the disadvantage of the former (e.g., Charpentier and Sparkes 1934, p. 131)—a difference that has existed for centuries (Mennell 1985, pp. 102–33)—although whether it is a function of national character, class structure, geographical organization of the nation-state, agricultural production, weather, or some other cause is a matter of contention. French cuisine has not always been considered the foremost in Europe, however. In the sixteenth century, Italian cuisine held that distinction. The change in national reputation is attributed to the 1533 marriage of Catherine de' Medici to Henry II of France. As queen, she brought with her some of the finest Italian cooks, and French cuisine was established by these new immigrants (Bowden 1975, p. 6).

Political movements and economic concerns contribute to culinary migration, just as they are associated with other migrations. An unanticipated consequence of the French Revolution was the emigration of some French court chefs to England (Bowden 1975, p. 8). A latent benefit of the end of the American war in Indochina was the influx of Vietnamese cooks to our shores, infusing urban restaurant scenes. Likewise, the new wave of immigration to American shores by Chinese nationals has produced a flowering of restaurants (Epstein 1993, p. 50). In fact, the American restaurant scene has benefited from waves of

third world migration, bringing cuisines, cooks, and many minimum-wage kitchen laborers. Migration moved west, as well as north and east: French tax rates, coupled with the growth of American culinary sophistication (and salaries for top chefs), have impelled French chefs to seek employment in American kitchens.

Court cuisine was well established by the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but it was not until centuries later that the restaurant as modern, Western diners would recognize it appeared. Inns, teahouses and coffeehouses, caterers, cabarets, and taverns have long served food for a price (Brennan 1988), bringing dining into the public sphere, but it was not until 1765 that the first "restaurant" was established in Paris (Willan 1977, p. 85). With attention to the preparation and serving of *meals,* these restaurants were more specialized than previous establishments that served food, and they explicitly addressed the status needs of their clientele (Clark 1975, p. 37).[6]

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, these establishments grew in number and importance as courtly cuisine declined. Prior to the French Revolution, fewer than thirty restaurants operated in Paris; some thirty years later three thousand restaurants dotted Paris (Clark 1975, p. 37). They served a *grande cuisine* but one available to all with financial resources. Restaurants in Paris and other cities benefited from the population influx into urban areas. While restaurants were not created in direct response to political and social changes, these changes facilitated their development. In the last two hundred years, restaurants have altered from a respite for the rich to a bastion of the middle class. Restaurants meet a combination of aesthetic, status, and entertainment needs—although the means in which these needs are met has changed with circumstances.

The first restaurant in London was established in 1798 (Bowden 1975, p. 19), and in 1831, Delmonico's opened in New York, arguably the first full-fledged American restaurant, certainly the first sanctified with a French chef. For much of the nineteenth century the name "Delmonico's" epitomized American haute cuisine (Root and de Rochemont 1976, pp. 321–22).

The spread of restaurants was a consequence of the agricultural revolution, the desire for mass feeding in urban areas, and the needs of the elites for quality food in status-conferring surroundings without the necessity of employing their own cooks (Symons 1983, p. 39). Thus, symbolic issues merge with the structure of the political economy in fostering this industry. The prosperity of postindustrial Western soci-

eties, particularly in the last few decades, has provided a fertile breeding ground for new restaurants. This prosperity is both a cause and a result of changes in global markets: with the ability to obtain culinary items from all over the world at all times at prices that consumers can afford, the possibilities of food preparation multiply (Zukin 1991, p. 209).

Jane and Michael Stern (1991, pp. 133–37) date the birth of an haute cuisine orientation to the opening in 1941 of Le Pavillon in New York, in part as a function of those intellectuals who wanted to appear cosmopolitan by disdaining traditional American food, in part as a function of international migration, and in part as a function of expansions of markets for prestige goods. By the 1950s, this New York establishment began to spawn imitations across the nation, and within twenty years of its opening, it was regarded as old-fashioned (see Levenstein 1988, pp. 206–7). The haute cuisine trend continued into the culinary boom of the 1970s (Levenstein 1993, pp. 214–15), as exemplified by the opening in 1971 in Berkeley of Alice Waters's *American*-inspired Chez Panisse. The food critic Craig Claiborne (1982, p. 146) notes that along with a change in attitudes came increased prosperity: "Hundreds and thousands of people who a dozen or twenty years ago had to think twice before going to some small French bistro for their *coq au vin* or beef *bourguignonne,* now find it financially feasible to visit restaurants that are relatively luxury-style to sup on the *nouvelle* and traditional cuisine." With the growth of environmentalist and globalist ideologies, nouvelle restaurants have become ideologically compatible with the aging of sixties' radicals and their incorporation into the cultural establishment (e.g., Waters 1990). Indeed, Chez Panisse opened as an outgrowth of the homemade meals that Alice Waters had served Berkeley radicals (Belasco 1989, p. 94). The Berkeley restaurant scene pays heed to the maxim that you are what you eat, your cuisine is your politics, and food is an " 'edible dynamic' binding present and past, individual and society, private household and world economy, palate and power" (Belasco 1989, p. 5). The restaurant culture of Berkeley represented the epitome of a "gourmet ghetto."

Yet, while the importance of ideological and cultural considerations in the development of new styles of restaurants may be emphasized, economic forces must not be discounted. As noted, an international market of foodstuffs developed with changes in transportation, agriculture, marketing, and refrigeration. Further, the development of a market for gourmet food as a form of consumption is part of the gen-

trification that has altered the urban landscape of many cities (Zukin
1991, p. 202); gourmets reside in cultural zones. This gentrification af-
fects not only the customer base of these establishments but also its
labor base, as many servers are recruited from the artistic "critical in-
frastructure" found in cities (Zukin 1991, p. 206). The fixed costs of
restaurants are also affected when previously impoverished areas of the
city are rediscovered by entrepreneurs, such as restaurateurs, who at-
tempt to provide novel experiences for their customers who strive for
the latest and most status-enhancing culinary experience. The succes-
sive popularity of various cuisines over the past two decades (e.g.,
Cajun, Thai, Ethiopian, Tex-Mex) has led some to suggest that the
restaurant scene is as subject to trends as the art world. The culinary
avant-garde grazes on.

   Yet, any perspective that emphasizes the pinnacle of the restaurant
industry at the expense of the vast majority of restaurants that cater to
middle- and working-class eaters is deceptive. Many restaurants are
not part of national chains but are small, local establishments, serving
food only modestly different from that served in customers' homes.
Other market niches provide Americanized "ethnic" cuisine—notably
Chinese, Italian, and Mexican. Some ethnic restaurants have two
menus, one for fellow members of a particular ethnic group and one
for those outside it (Epstein 1993, p. 54). Among restaurants the
growth of franchises is of the greatest economic significance: from
White Towers in the 1920s (Hirshorn and Izenour 1979), linked to
urban transport systems, to suburban fast-food establishments in the
1950s, dependent on the growth of highways, to the recent franchising
of family-style and thematic restaurants found both in urban enclaves
and suburban malls (Finkelstein 1989).

ECONOMICS AND RESTAURANT WORK

To understand the kitchen as a social world, we must consider it as an
institutional environment. This institution consists of the industrial
section of the American economy involved in the preparation and serv-
ing of food to customers: the "restaurant industry" (Hughes 1971, p.
298),[7] part of the "hospitality industry" (Olesen 1992). Restaurants
are integral symbols of a free-market economic system. It was not by
chance that many of the early battles over integration occurred at
southern lunch counters, as eating establishments were a readily avail-
able public arena of American capitalism. Indeed, restaurants are so

linked to free-market capitalism that socialist nations quickly become known for the poor quality of the food they present to diners. When a socialist country begins to move from a planned economy, the restaurant business is one of the first arenas in which the development of an entrepreneurial market economy is noticed. In the early stages of Soviet perestroika, the quality of the small, private restaurants that appeared in Moscow impressed Western journalists. Within the American context, state action can be profound. The imposition of Prohibition in the United States was said to have destroyed many fine dining establishments, constituting what the journalist Julian Street described in 1931 as a "gastronomic holocaust" (Levenstein 1988, p. 183). In fact, Prohibition did not so much destroy public eating as change it, aborting the spread of French cuisine in this country, served in luxurious restaurants and aimed at well-to-do males, and replacing those establishments with more modest "American" ones, catering to women and families.

Competition among restaurants represents, in some respects, an ideal type of a true free-market system in that capital barriers to entrance into the market are relatively modest, large numbers of entrepreneurs compete, and consumers make choices with relatively little pressure. In the pure free-market system (e.g., in which cost alone determines consumption choices), products are fully fungible: all food is interchangeable. Obviously this does not apply to the restaurant industry, as establishments strive to insure product differentiation separate from price and convenience. Restaurants strive to differentiate themselves in cultural *meaning* as well as cost. The possibility of such differentiation creates a highly competitive market with numerous niches.

The dominant industry trade group for this segment of the economy is the National Restaurant Association, which, in conjunction with state trade associations, represents a quarter of a million restaurants. Many others operate that are too small or choose not to be represented by this giant association. For instance, in the city of Chicago there are some 8,000 eating establishments. Even if we ignore lunch counters and fast-food establishments, most large metropolitan areas sport several hundred restaurants. According to 1987 census data, 330,000 eating places employed nearly six million workers with a payroll of $36 billion and sales of nearly $150 billion (*Statistical Abstracts 1990,* p. 769). This industrial segment represents the largest employer of young people between 16 and 19 years of age. The National Restaurant Association estimates that sales of food equaled nearly 5 percent of the

United States Gross National Product in 1982. In 1977, restaurants accounted for 8.8 percent of the money spent in all retail establishments (Zelinsky 1985, p. 53). On a typical day more than 77 million customer transactions occur in the food industry, and 78 percent of all families report eating in commercial food-service establishments on a regular basis. This gigantic industry comprises numerous small firms, each tightly interconnected with a network of large corporations (food producers and suppliers).

From one perspective, all these eating establishments compete with each other, but from another this is deceptive. Within a market a restaurant draws customers from different regions, choosing its market niche or segment. A restaurant differs from others in the distances that its customers will travel to eat there. A local restaurant (e.g., a family restaurant that is part of a chain, a locally owned café, or a diner) has a customer base that resides or shops near the restaurant—a small catchment area. When my family and I desire a simple Mexican meal or to eat in a cafeteria, we choose a restaurant within a mile or two of our home or near to where we happen to be at the time. We are unlikely to drive across town, because we perceive that these restaurants are equivalent—we are unwilling to incur significant costs (in money, fuel, or time) for no measurable difference in quality. In contrast, when we choose a restaurant for dim sum or for haute cuisine, we may travel great distances. These restaurants are not fungible with others, because of the unique qualities associated with them. The more interchangeable a restaurant, the smaller the area from which customers will be drawn.[8] Fungibility is an asset for a chain (if the chain itself can differentiate itself from other chains) in that advertising can be cost effective in promoting all franchisees or for a restaurant with few competitors, such as small-town restaurants. Yet, it becomes a disadvantage when attempting to convince customers to select one restaurant over another if greater costs are associated with that selection. A French restaurant seen as "nearly identical" to all other French restaurants will likely not succeed financially. The organizational ecology of restaurants is complex and dynamic, but, perhaps more than most industries, demonstrates the fruitfulness of an ecological orientation to organizational life (see Hannon and Freeman 1989), because the effect of external considerations is readily apparent.

Because of the relative ease of market entry (low start-up costs and relatively few institutional barriers), restaurants provide a compelling model of free-market capitalism. The fantasy of "Hey, guys, let's open

a restaurant" is almost feasible (e.g., Miller 1978). While successful restaurants are likely to have a sufficient capital reserve to cover the expected losses during the first year, compared to other industrial sectors the restaurant industry is not capital intensive. In addition, changes in bankruptcy laws make exit costs relatively modest. Restaurants have a short life expectancy, with some claiming that 20 percent close within a year and that half close within five years.

Beyond its profit potential, operating a restaurant has cultural value (Miller 1978). Being a restaurant owner is appealing to those with cultural capital or an entrepreneurial spirit. Operating a restaurant provides a basis for the symbolic status the owner can gain in the community, as well as the privileges of owning one's own business. Unlike the owner of most industrial enterprises or small businesses, a restaurant owner can both make an aesthetic and personal statement while differentiating the business from others.[9] For many entering this industry, particularly those whose establishments aim at the trend-conscious, upper-middle-class consumer, the status and glamour of control, coupled with the satisfaction of seeing one's aesthetic vision put into practice, is as important as the income. The following decision to enter the restaurant business is a dramatic example:

> Dr. [Hilary] James [a psychotherapist] had always been very interested in good food and, while still a medical student, had been famous among his friends for his excellent cooking. After he had qualified and begun to practice, he found that he was not satisfied with the London restaurant scene; he did not like the food, the service, waiters in dirty tail-coats nor the necessity for customers to dress up if they wanted to go to a restaurant. He had become very fond of the little informal restaurants in the South of France which offered very good food in an atmosphere devoid of any pretension and so, egged on by the enthusiastic encouragement of his friends, he decided to open a restaurant of his own.
>
> (Bowden 1975, p. 85,)[10]

One's cultural position, a need for aesthetic expression, and the existence of a community of supportive friends—each contributes to such a decision. While some restaurant owners have economic motives as their priority, from my discussion with upscale restaurant owners and reading the popular press, I find aesthetic concerns rarely absent. The economic organization of the restaurant industry permits businesses to be run for their cultural rewards.

This economic reality provides a backdrop for understanding the mundane doing of cooking—how the kitchen is experienced, and how

that experience is revealed in action. What does it mean to cooks and chefs to be working? How do cooks cope with the challenges derived from the structure of the occupation? How do cooks structure their worktime, addressing the explicit and implicit demands of management and customers while mitigating the unpleasant components of culinary labor? This issue—the interplay of agency and structure—is addressed in the first five chapters. My treatment begins with a microsociological examination of work within the kitchen, expanding the focus into the larger socioeconomic concerns. In light of the structure in which they are embedded, in examining occupations I work from the "bottom up"—describing behavioral choices, grounded in local demands, before discussing the place of the occupation in the organization and the economy. The rhythms of work create and are created by the structure of the workplace. The experienced reality of a job consists of its patterned quality: knowing what is expected in minutes, hours, days, and weeks of work.

In chapter 1, I examine the negotiation of the behaviors of cooks, given the demands placed on them, including the negotiation of the division of labor within the kitchen. How is work in the kitchen produced among co-workers? In what way do the requirements of culinary work produce shortcuts, culinary tricks, approximations, and dirty work. In this chapter I examine the advantages and disadvantages to this work, along with the routes that lead workers into the occupation. In chapter 2, I discuss the use of time within the kitchen and the pressures that emerge from the temporal structure of the workday. How do cooks experience the Bergsonian concept of *durée* while at the stove? More than many occupations, cooking is temporally bounded, both in the microrhythms of preparing particular dishes and the longer rhythms of the workday. The third chapter focuses on the structural reality of kitchens. Here I focus on those elements that are not themselves part of cooking but contribute to the kitchen environment. What is the role of kitchen equipment in the production of food? How does the kitchen space constrain or contribute to culinary outcomes? Underlining these questions is the reality that restaurants are work communities. Chapter 4 explains the meaning of this community to the workers within it. How does the restaurant community and the expressive behaviors of those who are a part of it tether workers to what many outside this community perceive as low-paying, dirty, unappreciated labor? How do expressive culture and the development of an organizational culture affect the work of cooks? How do the expressive compo-

nents of an occupation connect to instrumental demands? In chapter 5, I attempt to situate the restaurant and the work of cooks into the economic structure. How do the institutional constraints of the restaurant and the industrial components of the occupation affect the cooking that can and will be produced? How does the political economy in which restaurants are located influence the work in the kitchen, and in what ways do other organizational actors (e.g., managers, customers, and servers) impinge on the doing of cuisine?

AESTHETIC PRODUCTION

The restaurant industry involves more than the production of objects and the providing of services. Restaurant food, like all food, has an aesthetic, sensory dimension and is evaluated as such by both producers and consumers. I argue as a general principle that all products and services have an aesthetic dimension, but this dimension is most evident and self-referential in those organizations in which an "artistic" rhetoric is present. Although the aesthetic of food production and the aesthetic theory behind that production may not be as elaborate as that of photography or interior design (and certainly not as elaborate as that of the fine arts), restaurant employees care about the sensory qualities of their products.

Its location within a large industry, coupled with an explicit sense that the products are to be judged on their sensory qualities, makes a restaurant a compelling research site to examine the strains that affect workers. Linking macroconstraints with interaction, I find that aesthetic choices provide a means by which a cultural analysis informs and is informed by an organizational and economic reality.

Central to my analysis is the artistic character and definition of work, a rare concern in much social-scientific discourse. Food preparation incorporates four human senses: sight, smell, touch, and taste. Typically sound is not dramatically evident in food, but in the case of a sizzling steak, a bowl of Rice Krispies, a crisp apple, or crunchy stalk of celery, some measure of auditory enjoyment is tied to mastication (Vickers and Christensen 1980). Food involves more sensory dimensions than any other art form, except, perhaps, the "art" of love. This aesthetic richness allows vast leeway in choices of food preparation, a diversity that may have hindered the development of a formal aesthetics of cuisine: a theory of eating.

From an organizational perspective, cooks must compromise on

what they serve customers. Not all dishes are economically or morally viable in a kitchen. I hope to extend the analysis of the ideology of "art," addressing the practical doing of aesthetics. The forms of aesthetic negotiation discussed are characteristic of all occupations. All—or at least most—occupations display a sense of the aesthetic, sensory quality of the doing of work. Yet, for all work, those outside the boundary of the occupation and conventions within it constrain legitimate practice. For the fine arts these limits are flexible, unstated but simultaneously ideologically offensive. The illusion is that there are no limits—that art defines itself. In other occupations, such as assembly-line work, the limits are recognized as a legitimate, if unpleasant, part of the job and are rarely explicitly questioned, even as workers complain and evade these restrictions. Cooks fall somewhere in the midst of this continuum of aesthetic workers, and, as a consequence, focusing on these workers encourages an elaboration of the role of freedom and constraint in the workplace.

Specifically in chapter 6, I examine the forms of this aesthetic constraint. In a restaurant, cooks must be aware of the demands placed on them by standards of customer taste, constraints of time, and the economics of the restaurant industry. These features limit what is possible to create. Each constraint is tied to structural and historical dimensions of the larger world, and the complaints of cooks are a response to the structural conditions of restaurants and public taste. Chapter 7 addresses the development of and limits on an aesthetic discourse in the kitchen. In a language that is not conducive to discussions of culinary issues, how can cooks communicate with each other about taste? How is a culinary poetics developed in practice?

•   •   •

I have attempted to write a volume that will be accessible to an audience of nonspecialists. Jargon and technical language has been eliminated wherever possible. Further, while each chapter addresses my theoretical argument, I have attempted in chapter 8, my conclusion, to place my ethnographic conclusions in light of the core sociological concepts of organization, interaction, time, emotion, economics, and aesthetics. Together, these concepts outline an interactionist sociology that takes organizational existence and social structure seriously. While some sociological discussion is necessary in each chapter, hopefully most of this volume will be as lucid to those outside the academy as to those inside. Hopefully this volume will contribute to understanding by cooks and eaters, as well as by researchers and teachers.

This research is based on participant observation and in-depth inter-
viewing in four restaurants of different types, within the Twin Cities.
In each restaurant I spent a month observing in the kitchen, during all
hours in which the restaurant was open, a total of approximately
50–75 hours in each restaurant. In each restaurant I interviewed all its
full-time cooks, a total of thirty interviews, lasting approximately 90
minutes each, with some lasting as long as 3 hours. I describe each of
these sites in detail in the appendix, along with a set of methodological
issues.

The four restaurants represent a range of professional cooking envi-
ronments in the Twin Cities. I make no claim that these four restau-
rants form a representative sample of all eating establishments; clearly
they do not. They represent the upper portion of Minnesota restau-
rants in status; they are not "family," "fast-food," or "ethnic" restau-
rants:

1.   La Pomme de Terre is an haute cuisine French restaurant, by all
accounts one of the best and most innovative in the upper Midwest.

2.   The Owl's Nest is a continental-style restaurant, best known for
the quality of its fresh fish. Its primary clientele is businessmen, and the
restaurant is a multiyear Holiday Award winner.

3.   Stan's Steakhouse is a family-owned steakhouse. It is particu-
larly well known in its neighborhood, a middle-class area not known
for the quality of its restaurants. It has received metropolitan awards
for the quality of its beef.

4.   The Twin Cities Blakemore Hotel is part of a chain of hotels
that is not esteemed for the quality of its cuisine. The hotel is modern,
catering especially to business travelers. The hotel has a banquet ser-
vice and operates a coffee shop and dining room.

Although the restaurants vary widely in the number of customers
served—from 500 on a busy weekend evening at Stan's to about 75 on
the same evening at La Pomme de Terre—each hires from five to ten
cooks, of whom usually three or four are working in the kitchen simul-
taneously.

Several issues of legitimate interest to readers are treated only lightly
in this volume. While real differences distinguish these restaurants in
the skill and aesthetic orientation of the cooks, my goal in this volume
is to explore the similarities among them—those commonalities that

might be generalized to the occupation as a whole. I downplay the elements that divide them, preferring to generalize from four cases than to use each restaurant with its manifest idiosyncrasies as a representative of its culinary class. Cooks at La Pomme de Terre certainly had a more profound aesthetic orientation than those at Stan's, but what impressed me was how cooks at each establishment attempted to make aesthetic sense of the food that they produced; and for this reason I feel justified in combining discourse from each kitchen in a single argument. Nor do I compare and contrast differences in organization, since I feel that the structural similarities of these establishments overwhelm their categorical differences.

Examining cooks in a second-tier metropolitan area provides a different kind of sample than one based upon elite chefs in a primary cultural center (e.g., New York, San Francisco, New Orleans), where a more self-conscious aesthetic dynamic occurs. These cooks are sociologically interesting because they are not elite artists. Taught in trade school, where cooking was likened to other industrial work, not other arts, leads them within their *habitus* to be inarticulate about taste and to produce imprecise classifications of culinary productions (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 170–73). The fact that, even so, they talk about the aesthetics of food preparation suggests the extent to which aesthetic discourse affects the doing of work. An examination of elite chefs would surely produce different results.

Finally I do not address what customers think of these establishments. I am interested in cooking, not in dining. In this regard, I only address the lives of servers as their lives affect those of cooks. Each of these topics—and many others—should be the concern of other researchers.

In this volume the restaurant industry stands as a surrogate for a wide variety of economic spheres. Obviously every organization is idiosyncratic. Yet, idiosyncrasies and all, restaurants and their kitchens provide a setting in which the demands of the external environment affect the interactional order: where microsociology meets structural analysis.