

Semiotic analysis of pakistani food

Food & Diet



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Signs have played a vital part of the social life of any human since childhood. Many mediums exist in the world of semiology, as Umberto Eco (1976) notes, “ each is already charged with cultural significance”. Food, as the necessity of life is a profound fix in any culture of the world and has been described by Appadurai (1986) as “ a highly condensed social fact”.

Different restaurants offer different meals, its cultural cuisine or its unique ambiance makes having a meal at that place such an exotic experience. Laari Ada in Mississauga offers their customers a unique experience with a luxurious take on Pakistani street food. M. Van der Veen (2003), has pointed out that, “ Definitions of the concept of ‘ luxury’ as found in many dictionaries all stress the non-essential nature of luxury goods, using terms such as extra, extravagance, indulgence, treat, affluence, sumptuousness and splendor”.

Visiting a Pakistani restaurant is a great way to understand Pakistani culture and the social importance it has for its cuisine and street food. The ambiance of the restaurant is very modern but it also reflects the colorful nature of the famed Pakistani painted trucks. The all glass front, located in a plaza serve as the proper style that was intended. Laari adda means “ truck stop” in urdu, the national language of Pakistan. The restaurant opens at 5 pm every day, thus its perfect for friend groups or families. The owners of this place have kept a very modern take on the traditional snack stops that are usually found on highways in Pakistan.

As one enters the place, they are greeted by the waiters and brought to their seats. The colorful but cozy atmosphere of the restaurant suits their target

customers. A wall on the front dominates any other work and is a painting of a truck driver in traditional Pakistani village wear with the turban and truck art. The wall on the right is full of frames that comprises of several different puns that relate to any modern South Asian person. A street sign and street light add to the concept of a 'truck stop'. Furniture such as bright yellow couches with sleek black or white tables and contemporary black chairs makes the restaurant stand out against all the other South Asian restaurants where one is greeted with greasy white floors and no colour. The furniture is very comfortable to sit on and thus targets a higher paying audience. The lighting on top of the couches is very contemporary which shows the modern side of the theme. There is a darker corner off to the side of the right wall which has bright neon lights that make more puns with Urdu language lettering, and is meant for a friend group rather than family.

The paper menu is then offered on a wooden clip board, which emphasize the very common object in Pakistani truck stops and it represents the lack of resources in such areas, which makes the interpretant to be very cheap.

Laari adda has taken this concept have tried to manipulate it and fix it into today's society by making it more modern and giving it a chic look. Pakistan, also known as the Islamic republic of Pakistan, is a Muslim country and therefore the food at the Pakistan restaurant does not consist of Pigs meat as it is not 'Halal' and it symbolizes the 'Haram', which means 'forbidden'.

Danesi (2004) has researched that, " Symbolism is the reason why the meat of certain animals is not eaten by the people of certain cultures". This is also the reason why the menu will also lack alcohol, as alcohol signifies 'Haram' in Islamic religion. The menu has different sections to it, more common are <https://assignbuster.com/semiotic-analysis-of-pakistani-food/>

shareables and drinks but sections like ‘ buns and rolls’ and ‘ cholay chaat’ signify the culture of truck stops as these are common street food names. The owners of the place have tried to keep the place modern with dishes like ‘ nutella paratha’ and ‘ fries’ but have also added true traditional dishes that are more in line with the restaurants theme like ‘ chaat papri’ and ‘ bun kebab’. Common foods in today’s world like Nutella and fries represent the newer generation and the modernity that it implies on certain cultures. Small items in the menu like ‘ gola ganda’ priced at \$5 is expensive, certainly for something that is only shaved ice flavored with syrup. Therefore, this menu is targeted towards a higher paying customer. As the order arrives, the food is served on wooden trays, earthenware bowls and metal pots that are important signifiers of the Pakistani culture. The food is rich in taste and loaded with a lot of meat which is an important factor in Pakistani cuisine. The drinks like “ lassi’ and ‘ mango shake’ are a big part of the truck eatery stops and are a must to go with the theme.

The restaurant is quite pricey for a group of people and charge 15% gratuity for the service. Thus, as Danesi (2004) has also stated, “ The semiotic investigation of food brings out how nature and culture intersect constantly in human life”.