

Richard Tellström

Dept. of Restaurant and
Culinary Arts, Örebro University,
S-712 60 Grythyttan, Sweden
richard.tellstrom@telia.com

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Modern European Political Food Culture: in Search of the Optimal Balance of Food and Political Factors

Meetings with other politicians, business people and NGO representatives, and the discussion of ideas on how to formulate new policies constitute a major part of politicians' work in Europe today. Many meetings take place during meals; which may be ceremonial, but are often informal. The food served during these meals is commonly carefully selected to support the political strategy of the meeting. The day-to-day political meal, with its strong functional element, has until now been of little interest to the ethnological research tradition. The aim of this study is to analyse how a group of politicians in contemporary Sweden use meals in their daily work, how they choose food in relation to the purpose of the meeting, and what role they give the meal in political discussions and negotiations. The method used is semi-structured interviews with ten Swedish politicians; ministers and permanent secretaries (both politically appointed in Sweden). The politicians explained how they select topics that should be discussed during the formal meeting, and which topics might better be discussed during the meal following the meeting. The analysis showed that several ministers and permanent secretaries use the meal as a political tool, and that there is a perceived benefit for those who use the meal in a strategic way. The politicians' interest in food can be seen as a reflection of post-modern society's interest in food and meal culture.

Key words: political meals, political food, ministers, permanent secretaries, Sweden

Introduction

The study of food and meal culture is an essential and well-established field within ethnology. New aspects on the topic have arisen the last decades, such as body, gender, ethnicity, tourism, etc (Lysaght, 1998).

However, the political meal, both the food that is served and the meal as a symbol of status, is a field where little research has been conducted. Ethnological research has been directed downwards and outward to the periphery, towards farmers or sub-groups, and seldom upwards to the centre or towards politicians and their use and construction of culture. The study of politicians is normally confined to the field of political science. Within this area meal research is limited, but can be found in the study of political meetings disguised as political meals (Baughman, 1959).

Within the study of classical antiquity there is some research on the importance of the dining room as political arena (Malmberg, 2003) and the decoration of political festive tables during the European baroque period (di Shino, 2003). There has also been study of ethnocentric aspects of national food (Attar, 1985, Billig 1995), and on the use of food and meals as a political tool in dictatorships (Binns, 1978: Gronow, 2003). Political satires based on research, such as Klaus Steffen's book (1999) on banquets under the regime of the former DDR in east Germany, show that politicised food can be a subject with many aspects.

Aim, research methods and empirics

This article will attempt to highlight some ethnological aspects of the political meal's function and how politicians as a group use meals in their daily work.

The aim is to discuss how ministers and permanent secretaries in Sweden today use the meal strategically and how it is chosen as an arena for political meetings.

The research methods used were qualitative in-depth interviews. The empirical material comprises ten interviews with ministers and permanent secretaries. The interviewees chosen were Swedish government ministers or permanent secretaries from the last 10 years who responded positively to an e-mail request to participate in this study. Six were currently incumbent, four were in office in the mid 1990s. They are all hereafter called politicians. The request to participate was e-mailed to 57 politicians, and most declined due to lack of time. The interviews took place between April 2003 and May 2004 using an interview guide with nine semi-structured and thematic questions (Kvale, 1997:121) on how politicians use food in their work. Interviews were between 15-30 minutes long, tape recorded, and later transcribed. Two interviews were conducted via e-mail.

The answers in the transcribed interviews were systematically coded using the scheme of chosen categories, focusing on the concepts and methods underlying how politicians use food and the meal situation in their day-to-day work (Polit & Hungler, 1995:520-1).

Background

Within the field of *political meal culture* there are studies of associations between food and ascribed national qualities (Appadurai, 1988; Verlegh, 2000). Food and the meal is an expression of the identity the individual identifies with or wants to be identified with, something that can be noticed today in actions performed by animal liberation groups, and also in political demands for boycotts of certain countries' products. Examples include boycotts of South African products in the 1980s against apartheid, or of French wines in the mid 90s during the atomic bomb tests in the south Pacific. Food which can be connected with regional or local places is proven to have a higher economic value than other food (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Hall & Sharples, 2003). Governments and authorities, especially within the EU, have been attentive to the economic potential in developing a special local or regional food culture (Cederman, 2001:17, Salomonsson 2001:24, 43, Jones & Jenkins 2002:115). Sweden chose to profile its regional food culture during its 6 month tenure as chair of the EU in spring 2001, the same process having been noticeable during Finland's tenure in autumn 1999 (Tellström, et al. 2003). A varied mix of food, raw products and dishes is an important part of the new European political project since it is regarded as a signal of prosperous economic development within the region, an important EU goal (EC Culture, 2000; Delanty, 1998). Politicians' personal interest in food, revealed by their publishing cookery or gastronomic travel books, is also a sign of the importance of food culture today (e.g. Kohl, 1996).

A political meal is a meal where several persons meet to discuss political issues, and is also an arena where political status can be expressed, often in a ritualised form where the meal is a necessary part of the ritual's expression (Moore, 1984:100).

Results

Planned political meal conversations

The character of a political meal is that it has a political purpose. The political discussion is always of superior importance to the food, however, the meal can be a key to reaching a desired political goal. At political meals the guests are never present as private individuals, but they can have personal conversations. As one of the politi-

cians interviewed said: *“You eat for a political purpose, not to enjoy yourself as you do with friends, and you are always on duty.”*

The interviewees used meals in different ways in their work, from the very well-planned meal to the less structured. They all agreed that the meal makes another type of conversation possible than that during a traditional political meeting. The meal creates an informal atmosphere where it is possible to have assumed discussions without preconceptions; it's easier to sound out opinion. The meal can function as an “ice-breaker” a way to approach difficult topics: *“The meal can be a good ‘starter’, a conversation piece to begin with before you start the political discussion”*. During a meal anything from horses to architecture or flowers to travel can be discussed and through informal conversation a mutual understanding is created and a personal relationship can be built: *“At a meal you can get signals on what is possible, and what isn't”*. During the meal the individual person is observable; personal manners are displayed (not putting elbows on the table etc), and how much at ease someone is with eating in public: *“This gives important information on what your guest's background is”*. The interviewees most appreciated those meals with as few formalities as possible, because at that type of meal the political agenda can be best addressed: *“It's good to talk one-to-one with a political colleague or business representative, because that provides an opportunity to really talk things through”*.

One politician said that he often combines meals with short one or half hour meetings with his international colleagues, and that the meeting continues during a lunch of the same duration. Both periods are filled with political discussion on different topics, and *“as host I choose when to discuss which question, the one suited best to the formal part, and the one more profitably discussed during the informal lunch”*. Another said that the formal part is more focused on political standpoints and questions of a technical nature, and during the meal the discussions follow a wider range, e.g. relations between Europe and the US. Sometimes when the formal meeting runs short of time, less controversial questions can be carried over from the official agenda to the informal meal: *“In the lunch talks more people can participate in the discussion without necessarily having formal knowledge of the issues discussed, and therefore unexpected or unorthodox remarks are made”*.

The meal can be an opportunity to introduce a completely new issue that is to be formally negotiated in the future, or provide room for further informal discussion of a question that isn't totally settled: *“During the meal it is possible to test issues or standpoints you may want to take on the political agenda in the future”*.

Different meals are used in different ways: *“Lunches are more for keeping in contact in relation to upcoming matters, dinners for the more long term outlook.... If the issues to be discussed are of a philosophical nature, the evening is best, since an evening meal has a better ambience than daytime meals, and this atmosphere can help in political negotiation”*.

The meal can also be an opportunity to get away from notetaking and: *“your thoughts are then allowed to be more free”*. During a meal it's also possible to take more time to think before answering a question, e.g. if you take a mouthful of food just as you are asked

a question, you must chew it properly before you can answer. This extra time can be very valuable, according to one interviewee, although at the same time, you have to be vigilant as to which questions arise at table, even though the guest usually more often than the host can afford the luxury of enjoying the food. During a meal it is also possible to say things that in another situation would have seemed very calculated: *"People should feel that they are among friends, and food and drink are of course something that can be used in this situation"*.

A meal is also a good place to get acquainted:

"Offering well-prepared food, presented on a beautifully laid table is an international and deeply rooted gesture of friendship. And a shared meal is also a symbol of respect that you can use to signal that, despite having opposite opinions, you would like to continue to discuss mutual problems".

The meal as a meeting place for making contact - extramural and intramural

The dinner table creates an intimacy where not only are facial expressions more easily observed, but also levels of interest for the topic discussed more easily judged, and thereby the will to solve a political problem. Lunches at which EU-ministers meet are meals where documents are beside the plates, working papers are by the napkin, and headsets for interpretation and: *"microphones are in the soup"*. At large EU-meetings it can be difficult to make eye contact with the others around the table. A round table with 8-10 places makes for good conversation, and gives room for more private talk, and a round table creates more lively and vital conversation than a long table.

Another important occasion for making contact is the political cocktail party or embassy reception. A little food and drink creates an arena for informal discussion. One interviewee said that: *"there are some political issues that are too small to arrange a special meeting for, but too big to be put aside. It can be suitable to just mention these questions during a cocktail party"*.

One of the interviewees called these events "strategic" rather than "political" and emphasised that he had a purpose in arranging them. The planning of the guest list, the food to be served and the subjects to be discussed are all of great importance. One interviewee said that he makes a list of 10-15 topics that he wants to discuss in advance of every political meal, and then chooses topics to suit the occasion during the meal. Politicians also use meals to thank other politicians, civil servants or business contracts for efforts made on their behalf, the meal being designed to reflect the amount of effort expended.

The equality and availability of employment across genders in Sweden often results in an absence of anyone to do housework or look after children in the daytime. Also,

since maids are seen as a politically incorrect luxury in Sweden, politicians often have to collect their children from day care themselves. As a consequence, the private home is not used as an arena for official or work-related entertaining. It has to a large extent been replaced by the lunch meeting.

The political meal can also take place on the political organisation's home ground, when it becomes an important indicator of how the political agenda should be handled. In an informal dinner speech a politician can underline which matters are important and which can be seen as unimportant. These meals can also act as a safety valve during a politically tense moment, when difficult political issues can be joked about, and points can be made in a low-key way. Internal political meals can also mark the start of projects, to encourage the staff, or to thank everybody for their efforts: *"But I can think that in Sweden we are too puritan, and that we don't allow ourselves to enjoy a meal; it shouldn't be too good, and it's not appropriate if it's too generous"*.

The Swedish government has a shared lunch four days a week. Every minister is not present on every day, but the meal creates a possibility to meet. One interviewee said that it is very good to have a standing occasion every day where both small and larger questions can be discussed. On the fifth day, ministers usually have lunch in their own ministries.

The meal as break in negotiations

Leaving the political negotiating table for a lunch table or a meal break can create room for testing new ideas. During EU-minister meetings there is often an informal agenda during the meal where political issues can be discussed in a more tentative way before they come up on the formal agenda. But a meal can be a problem if it comes at a sensitive moment in negotiations. An example is the meal planned during EU negotiations with 10 new member states in Copenhagen in December 2002. The banquet food was ready, but because negotiations were running late the ministers didn't want to be interrupted, and the banquet was therefore cancelled.

Sweden's EU-membership since 1995 has resulted in many more meetings with foreign colleagues compared with the time before the membership. The meetings are also shorter and more effective. The meals during these meetings can also be an occasion to conclude what has been discussed, and an opportunity to comment and reflect in an informal way:

"Before we from Sweden had understood how important the meals were to the commenting part of the EU-meetings, and as an opportunity for post-negotiation, we left right afterwards to get back in Sweden the same day. We took the plane down to Brussels in the morning, held the meeting during the day and then rushed back home in the evening. But we discovered that this wasn't good. It was important to stay during the dinners, not just to comment on what was said during the day and in the meeting, but also to decide what should be discussed during the next meeting. The dinner was also an occasion to resolve bilateral question between different states."

Ceremonial meals as a stage

The political meal can also be an occasion to introduce political guests to the host country's culture. During the Swedish EU-chairmanship in 2001 ministerial meals were used to present different cultural regions of Sweden. "*In this situation it was also important to show that Sweden was a gastronomically and culinarily interesting country*", said one interviewee who also underlined that the meal and its components can be used to give a representation of Sweden.

The ceremonial meal may also refer to political relations, but is not suitable for discussing political topics. The ceremonial meal's formal frame, with ceremonies, music and solemn declarations, in addition to the selection of guests from the upper ranks of the establishment, rather than the most politically influential, creates a situation where significant political discussion is seldom possible.

Many of the interviewees said that ceremonial banquets are exhausting. It is therefore common to limit the ceremonial meals during political two or three day visits as much as possible, and instead have informal meals where political issues can be discussed. A dinner buffet is preferred to a traditional three to five course dinner:

"My experience is that a Swedish 'smorgasbord' on a voyage through a beautiful Swedish archipelago is good start for several days of political negotiations to follow".

Seating at table an important political tool

The advantage of an informal meal is that the guests can be placed at the table according to need for discussion, rather than rank, according to one interviewee. The seating order at table is an important means of extracting maximum political benefit from the meal. It is important to achieve the right arrangement of people involved in solving a political issue. A buffet dinner with a freer choice of seating can affect the outcome of a political meeting: "*I don't host a meal if I can't choose the menu and the seating order. Both parts are important*".

The interest in food and meals varied among the interviewees. Some wanted to be involved in the detail planning in order to be a good host, while others said that they just wanted an overview of the event, and would accept what a catering firm or restaurant suggests. One said that he wanted to know what the menu is so that he can decide if it's equal to the importance of the meeting.

Politically correct and incorrect food

The political importance of the meal can be underlined by the choice of raw products of more or less highly perceived status. This is more common at the more ceremonial meals, with French cooking and French wine being of the highest status. There are aspects of protocol to consider, and the guests expect the meal to conform

to certain expectations, particularly in the case of ceremonial meals: *“It should have the right amount and mix of high-status raw products, techniques of preparation, and wines, because the meal is regarded as an official act”*. In Sweden it is possible to represent the highest political level by the use of some of the regional cuisine’s raw products, such as reindeer and cloudberries. The meal’s political importance can also be emphasised through the care the host gives to his guests, e.g. by serving a guest his favourite dish or beverage.

It is possible for friendships to develop within the political arena. When this happens, the demands of protocol can be set aside with a simple meal in the countryside, on a boat or at an intimate restaurant. But: *“The Swedes have an informal nature and underestimate the importance of formal protocol more commonly obtains in continental Europe, where the menu, how dishes are served and their status are more closely studied.”*

Some food and raw products are more politically delicate than others. Since 2003, neither Dutch veal or foie gras have been served at official Swedish government meals. The production methods of these products are against the Swedish political programme on animal husbandry. One interviewee said that at one dinner the host realised during drinks that Dutch veal was about to be served, and that since this was politically incorrect, the restaurant had to change the menu on the spot and serve Swedish beef instead. During the 1990’s when France conducted nuclear tests in the Pacific one politician boycotted French wines at official ministerial meals. A raw product can have an improper origin, come from an improper country or region, or have been improperly manufactured.

Some food can be appropriate for one guest but inappropriate for another: *“Lobster could be an excellent choice when meeting business executives to develop business connections, but totally incorrect when you meet representatives of abused women or refugees”*.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages during the political meal is moderate, and many of the interviewee said that the political agenda is too arduous, with too much to discuss: *“Alcohol is not used as a means to get approval for a political suggestion”*.

Political breakfast meetings: a new trend

Breakfast is less frequently used in political contact making, although some politicians with a full diary do meet contacts at breakfast meetings. Breakfast meetings are more used for politicians to meet the press, with the journalists being served coffee and an open sandwich. Political breakfast meetings with the press are also a way of signalling that the subjects presented are ideas being floated, rather than government policies of high importance. *“Breakfast also catches people when they’re a little more awake”*.

The political meal in a new millennium

European political development has increased the speed of meals, and less time is used to analyse problems than was common during the longer meals of the past:

“When you meet today you don’t start from scratch as you did 30 years ago. You have already got political drafts on telephone, telefax and e-mail, and you only meet person-to-person when it’s really necessary”. A faster tempo can also be noted in the more frequent practice of serving food onto the plate directly in the kitchen. The meals are also lighter, have fewer dishes and more frequently feature fish, chicken and vegetables. It is not unusual for a three course lunch to be eaten in 45 minutes, and a ceremonial five course dinner in two and half hours.

The political meal’s venue has moved away from banqueting halls to new sites such as museums or art galleries, and even sometimes alpine lodges or mines.

The meal is today more important than it used to be, and is an important way of making political contacts, one of the interviewees said, and: *“In New York you could never be an effective UN-ambassador if you did not go to or arrange luncheons. It is there where the important discussions take place in an informal and explicit way, compared with what is said in the formal meetings before or after the lunch”.*

Discussions and conclusions

The meal is an important part of political life and is used in different ways. Its function is often seen as more important than its content. The meal functions as an arena for displaying relations and the importance the host places on those relations. The host can show regard for his guests and express gestures of friendship through his choice of food and, compared to the formal political meeting, where standpoints are more precise, during a meal a politician can more easily present ideas and probe what possibilities an issue may hold.

During a meal a politician can highlight questions too unimportant to merit a formal meeting, but are nonetheless too important to be passed over. Political lunches, dinners and cocktail parties are a way to make informal contacts and build alliances. The meal can also be a means to use all available working hours more effectively; it is often possible to squeeze in an extra meeting over lunch or dinner. During a meal two political factions who haven’t previously met personally can get acquainted, and get to know each other’s ways of expressing their thoughts. Less fraught topics than those scheduled for the formal political meeting can be discussed. The meal can act as a “warm up exercise” for the political meeting. The courses and the food culture they represent can be a conversation piece and introduction for the political discussions that follow the meal.

The meal can render conflicts less dramatic and decrease tensions; since a meal is something shared with a friend. Even though two politicians may disagree over an issue, through a shared meal they can show mutual respect and a willingness to continue negotiations. Difficult topics can be transferred from the meeting to the meal

that follows to continue discussion in a new environment and a less tense situation. The meal can also act as a seal to conclude a political discussion or treaty.

The food and dishes' value in a political meal can be central, or of less importance. Dishes can be chosen to represent regions in the country or values important to the host's country. Including dishes of a too low a status can disturb a political relation. The interviewees said that the political workload during the last decades has become more intense, especially since Sweden joined the EU in 1995. Shortage of time has meant that lunches and dinners are more often used for formal political negotiations and discussions. This has decreased the meal's representational function. Previously, it was not unusual to have politically representational dinners in the politicians' homes, but the "professionalisation" of politics has created a sharper border between home and work in Sweden.

The political meal is an arena where cultural values can be expressed and discussed, where new political directions can be chosen, but also a situation where current values that are of undisputable importance can be shown. Through the choosing of raw products and dishes, the meal's political importance can be signalled, and the importance of the alliance between the host and guest made clear.

The political meal in itself creates a different arena for the traditional political meeting. The liquids in the glasses, food on the plate and the atmosphere in the room can support a creative discussion and put old negotiating positions in a new light. Unusual food or food from an unknown food culture can stimulate uncontroversial conversation to lead onto the difficult and core political questions to be discussed. The food and dishes chosen mark the importance of the political relation (Douglas, 1984:177), and when two politicians first become acquainted they can step aside from the political protocol, and a host can convey high esteem for his guests through high-value food culture.

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Richard Tellström

Odsjek za ugostiteljska i kulinarska
umijeća, Sveučilište Örebro,
S-712 60 Grythyttan, Švedska
richard.tellstrom@telia.com

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Kultura prehrane u suvremenoj europskoj politici: u potrazi za optimalnom ravnotežom hrane i političkih faktora

Sastanci s kolegama političarima, poslovnim ljudima i predstavnicima nevladinih udruga, te rasprave o novim oblicima političkog djelovanja predstavljaju va žan dio rada suvremenog europskog političara. Mnogi od tih sastanaka odvijaju se uz jelo. Katkad su ceremonijalni, a često neformalni. Hrana koja se u tim prigodama poslužuje obično se pomno odabire kako bi podržala političku strategiju sastanka. Svakodnevni obroci političara, koji imaju određenu funkciju, dosad su slabo zanimali istraživače etnološke tradicije. Zato je namjera ovog rada analizirati kako skupine političara u suvremenoj Švedskoj koriste obroke u svakodnevnom radu, kako odabiru hranu s obzirom na svrhu sastanka i koju ulogu daju hrani u političkim raspravama i pregovorima.

U istraživanju je korištena metoda djelomično strukturiranih intervjua sa švedskim političarima: ministrima i stalnim tajnicima. Analiza je pokazala da neki ministri i tajnici koriste hranu kao političko sredstvo, te da su u zamjetnoj prednosti oni koji se hranom služe u strateške svrhe. Zanimanje političara za hranu može se promatrati kao odraz postmodernističkog društva koje zanima hrana i kultura prehrane.

Ključne riječi: politička jela, politički obroci, ministri, stalni tajnici, Švedska

Uvod

Proučavanje kulture hrane važno je i dobro utemeljeno područje unutar etnologije. Novi vidovi te teme, poput proučavanja tijela, roda, etničnosti, turizma i drugog, postali su zanimljivi posljednjih desetljeća (Lysaght, 1998).

Ipak, službeni ručkovi, uključujući način posluživanja jela i obroke kao statusne simbole, spadaju u slabo istraženo područje etnologije. Etnološka istraživanja usmjerena su prema društvenoj periferiji, selu ili subkulturnim skupinama, a rijetko prema društvenom centru ili političarima i njihovoj upotrebi i konstrukciji kulture. Političari su obično predmet istraživanja u okviru političkih znanosti. Unutar tog područja, istraživanja su prehrane rijetka, ali se mogu naći u studijama o političkim sastancima gdje se navode kao službeni ručkovi ili večere (Baughman, 1959).

Unutar proučavanja klasične starine postoje istraživanja o važnosti blagovaonice kao političke arene (Malmberg, 2003) i o ukrašavanju stolova za svečana politička zbivanja u doba baroka (di Shino, 2003). Također postoje studije o etnocentričnom vidu nacionalne prehrane (Attar, 1985; Billig, 1995), te o upotrebi hrane i obroka kao političkog oružja u diktaturama (Binns, 1978; Gronoe, 2003). Političke satire temeljene na istraživanjima, poput knjige Klausea Steffena (1999) o banketima pod bivšim istočnonjemačkim režimom, pokazuju da se politiziranost hrane može istraživati s brojnih aspekata.

Cilj, metode i praksa istraživanja

U ovom će se radu istaknuti neki etnološki vidovi funkcije službenih ručkova i načini na koje političari kao skupina koriste jelo u svome svakodnevnom radu. Cilj je istraživanja raspraviti kako ministri i stalni tajnici u suvremenoj Švedskoj strateški koriste jelo i kako ga odabiru kao arenu za političke sastanke.

U istraživanju je korištena metoda kvalitativnog dubinskog intervjua. Prikupljena građa obuhvaća deset intervjua s ministrima i stalnim tajnicima koji su te dužnosti obnašali zadnjih deset godina, a odazvali su se molbi da sudjeluju u istraživanju. Od njih deset, šestoro je još uvijek na dužnosti, a četvoro su te dužnosti obnašali sredinom 1990-ih. U nastavku, nazivat ćemo ih političarima. Molba za suradnju poslana je elektroničkom poštom pedeset i sedmorici političara, od kojih je većina odbila sudjelovanje zbog nedostatka vremena. Intervjui su obavljeni između travnja 2003. i svibnja 2004. pomoću devet djelomično strukturiranih i tematskih pitanja (Kvale, 1997:121) o upotrebi hrane u radu političara. Intervjui su trajali između petnaest i trideset minuta, zvučno su snimani i potom zapisani. Dva su intervjua vođena putem elektroničke pošte.

Odgovori u transkribiranim intervjuima sustavno su kodirani pomoću sheme odabranih kategorija, s posebnim osvrtom na pojmove i metode na kojima se temelje načini kako političari koriste hranu i situacije uz jelo u svakodnevnom radu (Polit & Hungler, 1995:520-1).

Pozadina

Na području *kulture službenih ručkova/večera* postoje studije o povezanosti hrane i nacionalnih vrijednosti koje joj se pripisuju (Appadurai, 1988; Verlegh, 2000). Hrana i jelo izraz su identiteta s kojim se pojedinac identificira ili želi identificirati, kao što se to danas može zamijetiti u akcijama skupina koje se zalažu za prava životinja ili u bojkotima proizvoda određenih zemalja. Među takve primjere spada i bojkot proizvoda iz Južne Afrike u 1980-ima u znak osude aparthejda ili bojkot francuskih vina sredinom 1990-ih zbog testiranja atomske bombe u južnom Pacifiku. Hrana koja se može povezati s regijom ili lokalitetom ima dokazano višu ekonomsku vrijednost (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Hall & Sharples, 2003). Vlade i vladina tijela, osobito unutar Europske unije, obraćaju veliku pažnju ekonomskom potencijalu koji leži u razvoju posebnosti lokalne ili regionalne kulture prehrane (Cederman, 2001:17; Salomonsson, 2001:24, 43; Jones & Jenkins, 2002:115). Švedska je odlučila profilirati svoju regionalnu kulturu hrane tijekom svoga šestomjesečnog predsjedanja Europskom unijom u proljeće 2001., što je Finska već učinila tijekom svog predsjedanja u jesen 1999. (Tellström et al., 2003). Raznolika mješavina hrane, namirnica i jela važan je dio političkog projekta nove Europe i smatra se znakom prosperitetna ekonomskog razvoja unutar regije, što je jedan od glavnih ciljeva Europske unije (EC Culture, 2000; Delanty, 1998). Osobno zanimanje političara za hranu, vidljivo u kuharicama ili gastronomskim putopisima koje objavljuju, također svjedoči o važnosti kulture hrane u suvremenom svijetu (npr., Kohl, 1996).

U službene obroke spadaju ručkovi, večere i ostali obroci oko kojih se sastaje više osoba da bi raspravile neku političku temu. Istodobno, takvi obroci predstavljaju arenu za izražavanje političkog statusa, često u ritualnom obliku, pri čemu je hrana nužni dio ritualnog izraza (Moore, 1984:100).

Rezultati

Planirani politički razgovori uz jelo

Obilježje je političkog obroka da ima političku svrhu. Iako je politička rasprava uvijek važnija od hrane, jelo može biti ključ za dosizanje željena političkog cilja. Gosti na službenim ručkovima i večerama nikad nisu prisutni kao privatne osobe, iako mogu

voditi i osobne razgovore. Kao što je rekao jedan intervjuirani političar: *“Jedete zbog politike, a ne da biste uživali kao što to činite s prijateljima; zapravo ste stalno na dužnosti.”*

Intervjuirane osobe koriste jelo na različite načine u svom radu, od pomno planiranih pa sve do manje organiziranih obroka. Svi se slažu da je uz jelo moguća druga vrsta razgovora od one koja se vodi na uobičajenu političkom sastanku. Jelo stvara neformalno ozračje u kojem je moguće raspravljati bez unaprijed donešenih zaključaka; lakše je izraziti mišljenje. Jelo može imati funkciju “razbijanja leda” kod započinjanja razgovora o teškim temama (*“Jelo može biti dobar ‘pokretač’, uvodni razgovorni dio prije početka političke rasprave.”*). Tijekom jela može se raspravljati o svemu, od konja do arhitekture, od cvijeća do putovanja, a kroz neformalni razgovor može se stvoriti međusobno razumijevanje i graditi osobni odnos (*“Uz jelo možete dobiti signale o onome što je moguće, a što nije.”*). Tijekom jela pojedinac pokazuje svoju osobnost; do izražaja dolaze osobne manire (stavljaju li se laktovi na stol i sl.), ali i činjenica u kojoj je mjeri nekome ugodno jesti u javnosti (*“To pruža važne informacije o okruženju iz kojeg dolazi vaš gost.”*). Ispitanici najviše cijene jela kod kojih ima što manje formalnosti, jer se politička pitanja mogu najbolje raspraviti upravo u takvim prigodama (*“Dobro je izravno razgovarati s kolegom političarom ili poslovnim partnerom, jer to pruža mogućnost da se stvari zaista rasprave.”*).

Jedan je političar izjavio da često održava kratke, jednosatne ili polusatne sastanke sa svojim inozemnim kolegama, koji se nastavljaju tijekom ručka u jednakom trajanju. Oba dijela takvih sastanaka ispunjena su raspravama o različitim političkim temama, a *“budući da sam domaćin, ja određujem kada će se o nekom pitanju raspravljati, odnosno je li primjerenije o njemu raspravljati u formalnom dijelu ili uz neformalni ručak.”* Drugi je ispitanik rekao da je formalni dio više usmjeren na politička stajališta i pitanja tehničke prirode, a da tijekom ručka ili večere slijedi rasprava o temama šireg opsega, poput odnosa između Europe i SAD-a. Ponekad se, ako formalni dio traje prekratko, manje kontroverzna pitanja raspravljaju uz neformalni ručak (*“U razgovorima za vrijeme ručka može sudjelovati više ljudi koji ne moraju nužno poznavati temu o kojoj se raspravlja, pa se tako čuju i neočekivane i neortodoksne primjedbe.”*).

Jelo može biti prigoda za uvođenje potpuno novih tema o kojima će se formalno pregovarati u budućnosti ili može otvoriti prostor za daljnje neformalne rasprave o pitanjima koja nisu raspravljena do kraja (*“Tijekom jela mogu se testirati pitanja ili stajališta koja ćete možda staviti na neki budući politički dnevni red.”*).

Ručkovi odnosno večere koriste se u različite svrhe (*“Ručkovi više služe za održavanje kontakata vezanih uz neposredno aktualna pitanja, a večere za dugoročnije planove ... Ako je tema o kojoj će se raspravljati filozofske naravi, bolja je večera, jer ona ima bolje ozračje od dnevnog obroka, a to ozračje može pomoći u političkim pregovorima.”*)

Jelo može biti i mogućnost bijega od bilježenja razgovora, pa se tako *“može mislima dati veća sloboda”*. Tijekom jela također ima više vremena za razmišljanje prije davanja odgovora, npr., ako ste uzeli zalogaj upravo kad vam je postavljeno neko pitanje, morate ga prožvakati prije nego što odgovorite. Prema jednom ispitaniku, to dodatno vrijeme može biti vrlo dragocjeno, no istodobno morate pratiti koja se još pitanja

postavljaju pri stolu. Unatoč tomu, gost si mnogo češće nego domaćin može priuštiti luksuz uživanja u hrani. Tijekom jela također je moguće reći stvari koje bi u drugoj situaciji djelovale vrlo proračunato (*“Ljudi trebaju osjetiti da su među prijateljima, a tome, naravno, pridonose hrana i piće.”*)

Jelo je, isto tako, dobra prigoda za upoznavanje: *“Nudenje ukusno pripremljene hrane poslužene na lijepo uređenom stolu međunarodna je i duboko ukorijenjena gesta prijateljstva. Podijeliti s nekim obrok također je simbol poštovanja kojim možete istaknuti da, unatoč različitim mišljenjima, želite nastaviti raspravu o zajedničkim problemima.”*

Jelo kao mjesto susreta i stvaranja kontakata

Stol za blagovanje stvara intimnost u kojoj se mnogo lakše uočavaju izrazi lica, ali i procjenjuje razina zanimanja za temu o kojoj se raspravlja, a time i za rješavanje političkih problema. Na ručkovima na kojima se susreću ministri Europske unije dokumenti stoje uz tanjure, radni papiri uz ubruse, a slušalice za prevodenje i *“mikrofonu su u juhi”*. Na sastancima Europske unije kojima nazoči više sudionika teško je uspostaviti prisniji kontakt sa svima prisutnima za stolom. Za okruglim stolom s 8-10 mjesta moći će se voditi bolji, pa čak i privatniji, razgovor, te stvoriti življa atmosfera za raspravu negoli za dugačkim stolom.

Službeni kokteli ili primanja u veleposlanstvima još su jedna važna prigoda za stvaranje kontakata. Uz nešto hrane i pića stvara se poprište za neformalne rasprave. Jedan od ispitanika kaže da *“postoje neke političke teme koje nisu dovoljno važne da bi se zbog njih organizirali posebni sastanci, ali ih se ne smije zanemariti. Dovoljno ih je samo spomenuti na koktelu.”*

Jedan od ispitanika nazvao je takva zbivanja *strateškima*, a ne *političkima*, naglasivši da ih je organizirao sa sasvim jasnom svrhom. Sastavljanje popisa gostiju, odabir hrane koja će biti poslužena, utvrđivanje tema o kojima će se raspravljati - sve je to od velike važnosti. Jedan je od ispitanika rekao da prije svakoga službenog obroka sastavlja popis od deset do petnaest tema koje želi raspraviti. Njihov će redosljed ovisiti o situaciji tijekom jela. Političari također koriste hranu i u znak zahvale drugim političarima, javnim službenicima ili poslovnim partnerima za uložene napore, pri čemu se jelo bira tako da odražava količinu njihova uloženog napora.

Spolna ravnopravnost pri zapošljavanju i dostupnost posla oboma spolovima u Švedskoj često su razlog zbog kojeg je nemoguće naći osobu za kućanske poslove ili čuvanje djece tijekom dana. Osim toga, otkad se u Švedskoj dadilje smatraju politički nekorektnim luksuzom, političari često moraju sami otići po svoju djecu u vrtić. Zbog toga se u vlastitu domu ne upriličuju službeni ili poslovni susreti. Tu su ulogu velikim dijelom preuzeli službeni ručkovi ili večere.

Službeni se obrok može odvijati i unutar same političke organizacije, kada postaje važnim indikatorom načina na koji treba pristupiti aktualnim političkim pitanjima. U

govoru pri neformalnom ručku, političar može razlučiti važne od nevažnih stvari. Ti obroci također mogu poslužiti kao sigurnosni ventil u politički napetim trenucima, jer pružaju prigodu za šalu na račun složenih političkih tema i diskretnije iznošenje stavova. Interni službeni ručkovi ili večere mogu također označiti početak nekog projekta, ohrabriti zaposlenike ili predstavljati zahvalu za uloženi trud (*“Ali, mislim da smo mi Švedani preveliki puritanci i da si ne dopuštamo uživanje u jelu: ono ne bi trebalo biti predobro, a preobilno se smatra neprimjerenim.”*).

Švedska Vlada sastaje se na zajedničkom ručku četiri dana u tjednu. Iako nisu svaki puta prisutni svi ministri, ti ručkovi imaju karakter sastanka. Jedan je od ispitanika rekao da je vrlo dobro imati stalnu, svakodnevnu prigodu za raspravu o većim i manjim pitanjima. Petog dana ministri obično ručaju u svojim ministarstvima.

Jelo kao predah u pregovorima

Napuštanje pregovaračkog stola i sjedanje za stol za objedovanje može stvoriti prostor za provjeru novih ideja. Tijekom sastanaka ministara Europske unije obično postoji neformalni dnevni red tijekom ručka, gdje se politička pitanja provizorno raspravljaju prije nego što dospiju na formalni dnevni red. No, ručak može biti problem ako se planira u osjetljivom trenutku pregovora. Takav je primjer ručak planiran tijekom pregovora Europske unije s deset novih članica u Kopenhagenu u prosincu 2002. S obzirom da su pregovori potrajali, ministri nisu željeli da ih se prekida pa je banket otkazan.

Članstvo Švedske u Europskoj Uniji od 1995. rezultiralo je većim brojem sastanaka sa stranim kolegama u usporedbi s razdobljem prije pristupa Uniji. Sastanci su također kraći i učinkovitiji. Obroci tijekom tih sastanaka također mogu biti prigoda za zaključke prethodnih rasprava, kao i za komentare i neformalne osvrte (*“Prije, dok mi Švedani još nismo shvaćali kolika je uloga jela u neformalnom dijelu sastanaka Europske unije i koliko je ono važno kao prilika za naknadne pregovore, nastojali smo se vratiti u Švedsku isti dan. Odletjeli bismo u Bruxelles ujutro, održali sastanak tijekom dana i žurno se vratili navečer kući. Ali otkrili smo da to nije dobro. Bilo je važno ostati na večeri, ne samo da bi se komentiralo ono što je rečeno tijekom dana i na sastanku, već da bi se i odlučilo što treba raspraviti na sljedećem sastanku. Ručak je bio i prilika za rješavanje bilateralnih pitanja između dviju država.”*).

Ceremonijalni banketi kao pozornica

Službeni obroci mogu također biti prigoda za upoznavanje gosta s domaćom kulturom. Tijekom švedskog predsjedanja Europskoj uniji 2001., ministarski su ručkovi korišteni za prezentaciju različitih kulturnih regija u Švedskoj. *“U toj je situaciji također bilo važno prikazati Švedsku kao gastronomski i kulinarski zanimljivu zemlju,”* rekao je jedan od ispitanika, istaknuvši da hrana sa svojim sastojcima može prezentirati Švedsku.

Ceremonijalni ručkovi ili večere mogu također biti vezani uz političke odnose, ali nisu primjereni za raspravu o političkim temama. Formalni okvir ceremonijalnih ručkova ili večera, s popratnim protokolom, glazbom i svečanim izjavama, uz goste koji su odabrani iz elitnih, a ne nužno iz politički najutjecajnijih krugova, stvara situaciju gdje je rijetko moguća značajna politička rasprava.

Mnogi su ispitanici izjavili da su ceremonijalni banketi iscrpljujući. Zato se za vrijeme političkih posjeta koji traju dva do tri dana ceremonijalni banketi obično nastoje svesti na minimum, a umjesto njih organiziraju se neformalni obroci uz koje se mogu raspravljati političke teme. Umjesto tradicionalne večere, prednost se daje “švedskom stolu” s nizom posluženih jela (*“Moje je iskustvo da je švedski ‘smorgasbord’¹ na proputovanju kroz predivni švedski arhipelag dobar početak za nekoliko dana političkih pregovora.”*).

Raspored sjedenja za stolom kao važno političko oružje

Prema jednom ispitaniku, prednost je neformalnog obroka ta da gosti mogu biti smješteni za stolom prema potrebama rasprave, a ne prema statusu. Raspored sjedenja za stolom važno je sredstvo izvlačenja maksimalne političke koristi iz obroka. Važno je postići pravi raspored ljudi uključenih u rješavanje političkih problema. Večera u obliku „švedskog stola“ sa slobodnijim izborom sjedenja može utjecati na ishod političkog sastanka (*“Ne priređujem ručak ili večeru ako ne mogu odabrati jelovnik i raspored sjedenja. Oboje je važno.”*).

Ispitanici su pokazali različito zanimanje za hranu i obroke. Neki žele biti uključeni u sve pojedinosti planiranja da bi bili dobri domaćini, dok su drugi izjavili da žele samo imati pregled nad zbivanjem i da bi prihvatili što restoran ili tvrtka za *catering* predlože. Jedan je rekao da želi znati kakav je jelovnik, jer tada može odlučiti odgovara li on važnosti sastanka.

Politički korektna i nekorektna hrana

Politička važnost hrane može se naglasiti odabirom sastojaka manje ili više naglašenog statusa. To je uobičajenije kod jela naglašenijeg ceremonijalnog karaktera, pri čemu francuska kuhinja i francuska vina imaju najviši status. Potrebno je poštivati neke vidove protokola, a gosti očekuju da hrana ispunjava određena očekivanja, osobito u slučaju ceremonijalnih jela (*“Trebalo bi poslužiti pravu količinu i omjer sastojaka, odabrati tehnike pripreme i vina visokog statusa, jer se jelo smatra službenim činom.”*). U Švedskoj je moguće izraziti najvišu političku razinu korištenjem nekih sastojaka regionalne kuhinje, poput sobovine ili *hjortona*.² Politička važnost obroka može se naglasiti i pažnjom koju domaćin poklanja gostu, npr., poslužujući mu omiljeno jelo ili piće.

¹ „Švedski stol“ (nap. prev.).

² *Rubus chamaemorus*, biljka srodna kupini koja raste na sjeveru Europe; engleski cloudberries (nap. prev.).

U političkoj areni mogu se razviti i prijateljstva. Kad se to dogodi, zahtjevi se protokola mogu zaobići jednostavnim jelom na selu, na brodu ili u intimnom restoranu. Ali, “Švedani su neformalni i podcjenjuju ulogu koju formalni protokol obično ima u kontinentalnoj Europi, gdje se jelovnik, način posluživanja jela i njihov status pomnije proučavaju.”

Neka jela i namirnice politički su delikatniji od drugih. Od 2003. na službenim ručkovima i večerama švedske vlade ne poslužuju se ni nizozemska teletina niti gušćja jetra. Načini proizvodnje tih jela protivni su švedskom političkom programu uzgoja životinja. Jedan od ispitanika rekao je da je na jednoj večeri domaćin kod posluživanja pića saznao da će se služiti teletina. Budući da je to politički nekorektno, restoran je morao promijeniti jelovnik i poslužiti švedsku govedinu. Tijekom devedesetih, kad je Francuska obavljala nuklearne pokuse na Pacifiku, jedan je političar bojkotirao francuska vina na službenim ministarskim ručkovima. Jela mogu imati neprikladno porijeklo, mogu dolaziti iz nepoćudne zemlje ili regije ili mogu biti neprimjereno priređena.

Neka jela mogu biti prihvatljiva jednom, a neprihvatljiva drugom gostu (“*Jastog može biti vrhunski izbor kada se na sastanku poslovnih direktora razvijaju poslovne veze, ali potpuno neprimjeren na sastanku s predstavnicima zlostavljanih žena ili izbjeglica.*”).

Alkoholna se pića tijekom političkih ručkova konzumiraju umjereno, a mnogi su ispitanici izjavili da je politički dnevni red prenaporan i sadrži previše tema za raspravu (“*Alkohol se ne koristi kao sredstvo da se postigne prihvaćanje političkih prijedloga.*”).

Politički susreti za doručkom: novi trend

Doručak se rjeđe koristi u stvaranju političkih kontakata, premda neki političari s punim dnevnim rasporedom koriste doručke za sastanke. Političari češće koriste doručak za susrete s predstavnicima medija, pri čemu se novinarima poslužuje kava i sendvič. Službeni je doručak s novinarima i način signaliziranja da se kod predstavljenih tema radi o idejama koje se puštaju u javnost, a ne o pitanjima od velike važnosti za politiku vlade (“*Doručak često ulovi ljude dok su malo budniji.*”).

Službeni obroci u novom mileniju

Europski politički razvoj je smanjio trajanje obroka, tako da se manje vremena troši na analiziranje problema nego što je bilo uobičajeno tijekom duljih obroka u prošlosti (“*U današnjim susretima ne počinjete od nule kao prije trideset godina. Nacrti političkih ideja već se primaju telefonom, telefaksom ili elektroničkom poštom, a osobni susreti dogovaraju samo kad je to zaista neophodno.*”). Brži tempo se također može uočiti u sve češćoj praksi posluživanja hrane na tanjure već u kuhinji. Jela su također lakša, obrok se sastoji od manje uzastopnih jela, a sve češće je na jelovniku riba, piletina i povrće. Nije neuobičajeno da ručak od tri jela završi za četrdeset i pet minuta, a ceremonijalni ručak od pet jela za dva i po sata.

Ručkovi i večere preselili su se iz dvorana za bankete na nova mjesta kao što su muzeji ili galerije, pa čak i planinarski domovi ili rudnici.

Jelo danas ima značajniju ulogu nego prije i važan je način stvaranja političkih kontakata, rekao je jedan od ispitanika (*“U New Yorku nikad ne biste mogli biti učinkovit veleposlanik UN-a ako ne organizirate i ne odlazite na ručkove. Na ručkovima se važne rasprave vode na neformalan i eksplicitan način, za razliku od onog što je rečeno na formalnim sastancima prije ili poslije ručka.”*).

Rasprava i zaključak

Jelo je važan dio političkog života i koristi se na različite načine. Njegova funkcija često se smatra važnijom od sadržaja. Jelo funkcionira kao arena za iskazivanja odnosa i važnosti koje domaćin pripisuje tim odnosima. Domaćin može pokazati poštovanje prema gostu i učiniti prijateljsku gestu izborom hrane. Za razliku od formalnih političkih sastanaka gdje se stanovišta preciznije izražavaju, tijekom jela političar može puno lakše predstaviti ideje i ispitati mogućnosti.

Uz jelo, političar može naglasiti pitanja koja nisu dovoljno važna za formalni sastanak, ali ipak prevažna da bi se zanemarila. Službeni ručkovi, večere i kokteli put su k stvaranju neformalnih kontakata i sklapanju saveza. Jelo može biti i način da se korisnije upotrijebe svi radni sati; često je moguće ubaciti dodatni sastanak tijekom ručka ili večere. Dvije političke frakcije koje se prethodno nisu osobno susrele mogu se uz jelo bolje upoznati i bolje doživjeti načine kako druga strana izražava ideje. U takvim prigodama moguće je raspraviti manje teške teme od onih zapisanih u rasporedu formalnoga političkog sastanka. Jelo može poslužiti kao “zagrijavanje” za politički sastanak. Jela i kultura prehrane koju ona predstavljaju mogu biti predmetom konverzacije i poslužiti kao uvod u političke rasprave koje slijede nakon jela.

Jelo može umanjiti dramatičnost konflikta i smanjiti tenzije; jer jelo je nešto što se dijeli s prijateljem. Premda dva političara mogu imati različita mišljenja o nekoj temi, zajedničkim ručkom mogu iskazati međusobno poštovanje i dobru volju da nastave pregovore. Problematične se teme mogu prenijeti sa sastanka na ručak, na kojem se rasprava nastavlja u novom okruženju i u manje napetoj situaciji. Jelo može poslužiti i kao zaključak političke rasprave ili dogovora.

Hrana i jela na službenom ručku mogu imati središnju, ali i sporednu ulogu. Jela mogu biti odabrana tako da predstavljaju pojedine regije ili vrijednosti važne za zemlju domaćina. Odabir jela preniskog statusa može poremetiti političke odnose. Ispitanici kažu da se količina političkog posla povećala tijekom zadnjeg desetljeća, osobito otkad je Švedska 1995. pristupila Europskoj uniji. Ograničeno vrijeme značilo je da se ručkovi i večere češće koriste za formalne političke pregovore i razgovore, što je smanjilo reprezentativnu funkciju jela. Nije bilo neobično da se politički repre-

zentativne večere održavaju u domu političara, no „profesionalizacijom“ politike u Švedskoj je povučena oštrija granica između doma i rada.

Službeni su obroci arene u kojima se mogu izraziti i raspraviti kulturne vrijednosti, odabrati novi politički smjerovi, ali također i situacije u kojima se mogu pokazati postojeće vrijednosti od nedvojbene važnosti. Odabir namirnica i jela može signalizirati političku važnost obroka i istaknuti važnost savezništva domaćina i gosta.

Političko jelo samo po sebi predstavlja drugačiju arenu za tradicionalni politički sastanak. Piće u čašama, hrana na pladnju i atmosfera u prostoriji mogu podržati kreativnu raspravu i pokazati stare pregovaračke pozicije u novom svjetlu. Neobična jela ili jela iz nepoznatih kultura mogu stimulirati nekontroverzne razgovore i dovesti do rasprave o problematičnim i ključnim pitanjima. Odabrana jela i pića izražavaju važnost političkih odnosa (Douglas, 1984:177). Kad se dva političara jednom upoznaju, oni mogu odstupiti od političkog protokola, a domaćin može iskazati svoje poštovanje prema gostu putem visokovrijedne kulture hrane.

Prevela Sanja Novak