

# Modeling Culinary Value

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**Abstract.** Culinary products have culinary value. That is, they have value *qua* culinary products. However, what is the nature of culinary value and what elements determine it? In the light of the central and universal role that culinary products play in our lives, offering a philosophical analysis of culinary value is a matter of interest. This paper attempts to do just this. It develops three different possible models of culinary value, two rather restricted ones and a third more encompassing one, rejects the first two, and defends the third one.

**Keywords:** Culinary Value, Hedonic Feelings, Cognitive Penetration, Second-Order Value.

## Introduction

The culinary domain is one of values. To wit, a culinary product (*i.e.*, anything that can be eaten or drunk<sup>1</sup>) can be deemed, *e.g.*, to taste good, be healthy, be authentic, be creative or innovative, be harm-free, be sustainable, or even nostalgia-inducing. These examples of purported values a culinary product can bear are of different kinds. Some of them are sensory (*e.g.*, tasty), some of them are health-related (*e.g.*, healthy), some of them are more aesthetic (*e.g.*, creative), some of them are cultural (*e.g.*, authentic), some other bear on the ethical (*e.g.*, harm-free) and the political (*e.g.*, locally sourced) while some of them are merely psychological (*e.g.*, nostalgia). This diversity of values culinary products can bear raises the following general question: How do these different kinds of values relate to culinary products *qua* culinary products? In other words, which of these values culinary products can bear are constitutive ones and which are merely adventitious?

This paper addresses this question by exploring three different culinary value models, rejecting the first two and endorsing the third. The structure of the paper is the following. In the first section, the preliminary distinction between constitutive and adventitious values is introduced. In the second section, a first model of culinary value, the Hedonic Model, is examined and rejected. It is replaced, in the third section, by a second model, the Cognitively Enriched Model. In the fourth section, a challenge is mounted against this second model while the fifth section develops and defends against some objections a third option, the Encompassing Model.

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<sup>1</sup> As pointed out by an anonymous referee, my use of the term “culinary” goes beyond a more standard one that covers a sub-set of what can be eaten or drunk, namely what has undergone culinary preparation or kitchen work of some sort. However, if indeed non-standard, I think my use can none the less be defended. On the one hand, the notion of “culinary preparation” is rather vague. As a result, I find it hard to establish in a non-arbitrary way a threshold in our dealing with ingredients beyond which it would count as “culinary preparation”. For instance, someone eating wild blackberries on a hike would have to, at least, identify, select, and pick them. Why wouldn’t that count as a form of culinary preparation, if only minimal? On the other hand, I contend that some ingredients very minimally prepared (*e.g.*, just picked, delivered, and platted) but served in certain contexts (*e.g.*, in a high-end restaurant) would count as culinary products.

## 1. Constitutive and Adventitious Values

The question tackled in this paper is the following. Which of the valuable features a culinary product can possess can determine its value as a culinary product, not as something else? This question presupposes a distinction between two kinds of values a culinary product can bear, some that pertain to its evaluation as a culinary product and some that pertain to its evaluation as something else. Generalizing, for any item  $i$  of a kind  $K$  that bears a set of values  $S$ , we can distinguish between two kinds of values within  $S$ : a) constitutive values and b) adventitious values. A value  $v$  of an item  $i$  of kind  $K$  counts as a constitutive *iff*  $v$  is a value that bears on the evaluation of  $i$  *qua*  $K$ . On the other hand, a value  $v$  of an item  $i$  counts as adventitious *iff*  $v$  is a value that does not bear on the evaluation of  $i$  *qua*  $K$ .

Here is a standard and hopefully not too controversial example. Works of art can possess different kinds of values, some being constitutive, some being merely adventitious. The artistic value of an artwork (however one wishes to conceive of it<sup>2</sup>) counts as constitutive. But artworks can also bear investment value, and even if there can be some causal relation between the artistic value of a work and its investment value, it is, admittedly, not the case that the investment value of an artwork is constitutive of its value *qua* artwork.

Generalizing from this example, for any kind of thing, we can ask the following question:

(Q) For any kind of thing  $K$ , which values count as constitutive of  $K$  and which count as merely adventitious?

The question tackled in this paper is a particular instance of (Q), where the kind  $K$  under scrutiny is the one of culinary product, *i.e.*, anything that can be eaten or drunk. In other words, it is an inquiry into the nature of culinary value and, as we shall see, it is far from straightforward. This should not come out as surprising. Indeed, even if culinary products answer basic and universal needs, they bear quite a lot of cultural and personal significance. As a result, they quickly get entangled in complex networks of values. The aim will be to determine which values among this network are properly culinary and which are merely adventitious.

## 2. The Hedonic Model

By nature, culinary products are consumables. Hence, the most obvious reasons for their being praised or criticized have to do with their consumption (to be understood in a broad sense, as we will see below) and with the hedonic feelings of pleasure and displeasure to which it is conducive. This will constitute the basis of the first model of culinary value to be scrutinized, the Hedonic Model. I start by introducing some terminology before discussing the model itself.

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<sup>2</sup> For recent discussions of artistic value, see McIver-Lopes 2018 and Stecker 2019.

I will call the properties relevant to our valuing culinary products *qua* consumables *consumable properties* and distinguish between two sub-kinds of such properties: *nutritional properties* and *experiential properties*. Nutritional properties are the properties of culinary products that pertain to a culinary product's contribution to our survival's necessary conditions. However, we don't consume culinary products with the sole aim of maintaining our physiological equilibrium. Besides, we also are interested in culinary products because they often are conducive to hedonic sensory experiences, *i.e.*, pleasant—and sometimes less pleasant—sensory experiences. I shall refer to such hedonic experiences as *consumption experiences*, and experiential properties are the properties of culinary products conducive to them.

I will also distinguish between two kinds of consumption experiences. First, consumption experiences are characterized by the experiential component of hunger and the hedonic feelings associated with our release from it. Second, consumption experiences are characterized by the experiential aspect of discriminating sensory properties as part of the experience of consuming culinary products and the hedonic feelings that come with it. In that respect, consumption experiences are of two kinds: *non-discriminative* (release from hunger) and *discriminative* (discrimination of sensory properties). And experiential properties are of two kinds as well: *non-discriminative* (power to release from hunger) and *discriminative* (power to be conducive to a particular sensory experience).

It is also worth pointing that the Hedonic Model is compatible with a rich conception of discriminative consumption experiences, by which I mean two different but complementary things. On the one hand, it is compatible with the idea that consumption experiences comprise the discrimination of sensory properties of culinary products in several sensory modalities at once. That is, we see, touch, smell, taste, and maybe also hear features of culinary products and, hence, discriminative consumption experiences comprise the discrimination of a vast array of olfactory, gustatory, haptic, visual, and auditive properties. Hence, a consumption experience is not just the result of discriminating some properties of a culinary product as a result of ingesting it: it is an encompassing sensory encounter with a culinary product. On the other hand, it is also compatible with the idea that discriminative consumption experiences are multimodal in a stronger sense. That is, in the sense of being conducive to discrimination of sensory properties that result from emerging sensory properties and sensory modalities. Here, a clear case is flavor, conceived as a sensory property that emerges from different sensory properties such as olfactory, gustatory, and haptic, and their related sensory modalities (see, *e.g.*, Smith 2013; Spence 2017; O'Callaghan 2019).<sup>3</sup>

Without a doubt, there is a close relation between the culinary value of a culinary product and its consumable properties, both nutritional and experiential. For instance, we value frozen pizza or *Gruyère* cheese because of their nutritional and experiential properties. Some eaters might also be disposed to attribute more culinary value to *Gruyère* than to frozen pizza by pointing out that *Gruyère's* subtle floral and salty experiential properties can be conducive to a richer consumption experience than the one that results from eating a greasy and bland frozen pizza.

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<sup>3</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me to say more about the multisensory aspect of consumption experiences.

But what is the exact nature of the relation between consumable properties, both nutritional and experiential, and culinary value? In particular, are nutritional and experiential properties the full, or only partial, determinants of culinary value? For instance, are the reasons why some value *Gruyère* cheese more than frozen pizza *qua* culinary products exhausted by pointing to how these products can be conducive to nutritional equilibrium and to non-discriminative and discriminative consumption experiences?

The most basic model of culinary value—the Hedonic Model—answers this question positively. It results from the endorsement of two complementary claims. Unsurprisingly, the first one is that nutritional and experiential properties are the full determiners of culinary value. As a result, the reasons for which a culinary product can be said to possess a value, whether positive or negative, rest on its power to sustain life and to be conducive to non-discriminative and discriminative consumption experiences.

However, this first claim alone is not sufficient to capture the Hedonic Model. A second one is crucial for understanding the logical space of culinary value and wherein the Hedonic Model fits: namely, that the valuable aspects of experiential properties are exhausted by their power to determine the hedonic components of a consumption experience. Accordingly, the way experiential properties can play a role in determining culinary value is restricted to their role in determining a certain hedonic feeling that is part of the consumption experience, however sensorily rich is that experience<sup>4</sup>.

These two claims play slightly different roles. The first one determines the metaphysical basis of culinary value: nutritional and experiential properties. The second one specifies what this metaphysical basis can determine, *i.e.*, consumption experiences to be evaluated in purely hedonic terms. As a result, according to the Hedonic Model, a culinary product's culinary value is a function of its contribution to physiological equilibrium and consumption experiences. This function's nature is likely to be rather complex, as it is hard to come up with a clear conception of how nutritional and consumable properties interact to determine culinary value. However, its consequence is clear: there cannot be determiners of culinary value beyond properties conducive to survival and (dis)pleasure.

Is the Hedonic Model plausible? It is probably true that it constitutes anyone's default conception of culinary value. Whatever reasons we possess to positively or negatively evaluate culinary products, their nutritional and experiential properties—and especially how the latter can be conducive to hedonic sensory

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<sup>4</sup> By this, I mean that the Hedonic Model doesn't make much of the potential richness of discriminative sensory experiences. In particular, the Hedonic Model only takes into account the way consumption experiences, whether weakly or strongly multimodal, are conducive to a hedonic feeling. This creates a problem for the Hedonic Model that I won't pursue in the rest of the paper for lack of space, but that seems important to flag. According to the Hedonic Model, the multisensory aspect of consumption experience can only be factored in hedonic sensory terms. But the multisensory nature of consumption experiences makes them poised for features of evaluation that go beyond hedonic sensory aspects, such as meta-cognitive reflections on sensory experience. Take recipes that play on colors and shapes to create consumption expectations that are then overturned (for discussion of such cases, see Spence 2017, Chap. 1). For example, take a savory recipe whose instances look just like instances of a sweet dish, thereby creating an expectation of sweetness overturned by actually tasting the dish. In such a case, a cognitive emotion like surprise or even satire can be said to be part of the recipe's culinary value. And, certainly, these cognitive elements of the culinary value of the recipe are properly consumable ones. That is, it is the consumption experience that is supposed to be a surprising and satiric one. As I argue in Author 2020, this meta-cognitive aspect and its influence on culinary value is a central feature of modernist cuisine and its descendants.

experiences—certainly do stand among them. However, there are good reasons to believe that it fails as an account of culinary value. Specifically, I will argue that it is conceptually flawed as it confuses what I will call *consumption value* with genuine culinary value and mistakenly identifies the latter with the former. Indeed, even if there is no principled reason to deny that there is indeed a kind of value attached to culinary products in the way presumed by the Hedonic Model, it is a mistake to identify this value with culinary value. Consumption and its results are one thing, culinary value is another, and whatever relation can obtain between them, it cannot be identity.

I will introduce the distinction through a simple example, although the argument could also be made with richer forms of consumption experiences. Imagine that you are presented with two pieces of cheese identical in terms of their consumable properties: whichever piece of cheese is the object of your consumption experience, the resulting nutritional equilibrium and consumption experience, in all its multisensory complexity and including its hedonic component, will be the same. Let us call this value that the two pieces of cheese share their consumption value. Now, if the Hedonic Model were correct, then it would follow from this scenario that these two pieces of cheese would also share their culinary value, as this first model simply identifies consumption and culinary values. However, imagine further that one piece of cheese is a sample of authentic *Gruyère* cheese while the other one is a lab-produced one that reproduces exactly the consumable properties of its authentic counterpart<sup>5</sup>. Would we be prone to say that these two pieces of cheese share both their consumption and culinary values?

The intuition this thought experiment intends to trigger is the following. One might agree with the claim that the two pieces of cheese share a same value as, after all, they share all their consumable properties, both nutritional and experiential. But one might feel uneasy about framing this equivalence in terms of culinary value. Indeed, one might think that some further factors, such as, *e.g.*, its ability to express terroir, also pertain to the determination of the culinary value of a culinary product. The problem is that the Hedonic Model cannot make room for this uneasiness as it identifies consumption and culinary values. Therefore, one might take this fact as a sufficient motivation to explore the nature of culinary value beyond the Hedonic Model—what, as we shall see in the next section, several authors have been convinced to do in the recent past.

### 3. The Cognitively Enhanced Model

Since the Hedonic Model consists in the conjunction of two claims, we can point to at least two different sources for its problematic identification of consumption and culinary value. I shall discuss the first one here and the second one in the next section.

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<sup>5</sup> In other words, I agree here with Matthew Strohl's account of culinary authenticity, according to which "replication [of perceptible qualities] cannot be all there is to authenticity" and that additional "provenance requirements" matter for determining the authenticity of a culinary product (Strohl 2019 : 162). Note also that I agree with Strohl that authenticity is, in itself, "value neutral" (Strohl 2019: 163). As I will make clear in the next section, what matters for culinary value is not authenticity itself, but further aspects of culinary products for which authenticity serves as a necessary condition.

The first story goes like this. The Hedonic Model turns out to be correct in its contention that nutritional and experiential properties fully determine culinary value. Indeed, as mentioned above, culinary products are consumables by nature. Therefore, their valuable properties *qua* culinary products must be a function of features strictly related to their consumption, *i.e.*, their nutritional and experiential properties and consumption experiences thereof. That being said, it is mistaken in claiming further that the valuable aspects of consumable properties are exhausted by their power to determine the hedonic components of a consumption experience. There is more to the value of a consumption experience than pleasure and displeasure.

At this point, we need to operate a crucial conceptual distinction between a) consumable properties in a strict sense and b) consumable properties in an extended sense. We can conceive of them as follows. Generally speaking, consumable properties in a strict sense are the ones that possess the power to determine a basic consumption experience, where a consumption experience is basic if its properties result from, at most, mere sensory discrimination of its consumable properties. Consumable properties in an extended sense, on the other hand, possess the power to determine not only a consumption experience in a basic sense but, rather, in an overall sense that goes beyond the mere sensory discrimination of its consumable properties.

With this distinction in place, we can now say the following: two culinary products could share their consumption properties in a strict sense yet differ with respect to their consumable properties in the extended sense. For instance, the above two pieces of cheese could share the same consumable properties in a strict sense while differing with respect to their consumable properties in an extended sense.

Operating this distinction is crucial for the inquiry into the nature of culinary value. Indeed, it allows us to distinguish between consumption and culinary value without adding more to the metaphysical basis of culinary value than nutritional and consumable properties. Indeed, in the light of this distinction, we can claim that consumption value is determined solely by nutritional properties and consumable properties in the strict sense. In contrast, the determination of culinary value must take into account consumable properties in the extended sense. But how exactly can consumable properties in the extended sense determine culinary value as distinct from consumption value?

Here is one way this could work. Philosophers generally distinguish between two kinds of sensory experiences: a) purely sensory ones and b) cognitively penetrated ones. In the first case, a sensory experience is entirely determined by mere sensory discrimination of sensory properties—in the case of a consumption experience, this would correspond to a consumption experience entirely determined by nutritional and consumable properties in the strict sense. In the second case, the sensory experience can be jointly determined by both sensory discrimination and some cognitive factor impinging on it.

A standard example of cognitive penetration of sensory experience is the role that concepts play in visual experience. Take two subjects,  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , simultaneously looking at a blue jay standing on a branch from the same position in space with, however, one crucial difference: only  $S_2$  possesses the recognitional concept "blue jay," *i.e.*, can perform the recognitional judgment that a certain bird is a blue jay when she

sees one. Now, in a *de re* sense, it is correct to say that both  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  are visually sensing the same thing, *i.e.*, the way the blue jay looks from their shared perspective. However, in a *de dicto* sense, it is only correct to attribute to  $S_2$  an experience as of visually sensing a blue jay, as only  $S_2$  would take her visual experience as being one of a blue jay.

This general example shows the following: cognitive factors can impinge on a sensory experience's overall nature. One way they can do so is that a same property discriminated sensorily can, in the absence or presence of an additional cognitive factor, be experienced differently, *e.g.*, as an appearance of *that bird* or of *that blue jay*.

This basic distinction between non-cognitively and cognitively penetrated sensory experiences can be applied to our experiences of culinary products. Indeed, one might say that even though the two pieces of cheese of the above thought experiment share the same consumable properties in a strict sense, they possess different consumable properties in an extended sense. Indeed, if one were to taste the two pieces of cheese with the background knowledge of which piece of cheese is which, then even though one would discriminate the same sensory properties in a strict sense in both cases, one could still experience different sensory properties in an extended sense. Accordingly, only the authentic piece of *Gruyère* could be experienced correctly *as* a piece of authentic *Gruyère*, and only the lab-sourced piece of cheese could be experienced correctly *as* a piece of lab-sourced cheese.

As a result, we could distinguish between the two pieces of cheese in terms of the kind of correct cognitively penetrated experiences to which they could give rise. For instance, correctly experiencing the authentic piece of *Gruyère* as a piece of *Gruyère* could have a decisive impact on one's consumption experience. This experience would be correctly individuated as an experience of authentic *Gruyère* cheese and not an experience of lab-sourced cheese, even though the two pieces of cheese would share all of their nutritional properties and consumable properties in a restricted sense. We could then be tempted to use that fact to claim that part of what makes these two experiences different is that they turn out to be experiences of different culinary values despite being experiences of the same consumption value.

Here is a concrete way this idea could work. When experiencing the two pieces of cheese, one is acquainted with the same consumable properties in the strict sense. Still, when one undergoes a correctly cognitively penetrated experience of tasting an authentic piece of *Gruyère* cheese as a piece of *Gruyère* cheese, then a certain expressive power of the piece of cheese is becoming manifest. In such a case, one can experience the cheese's gustatory profile as an expression of the cheesemaker's intentions or expression of a specific terroir, *Gruyère* cheese being exclusively produced with the milk of grass-fed cows from a restricted geographical area. In other words, an authentic piece of *Gruyère* could be said to possess a distinct kind of consumable properties, *i.e.*, expressive ones, and experiencing them in a correctly penetrated way could be said to make them manifest.

In the case of the lab-source piece of cheese, we could either deny it any such kind of expressive power or grant it expressive power, but distinguish what it would thereby be able to express, *e.g.*, the capacity of a lab to reproduce an artisanal taste and the intentions of a marketing team to piggy-bag on it. We could

then either say that the lab-sourced piece of cheese possesses less culinary value than its authentic counterpart because it lacks expressive value or that what it expresses is intrinsically less valuable than what the authentic piece can express. In any case, we would be able to distinguish between the consumption value that the two pieces of cheese would share and the distinct culinary values that each would bear.

The resulting model of culinary value one would obtain from this maneuver would be the following. Consumption value must be distinguished from culinary value. Consumption value is determined by consumable properties in a strict sense, while culinary value is—or can be—determined by consumable properties in an extended sense. Let us call this second model the Cognitively Enriched Model.

The Hedonic and Cognitively Enriched models are distinct, but they share a commonality: they contend that culinary value is fully determined by consumable properties, though of different kinds. That is, they take culinary value to be essentially manifested in consumption experience. According to the Hedonic Model, culinary value is determined by consumable properties in a strict sense, while the Cognitively Enhanced Model countenances the additional claim that expressive consumable properties can also be manifested in consumption experience and impinge on culinary value.

Something is appealing to such a general conception of culinary value. Indeed, as mentioned above, it is in the nature of culinary products to be consumables. It would then be quite in order that their value *qua* culinary products is a function of their consumable properties. The Cognitively Enhanced Model, however, presents a significant advantage over the Hedonic one. By distinguishing between consumption and culinary values, it can account, *e.g.*, for the intuition that we value differently culinary products that share the same consumable properties in a strict sense. Accordingly, it adds an extra element to consumption experience beyond mere hedonic sensory feeling, making room for gustatory experience as a thoughtful enterprise and, ultimately, for a richer conception of culinary value.

Versions of this second model have been defended independently by different authors. For instance, in her classic *Making Sense of Taste*, Carolyn Korsmeyer provides many examples of what she calls "expressive foods" (Korsmeyer 1999: 131). One of them is the fictional story of a father tasting meat cooked without salt and to whom is thereby revealed the meaning of what his disgraced daughter intended to convey by telling him, initially much to his dismay, that she loves him "as fresh meat loves salt." In such a case, we might say that meat served without salt possesses distinct expressive properties and that the right kind of discriminative consumption experience can make these properties manifest.

However, one distinctive feature of Korsmeyer's account is, as she admits it, that the representational powers she attributes to food are heavily context-dependent. This limitation has been challenged by different authors such as Cain Todd (Todd 2010), Matthew Adams (Adams 2018), Matteo Ravasio (Ravasio 2018), and Matthew Strohl (Strohl 2019), who, each in their way, argue that if a certain culinary product has the right kind of connection to, *e.g.*, its production conditions, the environment, or the past, then the right kind of discriminative consumption experience can make manifest expressive properties

of these culinary products in an intrinsic way<sup>6</sup>. For instance, Ravasio argues that proper appreciation of a lowbrow culinary item such as Cornish pastry can make manifest some of its expressive properties. As he puts it,

Knowledge of a food item in its historical and sociocultural situatedness is relevant to the appreciation of the aesthetic properties of the object in question. The resourcefulness, creativity, ingenuity of the people who first developed the Cornish pastry is only enlightened by such knowledge. The somewhat unsophisticated flavor of the pastry becomes a piece of culinary inventiveness when it is seen from the standpoint of the hungry Cornish miner. (Ravasio 2018: 317)

However, one might be disposed to grant the point about the importance of cognitive penetration for the determination of culinary value and yet be suspicious of the idea that this fact requires us to endorse a new model of culinary value. In particular, one might suspect that the Cognitively Enhanced Model just amounts to an extension of the Hedonic Model. Cognitive penetration allows not for culinary value to step beyond the hedonic but for the hedonic to step beyond the purely sensory. When properly cognitively penetrated, consumption experience is more pleasurable or satisfying than its purely sensory counterpart, and culinary value is what such experiences acquaint us with.<sup>7</sup>

This understanding of the Cognitively Enhanced model rests on the following claim: the relation between consumption value and culinary value is additive, such that whatever additional expressive value of a culinary product a properly cognitively penetrated consumption experience can uncover, this value either is of a hedonic kind or at least enhances the overall hedonic value of the experience. Culinary value, in that understanding, amounts to a form of pumped-up consumption value.

The above example about authentic *Gruyère* cheese *vs.* lab-produced counterpart might lend itself to this interpretation. When cognitively penetrated, the consumption experience of the authentic piece of cheese uncovers, *e.g.*, the taste of terroir or of a *savoir-faire*, that somehow infuses the experience with additional pleasure—the snobbish pleasure of the connoisseur, maybe. One might also be tempted to read the passage by Ravasio just quoted in a similar way. The cognitive penetration of the consumption experience of the Cornish pastry leads to a better aesthetic appreciation: what tasted unsophisticated becomes inventive, and more enjoyable.

I am skeptical that this interpretation generalizes. We should be cautious not to confuse a feature of examples used for illustration with a necessary feature of the distinction at play. We should also be cautious not to confuse the question of the aesthetic value of a culinary product with the one of its culinary value. In that respect, the passage from Ravasio quoted above is slightly misleading. He agrees with me that culinary products can possess expressive properties beyond their consumable properties in a strict sense, but we should bear in mind that he frames his discussion in terms of aesthetic, not culinary, value. And if

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<sup>6</sup> I discuss Korsmeyer's extrinsic account in detail and offer my own take on the intrinsic representational power of food in Engisch (2022).

<sup>7</sup> Thanks to the editors for pressing me on this point and for suggesting its formulation.

it might be plausible to claim that the aesthetic value of a Cornish pastry or a piece of authentic *Gruyère* amounts to a pumped version of its consumption value, it remains open whether their culinary value is to be understood in the same way.

One reason to doubt that culinary value doesn't work that way comes from cases that we might reasonably interpret as not following this model. For instance, take the case of consumption experiences of dishes produced by retro-engineered recipes, *i.e.*, recipes reconstructed on the basis of chemical analysis of archeological remains. Sometimes, these can hardly be said to have great consumption value because, *e.g.*, they display tastes far too pungent for our contemporary palates (see Korsmeyer 2022 for discussion). But if the hedonic interpretation were correct, we would be forced to claim that, when properly cognitively penetrated, such experiences become more pleasurable or satisfying than their non-cognitively penetrated counterparts. I think the following interpretation fares better. Cognitive penetration doesn't affect consumption value, which remains the same, but it affects culinary value. Once cognitively penetrated, the consumption experience uncovers an expressive property of the dish, being expressive of the past. The additional values displayed in such cases are cognitive, not hedonic ones, and they also don't necessarily enhance the overall hedonic value of the experience. They make the experience more interesting, not more pleasurable or satisfying. Hence, the conception of culinary value advocated by the Cognitively Enhanced Model cannot be collapsed in a mere extension of the Hedonic Model.

This move from the Hedonic to the Cognitively Enhanced model is clearly on the right track. One might wonder, however, whether it goes far enough. In the next section, I challenge the Cognitively Enhanced Model before, in the fifth section, offering an alternative that, though strictly compatible with the Cognitively Enhanced Model, also extends the basis of the determination of culinary value beyond consumable properties.

#### **4. Culinary Value Beyond Consumable Properties**

Why be tempted to go beyond the Cognitively Enhanced Model? The main reason is that one might doubt that all the elements that can pertain to the culinary value of a culinary product fall within the range of its consumable properties, either in a restricted or in an extended sense. Or so I shall argue in this section. Here is the argument I intend to defend:

- 1) Culinary products have constitutive values, *i.e.*, culinary values.
- 2) Culinary value is determined by consumable properties if what makes a culinary product valuable *qua* culinary product is determined by the value of the consumption experience that results from acquaintance with these consumable properties.
- 3) There are instances of culinary products whose culinary value is determined, at least in part, independently of consumable properties.
- 4) Hence, culinary value is not fully determined by consumable properties.

As made clear by premise 3), the argument is supposed to work by examples. I will discuss one such example and defend my interpretation as supporting 3) against possible objections.

The example concerns, again, the case of *Gruyère* cheese. Authentic *Gruyère*, *i.e.*, *Gruyère* cheese officially recognized as part of the *Gruyère* geographical indication, comes in several kinds. At one extreme, one finds *Gruyère d'alpage*, a cheese made in mountainous regions where cheesemakers and their cows spend the summer months in relatively isolated, often rudimentary, secondary housings. The milk is produced and transformed on-site and is sometimes still boiled on a good old wooden fire. The resulting quantities of cheese are small, the work is hard, but the end product possesses a distinctive culinary value. At another extreme, one finds quasi-industrial *Gruyère*, a cheese produced in large quantities in a standardized form in industrial cheese factories. The resulting quantities of cheese are much more important, the work greatly helped by technology, and the resulting product, though still of great culinary value, is arguably not on a par with its *Alpage* counterpart. But what determines this difference in culinary value?

One might argue that the difference in consumable properties in a strict sense plays only a restricted role in such a case. Indeed, independently of its mode of production, one will be able to find *Gruyère* with astonishing consumption value. What about its consumable properties in an extended sense? Here one might be more optimistic in their ability to explain the difference in culinary value between the two kinds of cheese. Indeed, one might argue that differences in the intentions of the respective cheesemakers (*e.g.*, one cheesemaker might be aiming for idiosyncratic wheels of cheese, the other one for consistency) or differences in terroir must be taken into account, and that as a result, the two kinds of cheese possess different culinary values in a way that the Cognitively Enhanced Model can accommodate. However, there are further differences between these two kinds of authentic *Gruyère* that one might regard as impinging on their culinary value, and that might not fit as well the Cognitively Enhanced model and its reliance on the distinction between consumable properties in a strict and extended sense.

Indeed, beyond features like intentions and terroir, one might also argue that these different *Gruyère* cheeses also embody different values of a more existential kind. For instance, a cheese-like *Gruyère d'alpage* isn't merely an authentic *Gruyère*, it is also an authentic *Gruyère* authentically made<sup>8</sup>. It embodies values like small-scale agriculture, proximity to the animals and the landscape, and self-reliance, and these values seem to guide us in its evaluation *qua* culinary product. The question is now the following. Is it plausible to claim that when we value a culinary product on such grounds, we do so in accordance with the Cognitively Enhanced Model, *i.e.*, through acquaintance with consumable properties in a strict and extended sense?

One might answer this question positively and contend that when suitably cognitively penetrated, the consumption experience of the *Gruyère d'alpage* ends up being more interesting than the consumption experience of its merely authentic counterpart—and that this is all we need to explain the difference in culinary value between these two kinds of *Gruyère* cheeses. But is this positive answer plausible? I will offer

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<sup>8</sup> For a similar distinction applied to the case of wine, see Todd 2022.

one reason to think that, on the contrary, it would entail stretching too much the notion of cognitive penetration of consumption experiences.

Indeed, one useful way to think about cognitive penetration of sensory experience is as experiencing sensory objects under aspects uncovered by cognitive penetration. Differences in conceptual repertoire, or lack thereof, allow for differences in aspectuality thus conceived. To experience a bird as a blue jay is to experience it under a certain aspect, the aspect of blue jays, and to experience a piece of cheese as an authentic piece of *Gruyère* cheese is to experience it under a certain aspect, *e.g.*, the aspect of authentically produced cheese.

However, some general conditions must pertain to the uncovering of an aspect of an object through a successful instance of cognitive penetration. A first, unsurprising one is that it must be the case that the aspect in question indeed is a feature of the object, however one may be prone to cash out the exact metaphysics of that claim. For instance, a cognitively penetrated experience of seeing a blue jay can be successful only if the bird in question indeed is a blue jay. But this can't be the full story. Another plausible condition is that if cognitive penetration of a sensory experience leads to the uncovering of an aspect of an object, then there should obtain some explanatory relation between the uncovered aspect and the sensory features of the object. In the authentic *Gruyère* cheese *vs.* lab-counterpart example used above, we can explain the aspects we might label *cheesemaker's intentions* or *flavors of terroir* in terms of the sensory features of the object. Namely, the cheese has certain sensory features in virtue of the cheesemaker's intentions or it being a product of its terroir. But here looms a problem for accounting for the further valuable features of *Gruyère d'alpage* we pointed to in terms of the Cognitively Enhanced Model. Indeed, it seems much less clear how there could be an explanatory relation between a supposed cognitively penetrated aspect that we might label *expression of self-reliance* and sensory features of the object. Indeed, it seems quite a bit of a stretch to claim that a value like self-reliance could impact a cheese in such a way that it can be expressed through a consumption experience.

Of course, my overall interpretation of this example can be challenged. In particular, the following straightforward objection must be considered. Even though culinary products can possess such valuable features independent of their consumable properties, they are determiners of values distinct from culinary value. For instance, in the case of the authentic *Gruyère* cheese authentically made, the existential values that it manifests pertain to it as, say, a cultural or commercial artifact, not as a culinary one.

What should we make of this objection? Of course, it might be true that culinary products can possess valuable features that are determiners of non-culinary values of culinary products. But what we need for the object to go through is something more than this mere possibility: a plausible ground to think that such valuable features of culinary products independent of their consumable properties would turn out to be determiners of non-culinary values. Could there be such a ground?

Here, one could attempt to find support for this objection in the following way. Existential values like being made authentically or cognitive values like being surprising or satirical cannot be constitutive of culinary value proper because they are constitutive of other values that have nothing to do with the culinary

world. For instance, one could rationally justify buying locally sourced knitwear from an independent shepherd spinning her own wool instead of anything more industrial in the light of the existential values that her knit products manifest.

However, I don't think that we should give this consideration much weight. Indeed, it would be a bit like saying that aesthetic features cannot bear artistic value because things that aren't artworks, such as landscapes, can also have aesthetic value. But the fact that the aesthetic domain is wider than the artistic one doesn't make it such that, in principle, aesthetic features cannot have a bearing on artistic value. Similarly, that the existential domain is wider than the culinary one does not, in principle, make it such that existential features cannot have a bearing on culinary value.

What the objection needs to go through, then, is a more principled reason to think that valuable features of culinary products independent of their consumable properties cannot be determiners of culinary value. Of course, one could deliver such a principle reason by sticking to the idea that the nature of culinary products is so much influenced by their being consumables that their valuable features must be consumable ones, and by then wheeling in either the Hedonic or the Cognitively Enriched models of culinary value. But this is premature. Indeed, we don't yet possess a firm enough grasp on the notion of culinary value to stick to such principled reasons without manifesting prejudice. The next section aims to challenge this prejudice and offer an account of culinary value that does away with it.

## 5. An Encompassing Model of Culinary Value

There might be more than one way to develop a model of culinary value aiming at enriching its basis beyond consumable properties. This section will develop a particular version of such a model based on a second-order conception of culinary value—the Encompassing Model. In such a model, different features of culinary products determine various kinds of first-order values. Culinary value is then conceived as a second-order value that is a function of these first-order values. For instance, the culinary value of a piece of *Gruyère d'alpage* can be a function of, say, its consumption value and an existential value such as self-reliance.

Such a model of culinary value bears structural similarities with a certain model of artistic value, according to which artistic value is a second-order value (see, *e.g.*, Stecker 2012, 2019). In that case, the main idea is the following. Artworks are generally praised and criticized in terms of their artistic value. However, in the light of the well-known diversity to be found within the class of artworks, it has been recognized to be quite challenging to identify a clear set of properties, *i.e.*, the properly artistic ones, out of which the artistic value of an artwork could be determined. On the other hand, artworks can possess different kinds of values, such as aesthetic, emotional, cognitive, moral, or political ones. According to the second-order model of artistic value, there is a determination relation between an artwork possessing such kinds of values and its possessing artistic value. Artistic value is a second-order value that an artwork can possess in virtue of possessing other values.

The intuitive nature of this proposal can be made manifest as follows. Imagine someone saying of an artwork: "It is beautiful, creative, and politically relevant," before adding: "And of course it also has artistic value." There is something weird about such an assessment. For an artwork to be beautiful, creative, and politically relevant does not seem to be something distinct from it having artistic value. Instead, it looks as bearing these values is a way for this artwork to have artistic value. Once these first-order values have been recognized, the second-order artistic value comes from free, so to speak.

Though independent of this conception of artistic value, the Encompassing Model of culinary value develops a similar idea: culinary value is a second-order value. Among these first-order values are ones based on consumable properties, either in a strict or extended sense. And together with other values independent of consumable properties, such as cognitive or existential ones, these first-order values can determine a second-order value of a culinary product, *i.e.*, its culinary value. Accordingly, when one says of a piece of *Gruyère d'alpage* that it doesn't only taste great and expresses terroir, but also, *e.g.*, manifest self-reliance, one is listing down different first-order values that can all pertain to the determination of culinary value as a second-order value.

That being said, one might be worried that, contrary to the case of artistic value, the notion that culinary value could be a second-order value has little bite. An asymmetry between artworks and culinary products seems to prevent culinary products from having their values conceived in second-order terms. Indeed, unlike culinary works, artworks are extremely varied, and as a result, it is not surprising that they end up being the bearers of many different values. However, the kind *art* comes with a unifying principle that allows understanding how these disjoint first-order values can all impinge on an artwork's artistic value. That is, it seems that the notion of artistic value brings some kind of unity at a second-order level while there is disunity at the first-order level.

However, in the case of culinary value, it seems that the situation is very different. Indeed, under the assumption that culinary works could present similar disunity at the first-order level, one might be worried that the best one could do to come up with a unifying principle is to fall back on the notion of consumable properties, and hence on a conception of culinary value like the one advocated by the Hedonic or the Cognitively Enriched models. Accordingly, unlike the prospect of understanding artistic value as a second-order value, the idea of understanding culinary value as a second-order value would be doomed from the start. At best, it would collapse in a first-order conception of culinary value along the lines of the Hedonic or the Cognitively Enriched models.

There is something to this objection. Indeed, how could one deny that, unlike artworks, culinary products fall within a relatively homogeneous kind and that their nature as consumables serves as a *de facto* unifying principle? That being said, I don't think that we should conclude from this that the idea of culinary value as second-order turns out to be impossible to get off the ground. Instead, we should distinguish the idea that culinary value is constitutive of culinary products homogeneously characterized by their being consumables and the idea that culinary value is constituted by the consumable properties of culinary products homogeneously characterized by their being consumables. The first claim pertains to the medium

of culinary value, the second one to culinary value itself. The objection under scrutiny establishes only the former idea, not the latter: the unity of culinary products as consumables tells us something about the rather strict constraints on their nature as the medium of culinary value, not yet something about the nature of culinary value itself. Ruling out the notion that culinary value couldn't be second-order on the idea that culinary products are unified by their nature as consumables amounts to nothing but falling prey to a subtle confusion.

What is true, though, is that the Encompassing Model is committed to the claim that consumable properties can play double duty. On the one hand, they can determine consumption value. On the other, they can serve as the medium of additional values, such as existential ones—and these first-order values can then jointly determine culinary value at the second-order level. According to the Encompassing Model, this claim is one of the keys to understanding culinary value's complex nature. That culinary products are relatively simple when understood in terms of mediums of value doesn't mean that their culinary value is equally simple.

At this point, one might still agree about the distinction between consumable properties as a medium of value and consumable properties as determiners of culinary value, yet deny that it is culinary value proper, not adventitious values, that consumable properties mediate when taking up a mere mediating role. One might claim that culinary products are homogeneous mediums of heterogeneous first-order values—culinary value determined by consumable properties being one of them—rather than homogeneous mediums of heterogeneous first-order values that can jointly determine culinary value conceived as second-order. Here I want again to use the case of artworks as an analogy to understand why we should conceive of culinary value as second-order.

In the case of artworks, an interesting idea is that despite the great variety of artistic mediums and of values they can realize, artworks are characterized by the fact that they often constitute a special avenue or opportunity to materialize these values, whether they are aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, moral, political, social, or whatever else. This idea is then closely related to the one that artistic value is a second-order value constituted of first-order ones. Indeed, it is because artworks have this special nature of being a special avenue or opportunity to materialize some values that they can be evaluated *qua* artworks in the way they materialize these values. In other words, it might be the case that even though one might be sometimes confounded as to what makes something an artwork, one can nonetheless make a case as to why producing this work is the right kind of thing to do to manifest or embody the specific value or values embodied or manifested in that work. One condensed way to express this idea is that, often, what we may call the "form" of an artwork, whatever this could mean, bears a tight fit to its content so that it would be difficult to express this content through a different form. And when there is such a tight fit between form and content, we can see how and why artistic value could be a function from disjoint and unrelated first-order values.

My final suggestion is that we should conceive the Encompassing Model of culinary value as claiming that the same is true of the culinary domain. We should conceive of culinary value as a second-order value determined by disjoint first-order values because we can often find a tight fit between the form and content

of culinary value, *i.e.*, between a culinary product and values that could hardly be expressed or embodied by something else. Take, for instance, the existential value of self-reliance embodied by an authentic piece of *Gruyère* cheese authentically produced. One could hardly find a better avenue to embody or manifest a value such as self-reliance because embodying or manifesting self-reliance in part consists in producing culinary products in the way such a piece of *Gruyère* is being made<sup>9</sup>. If this is correct, this might be the missing link required to seal the deal in favor of the Encompassing Model. Culinary products can keep their nature as consumables and be vehicles for values that aren't determined by their consumable properties. Moreover, these values can be constitutive of culinary value proper as culinary products constitute a special avenue or opportunity for these values to be embodied and manifested. Just like in the case of artworks, there is a tight fit between form and content that explains why multiple and disjoint values can be regarded as determining culinary value conceived as a second-order value.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to examine three different models of culinary value and to offer a defense of one of them, the Encompassing Model. As I argued, the two other models, the Hedonic and the Cognitively Enhanced ones, shared a common problematic assumption: that culinary value is determined by consumable properties of culinary products. The Encompassing Model goes beyond this claim by arguing that culinary value can be determined by non-consumable properties of culinary products. A neat, and hopefully correct, way to see how this is possible, I argued and defended against objections, is that culinary value is a second-order value determined by first-order values. Values determined by consumable properties of culinary products are to be counted among these values, of course. Still, more first-order values determine culinary value than just these. Hence, culinary value is an encompassing phenomenon. If true, this conclusion can be brought to explain the centrality of the culinary domain in our lives in a way that doesn't fall prey to the prejudice that displaying an interest in the culinary domain is a futile enterprise or, worse, a vice. We might also hope that it could help to focus further the attention of philosophers on the culinary domain.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> To link the point made here with previous publication, one could also argue that traditional recipes and their outputs constitute a uniquely valuable way to relate us to past living conditions (Engisch 2022; see also Ravasio 2018). Or that the creativity manifested by certain recipes constitute a uniquely valuable way to mediate our relation to the environment in a way that can lead us not only to discover new consumable properties, but also to put us in a position to reconsider the way we think about our direct environment (Engisch 2020).

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