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### Metaphors Seen in Chinese Cuisine Names

The topic of this article is about metaphor used as a strategy in Chinese cuisine naming via a contrastive study of Chinese and foreign dish names in accordance with a dataset. The database consists of approximately 400 cuisine names. The thesis firstly proffers multiple examples of divergent kinds of metaphors exploited in Chinese cuisine nomenclature, foreign samples then follow, and lastly sums up major findings and gives out a conclusion.

Metaphorical expression has been exploited by human beings for hundreds of divergent reasons and also has raised its mysterious curtain in cuisine denomination. In conformity to our existing database, though not comprehensive enough, approximately 30% of Chinese dishes possess a metaphorical name. And based on analyses of these 120 aesthetic features of naming, we categorize different intentions of metaphorical dish names as follows:

Metaphors based on color account for 47 menu items, such as 金蒜秘制咸猪手, 青龙卧雪, 雪山飞狐, 阿拉斯加火焰雪山, 银山白珍珠, 银芽炒三丝, 金丝卷, 金丝海鲜扎, 金苗荟萃 etc. Target domains of these metaphors primarily are snow, silver, gold, pearl, to name but a few. As the most representative one, “金” occurs 11 times among the whole 47 items, appearing to refer to ingredients whose colors are silvery, white or beige, like garlic, bean sprouts, corn etc. Using color based metaphors to a large extent achieves an aesthetic imagination and visual beauty at the first sight, spontaneously cultivating a curtain of mystery around the comestible. Metaphors on colors, on the other hand, can get rid of some ominous factors of food materials, like replacing “血” with “红” to represent animals' blood.

Physical shape or appearance of each diet also is a noticeable factor from which a metaphorical name consults. Among the database, 33 items apply metaphorical expressions to display their unique configurations, for example, 马兰头, 蝴蝶海参, 蜂窝豆腐, 蜂巢蛋糕, 彩蝶纷飞 etc. Obviously, animals play an indispensable role in these kinds of target domains, like horse, butterfly, honeybee, squirrel, rabbit, dragon, phoenix etc.

Much like shape-based metaphors, there are myriad vivid metaphors referring to structures or unique formations of dishes, which can be confirmed by 37 items from the database. Take “南瓜抱饭” as an example, the pumpkin definitely does not have the ability to embrace rice, so the verb “抱” is used to describe the interdependently encircling structure of pumpkin and rice. More supporting examples can be seen from 百鸟归巢, 半月沉江 and 云河段霄. These kinds of cuisine names sometimes convey a profound implication and a dynamic beauty.

Some dishes take advantage of tactful metaphors to indicate their cooking methods. For 酒鬼花生 and 酒醉虾, “wine bibber” or “drunkenness” means that these kinds of dishes are made with wine or their flavor elements contain a sense of alcohol, rather than that peanuts become drunkards or shrimps get tipsy themselves.

Via cuisine naming, many historical figures or impressive events are exploited with a high frequency, which occupy 19 items in the database. For instance, 贵妃鸡, refers to the memory of the Lady Yang. Yang prepared a banquet for the appointment with the Emperor in a pavilion, but the Emperor failed to his promise and went to visit other beautiful concubines. Furious and depressed, Yang had the banquet alone and got very drunk.

Then people titled “贵妃鸡” to the chicken she prepared for the meal and this dish handed down to generations. This kind of naming scheme can also be exemplified by items like 宋嫂鱼羹, 宫保鸡丁, 文思豆腐 etc.

Besides real existed figures and events, some imaginary gods as well as deities are typically seen as source domains in cuisine nomenclature to express warm gratitude and blessings, like 八仙过海闹罗汉, 八仙聚宴, 凯撒大帝沙拉, 牛魔王拼盘, to name but a few. Although the eight immortals and the bull king are indeed fictitious characters in legends, these cuisine names all express good wishes and convey strong flavor of traditional culture through dishes.

The use of metaphor in cuisine names marks the profundity of China’s 5, 000-year-old cultural heritage as well as remarkable intelligence of Chinese people. More than having a meal, people go through a colorful cultural tour by delving into the recesses of the meal. However, on the contrary, foreign cuisine naming usually not deeply involves in its culture or significance. It is reasonable to misuse words like “frank”, “straight forward” and “explicit” as synonyms for foreign cuisine names. Based on data collected from some foreign restaurants, approximately 84% of their cuisine names basically concern with their food materials or cooking methods. For example, “French Goose Liver and Beef”, this item simply reflects that this dish is an assortment in French style consisting of goose liver and beef. In a similar way, “French Lobster Bisque” and “Salmon Tart” are no exceptions, so customers can easily get an imagination of soup with langouste and salmon in egg tart respectively. Among the whole data collected from foreign restaurant, the preposition “with” plays an indispensable role in approximately 67% of cuisine names, serving as an apparent antithesis to Chinese cuisine naming in which conjunction words like “和” hardly can be brought into sight.

53% of Chinese cuisines from database are also named in a frank style, most of which contain exotic animals or fruits in their materials. The most frequent one in menu is “curry”, which can easily combine other ingredients to form frank names like “Curry Rice”, “Curry Shrimp”, “Curry Chicken”, “Curry Sirloin”, “Curry Beef” etc. In line with the database, 61% of such explicit Chinese cuisine names contain at least one material which was introduced from foreign countries once upon a time.

To summarize, these specially purpose-designed languages in dish names build a linguistic related book of cuisine which is full of variety, showing us how individual meal is allowed to reveal social and pragmatic characteristics in Chinese or foreign language environment. Menus are stages and all cuisine names are players which have a charm of their own, so in addition to being eaten, they deserve people’s rethinking as well as reconsideration.