

**Inquiry Question: How does food embody art, culture, and resistance?**

**Source A**

**Excerpts from *Notes from a Young Black Chef: A Memoir* by Kwame Onwuachi (2019)**

*Note: Kwame Onwuachi is an award winning chef and Top Chef winner who trained at the Culinary Institute of America. In this excerpt, Onwuachi is catering a dinner at the then newly opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in October, 2016.*

The air is so warm in D.C. tonight, it still feels like summer. It's October, it should be night already, but the sun is taking her time leaving the stage. It's just too beautiful a day to say goodbye. From where I stand, on the fifth-floor balcony of the brand-new National Museum of African American History and Culture, the city spread below seems full of promise. Across the North Lawn, American flags flutter in the wind around the base of the Washington Monument To the east, the Capitol building, with its impressive dome, bathed in bright light, and to the south, the White House sits like a perfectly proportioned dollhouse. In the distance, the red and blue lights of the carousel at National Harbor glitter in a tiny festive constellation against the pink-fading-to-blue sky, guileless and beautiful.

Standing above the scene in my chef's whites, I feel like an orchestra conductor peering in on my pit as the musicians tune up. Under the ruby sun, everything glimmers and shimmies with excitement.... The stakes are high but I wouldn't have it any other way. In the kitchen, jittery and pumped up just before the curtains rise, I'm in my element.

But just before I head inside, I pause for a second to take in the enormity of the moment and my small role in it. Five stories up and I'm still standing on hallowed ground. Caskets and chains and splintered beams of slave ships, knives and forks and salt shakers, Woolworth stools and mammy figurines, freedom and blood, progress and pain, voices raised and voices silenced, courage. The purpose of this museum is to resurrect the dead, to honor their lives, to celebrate their progress, to remember their suffering, to

never forget their stories. This building is an argument that these stories, traditions, this suffering, this history, matters. In three weeks, I will open my restaurant and with it, I'll have a chance to add my voice to that chorus. To prove that my story, like the millions of voices behind and beneath my, matters. As I push open the kitchen door, the last of my smile fades and I get back to work. I'm standing on stories, and this is my own.

## Source B

### Excerpt from *L.A. Son* by Roy Choi (2013)

*Note: Roy Choi is a Korean-American chef who gained fame as the creator of the gourmet Korean-Mexican taco truck Kogi. He is often credited with starting the gourmet food truck movement. His 2013 book acts as a memoir and cookbook.*

I got everything I needed for the improved salsa, plus everything for the taco itself—marinated short ribs, tortillas, onions, cilantro, limes, cabbage, lettuce, scallions, sesame seeds.... Spread all the groceries out and started to color in our outline of a taco. I didn't know exactly what the picture would look like when I was done, but the technical details didn't matter right then. As I chopped and layered ingredients, visions of [my parents' Korean restaurant], Pershing Square, my childhood refrigerator, cruising in Whittier, Grove Street, transient life, the desert bubbled up and started flowing through me like a tidal wave. I was possessed.

I had it.

It was about four inches in diameter. One and a half bites at most. Oily but crispy. Made of fresh corn, but never grainy. Filled with meat that felt like it had been chopped all day by the same cleaver over and over again on a worn wooden block, then thrown on a plancha and sizzled to a crusty sticky juicy niblet of life. Showered with chopped onions and more handfuls of chopped cilantro than you can imagine. Lime juice everywhere. And salsa roja, smoky and pungent. There it was. Los Angeles on a plate. Maybe it wasn't everyone's LA., but it was mine. It was Koreatown to Melrose to Alvarado to Venice to Crenshaw crumpled into one flavor and bundled up like a gift. The elements looked like city blocks. The flavor tasted like the streets. And the look said home.

## Source C

### Clip from 2013 CNN's [Parts Unknown](#)

Note: Anthony Bourdain was a chef and TV host. This episode from his show, *Parts Unknown*, Bourdain visits a Sizzler restaurant in Los Angeles' Koreatown with artist David Choe.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfKxfiv1Ik>

## Source D

Clip from [Broken Bread](#) (Please watch the clip from 17:51 - 22:48)

*Note: Chef Roy Choi is the host of the show Broken Bread on PBS. Choi explores different perspectives that make up In the episode, "Food as Resistance" Choi meets with restaurant owners and chefs who are preserving culture through food.*



<https://www.pbs.org/video/food-as-resistance-qx2xfj/>

## Source E

### Excerpt from [Race in the Study of Food](#) by Rachel Slocum

A material-semiotic substance used in the "creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart" (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002: 109). Food products "create the images by which we understand who we have been, who we are, and who we might or should be in the future" (Miller, 1995:35). Producing and maintaining racial identity is dependent, in part, on holding onto food habits and tastes, which are themselves imagined as cuisines belonging to racialized groups or nations (Appadurai, 1988; Weismantel, 1989). Eating and cooking as acts at once intimate and public, empowering and complicit, are constitutive of racial identity and its politics. Scholars understand food preparation and consumption as central to the development and preservation of racialized identity and belonging for women, diasporic populations, immigrants and the displaced, enslaved and impoverished. Themes include how nonwhite groups are exoticized or demonized, how food histories of marginalized people are ignored, appropriated or maligned by dominant groups and how racialized groups discursively resist these oppressions. Authors have also written about the encounter that occurs through the preparation and consumption of 'others' foods' and question the idea that food 'belongs' to particular racialized groups.

## Source F

### Excerpt from *The Ethnic Restaurateur* by Krishnendu Ray (2016)

My hypothesis is that American taste-makers have a threefold classification system by which they venerate a few foreign cuisines in turn (Continental, French, and Japanese) or "slum it" with the real ethnics (Soul Food, Tex-Mex, Dominican, etc.). Falling somewhere between the two poles are Chinese, Indian, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese food—all Asian, by the way, which hints at a larger dynamic of cultural capital at work in the global political economy of signs which is, I think, unrelated to food per se. Ethnic foods never reach the heights of foreign foods. But some ethnic foods do better than others, which is related to the per capita income of the group (as shown in the previous footnote). My related hypothesis is that the popularity of a particular ethnic cuisine among the middling sorts is unrelated to the total number of people of a particular heritage: in fact the two may be inversely related. Italian cuisine brings an interesting complexity to that pattern. American cuisine, on the other hand, evokes an association between culture and nation on which the French have long had a monopoly. That national identification goes hand in hand with a complex love of and loathing for ethnic interlocutors. Proximity, especially within a class hierarchy, can be a cultural liability much greater than foreignness. The intimate Other is always disdained, while the distant Other can be safely eulogized. These two polarities of identification—nation and ethnicity—mark a complex adumbration between the self and the Other in the American aesthetic imagination that I will develop in the concluding chapter.

[How Simu Liu's Comments About a Boba Tea Company Launched a Discussion on Cultural Appropriation](#)