



Manila, Philippines

Title: Anthony Bourdain on street food and what is 'authentic'

Date of publication: June 1 2017

Author:

Name of publication: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/life/06/01/17/anthony-bourdain-on-street-food-and-what-is-authentic>

MANILA – Chef and TV host Anthony Bourdain talked about the importance of food in preserving cultural identity on Thursday as one of the speakers in World Street Food Congress 2017.

During the Dialogues segment of the event which will run until June 4, Bourdain said food – particularly street food – is a “reflection of who we are, where we come from and what we love.”

“There is nothing more political than food... The things that we eat are the direct reflection of our histories,” he said. “The ingredients, whether they are dried, they are pickled or preserved, these are reflections of long, often painful histories. That’s how we got to these dishes.”

“I often say wealthy cultures that are lucky and fortunate and prosperous generally don’t cook very well because they never had to,” he continued. “It’s the countries that struggle that make the most of what they have who, over time, learned to make wonderful things.”

With help from K. F. Seetoh, who founded the famed hawker center Makansutra in Singapore, Bourdain is looking for vendors and partners for his own food market in New York.

He hopes that the Bourdain Market, slated to open in 2019, can also be replicated in parts of Europe.

“We have representatives of people and cultures from all over the planet and it’s been that way since the very beginning. And then, shockingly, scandalously enough, we don’t have a real market [in New York]. We don’t have a place like what Singapore has, like Hong Kong or Vietnam. A place you can go, a democratic space where people value a good bowl of noodles,” he said.

“This is not some Disneyland version, like McHawker or Hawker World. We’re talking about the real deal.”

When asked by Seetoh if he wants to have the Filipino roast pig lechon in his market, Bourdain replied: “Yeah, gotta have lechon.”

Here are some parts of Bourdain’s Dialogue in WSFC 2017:

ON HIS ‘PERSONAL CONNECTION’ TO PH

“I’m grateful to be back in the Philippines. This is a personal connection for me. My daughter, like so many American children, has been largely raised by Filipinas. Her brother from another mother is a Filipino kid... I’m personally grateful to be back.”

ON HOW AMERICANS TODAY ARE CRAVING FOR STREET FOOD

“Street food is important. First of all, it’s a practical matter... The number one determining factor for American tourists on where they’re going to go and spend their tourism dollar, the number one answer is food. That’s often, if not predominantly, the driving influence.”

ON EATING ‘EMOTIONALLY’

“I hang out with a lot of the greatest chefs in the world... What chefs crave after work is a simple good thing, whether it’s a bowl of pasta, a bowl of pho, some lechon, something that you can eat with your hands and eat emotionally, not technically.

“I’m not a critic. I was 30 years in the restaurant business. I don’t want to think about my food. I don’t want to evaluate it and write tasting notes and score them on a basis of one to ten... I want to experience food emotionally, like a child. I want to be lost in the moment. I want to take a bite of food and it takes me to another time or in another place, whether it’s my childhood or somebody else’s childhood. Anybody’s grandma’s food is preferable in my mind than a fine dining restaurant in almost every case.”

ON ‘AUTHENTIC’ FOOD

“But what is authentic? Food is always changing with the movement of bodies, with intermarriage or with displacement, with foreign influences and changing markets. Is tomato sauce even authentic Italian? Of course not, it came from the New World.

“Anything that gets us to cross the river to enlightenment, as far as I am concerned, is a good thing... I think because we are all becoming food nerds and some of us can’t sit down in a meal without Instagramming it anymore or tweeting about it or trying to make other feel bad about what they’re eating, I think there’s pressure on people to learn and understand... and hopefully we will increasingly become aware of those differences and nuances [in food].”

ON WHY HE IS ‘NOT FAT’

“When you see me on TV eating, I eat everything. I’m not taking a little bite and moving on. I eat strategically. If I know I’m going on a ten-course Imperial Chinese meal, you know I’m not having Eggs Benedict at the hotel. Also, I practice Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.”