

■ Living a Dream Life: Creating an Image of a Cookbook Author in Early 2000s Russia

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Abstract

An unprecedented surge in lifestyle literature marked the early 2000s in Russia. Symptomatic of this phenomenon was an extraordinary outpour of lifestyle journals, blogs, and TV shows. One aspect of this new literature was a novel interest in food culture. This new food culture was supposed to be one of the many Western habits that new Russia had to incorporate to become a globalized country after years of isolation. If, on the one hand, the 1990s were a time to learn how to behave with new money, the 2000s and early 2010s, on the other hand, would be the time to learn how to spend it in style. Together with fashion magazines, foreign movies, books, and TV series, cookbooks and gastronomic magazines became the new textbooks of Western lifestyle. One of the distinguishing features of this novel culinary discourse was the significance of the culinary text's author: a professional chef or a celebrity, a popular columnist or a historian, basically anyone who could offer their audience some new authentic knowledge. Among the numerous books published then, Anahit Piruzyan's book *Elle: Cooking Diary: Stories with Recipes* (*Elle: Кулинарный дневник. Истории с рецептами*) stands out. She chooses an unusual strategy for her traditionally (and primarily) didactic culinary discourse: she published not just recipes or even recipes with history but rather stories with recipes. Recipes as cooking manuals

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became secondary in comparison with the self-presentation of the author, who was a successful culinary columnist, an expert on bourgeois American culinary culture, and a so-called Global Russian who could now be described as an influencer in a pre-influencer era who created an image of the ideal modern woman of the 2000s and thereby attracted the broad attention of the female audience of *Elle* fashion magazine. In this article, I aim to answer what and how she talks about herself to gain the trust and interest of her readers, how she pictures herself as a culinary enthusiast, and what makes her so unique among other cookbook authors of the same time.

Keywords: lifestyle literature, cookbooks, image of an author, self-presentation strategies, Russian daily culture

Introduction

When it comes to unique writing strategies (or text analysis more broadly), cookbooks are often overlooked: most of us only occasionally use them for anything other than recipes. Today, despite variegated culinary media—TV shows, magazines, YouTube channels, Instagram accounts, websites, and books, which readily offer both recipes and clear instructions—we often turn to the big names like Jamie Oliver or Gordon Ramsey, whose opinion on the quality of the recipes we trust. An author's attitude and the public image they are selling to the audience become the final decision-making factor for a significant portion of the audience. Someone may buy the simplicity of the boy-next-door or the coziness and skillfulness of a grandmother; another, the borderline perfectionism of a chef, the perfection of a wellness guru, or the lifestyle of a celebrity. Overall, the modern reader looks not just for a recipe but more for a recipe as a lifestyle, and authors become intermediaries for those lifestyles.

Therefore, finding a proper image that promotes the personal brand of a particular gastronomic expert is one of the keys to success. However, is this a recent development, or has it always been there? Was an author always that important? Was an author ever that recognizable in a cookbook? What is the point of cooking content full of background stories, which, in fact, end up being the most exciting and engaging part of the text?

Over the past century, cookbooks have become a way of documenting a paradigm shift in daily culture: cooking has moved from an occupation of professional chefs and housewives to a popular hobby. All-in-one culinary encyclopedias were replaced, first by popularizers of haute cuisine like Julia Child in the USA or Elena Molokhovets in Russia, and then by culinary enthusiasts and celebrities who wrote their books based on their expertise and life experiences, which, in turn, became attractive for people who found an interest in a particular lifestyle, type of information, or narrative strategy.

Since the 1990s, cooking has become a field of constant self-presentation by culinary gurus who tried to find different and unique tones of voice that would allow them to attract the attention of a broad audience and use different strategies to build both their public and book image as well as produce an engaging narrative. One of the strategies they used was a type of recipes with history, which, in fact, could be considered a return to the roots of the transmission of culinary knowledge. Many families in Russia have preserved the notebooks of their mothers and grandmothers full of handwritten recipes, quite literally ripped out from journals and magazines and later embedded between the printed recipes, pieces of paper with notes from friends and relatives with

recipes of their signature dishes. In place of these florilegia, many of us have saved browser tabs, Instagram posts, and Pinterest boards with cooking ideas that could be read similarly: chronologies of life, interests, and hopes, or, in a nutshell, a self-portrait of the user. The genre of these notes is not quite cookbook-like but resembles more a culinary diary. Surprisingly, this diary format, which is so obvious and natural for discourse in general, is the least often used by the authors of cookbooks in Russia.

In Russia, the golden age of authored cookbooks with a personal twist came in the 2000s, together with the rise of lifestyle journalism. In the 2000s, cookbook authors could not ignore that a new social cluster with a fundamentally new consumption and lifestyle model had appeared in Russia and had set the discourse in the field of daily culture. The growing popularity of gastronomy as a topic was symptomatic and confirmatory of fundamental revisions of food culture as a lifestyle. In this lifestyle, food becomes not just a necessity that can bring joy and nutrients but also an important phenomenon of social and cultural life, endowed with a large number of additional meanings and marks of different types of consumer culture. Gastronomic experiences, habits, and skills are essential characteristics of a person on equal footing with their social and professional statuses, which makes a versatile theoretical study of food culture and, particularly, the study of written forms of gastronomic narrative relevant.

In this article, I will focus on one of the most popular and representative cookbooks of its time in Russia—Anahit Piruzyan's *Elle: Cooking Diary: Stories with Recipes* (*Elle: Кулинарный дневник. Истории с рецептами*), issued in 2008. Anahit Piruzyan, the successful culinary columnist, was able to capture in her book all the realities of fashionable Moscow in the early 2000s and, more importantly, to construct an image of a modern woman in the kitchen, eliciting her readers' trust and sympathy. The aim of this paper will be to answer several questions: how she does it, which strategies she uses to engage her audience, how she pictures herself as a culinary enthusiast, and what makes her so special.

Post-Soviet Lifestyle Media and the New Beginnings

The post-Soviet period of Russian history was and still is an era of a permanent revision of value systems. In the last thirty years, Russian society has witnessed the ebb and flow of redefining what does and what does not matter in a new era. One of the first significant changes in modern Russia in the 1990s was what could be described as an invasion of Western products, including movies, music, magazines, TV shows, brands, and new types of groceries and beverages.

Everything Soviet or even Russian in terms of culture and consumption was not altogether rejected but rather recast as outdated and not fashionable. In the 1990s and 2000s, one of the major dreams sold through media was building a new globalized country living in the same cultural timeline as Europe and the United States. However, it needed a mediator to help build the bridge between Russia and the West, to help New Money look more civilized, to set the values for a newly formed middle class, and to keep them up to date with recent information and trends. It was the right time for big lifestyle-media publishing houses to come to Russia.

Starting in 1994 with the first issue of *Cosmopolitan Russia*, the invasion began in earnest. Fashion magazines became more like lifestyle magazines at the beginning of their existence in Russia. While it is currently difficult to imagine *Elle* with pages of recipes to rip out and save for later, they were an integral part of the first issues of the Russian versions. The first Western magazines, like *Cosmopolitan* (first published in Russia in 1994), *Elle* (in 1996), or *Harper's Bazaar* (in 1996), all arranged the layout and explained the basics for a broad female audience. They would pave the way for more advanced and elitist media like *Vogue* (1997), *L'Officiel* (1997), or *Tatler* (2008). Topics varied from general fashion to new foods to try, new places to go, movies to watch, books to read, and new mantras to follow. Almost all major fashion magazines in Russia faced the ambitious challenge to formulate and arbitrate the tastes of a new, primarily female, audience: they had to teach women not only how to dress well but also explain to them the concept of a lifestyle itself and showcase all the parts of different lifestyles propagandized by the various magazines. Overall, it was a survival course for the new generation of global Russian ladies who wanted to keep up with the trends.

In their memoirs, early Russian lifestyle pioneers (for example, former editor-in-chief of *Vogue Russia* Alyona Doletskaya and former editor-in-chief of *GQ Russia* Michael Idov) believed that they needed to show their readers the art of living and the new normal for a normal country, the keyword of the era, according to Michael Idov (14). In his memoir *Dressed Up for a Riot*, he also mentions the fact that there was a new round of obsession with everything Western (106). Traditional Russian literary journals were replaced by Western lifestyle magazines; Russian celebrities were outdated, and people no longer paid any attention to their advice and lives: everything the audience was worried about was the fact that they did not feel that they were part of the same zeitgeist as people in Europe or the USA. To keep up with the Western agenda, people became an audience for new lifestyle magazines that gave them all the information they wanted. We can say, therefore, that the relative modernity of Russian history

was highly defined by the influx of Western lifestyle magazines. The short period between 1991 and 2014 (the year of the Crimea conflict, EU sanctions, and so-called tightening of the screws in Russia itself) could be called the golden age of Russian media when everything possible to print would somehow fit into the box of publishers' guidelines and advertising contracts' rules. As a result, the post-Soviet identity turns out to be dualistic. According to Svetlana Mareeva, it is based on multiple attempts to understand the Soviet past and actively acquire foreign experience, that is, the exploration of a new Westernized lifestyle. When the inhabitants of post-Soviet Russia got full access to new sources of information (foreign movies, magazines, books, unproblematic travel, etc.), they went from "fetishizing" Western objects (Todd) to "fetishizing empirical knowledge" (Oushakine).

The first Russian fashion magazines and the tone they set for the intellectual comprehension of everyday life became one of the milestones in forming a new cluster of the bohemian bourgeois in Russia. The cluster was characterized by the combination of high consumer culture, postulating the importance of professional success and traditional values of the intelligentsia: they do not hide their financial well-being, their consumer culture is built on quiet chic, they are well educated, they travel the world, they have liberal views, and they consider themselves carriers of global values and calmly talk about their ethnicity, as this is what helps them to find their place in the global society. In *Bobos in Paradise*, David Brooks argues that in their cultural behavior, a typical representative of this class should demonstrate conscience and good taste "without looking like one of those vulgar Yuppies they despise" (85).

The 2000s become a turning point in the history of culinary discourse in Russia: cooking was tightly woven into the cultural field formed by glamorous lifestyle magazines, which tend to review daily routines, such as cooking, to endow them with symbolic meaning, and to emphasize belonging to a particular social cluster. In this period, cooking started to be depicted not just as a utilitarian occupation but as a type of fashionable hobby.

Food has become an integral part of the new world order and one of the easiest ways to explore it. The number and scope of different ethnic restaurants increased; there were new gastronomic magazines focused on cooking, restaurant reviews, food traveling (*Good Housekeeping*, *Gastronom*, *KhlebSol'*, etc.), cooking-oriented TV shows (*Smak*, *Yedim Doma*, etc.), and publications of many cookbooks by Russian celebrities and opinion leaders (fashion magazine editors, famous writers, actors, musicians, TV presenters, and even cartoon characters). In the late 2000s, Russian readers gained access to Russian translations of foreign books by world-famous culinary authors (for example, Julia Child, Mark

Bittman, Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsay, or Paul Bocuse). At the same time, it was the beginning of the era of food blogs: Veronika Belotserkovskaya (@belonika), Maxim Syrnikov (@kare_1), or Elena Chekalova (@stalik_kitchen) explored different approaches and narrative strategies to deliver recipes.

These new media all convey novel experiences through food and make it a subject of precise study. Exploration of various new foods is an integral part of self-education. Deep knowledge of gastronomy becomes a symbolic elevator to the next level of life: if someone wants to be treated as a sophisticated and educated person, they need to know the bohemian bourgeois cultural and consumption code. Media, especially magazines, create a unique code for their audience: places, brands, food, and beverage preferences help put a tag on a person as “new money with a lack of style,” “sophisticated bourgeois,” “intellectual,” or “wannabe.” More than ever, food is a conversation starter; sometimes, it is even a conversation not about the food but about the person who brings up the topic: their life experience, travels, identity, consumption culture, education, etc. As a part of the narrative, the author gains importance and visibility. With the active use of extended text frames, the narrative of fashion magazines teaches readers that cooking is yet another way to tell others about themselves.

The Cooking Diary: a Genre Defined by the Author's Presence

As mentioned before, fashion and lifestyle magazines in the late 1990s and early 2000s in Russia always dedicated some pages to gastronomy. What and where you eat or drink was an unspoken marker of belonging to different cultural and social clusters. Magazines told their audience where to go, what to order, what to say about the place in small talk, and how to avoid faux pas if you want to look like a sophisticated global Russian. *Elle Russia* was no exception, and, in 2004, the magazine asked Anahit Piruzyan (who had been raised between Moscow, Yerevan, and Washington), a Moscow-based English literature specialist and translator, to write a column about food and lifestyle, which was then transformed into a book in 2008 after her column had become very popular. With her jet-setter background, prestigious education, a promising career in an international company in the 1990s, and a visibly bourgeois lifestyle, she was a perfect role model for the target audience of *Elle*: young and active women aged twenty-five to thirty-five who strive for self-realization, build a career, follow fashion trends, know their worth, and try to buy the best goods (according, of course, to the publisher's guideline).

To make cooking a part of a fashionable lifestyle, Piruzyan needed to find

a way to present it in its proper context. She was not a popular chef, a famous restaurant owner, an opinionated and experienced gastro-journalist, or even a celebrity; therefore, she needed to explain why her opinion matters and what is interesting about her recipes. She decided to begin with an unexpected genre that allowed her to be who she was. She was not a non-professional cook but a professional reader and a person experienced in the Western lifestyle. She wrote a public cooking diary: short essays about her life, traveling, family, friends, favorite books, etc., organized around different recipes, where she depicts the perfect image of a new Russian upper middle-class elite—a global Russian—together with their lifestyle habits, values, and consumption patterns.

Often, the genre sets the modality of the author's textual presence and narrative strategies, which could help her find a way to get her target audience's favor, interest, and trust. Piruzyan chooses to call her text "a diary," which, in turn, sets up readers' expectations as well as the author's intention to produce a primarily self-centered narrative organized according to the dates. Speaking of an actual diary as a textual genre, we can also mention the absolute honesty of the text. Diaries are not made for other people's eyes but for authors to share their feelings and capture moments of life in a contemplative manner, which makes entries raw and partially incoherent. The diary is one of the most selfish genres, in which everything gravitates towards the author. At a narrative level, diaries as a genre are characterized by "a high level of narrative individualization and the desire to demonstrate the features of individual human consciousness" (Bogdanova 29).¹ Readers can understand a lot about an author and their background through the diary: even the language directly depends on the author's belonging to a particular social "class, their political and religious views, or geographical location" (28).

Printed diaries at the beginning of the twenty-first century were well-known as a genre, and readers were aware that these texts were re-made or written explicitly for publishing; however, they traditionally assumed the narrator of the printed diary was similar to the real author. The personal and self-reflexive nature of diary entries gives grounds to believe that the author often appears in it in the format of self-presentation, that is, "a communicative (including verbal) strategy for managing the recipient's impression of the speaker," based on "the act of evaluating oneself, [and] describing one's personal qualities and self-identification as an act of attributing oneself to a group" (Lappo 33, 35).

The nature of the relationship between these concepts is formulated by

¹ All the translations from Russian to English are my own.

Goffman, who writes that self-identification can be observed only through self-presentation and that all human activity is subordinated to creating an image, the impression of others about it. One of the factors of successful self-presentation is understanding the significance of the role of the addressee in this process since self-presentation is possible only in the presence of a perceiving consciousness. Furthermore, self-presentation is “one of the ways to control the impressions that other people have about us” (Kendrick et al. 136); or “the cognitive and speech activity associated with this process” (Issers 64), that is, the addresser must be able to predict the audience’s potential reaction to their chosen image.

Piruzyan clearly understands her audience and her own character, which is supposed to be presented in her diary. She fixes on the topics and values of *Elle* magazine and ties them with cooking as the practice of a stylish individual. Her manner of writing and organizing the narrative shows similarities with a popular book and TV series, *Sex and the City*, except that, unlike Carrie Bradshaw, Piruzyan does not store her sweaters in the oven and has no relationship problems. She talks about friends, family, travels, and books as the primary sources of her cooking inspiration. However, she makes it evident that she is neither a Stepford Housewife nor a glamorous Barbie or jet-setter socialite. She describes herself through the different lines of self-presentation, which creates a more multilayered image of an author, which turns out to be a key to the book’s success.

The self-presentation of a cookbook author is organized to meet the expectations and visions of the readers. Anahit Piruzyan was in a good starting position: her potential audience was described in the guidelines for magazine authors, which helped her to predict the expectations. The tone of voice of *Elle Russia* magazine was friendlier and less high-brow compared to, for example, *Vogue*, so the columnist tried to follow the role which could be described as a more sophisticated and experienced friend who would like to share knowledge with others. Because Piruzyan started a food column, she became a friend for that part of the audience who would like to know more about the kind of food that was a part of the lifestyle propagandized by *Elle* magazine. Piruzyan has never been a professional cook, but she decided to elevate her cooking level and gain more experience—it was in the very first story of her life she wrote about—and the message helped her set an intention and start building the bridge between her and the readers. She is like them, but also, she is not.

Just Like All Other Girls but Better: The Image of a Modern Cookbook's Author

Unusual self-presentation and creating a specific image becomes essential in the era of information abundance when it is increasingly challenging to find your audience, attract their attention, and make them interested in the content. Also, for readers, it is more and more complicated to treat an author as a sort of authority. The Piruzyan's manifestation in *Elle: Cooking Diary* is characterized by the consistent development of the so-called *Me-topic*² and consistent self-presentation in several directions: the author talks about herself as an intellectual and literature expert, a food enthusiast, a global Russian who has lived in different countries, a specialist in American lifestyle, a family person, and a girl who likes fashion. So, we can analyze these directions one after another to find a key to the success of this self-presentation strategy and also try to understand how it was correlated with the development of Russian lifestyle magazines in the early 2000s.

Me-topic 1: Cooking Enthusiast

The self-presentation of Anahit Piruzyan as a culinary author begins with a description of her attitude toward food and the process of cooking. She represents the new generation of modern women who do not want to spend all their time in the kitchen and refuse to treat cooking as something they must do because of other people's expectations.

In the book's very first chapter, she says that, after resigning from a job, she bought a good-quality pepper grinder as a sign of the beginning of a new life. This simple purchase is described as something owned by professional chefs and a useful tool for improving cooking skills but also an act of initiation and re-birth: a former corporate translator turns into an amateur enthusiastic cook. The aspiration to improve the quality of her culinary life, which the author speaks of at the beginning of the book, is combined with the desire to realize her creative potential through cooking.

In the middle of her book, Piruzyan provokes her readers a little when describing her relationship with cooking, which is relatively normal for twenty-

² "Me-topic" will be used here as a broader and more text-analysis-oriented definition for the psychological term "I-statement." "Me-topic" could be used to find a common definition for a list of self-explanatory or self-presenting statements (both implicit and explicit) of an author in a text that intends to create a certain image of an author.

first-century working women but unexpected from an author who focuses on cooking and recipes:

When people read my culinary diary, they probably get the impression that I am spinning around in my apron in front of the stove all day. However, this is not true. Moreover, during the week, I rarely can push myself to cook. And not only because I want to avoid messing around in the kitchen after work. I, frankly, do not treat it as my sacred duty. Moreover, I have no interest in cooking routine food. Something new is another matter. (Piruzyan 76)³

This statement corresponds with the new concept of a woman in the kitchen inspired by the culture of the bohemian bourgeois and promoted by the lifestyle magazines of the 2000s: she is interested in cooking only as a creative practice and not as an everyday duty imposed by historical gender stereotypes, according to which the kitchen was a field of female self-assertion. In this context, the image of a housewife in an apron, spending all day in front of the stove, is more ironic than negative: for a modern woman, a career is a priority when a household is a choice. At that time, it is pretty unpredictable. She picks a new self-presentation character: she is not a Soviet woman freed of her household duties, the housewife from a patriarchal society, a careerist, or even a glamorous lady who stores her sweaters in her oven. She represents instead a regular woman who cooks when and if she wants. And it is a new turn for the genre when everyone expects an author who likes to cook and does it all the time. Overall, this self-presentation helps her to become reliable because her female readers can see themselves in her; moreover, it helps her to gain trust for her honesty.

Even though Piruzyan initially draws attention to her culinary unprofessionalism, she has another sort of expertise—she is familiar with many sources, unknown in the early 2000s Russia but well-known in Western cooking: books, blogs, TV shows, etc. This secret knowledge gives her many points in reliability because she looks like other women again—she is not an inventor but a follower; she relies on someone else's instructions as long as they are from a trustworthy source and makes them a part of her routine.

Most of the recipes she uses are taken from essential American and British sources (books by Mark Bittman, Julia Child, or Jamie Oliver), which had not yet been translated and, therefore, had not yet achieved popularity among cookbook lovers in Russia. Instead of brand-new recipes, she treats her readers to new information about the most inspirational celebrities of the American and British cookbook scene. She does not just say who they are and why they are supposed

³ All the following passages come from Piruzyan, *Elle: Cooking Diary* (*Elle: Кулинарный дневник*).

to be known, but she also describes how she incorporates their recipes into her own life.

Piruzyan often performs a purely educational function and gives her readers short trivia: some biography facts, why it is essential to know this author, and how they impacted the Western cooking community. As an example, we can use a description of Julia Child, a cult-status American cookbook author and TV host who popularized French cuisine in America:

Americans adored her—after all, she taught them how to cook. Here is the story: after the war, Julia Child, along with her husband, ended up in Paris, where she decided to master French cuisine. First, she entered the reputable culinary school Le Cordon Bleu and then, with two friends, wrote a fundamental work called *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. (12)

An interesting fact always follows the biography. In the case of Julia Child, Piruzyan describes how the famous American blog *The Julia Project*, inspired by Julia Child's cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (nowadays well-known for a broad audience after the Hollywood movie *Julie & Julia* from 2009), inspires her to think about starting her own cooking blog and simultaneously explains the idea of an original blog itself:

We sat in a cafe and discussed whether to create our Internet blog. I talked about a rather curious blog of an American secretary from Long Island who, in order to bring order to her life, came up with a project called *The Julia Project*—within a year, she had to cook all 524 recipes from that very book *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. (13-14)

Piruzyan brings all the facts with a friendly sharing intonation, making her educational intention obvious but not imperative or magisterial. This strategy helps her confirm the quality of the provided information and places her as a foreign-culture expert.

Piruzyan manifests her erudition in culinary literature not only through the mention of key names but also through the use of recipes from eminent authors. Almost every recipe has a corresponding textual frame with some examples of name-dropping as follows. She invokes the name of Julia Child when she writes that “all these conversations led me to the fact that I also could honor the memory of Julia Child by preparing something from her book” (14). She similarly uses Terence Conran: “I decided for the first time to choose the most straightforward recipe from Terence Conran's *The Conran Cookbook*” (17). Finally, she will bring up well-known or best-selling books from the United States of America: “I have a great recipe, taken from one of my favorite books in my collection called *The Whole World Loves Chicken Soup* by a former New York Times food critic Mimi Sheraton” (20).

Despite the secondary nature of the recipes, this approach to cooking works well to create a favorable image of the author, for whom the creativity of the culinary process was not in the creation of a fundamentally new dish but in the compilation of recipes from authoritative sources and their contextual rethinking or, more generally, in endowing the recipes with additional subjective meanings. Thus, through her self-presentation as a culinary enthusiast, Piruzyan sets two intentions, which will be very important for understanding her other roles. Firstly, she creates a reliable image of a modern cooking woman, for whom cooking is an exciting hobby, a way to improve her life but not a sacred duty. She shows that she allows herself to be lazy, tired, or, on the contrary, hard-working, and indirectly permits her readers not to be perfect housewives because she is not one either. Secondly, cooking is an intellectual challenge for her: she cooks with books, knows many sources, and never forgets to mention how important these books are in Western culture. In the late 2000s, she gives her readers keys to a new world of names and recipes, and yet, she still remains reliable in her role as a modern working woman who is not interested in being inventive in the kitchen but likes to add something new to her cooking practice, who permanently re-evaluates the information from authoritative sources and tops it up with some personal life-related meanings.

Me-topic 2: Just Like Another Girl

The second topic also aims to create a reliable yet slightly idealized image of the author. It is obvious Piruzyan is not a pioneer of an unusual lifestyle, and she does not have any unusual values either. Her core values are family, friendships, and her job, and she often returns to these sub-topics in her book. Occasionally, she points out her similarities with the majority of people and writes: “Of course, on the next day, like all ordinary people, I love to put on a large plate a little bit of everything from yesterday’s leftovers, lie on the sofa and turn on the TV” (16). Even though she often mentions she likes to cook, she is not afraid to show her minor flaws (like the fact that she has a thing for eating leftovers in front of the TV instead of cooking) to gain her audience’s trust and to show that they share similarities. This also helps her to maintain a balance between her aesthetic and intellectual approach to food and her reliability. She admits to her imperfections openly, which is also typical for the diary as a genre based on the semi-truthful self-description of an author.

Piruzyan emphasizes her connection to a broad audience by pointing out situations that can happen to everyone, like, for example, this one: “In every woman’s life, some turns are leading us to unexpected discoveries. For example, you can

discover a new gift—a gift of cooking” (7). She personifies the general idea, pointing to its particular realization in her life (also tied to the main topic of her book, cooking). Her readers can relate to it or find some inspiration here. However, it is difficult for her to make her public image ordinary. She is the author of a primarily fashion magazine, so it is difficult for her to base her narrative on how normal she is and not inspire others with her perfectly curated lifestyle.

Even if Piruzyan says she is not a typical housewife, her family members are permanent fixtures in her stories, familial devotion is one of her core values, and food becomes an integral part of her family history. Primarily, the family is connected with homemade food since, like any non-professional cook, she would mainly cook for them. The opinions of her husband and son are essential indicators of the quality of the food and, therefore, of the published recipe: “It was so delicious, so we all, including Stas [her husband], ate two pieces each” (9).

Like any other typical mom, she discusses her son’s food preferences. For example, in the textual frame of a Caesar salad recipe, she explains that she is “generally such an expert on Caesar” because her son “Tigran loves it a lot” (97). Interestingly enough, neither her husband, son, parents, nor in-laws have any described personality details: her readers do not know what they like (except some dishes), or what their occupations or hobbies are. The main aim of their presence seems to be to create a loving family background, which helps to bond with family-oriented readers but does not exaggerate.

The author also briefly refers to the theme of her childhood. Childhood memories, as required by the book’s thematic focus, are also primarily related to food:

These words immediately evoked my childhood memories. Not about dumplings (no one in my immediate family ever cooked them), but about fantastic dumplings with cottage cheese that my grandmother made—they were surprisingly tender and tasty. How much I loved them! I remember that my grandmother, in her typical leisurely manner, sculpted them, sitting at the table, and put them out on a large linen towel. (103-04)

The food in these memories has another symbolic meaning—it is not only an intellectual challenge or act of love but also a preservation of a family’s memories and history. This idea speaks to a traditional practice of many Soviet families where women created their own family cookbooks from plain notebooks. In those notebooks, they wrote down all the recipes they got from their friends and family, various cookbooks, magazines, newspapers, etc. Those notebooks preserve family history and memories of people and places, and Piruzyan also seems like a person who wants to keep the exact meaning of the recipe.

Childhood also refers to the collective memory of those who spent their formative years during the Soviet period. She mentions things every former Soviet child did, like family trips to the sanatoriums located in the Caucasus Mountains: “The next day, at breakfast, I told Stas with inspiration about what I was going to cook: all about Bill Blass, Lesya’s allergies, and also about the fact that a similar wrap was served in the dining room of the Armenian sanatorium in Gagra, where I spent almost every summer as a child” (8). She also describes the secret defiance of parental prohibitions: “And after lessons, I secretly ran to the department store for nightmarish meat pies, which, of course, no one allowed me to buy” (65).

Childhood memories evoke, therefore, collective memory: most of Piruzyan’s readers would have had the same or similar experiences, typical for several generations of Soviet children. However, the author does not address more specific memories since the existence of common facts in the biography allows readers to compare their life experience with the author’s experience and indirectly fit themselves in her life story and lifestyle.

Besides Piruzyan’s family, her friends also often appear in her stories, becoming a part of her self-presentation and one more source of her culinary knowledge. The author mentions that she asks them for recipes: “The next day, I sent Timur an e-mail asking him to send me the recipe for yesterday’s bouillabaisse” (71). Alternatively, they bring her something to try: “One day, my friend Marina, knowing about my great love, came to visit me with a wonderful gift—a jar of ginger and grapefruit jam she made herself. It was a real hit” (74). However, even these traditional interactions between friends are depicted as slightly elevated: her friends are described as sophisticated cooks who use a lot of, and this is unusual for Russian daily food culture, foreign recipes. As the Russian idiom says, show me your friends, and I will tell you which kind of person you are, and in the case of Piruzyan’s self-presentation, this idea becomes more than legitimate.

Piruzyan continues a tradition of cooking diaries, hand-made notebooks with recipes when she is using her friends’ names for recipe titles: “Open pie (quiche) from Natasha,” “Ginger jam from Marina,” “Schwabian Spätzle with cheese from Anna and Willy,” or “Chocolate mousse from Patricia.” Usage of such titles initially belongs to a time when the authors keep information about how, where, and from whom they got a recipe. Also, this naming strategy has another purpose—to display the author as a member of an international friend circle, to highlight her connections with both Russian and Western gastronomic traditions, and to prove the authenticity of her recipes. Moreover, by referring to an exchange of recipes, the author changes the symbolic status of the offered

culinary information: it is not just a set of recommendations but the result of friendly communication and material evidence of friendship. For Piruzyan, the act of keeping this information in a written form is an essential condition that connects, on the one hand, with the fact that the diary as a genre implies a high level of factuality, and on the other, with the need to form the image of a person whose life, in general, does not differ much from the lives of her readers.

Another way to involve readers in the author's friend circle is to use their often-used quotes, for example: "As my friend Sasha would say: what can this tell us from the point of view of a classical psychoanalysis?" (8). Piruzyan might even mention that "everything is going according to plan, as my friend Vika says" (16). She symbolically involves her audience in the discourse of her friend group, creating a set of insider quotes, jokes, and knowledge.

The author gives the readers the sentiment that they are involved in her private life, which is not significantly different from their own. The high level of abstraction helps Piruzyan weave her friends and family into the text. However, this involvement is rather superficial: the reader recognizes some names repeated from text to text but barely knows anything about these people, except for the information related to cooking or eating. Friends and family are nothing but decoration or background for the author's self-presentation and also for readers' perception of themselves through this book: if they are part of this group too, it means they belong to the same cultural cluster, share the same interests, and have the same values as the rest of the group, so—with a book's mediation—they are also getting closer and closer to their ideal lifestyle.

Me-topic 3: An American Lifestyle Insider

To make her book more interesting, Piruzyan focuses on the fact that, although she has something in common with her audience, she has a significantly elevated lifestyle and lives her life differently. One of the reasons for her superiority is her career, which even now looks like a perfect example of a smooth transformation from the Soviet to the post-Soviet intellectual elite: the daughter of successful parents who were able to travel the world and live abroad during the Soviet times (an unspoken but obvious marker that her parents had a high position in the diplomatic or academic circles), a successful graduate of a prestigious university, a Ph.D. in English literature, a former translator employed by an American corporation, and a popular fashion magazine's columnist—she uses her background and education to create a good career strategy and goes from upper-class Soviet intelligentsia to upper-middle class post-Soviet bourgeois bohemian.

Her family has working ties with the USA, so the author's connections with America are manifested not just through her corporate job. For Piruzyan, as a self-proclaimed American lifestyle expert, it is important to show how deep and long-lasting her relationships with the country are. She mentions that she spent her childhood with her parents in Washington, which turned out to be her favorite city: "Many years ago, back in the early nineties, I came to my favorite city of Washington to spend my holidays there" (20). New York turns out to be her other favorite city: "And it is all because New York is my favorite city in the world, and the prospect that I will be there again immediately fills my life with new meaning" (92). She also accentuates that she still regularly travels to the USA with her friends and family:

Thus, on Moscow soil, there was an unexpected reunion of a spontaneously organized but very successful group with whom we traveled to California two years ago [. . .]. The trip proceeded according to the plan: in San Francisco, we rented a car and drove around to all nearby attractions like Monterey Bay, the city of Salinas glorified by Steinbeck, and the University of Berkeley. (49)

For the generation of post-Soviet readers (former Soviet children), the United States of America was a country of dreams. In the 1990s, this dream became even more vivid with all available TV shows, lifestyle media, and movies. Piruzyan fulfills the dream of many Soviet children about life in the United States surrounded by many attractive stereotypes and myths. For her, America is not just a land of dreams but also a significant node that unites the past and present and influences her current preferences, way of thinking, career path, circle of acquaintances, etc. Her teen years in Washington explain her obsession with American culture and her career in an American corporation and turn her into an almost culture-bearer in the eyes of her readers.

Work in a foreign company in the nineties was considered highly prestigious. However, the author shifts the focus and highlights not the fact of successful employment (the ultimate dream of many Russians at that time) but rather the social and cultural capital she receives in the company. Since the acquisition of knowledge accompanies career success, she demonstrates it precisely. When she talks about her job, she always notifies readers where and with whom she has worked before: "It was in the early 90s when I was still working as a translator. The one French woman who worked in our purely American office was the wife of one of our American colleagues" (22). She also mentions that "Stas and I were invited to visit by George, an American with whom I worked many years ago" (27). Finally, she can claim that "George is indeed one of the most secular and sophisticated Americans I have ever met, and I have seen quite a few Americans" (27).

She works in an international team and, like any global Russian of that time, strives to absorb foreign cultural and everyday codes to avoid feeling like a stranger in her working environment. As an insider, she decides to share her knowledge with her audience and introduce them to new names, words, and lifestyle tips. For example, she introduces readers to new and previously non-existent (in Russian) language terms, such as “comfort food” or “dip,” and some American traditions of hospitality:

Americans never immediately sit at the table, as we do in our country. At the beginning of the dinner, everyone sits on the sofas around the coffee table for drinks and snacks. Then, less sophisticated hosts offer their guests chips with some “dip” from the supermarket. More sophisticated ones serve some interesting ethnic bread and homemade sauce or dip. (28)

In this case, her strategy is close to the strategy of modern Internet influencers. She talks about her life and adds useful tips and information here and there for those who want to get new knowledge. She is trying to create a comfortable information space for those who are already familiar with new information (and help them to feel more sophisticated), for those who want to improve their life (and help them to reach a new level and get some authentic tips), and for those who just want to read about a dream life (and enjoy it).

Me-topic 4: An Intellectual

Not a professional chef herself, Piruzyan presents herself as a literata with broad literary knowledge. Reading is one of the typical activities of an intellectual elitist, as well as an essential part of the symbolic code of Russian intellectuals, who often use literary references to explain the world around them and have a quote for every life situation possible. However, intellectuals in the Russian mass culture are not significantly related to cooking and taking care of everyday life; on the contrary, for representatives of the bohemian bourgeois, there is no contradiction between academic knowledge and love for improving one's life.

Piruzyan is definitely trying to combine the values of the bohemian bourgeois (like a good quality of life and elitist type of consumption) and pure intellectuals (knowledge and education) and represent herself as a summary product of both social groups. She indirectly characterizes herself as an intellectual through a quote from her friend: “Sasha gave me one of the most pleasant compliments in my life. He said I baked pancakes like a chubby, blushing bourgeois and not like a skinny intellectual. Only Sasha could flatter me so brilliantly three times in one sentence” (32).

Even if her cooking skills are different from expected intellectual ones (“intellectual women cooking skills” in Russian culture generally mean “no cooking skills at all”), she follows an intellectual approach to picking up the recipes. She describes her favorite recipes as being “passed through the experience and taste of an excellent chef. That is something I am incredibly greedy for” (36). She is not just picking up the first recipe she finds—she is looking for a deeper meaning or unusual context, which could make it more special.

Literary references for Piruzyan become a way to re-evaluate some of the realms of daily life. Here, for example, is a remark on a Shakespeare translation—something not often seen in cookbooks:

Only after living in Moscow for almost twenty years I understood why Shakespeare called one of his most famous comedies *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and nothing else. It was inaccurately translated into Russian as *A Summer Night's Dream*, but it is different. It must be midsummer, not just any time of the summer (to be honest, Shakespeare meant the night before the summer solstice, but this does not change my theory). (42)

The food also goes through the prism of literary knowledge: “The spaetzle that was cooked, for example, for little Schiller, is not that different from those that we ate while sitting at a dacha in the Russian countryside” (55). She further cites Proust’s famous seven volumes *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*): “As I have already noted, she cooked very well, and if Proust set off in search of lost time only from memories of his childhood cookies, then I fall into a similar state of mind when I am thinking about my grandmother’s vermicelli soup” (105). Additionally, she calls upon Russian dramatist Anton Chekhov: “The last time as an unexpected component, he [my friend] brought a bottle of seltzer. I was delighted and said: That is so Russian literature! That is so Chekhov!” (31). For the author, food is a bridge between fiction and reality, history and modern life, and she seems to enjoy these parallels, and she transfers this feeling to her audience.

The image of a *littérateur* is also shaped by describing her reading habits. Piruzyan prepares for travel by reading not only modern guidebooks but also classic literature. As she describes some of her pre-travel research, “I immerse myself in the material. I open my books about the splendor and poverty of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, take guidebooks and maps from the shelf, and reread selected passages from Schnitzler and John Irving” (34).

Books help Piruzyan to recharge an inner battery. She writes, “no matter how exhausted I am, as soon as I find myself among the unshakable shelves with books, I fully recover” (58). She also cannot resist the pleasure of sharing her opinion about a good writer in the middle of another story: “Here I have to

digress to tell the whole world what an excellent writer Karl Capek is!” (111). Literature, therefore, is a big part of her self-presentation as a cook and a person. She offers her readers the opportunity to feel like intellectuals in the kitchen. They get a recipe, personal interpretation, a cultural context, and a set of facts that could be used in conversation. Unfortunately, the facts she offers are only sometimes directly related to gastronomy.

Me-topic 5: A Girl with Style

Piruzyan shows that any person can be intelligent and fashionable at the very same time and becomes a perfect example of this statement. Interest in fashion is a common ground for many women, so using not only intelligence but fashion codes, including designers' names, brands, and popular Moscow places, seems like the right decision to enlarge an audience. Readers of *Elle* magazine are familiar with this code, and this familiarity helps to balance the amount of new and well-known names in a namedropping game the author plays.

Piruzyan often mentions the names of fashion brands like, for example, Chanel, Paul Smith, or Dries Van Noten. They could be dedicated to her shopping story, like this one: “By four, I got ready and went to the center to meet with Lesya. We decided to go to the Le Form boutique, where I noticed a gorgeous skirt from Van Noten, one of my favorite designers” (39). Designer items are not just her prerogative: her husband receives “nice cufflinks from Paul Smith” (18), while her son gets a “cool thing, a Chanel basketball ball” originally gifted at the fashion show to her friend Lesya who “did not know what to do with it after” (12).

Not being the subject of open fetishization, fashion brands have always been an organic part of the social bubble where the author exists. For fashion insiders, it is easy to distinguish a wannabe who wants to belong to the group but doesn't understand its rules by observing their consumption strategies. If someone doesn't know the markers of a superior or more sophisticated consumption culture (for example, that Chanel utilitarian item with a big logo is a faux pas), it could be impossible for her or him to blend in the fashion elitists' circle. Oppositely, the brand that the author calls her favorite, Dries Van Noten, for fashion insiders, is a marker of quiet chic, the evidence of a higher consumer culture where every item has its symbolic capital and secret meaning. Piruzyan shows that her taste in all lifestyle aspects is fun and smart but not flashy; she cares about stories and history, not about prominent logos and common names. Even in the context of fashion (and, in fact, especially in the context of fashion), the author finds a compromise between fashion and intelligence. As a typical

representative of her social class, she moves away from obsession over the brands but not from luxury goods. The fashion aspect of her life made her column so outstanding and popular in the 2000s: she lives the life of a fashion magazine heroine or *Sex and the City* character, but very flexibly, without condemning those who cannot live like that.

The names of restaurants, cafes, and boutiques are used in the text quite similarly. It could be an entire passage about a particular place, like when she decides to clarify her opinion about a popular Moscow restaurant: “So, I concluded that Pushkin is remarkable not only for its win-win ratio of interiors and cuisine. The main thing is that, despite all its glamour, they treat everything there with enviable ease” (46-47). Also, it could be a casual mention of the regular route from a famous coffee shop to a fashion boutique: “After the café, we went to Le Form—this is our standard route” (12).

The names of restaurants and significant fashion stores in Moscow in the 2000s appear in the text as often as brands, books, and names of foreign cities. For readers unfamiliar with the fashion magazine discourse of that time, all these names would mean nothing. However, for religious fashion-press buyers, it is a straightforward insider code. Insiders would know that Coffeemia is the most expensive and popular coffee shop in Moscow or that Pushkin is an expensive popular restaurant for the Moscow elite. Finally, Le Form, where, according to the book, the author often goes, is a high-end avant-garde fashion boutique, the owners of which have introduced intellectual fashion (brands like Dries Van Noten) to the Moscow fashion crowd.

The use of a fashion code in a culinary text, on the one hand, helps Piruzyan create an image of an ideal life from the pages of a fashion magazine, where a successful heroine has an exciting job, a friendly family, and numerous successful friends, where she reads books, goes to trendy places, buys designer clothes, collects interesting recipes from unusual sources, and sometimes cooks because it is one of her pleasant hobbies, not a necessity. However, on the other hand, the author knows her potential audience, and, with the help of such anchors, she holds the attention and strokes the ego of the readers, who want to belong to the group and be connoisseurs of trends. If they understand all the meanings hidden behind such name-dropping, they will get closer to the new elite group described in *Elle* magazine and on Piruzyan’s cookbook pages.

Conclusion

Piruzyan formulates her central thesis, which could boldly characterize her attitude to cooking, and which is still actively broadcasted by essayistic culinary literature today:

How to separate culinary impressions from all the rest? It seems like this is impossible. After all, food, like nothing else, is inextricably linked with everything that happens to us—who is interested in it for itself? However, on the other hand, what surrounds it [the food] is more interesting: visits and quiet evenings at home, travel to other countries and gatherings at friends' dachas, new trendy restaurants and family feasts familiar from childhood, and, most importantly, human relationships and characters—generally, life itself, sorry for the banality. Furthermore, cooking is a manifestation of your love for life, friends, and relatives, an opportunity to express your feelings and show how much you care about others. (117)

Thus, food, for her, is a subjective value, and its story is interesting precisely because of its subjectivity. Piruzyan's book was one of the first examples of cookbooks that became popular not just for the recipes but for their surroundings—the fashionable lifestyle textual frame. Because the author uses a lot of modern realities of the 2000s, the book has become an encyclopedia of a certain part of Russian life of that era. For readers of that time, it was a detailed and engaging description of the life of a successful young woman in fashionable Moscow. On the one hand, the author documents her surroundings in small details: the names of popular restaurants, boutiques, travel destinations, or movies. Nevertheless, she does not feel like a resident of Moscow alone—she is the personification of the new elite of her time, the Global Russians, who could freely travel the world, work in international companies, know the secrets of different foreign cultures, speak multiple languages, and belong to the global cultural context. And food is an essential and inseparable part of this context.

For the social group Piruzyan belongs to, cooking is as much an intellectual exercise as reading books or traveling. For them, a recipe or dish requires some interesting background story to transform the act of eating or cooking it from a necessity to a creative attraction, an adventure, a part of the story, or a conversation starter. As a cookbook author, Piruzyan attracts her readers with authentic knowledge from English-language culinary sources and stories about the gastronomic and hospitality traditions of the United States' upper and upper-middle class. Since America was an important cultural trading location in the 2000s, sharing information from original lifestyle texts written in English was a winning strategy for authors who wanted to catch readers' attention.

In many ways, Piruzyan's self-presentation strategy is a good example of the early 2000s lifestyle author's narrative. We can call her an influencer of the

pre-influencer era: she finds the right tone of voice for her target audience and personalizes a common topic with some information her readers can enjoy on different levels. She speaks to her audience in the same language of fashion they know. She deliberately scatters hints throughout the text that she is similar to her readers to establish contact with them so they can trust her. She is neither a famous chef nor a celebrity, so she has to find those sides of her personality that would interest her audience. She is a good friend and a good hostess. She finds those who also like to cook in her circle of friends and acquaintances. Her circle of friends are people who are constantly traveling, going to popular places, visiting each other, and discussing food. She is, of course, a wife, mother, daughter, and a family person. She creates a picture of a large, friendly family gathering where food is the center of the event but not the main reason to be together. According to the book, the heart of her concept of the family is having collective memories of, again, food, places, and people.

Most importantly, she is a connoisseur of the Western world. She does not teach her readers how to live; she shows them a particular lifestyle. In this lifestyle, women can combine everything: traditional values and new ideals; family and successful career; reading classics and buying avant-garde designer clothing; being an old-school intellectual, a fashion girl and a bourgeois at the same time; speaking multiple languages and living in the surrounding of multiple cultures; traveling the world, living in the capital, and remembering your roots. For her, the Western culture is initially privileged, which could be easily explained by her life story; however, she never openly articulates this statement and, even on the contrary, tries to make it very casual and simple. She never says she is privileged and lets her readers guess her social status and how successful and wealthy she and her family were in the past and still are. She is just a woman who has lived in the US, worked with Americans, and read many English lifestyle books, and that is enough expertise for a friendly chat with her readers about food, life, and some little lifestyle tricks. She is also a fashionable intellectual who enjoys going to trendy places and consuming designer items as much as reading and occasionally thinking of Schiller while cooking dinner.

She is a true pioneer in expanding the fashion narrative on lifestyle texts in Russia: she uses the language of the glamorous magazine and codes of fashion and adds them to the household discourse. Her readers know the languages of both worlds, but they have never collided in the printed text before. It seemed that women who love to cook, women who love to read, and women who love fashion were three different kinds of women. Piruzyan shows that it could be one person, and in the 2000s, it was a significant narrative shift in cookbook literature. This book is one of the first Russian culinary books that sell not so

much culinary knowledge but a personalized dream of a good life.

The combination of fashion magazine discourse and more traditional hospitality book discourse was the lucky find of Piruzyan, which ensures her a place on the list of culinary bestsellers of the late 2000s. She offers her female audience an example of a new approach to cooking, which had not yet been seen in Russian-language books: she depicts food as the result of life experience and a creative hobby that only accompanies other interests. More broadly, she clarifies that a woman no longer has to choose who she is and how she would be perceived: she could be a hostess of the house, a successful professional, a well-read intellectual, and a fashionista and not be limited to only one of the above.

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夢想生活家： 俄羅斯二十一世紀初食譜作家 的形象營造

摘要

二十一世紀初期，俄羅斯出現前所未見的生活風格文學，各種生活風格之書寫傾巢而出，包括日記、部落格、電視節目等等；歷經多年的孤立之後，俄羅斯為了加入全球化國家之列，必須在日常生活中吸納西方事物，其中飲食文化尤其成為新俄羅斯必須學習的項目之一。若說二十世紀的九零年代，俄國人得學習管理新財富，那麼二十一世紀初期的二十年，俄國人轉而學習如何花錢經營生活風格；若說流行雜誌、外國新電影、書、電視影集引領西方文化進入俄羅斯，那麼食譜與美食雜誌儼然成為西方生活風格的教科書，開拓了飲食料理論述。這時期最具獨特之處在於飲食料理書寫的作家本身，可以是知名廚師、名人，可以是受歡迎的專欄作家、美食方面的史學家，只要能提供讀者新的、罕見的真知灼見。眾多出版書籍之中，以阿奈特·皮魯齊揚（Анаит Пирузян）的作品《她：料理日誌，食譜故事》最為突出，原本只是傳統教導取向的烹飪書寫，作者卻採取超乎尋常寫作策略，不僅書寫食譜或食譜的歷史，更書寫環繞於食譜的小故事，取代了烹飪食譜本身的重要性；尤其，作者的自我呈現營造二十一世紀完美的現代女性形象：成功的美食專欄作家、美國布爾喬亞飲食文化的專家、全球化的新俄羅斯人等多重身分，一個網紅世代出現之前便具有影響力的人物，以此吸引流行雜誌《她》的主要女性讀者。本論文希冀探討飲食書寫的作者阿奈特·皮魯齊揚如何談論自己，又談了甚麼內容，方能贏得讀者的信任與興趣，作者如何營造自己熱衷於美食料理的形象，而相較於其他同時期食譜書寫的作家，又是哪些特質讓阿奈特·皮魯齊揚與眾不同。

關鍵字：生活風格文學、食譜書、作者形象、自我呈現策略、俄羅斯日常文化