

Wyatt Blackstone

English 110 H5

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Time inevitably changes all things, from our governments, to our social norms, and even cooking its self. This is discussed in Michael Pollan's essay "Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch" when he describes the transition of the cultural impact of cooking shows, and cooking in general, over the past decades. This is best summed up in the type of cooking shows on air now and then from the 1960's. Gordon Ramsay verses Julia Child and Chopped verses Martha Stewart. Although the amount of networking shown for cooking has stayed relatively the same, the action of the shows and our personal commitment to cooking has dramatically changed.

When you look back into your childhood memories, a lot of us find us waiting at the dinner table eagerly anticipating one of our favorite meals to be served up by our mother or father. However, now we seem to just be sitting on our couches and chairs waiting to go out to eat or for our premade food to be taken out of the microwave while we finish the episode of our favorite action filled, do or die, cooking tv shows. This is fortunately not the case in my household, however, there was a noticeable change, partly schedule related, in the amount of crockpot meals that could simmer away all day and come out ready, to several hours of scrupulous cooking to make a good tasting meal when my brother and I reached high school age. With our busy days and the new changing norm that cooking isn't as important anymore, we took the easier route. A good example of this in someone else's life is in Taylor Gibson's essay about her favorite meal. She quoted from her mother, "Shaw's was giving out recipe cards as a

promotion, and this was one of them. I collected around twenty of them and chicken cordon bleu was one of four we have actually tried”, describing how they obtained the recipe for her favorite meal. This recipe did not come from a television show but a store promotion. Even though we do not have Julia Child walking our way through the recipe, the same method of teaching people to cook (that being the straight forward not flashy aspect of it) is still occurring and making favorite memories for the current generation.

Why are we so obsessed with cooking shows? The progression of action packed into an episode might be explained by the generational differences in the ever-changing societal norms and need for instant gratification. It could also be our degrading value of cooking in the American household. It is much easier to just sit back on our couches and chairs to watch someone put in the work to cook while we eat our microwave/junk food to satisfy our hunger gained made by the chefs on TV. As degrading as this apparent “laziness” sounds to our generation and decade, it just shows how intertwined cooking is to our culture. There are much more action-packed television shows we can watch but we continue to watch our cooking shows. This shows us that we still find a comfort in watching someone cook. As stated in Pollan’s article, “Food shows are the campfires in the deep cable forest, drawing us like hungry wanderers to their flames. (And on the Food Network there are plenty of flames to catch your eye, compensating, no doubt, for the unfortunate absence of aromas)”. Our television shows of cooking are much like watching our mothers and fathers cook for us. It is not only relaxing but also satisfying to watch a pile of random ingredients be put together to make a meal that can bring so much joy and union between people.

With the modern trend of cooking shows degrading our motivation to get up off our couches and cook it makes up by evolving and preserving our culture of cooking in our society and generation. For the lack of hands on experience and nonvisual senses (smells and feelings of cooking) it has given us new favorite shows to watch and more entertainment we could consume in our lifetimes. I cannot say that this change is for the best, however, it is a change and it keeps us entertained.