

FIELD NOTES

Student 1 ● Prof. Mani ● Fall 2020

There are several interactions noted between the members of this community. An image was posted 12 hours ago by v/lovesdemise of honey glazed sweet and spicy fried chicken and buttermilk mac and cheese. The comment section under this post consists of 85 comments and several interesting interactions. Cluelesswench commented “I would fuck this” and received 390 points. For 23 points, a6245912 commented “that’s what good pussy sounds like”. ByahTyler then commented “then take a post nut nap” and received 7 points. These comments depict the seemingly obvious comments that one would expect to come across in a food porn subreddit. They in accordance to the overall culture of this community, combine explicit details to describe their reactions to the post displayed. However, apart from these interactions there appeared to be a conflict between two members. Tottmeister3r received 4 points for their comment stating “Holy heart-disease batman”. Kracker500 replied with, “These comments are always so stupid. Yeah Congrats, you figured out that this isn’t a picture of a salad. No one said OP is eating this for every meal. Just let them post a picture of their delicious looking food without the ‘wOw tHiS iS bAd fOr yOu’ comment”. This exchange reveals that maybe there is an unspoken rule in this subreddit that a more established member like Kracker500 would know. The rule would be that all members realize that the comfort and indulgent foods displayed on the subreddit aren’t things that are eaten every day but they are “cheat day” foods that one can enjoy viewing. One who isn’t familiar with the subreddit might respond in the same way that Tottmeister3r did and perceive the unhealthy “cheat day” foods displayed to be meals members regularly eat. In their response, Kracker500 established their power and proved to be an original member. Despite the few combative interactions, the r/foodporn community is also a place of unity and helping one another. In an image posted by u/viciousdv 22 hours ago, the user captioned her dish with “probably won’t be able to visit my family in the Philippines for awhile... so I made Pork Belly to feel a lil closer to family”. For 120 points, pork_belly commented “looks dank af. Can we get a recipe plz?” to where helenalena replied with a detailed recipe on how to make the dish displayed. There may also be an unspoken rule to where if someone asks for the recipe members help them out and therefore help the circulation and creation of new artifacts to continue in this community. Telling recipes may also be a way to establish power amongst the community as well since you have proven that you are more informed in the area of food in general and can be someone to “save the day” with your knowledge. This also may reveal a sense of intimacy or friendship between these two users. Based on my previous observations, there are many values that this particular community holds. One being the association between sexual terminology and innuendos and reactions to food. This is the pattern that is seen most prominently amongst the comments made by members. In the example observed, the reactions referenced the sound of “good pussy”, how badly that member wanted to

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“fuck” the food displayed and how they might be taking a “post nut nap” afterwards. These seemingly vulgar messages present themselves as being the type of comedy used by members. I highly doubt that these comments were written in the literal sense so it seems as though sexual references are not only part of the culture of this subreddit but also provides comedic relief to its members. This behavior or tongue in cheek humour I feel is invited and expected in a “food porn” site and is individual to this specific community. These sexual references made would not go over well or be received in the same way if a member chose to act like this in another space of the internet. In the second observation, this type of exchange is rare as this is the only instance where I’ve seen something like this take place. Kracker500 replied rather defensively to Tottmeister3’s comment who pointed out the obvious unhealthiness of the food displayed. In Kracker500’s reply it is learned that it is obvious that the food being presented in the subreddit isn’t foods that are eaten for every meal and that the objective of this community is to provide a space that allows people to simply show off their delicious foods. The overall tone of this community is lighthearted and not intended to take anything seriously. From the humour that is used, down to the types of food displayed. The “cheat day” foods that fill the timeline are meant for visual purposes and this community has little to no concern with the health of what is displayed. This sets the guidelines of what the cultural artifacts posted should look like. It should be more of unhealthy foods, filled with decadence, that many are not able to eat every day. Since these foods are so out of reach and are reserved for special “cheat days” there then is a greater appreciation for what is displayed and it becomes a space of appreciation towards the foods we are unable to have when we want them. In the third observation, we see the presence of intimacy and friendship amongst the community. Even in the caption u/viciousdv provided for the image, it is assumed that because of quarantine and COVID, they are choosing to cook a dish that reminds them of home and share it with the community. The level of intimacy in the caption of this post reveals that it is a space where the user is comfortable enough to share that with other members instead of just posting the image with no back story or explanation. With that being said, the comments also seemed to reflect the same unity and intimacy as helenalena provided pork_belly with the recipe when they asked for it. There is a sense of helping one another and unity across the members whenever they need help accomplishing the dish displayed. While this aspect of the community isn’t as prevalent as the sexual innuendos, it is very common as you see at least one of these exchanges under the majority of the posts. The reason behind why porn is specifically related to food is the behavioral pattern that seems rather inexplicable. The others some obvious conclusions can be brought through analysis of the community and the circumstances of the comments. It is understandable that food porn is the provocative display of food but there are many questions that rise

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from this definition. When was the first time that people began to draw a correlation between food and sex? Does the sensation of eating food and desiring it have similarities with sexual arousal? What defines the display of a dish to be considered provocative? I have seen a pattern of the images posted being zoomed in and that the types of food are usually unhealthy comfort foods. Secondary research that could help this analysis is looking at the origins of food porn itself and how it has globalized into a concept that nearly 3 million people have taken part of a subreddit for. It also sets up a question for what are the boundaries of how provocative a post can be. I noticed that comments like "I would fuck this" received around 390 points whereas more explicit ones like "then take a post nut nap" received only 7. It seems as though ByahTyler's comment was more unpopular than cluelesswench's rather general comment. The amount of points could reveal that there is an unspoken limit to how explicit your references can be. Are general sexual references acceptable and more specific and graphic ones are considered to be too far? These are all points of inquiries that while I can draw assumptions from, there is no exact way of really understanding without secondary research.