The Influence of Michelin Stars on the Rise of Vegetables in haute cuisine.
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We build on an institutional approach to assess the influence of Michelin stars on the rise of vegetables in haute cuisine. Institutional theory suggests that organizations do compete and survive in a field on the ground of consensus over how the actor’s world should be and that in institutionalized fields, taken for granted interpretive schemes, and organizational archetypes spread through isomorphism. We define haute cuisine as the field composed of agents and organizations engaged in the world of gourmet restaurants: the restaurants awarded with stars, their employees and clients, gastronomic critics and journalists, specialized journals, suppliers and contractors, some cooking schools and, last but not least, guidebooks.

In order to examine the influence of Michelin stars on the rise of vegetables in haute cuisine, we empirically analyze the place of vegetables in haute cuisine on the ground of a longitudinal study of French gourmet restaurants between 1997 and 2007. We draw on multiple sources of data: a database that includes the signature dishes of all starred French chefs on the ground of annual directories issued by the Guide Michelin, interviews with elite chefs, observations at gourmet restaurants, and secondary data.

We show that the status of vegetables has quantitatively and qualitatively changed in French haute cuisine. We highlight the leading role of elite three-star restaurants and follower position of others (one and two stars) in the process of institutional change. Our study contributes to a better understanding of the evolution and influence of haute cuisine, with the description of both new institutional rules and the role of three-star restaurants. In particular, whereas some studies are dedicated to the advancement of institutional theory and limit their use of gastronomy to that of an empirical field (e.g. Durand, Rao, and Monin 2007; Rao, Monin and Durand 2003; Svejenova, Planellas, and Mazza 2007), our aim here is to contribute to the understanding of haute cuisine, gastronomy and the restaurant industry with an institutional perspective.