FOOD AND RELIGION
(in public food service)

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À table avec les religions,  
a research study of Benvenuti in Italia and Risteco

Benvenuti in Italia, in collaboration with Mensa Civica, the Risteco and the Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l'Homme commissioned a research project to study religious dietary laws, school canteen service and religious pluralism, working with reference to three case-studies in Turin and Rome (Italy) and Zaragoza (Spain).

The project was led by Maria Chiara Giorda, and the research team composed of Luca Bossi and Elena Messina, members of the Benvenuti in Italia Scientific Committee, in the “Public Spaces and Religious Pluralism” research area, (www.benvenutiinitalia.it). The research team collaborated with Dr. Gladys Arby (Zaragoza case-study), Sara Casiraghi (gastronomy expert) and Dr. Paola Durelli (nutritionist).

Schools provide a fundamental opportunity for the promotion of healthy lifestyles, because they can encourage the implementation of a coherent set of integrated actions, involving both public and private actors. Improved nutrition should be one of the priorities on every school’s agenda because of its positive effect on children's wellbeing. It is a known fact that links between food practices, learning ability and school performance are very strong.

The main objective of the study is to explore differences in diet and eating habits among children attending European schools and those who come from foreign countries, and to define how public institutions such as primary schools, and their canteen services can consider the religious and traditional beliefs regarding nutrition. Fundamentally, food consumption can be considered a religiously and culturally-defined social issue, and can be used as an instrument for inclusion and social cohesion.

Data was collected through different methods:
- Gathering information about food selection and religious food beliefs;
- Charting a map of the religious needs of children attending primary schools;
- Analysing nutritional, economic and environmental issues concerning food distributed in school canteen services (with reference to local foods and the environmental impact of their consumption);
- Analysing good practices developed in school canteen services in the surveyed areas, with reference to religious pluralism and nutrition;
- Analysing surveys concerning religious needs, involving parents of children who attend selected schools in Turin, Rome and Zaragoza.

The project involved:
- 6 primary schools (in Italy and Spain);
- 2,012 students;
- 848 families involved in the questionnaires.

Among the possible developments of the project, we suggest the need to understand how to take advantage of different eating habits connected to different cultures and lifestyles, in order to encourage everybody to try “religiously correct” meals; the need to understand how to transform traditional recipes with local products in order to make them suitable for those who have particular restrictions related to religion; the need to try experimental menus in active and well-equipped canteens in order to evaluate their practicality in terms of organisation, economics, and; so as to empower as much as possible the culture of respect through mutual recognition, in the kitchen and at the table.

The following pages contain a synthesis of the research results, with the aim of defining a general perspective concerning questions, answers, and possible evolution regarding the surveyed issue.

\[1\] Collected data in Italian, English and French is available at: http://benvenutiinitalia.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ifwdfoodandreligionweblowrespublications.zip, 06.06.2014
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Introduction. Food and religious pluralism

The first important consideration, which builds the basis for this research, is the understanding of existing religious pluralism. Regardless of the process of secularization, often seen as the decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies, our societies are much more multi-religious, plural and complex than ever before\(^2\).

The much debated and controversial problem of the presence of religion in public spaces assumes great importance, for scholars and for those involved, with reference to their status as citizens or representatives of public, cultural and political institutions.

Undoubtedly, schools represent the context where, more than anywhere else, it is possible to experience the significance of religious diversity and of a culture of acceptance and inclusion. With regards to this consideration, it would be useful to consider how public school teachers about religion/religions – with reference to the challenges that religious pluralism sets within the education system\(^3\).

More precisely, the study of religion has given rise to a widespread debate on different research topics; one of these is represented by the relationship between food and religion, which enables one to approach them through a comparative research methodology\(^4\).

The religious significance of food has always captured the interest of anthropologists, historians and sociologists\(^5\). Every cultural and religious group acts as a culture carrier\(^6\), and in this respect every cultural and religious community is actively involved in the social inclusion process. The meanings embedded in cultural symbols, such as food, can serve to represent and institutionalize the values and beliefs of a broader culture\(^7\).

Food can be divided into different categories, according to hygiene and disorder, purity and danger. Hygiene is related to order, while danger and dirt are related to disorder. Avoiding selected food is not a negative action but a positive effort to organize the surroundings. There is no such thing as dirty: dirt only exists in the eye of the beholder.

Every cultural group develops its own preferences for certain kinds of food and ways of preparing it. Cultural preferences stem from the link between food supplies, tradition and necessities imposed by the social environment; food rules are also dictated by sacred stories (myths) and taboos concerning food practices\(^8\).

Therefore, food behaviours are influenced by both socio-economic and socio-cultural factors as much as religious conceptions; so, food is not only a physiological need but without doubt a cultural need.

A further point of interest is that, due to migration and globalization, food patterns have changed everywhere. Religious practitioners who migrated to countries without religious dietary laws used to adjust their food pattern to local food patterns or to other religious dietary laws similar to their own simply because appropriate food was not available.

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This topic has profound implications on the understanding of globalization; this can be well studied by means of religious discourse on food and alterity\(^9\). New globalized societies are now supposed to afford alterity, in order to promote, in primis, social inclusion. Food might be considered both as an object and a subject of social change and great attention may be paid to the convergences or clashes of religiosities, a relevant aspect regarding civil coexistence.

If we combine the significance of the relationship between food and religion/religions with the analysis regarding religion in public spaces, it is clear that school canteens might represent a useful set of comparative case studies, in order to illustrate how practices and meanings vary consistently across Europe.

This paper is therefore concerned with school canteen services and religious pluralism and presents modern strategies for the management of scenarios which are dynamic and constantly changing, where different cultural habits and behaviours are interlinked.

In spite of the growing number of observations and surveys on the matter of food and nutrition, this topic still needs more investigation in order to obtain a unifying perspective. Though certain variables have been explored, the majority have not.

Before considering and analysing each new necessity, it is important to refer quickly to two topics regarding food: commensality and quality.

The notion of commensality relates to the idea of eating together, at the same mensa\(^{10}\). With the intent to discuss religious rules, practices and taboo in terms of nutrition, the concept of commensality is fundamental, since it represents one of the most striking manifestations of human society\(^{11}\). Nutrition might be addressed as a fundamental social issue, religiously and culturally defined, also in the agendae of public and educational institutions. Considering eating as a social activity and considering the action of sharing food together as a ritual action, food might be defined as the subject and the object of social change; we need to explore new ways through which to manage cultural and religious needs and habits.

Overall, the issue of the quality\(^{12}\) of food enlarges the cognitive horizon of the research\(^{13}\).

Quality might be considered the result of the negotiation (supply and demand), which is partially determined by the power relationships among differing food-system actors.

In terms of food (production, distribution, consumption) there are four different kinds of quality agreements\(^{14}\):

- commercial agreements concerning prices;
- domestic agreements concerning local foods and local means of production;
- industrial agreements concerning reliability of products;
- civil agreements concerning social benefits.

These considerations might refer to the concept of “economy of quality”, emphasizing the various dimensions of quality attributed to products with reference to social, cultural and spiritual aspects\(^{15}\).

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\(^{11}\) Cfr. C. Fisher, Commensality, society and culture, Social science Information, Vol 50, 3-4, 2011, pp.528-548.


Chapter I - Religion and dietary systems

A general framework will be useful in order to understand the complexity of the relationship between food and religion. Each religious concept relating to food falls into three categories:\(^{16}\):

1. *Food creation and production*, or rather, everything preceding consumption;
2. *Food consumption*, in terms of objective and direct rules, (licit or illicit foods) or temporary rules (abstention and fasting) and the recommendation of consumption of specific food at particular times (e.g. during religious events);
3. *Food distribution*, referring to the complex issue of regulation within the food industry and branding and marketing (e.g. meat is the most strictly regulated food in the Islam).

### 1. Religions and dietary practices

In the matter of food practices and rules, Judaism is distinguished from any other religious tradition due to the effort to define each aspect of nutrition and commensality (with references to production, distribution and consumption); this consideration clearly shows how, for a Jew, eating is a way to actively build a relationship with God.

Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain the body of Jewish law dealing with food, called “Kashrut”. Kashrut comes from the Hebrew root Kaf-Shin Reish, which means fit, proper, correct, allowed. The more commonly known word kosher describes the foods which meet Kashrut standards. The details of Kashrut are extensive laws addressing a few fairly simple rules, which are:

- there are permitted and prohibited foods;
- certain animals, or parts of them, may not be eaten at all. This restriction includes flesh, organs, eggs and milk of the forbidden animal;
- animals that can be eaten must be killed in accordance with Jewish law (shechita)\(^{17}\).

More precisely, among the animals of the earth (with reference to mammals and with the exception of swarming rodents), a Jew is allowed to eat those which have cloven hooves and chew their cud. Among water-dwelling creatures, a Jew is allowed to eat anything with fins and scales. Regarding birds, criteria are less clear; the Torah provides a list of forbidden birds, even though it does not specify reasons. All the birds\(^{18}\) on the list are birds of prey and scavengers, which may represent the reason for the distinction. Finally, other birds such as chicken, geese, ducks and turkeys, are permitted – although for some, turkeys are not considered to be permitted as they were unknown at the time of the giving of the Torah. On three different occasions, the Torah prohibits eating meat with dairy together, as it contains the reference to not boiling a young goat in its mother's milk.\(^{19}\)

Later, rabbis extended the prohibition to include not eating milk and poultry together. This separation is not only referred to food consumption itself, but also includes the use of kitchen tools, pots and pans with which milk and poultry might be cooked, the dishes from which they are eaten, and also, dishwashers and dishpans in which they might be cleaned. Moreover, a Jew may eat meat only many hours after having eaten dairy. Each of these prohibitions and rules symbolizes the sacredness in the act of eating.

Kosher dietary laws are observed all year around, not just during ceremonies, even if there are additional dietary limitations and restrictions during some religious ceremonies. For example, many foods usually considered kosher all year round are not kosher for Pesach. In fact, during Pesach, leavened food (chametz) may not be served; during the night before the whole family is involved in the Crumb Ceremony. Every crumb that has ever entered your home must be searched out and

\(^{16}\) A. G. Chizzoniti, M. Tallacchini, *Cibo e Religione: diritto e diritti*, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 2010, Libellula Edizioni, Tricase (Le), p.7-

\(^{17}\) Deut. 12:21.


\(^{19}\) Ex. 23:19; Ex. 34:26; Deut 14:21.
removed. Because then, on the eve of the first night of Pesach when the Bedikat Chametz ceremony is conducted, there must not be even microscopic evidence of nasty leavened products. The night before Pesach, firstborn sons might fast in remembrance of the Egyptian slaughtering of the firstborn. Moreover, two days before of the ceremony, there is the sèder, a special family meal, during which unleavened bread (Matzah) is consumed, to remind Jews of the significance of the holiday.

The term sèder comes from a Hebrew root meaning order. It is also the same etymology from which the word siddur, prayer book, is derived. The text of the Passover is written in a book called Haggad, about the Jews’ escape from Egypt.

The concept of moderation and of a balanced diet is seen throughout the Qur’an, in which there is written “Eat and drink but waste not in extravagance, certainly He [Allah] likes not those who waste in extravagance” (VII, 31). Islam, through the Qur’an, has defined, permissible (halal) and impermissible (haram) food and prohibits the consumption of certain kinds of flesh, most notably swine flesh (II, 173).

In addition, any Muslim may slaughter his own animal only by invoking the name of Allah, the one God; without this ritual no meat, even if allowed, may be consumed20.

It is possible to state that halal dietary laws, found in the Qur’an, address three key issues which are:

A distinction between permissible and impermissible meat: pig, boar and swine meat is strictly prohibited, as it is the meat of carnivorous animals such as lions, tigers, dogs, cats and birds of prey. The meat of domesticated animals with a split hoof, like cattle, sheep, goat, lamb, buffalo and camel, is permitted; birds that do not use their claws to hold down food, like chickens and turkeys, can be consumed. Eggs and milk from permitted animals can be consumed.

The prohibition of blood: blood is always haram, both from permitted and from non-permitted animals;

The slaughter method: each kind of flesh consumption may not be divorced from the prescribed method of slaughtering21 (the animal may not be stunned prior to slaughter, which involves cutting the throat in a manner that induces rapid and complete bleeding and the quickest death possible).

Christianity does not include binding rules relating to food or drink to which Christians are expected to adhere. Christian practices simply refer to the consideration that freedom is the consequence of the salvation that Jesus brought to men and women. The freedom to eat and drink everything that is healthy is part of that. The only rule is represented by the abstinence from certain foods in particular periods, for example, during Lent, the period that precedes the Holy Easter. Also, abstinence from flesh on Ash Wednesday and the fast on Holy Friday represent the only effective religious restrictions in matters of food and nutrition. In fact, the Bible contains the reference: “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Yeshua declared all foods clean)22.

In spite of this clarification, and considering that Christianity (like Judaism and Islam) is composed of different symbolic traditions, which are not culturally and religiously unified and unifiable, it might be specified that some promote a different system of rules in matters of nutrition and commensality. Thus, the Seventh Day Adventist Church follows a different dietary system, rooted in Jewish Law. It promotes an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet, in which, as in Jewish tradition, pork is not permitted. Those who are not vegetarian usually consume only meat coming from ruminant animals with cloven hooves. Fleshes permitted are those of beef and lamb, since they are considered clean. More precisely, in Seventh Day Adventist Church tradition, nutrition directly

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21 Ibidem.
22 Mt 15, 1-20.
weighs on the relationship between health and illness. In this respect, unclean food is considered unhealthy.

Regarding Christianity, it may be said that also the architecture of sacred places (for example monasteries) may evoke the sacred meaning of food. Thus, the dining hall is always near the Church for the reason that man should live on sacred scripture and bread (the latter has always had a sacred meaning in Christian liturgy). In monasteries, monks pray and eat at predefined times, this discipline represents a fundamental element for religious asceticism.

With regards to what has been stated so far, a parallelism with Buddhist asceticism may not come as a surprise. The famous rule of San Benedict, *ora et labora*, shows a clear connection with the Doghen Buddhist tradition, in which the chef always performs a sacred role; in both traditions, the chef is a wise and virtuous man, a master and a guide for the community.

Buddhist tradition supports vegetarianism, out of respect for animals, considered before all as living beings. In Buddhist traditions and dogma, there appear to be some sutra references about the Buddha eating chosen foods which could have included meat before his enlightenment, while he was living in the palace. This is before he made the great renunciation, leaving the householder’s life and becoming a recluse (monk). His final meal before enlightenment is reported to have been rice cooked in milk. In the *sutras* after his enlightenment there is no reference indicating that he ate meat. At his death, the food that poisoned him and led to his death was at one time translated as pork. The term has been translated as pig’s truffles, which was originally misunderstood and mistranslated as pork. Modern scholars have corrected this to being the food of pigs, which are mushrooms.

In different instances Buddha stated that no living being should be killed or caused to kill, because the eating of meat destroys the seed of great compassion. Also the *Theravada Pali Canon* is permeated with sutras that are pro-vegetarian, espousing the virtues of not killing or causing to kill.

«All beings tremble before danger, all fear death. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill. All beings fear before danger, life is dear to all. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill».

[Dhammapada, 129-130]

In Buddhist tradition, self-indulgence refers to chasimg after pleasures of the senses without considering the consequences. It is an attachment to the senses. If we know that eating meat is not necessary for survival and we choose to eat it because we are attached to the taste, that is a form of self-indulgence.

Different religious traditions which flow into and merge in what is commonly defined as Hinduism, share common concepts in matters of food, which are considered vitally important since they are considered to be part of God or Brahma (not just as a symbol of Brahma), as food nourishes the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of a human being. It is considered a gift from God and should be treated with respect.

The importance of food and of its sacred meaning is represented throughout various Hindu rituals. In fact, several ceremonies are associated with food in Hindu tradition. A child’s first solid food is celebrated as rite. Also, funeral rites involve the serving food and the offering of food to the departed soul for his journey to the ancestral world.

As largely known, beef is strictly forbidden; the cow is considered “mother” in Hinduism, and in this respect, sacred. According to Hindu religion, violence or pain inflicted on another living thing rebounds on you. To avoid causing pain to another living thing, vegetarianism is advocated,

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23 Seventh-day Adventists have a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet, that allows milk and eggs, but not animal flesh, they have followed this diet for more than 130 years. The health recommendations were based on a combination of the biblical principles of the Levitical laws, the emphasis on self-control promoted by Seventh-day Adventists, and the emerging health and hygiene principles of the 19th century.

although not mandatory. Veganism, the practice of abstaining from the use of animal products is not supported, and prohibited animal products may be different from one area to another; for example, duck or crab may be forbidden in one location and not in another. The adherence to the *ahimsa* doctrine (nonviolence) represents the primary basis for vegetarianism, as it has been central to Indian religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Religions in India have consistently upheld the sanctity of life, whether human, animal, or elemental; but the essence of truth is the rejection of violence and the use of *ahimsa*; *ahimsa* and truth are intertwined also with vegetarianism.

In Hinduism, also onions, garlic, and red-colored foods such as red lentils and tomatoes are prohibited (*Bhagavad Gita* 9, 27-28; 17, 8-10). The *Bhagavad Gita* divides food into three classes: those of the quality of goodness, those of the quality of passion, and those of the quality of ignorance. The healthiest are the foods of goodness, represented by dairy products, grains, fruits, and vegetables, increase the duration of life and purify one's existence. Such foods are sweet, juicy, fatty, and palatable (*Bhagavad Gita* 17, 8-10). Moreover, foods that are too bitter, sour, salty, pungent, dry or hot, are of the quality of passion and cause distress. But foods of the quality of ignorance, such as meat, fish, and poultry, described as putrid, decomposed, and unclean, produce only pain, disease, and bad karma. In other words, what you eat affects your quality of life.

Daoism is the name given to a variety of philosophical and religious traditions. Some ancient texts of the tradition are dedicated to agriculture, gardening and dining, where eating and food are significant issues able to lead man down the spiritual path. Attention paid to food is not due solely to dietary or medical reasons, for the Daoist, the mental is not a realm set apart from the physical; rather, it is characterized by a refinement of the very same energy that flows through all existence.

In the later texts of the Daoist religion the focus on such matters becomes much more pronounced. It has been claimed that, for one of the most important of these religious thinkers, Ge Hong (4th Century CE), ingestion [was] the key soteriological activity. The thought behind the principle of salvation by ingestion was not simply that, by eating sensibly, a person might ensure longevity, even immortality – a main Daoist ambition. The idea, too, in Ge Hong’s words, was that by eating what is pure, a person can distance himself from the rottenness of the world.

Yet no one food contains a perfect balance of nutrients for everlasting life. A person needs to listen to the body and provide a combination of essences to maintain the body. Religious concepts dealing with food are directly linked to the concept of vegetarianism, since a Daoist will not eat meat raised with inhumane practices. This is not a statement to promote vegetarianism but solely an assertion to promote respect for life. Also, a Daoist would probably refuse to eat cereals, as they are connected with the production of three parasites, worms, which may cause illness. Considering that no action is fully independent of another, longevity requires treating food with the same respect as that given towards your own body. Moreover, considering the way in which Daoism teaches the post mortem survival of the whole body and an afterlife of torture and endless suffering in hell, a Daoist might focus on maintaining youth and promoting longevity and immortality also and necessarily through food and nutrition.

2. Food and Religion. Food as a symbol

In St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, Augustine narrates how his mother Monica used to go to the cemetery bringing with her bread and wine, with reference to the ritual called *refrigerium*, widely known at that time. To perform the *refrigerium*, food had to be consumed on the grave, in order to remember the dead and refresh the memory of them.

*Bread*, sacred food par excellence from the ancient world, had the extraordinary power to unite people with others and nurture this connection to the Divine. Bread can be recognized as a Christianized food. Bread may allow one to access the infinite sacred experience, with reference to the act of breaking bread together in the Eucharist, practising

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hospitality by offering it, and may also be considered as a food and tool to reach the Underworld - bread may be used as a payment for the boatman Charon. Through Christ, after death there is a chance for salvation.

Bread is a sacred food; in Catholicism, unleavened bread (Es. 13, 6-7) corresponds to the sacrament of the Eucharist. In Jewish tradition, iconic images of matzah (unleavened bread) are also linked with sacred meanings. In the mystical textual formulations found in the Sefer ha-Zohar written in 1290 by Mosheh ben Shem Tov del Leon, unleavened bread is a symbol of purifying virtue. In Hinduism, as discussed, it is not permitted to consume specific kinds of meat. Cows are revered as the source of food and symbol of life and may never be killed, with reference to the article 48 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits the slaughter of cows and calves and other milk and draught cattle.

Lord Krishna was born as a cow-herd boy while Nandi, the bull, is Lord Shiva's primary vehicle and also the Principal Gana (follower) of Shiva. Because of its importance in early Hinduism, the cow was an indispensable member of the family. The cow became the living symbol of Mother Earth. As the mother produces milk to feed her sons, a cow produces butter and milk for sustenance and also dung to fertilize.

The sacredness of the cow may present an insurmountable border, as the animal has the ability to link man and the Divine.

The fact that the Qu’ran permits eating cows has built an additional bridge between Hindus and Muslims in terms of identity.

Cows’ symbolic strength in India is enormous; Marvin Harris (1985) argued that the earliest Vedas, the Hindu sacred texts from the 2nd millennium B.C. do not prohibit the slaughter of the cattle, but perhaps part of the sacrificial rites. The worship of cows has come about relatively recently in India; it evolved as the Hindu religion developed and changed. After the Islamic invasion (1000 A.D.) the cow taboo assumed its modern form and began to function as it does today.

The consumption of pork is one of the greatest taboos; the prohibition of eating pork links Jews (Lev. XI, 12) and Muslims (Qur’an II, 173), who are also linked by the ritual method of slaughtering, through an incision to the jugular vein.

Various explanations about this religious prohibition have been given; most of them are widely known and make references to the fatness of the pig’s flesh, its presumed dirtiness and the environmental and economic problems it poses as livestock. As demonstrated, Mary Douglas’ symbolic/interpretative perspective argues that for ancient Hebrews, pigs were classified abominations because they had cloven hooves but were not cud-chewers and were therefore illicit. Each of the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – allows people to eat beef, particularly during the Jewish Pesach, the Christian Passover e and the Islamic I’Id al-Adha.

The work on Islamic eschatology, the Kitab al-Miraj (also known as Liber Scalae Machometi), concerning Mohammad’s ascension to heaven contains the prohibition of consuming wine (130-131). According to the text, Muhammad refused to drink the wine because before him, God refused it.

In the Qu’ran, wine is a forbidden drink (“O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful”, V 90); moreover it might be said that a sura (XLVII, 16) describes Paradise as full of delightful wine rivers.

Wine divides Abrahamic religions; in fact, Judaism and Christianity do not prohibit its consumption. In Jewish rituals, wine is a sacred symbol, kosher and pure, and is allowed to be consumed, while its derivatives, such as vinegar and spirits, are never allowed.

While wine is essentially the product of the grape fermentation process; beer, whisky, gin and rum are permitted, since they are the result of the fermentation of different kinds of ingredients.

In Christianity, wine, together with bread, acts as a Eucharistic symbol: it symbolizes Christ’s blood and is associated with human salvation and redemption.

In every religion, food is always considered as a gift of God. This assumption may represent the awareness that food is never a human product but a sacred practice.

In Hinduism, food should be prepared referring to the prasada (performed as an active devotional meditation).
In Judaism too (Dt 8,10) it is possible to find references linking food and the remembrance of God; in Christianity food consumption may link the faithful with God; as an example, Jesus used to pray before eating. “Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people” (Mc 6, 41). This represents a custom taken from the Ancient Church, they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (At 2, 46-47). Regarding Muslims, “Muslims are instructed to eat food upon which Allah’s name has been invoked” (VI, 121).

3. Abstinence as a link to the Divine

Various religious traditions invite their devotees to partake in abstinence. Since each food is given by divinity, prohibited food might too be considered a divine gift. Abstinence from food refers to the voluntary restraint from experiencing or indulging in bodily pleasures, although it may be practised for several reasons including health, philosophical or social considerations, or religious practices. Abstinence is never oriented against divinity. In most faiths there is an ascetic element that guides towards a subjective need for spiritual discipline. Religion intends to elevate the believer above a normal life of desire to walk on the path of complete renunciation. This is a principle that is shared with abstinence, which becomes one way to meet the Divine.

Hindus fast during several festivals, sometimes avoiding food or water, or surviving only on fruits and dairy products. Followers of Hinduism also observe certain rules when they abstain completely from eating, especially during Ekadasi, the eleventh lunar day of the shukla (bright) or krishna (dark) paksha (fortnight) of every lunar month in the Hindu calendar.

For Jews, the principal day of fasting is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, with references to biblical indication, Torah (Lv 16, 29–31; 23, 27–32; Nm 29, 7).

Catholics abstain from food and drink during certain periods of the year; abstinence from certain foods is also a biblical discipline. Lent bears particular resemblance to the 40 days Christ spent fasting in the desert before entering into his public ministry (Mt 4:1-11). Since Catholics do not have systematic dietary laws in terms of food, their food rules are concerned with abstinence and fasting.

These rules are related to two fasting days (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday); Catholics may also abstain from meat every Friday of the year or substitute abstinence with another form of penitence.

In Islam, the period of fasting lasts for the whole month of Ramadan. Each day of the month of Ramadan, Muslims go without anything to eat or drink from dawn to dusk (Qur’an sura II, 185).

Ramadan is a holy month for Muslims. It is a month of respect and compassion for those less fortunate; also in this period the faithful may be confronted with their physical and mental weaknesses, in order to refresh the harmony which links them to God.
Chapter II - Geography of a European case study

The relationship between diet and social life is a widely debated topic in European public and private contexts, where great attention is paid to different dynamics affecting societies, related to food production and distribution and the ways of consumption. Nowadays, nutrition represents an important subject in the national and communitarian policies agenda, related to different and often interrelated dimensions, which are:

- environmental policies;
- policies against poverty;
- health policies;
- cultural policies.

Even though these dimensions represent specific aspects of food and nutrition issues, it is important to notice how European public and private actors pay much more attention to the first three dimensions, while the fourth is under-represented in terms of policies, as will be shown in the following lines.

However, as stated in the previous paragraph, the relationship between nutrition and culture is directly involved in social inclusion, and thus in the protection of religious minorities and in the limitation of cultural discrimination.

As Anna Gianfreda in Chizzoniti (2010, p. 186) says about nutrition in school contexts:

«School represents the context in which more than anywhere else it is possible to experience the importance of a culture of acceptance and inclusion, in promoting the multi-religious societies’ cohesion. [...] The school should protect cultural and religious differences between pupils [...] by transforming these differences into cultural and educational resources».

In this respect, a culture of food might actively build a brand new range of priorities able to influence and enhance social inclusion. This culture of food might refer to religious concepts about nutrition representing, as stated, guidelines defining what we are allowed or not allowed to eat.

1. On the methodological debate on comparative research

In latu sensu, the major aim of comparative research is to identify similarities and differences between socially pre-defined entities. Comparative research seeks to compare nations, cultures, societies, and institutions. To some scholars, comparative research should be strictly limited to comparing two or more nations (also known as cross-national research), while others prefer to widen the scope in order to include comparison of many different types of social and/or cultural entities.

That considered, some of the liveliest debates about methodology in the social sciences are related to comparative methods and research; the methodology which has been adopted from the field of comparative politics and which is also associated with sociological and historical methods, concerns an active controversy about methodological issues.26

Conscious that any comprehensive and detailed discussion around methodological limitations and constraints might necessarily require a treatment that exceeds the scope of this paper by far, we would like to underline one of the most important criticisms concerning this survey.

Food and nutrition-related health and nutritional practices represent an area of interest which is especially characterized by being extremely multi-disciplinary. In fact, it is concerned with historical, legal, socio-cultural, medical and ethical considerations. Of course, this represents a strength but also a weakness of this research project; the inter-disciplinary nature has a clear purpose of supplying a greater number of elements useful in organizing the research. However, it also highlights the necessity to choose (and to exclude) methodologies not typical or appropriate

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within each considered discipline. This will consequently restrict the quantity and quality of accessible data.

As various aspects are picked up to be compared, there is often a tacit assumption about their autonomy and a silent tendency to ignore the complex interplays and mutual influences in the surrounding context\textsuperscript{27}.

But, regardless of contemporaneous critical analysis in matters of comparative methodological research, the main characteristic of this method is represented by the possibility of elaborating on and establishing hierarchical orders in which civilizations, cultures, societies, and nations are nested\textsuperscript{28}. This hierarchical disposition might be taken to serve as the norm\textsuperscript{29} or the point of reference in comparison.

Considering that nourishment and nutritional practices represent one of the most important public service priorities, and considering that national health care is a basic social right, we consider surveys such as the WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition, and indeed the present survey, the only method able to evaluate the effectiveness of public health services’ pre-defined policies and to promote united and combined actions able to support countries in addressing inequalities and socioeconomic gaps with regard to food practices.

2. Status quaestionis in Europe

Any healthy nutrition intervention needs to occur early in childhood, in order to prevent the development of bad habits with regards to food. Furthermore, many core eating habits and behavioural patterns that are developed could persist throughout adulthood.

Schools can provide a fundamental opportunity for prevention of negative habits, because they can promote the implementation of a coherent set of integrated actions by involving both public and private actors. Perhaps schools represent the most effective method of reaching the largest number of people, including youths, school staff, families, and community members.

Improved nutrition should be one of the priorities on each school’s agenda because of the positive effect on children’s wellbeing, and also because of existing links between nourishment, learning ability and academic performance.

As demonstrated, single European school nutrition policies cannot be formulated without any references to the European Government approved policies on nutrition and food safety. In this respect, the WHO’s – World Health Organization – Regional Committee for Europe is the part of the organisation devoted to defining nutritional practice guidelines.

In fact, the WHO’s Regional Committee for Europe:

«[...] is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends\textsuperscript{30} ».

During 2007, the WHO Regional Committee for Europe approved the resolution named EUR/RC57/R74\textsuperscript{31} which allowed the Action Plan\textsuperscript{32} – lasting five years – and called on each Member State to enhance its own nutrition policies.

\textsuperscript{27} R. Azarian, Potentials and Limitations of comparative method in Social Sciences, in International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 2011.
\textsuperscript{29} R. Azarian, Potentials and Limitations of comparative method in Social Sciences, in International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 2011.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{32} During September 2000, WHO Regional Committee for Europe promoted the Action Plan Food and Nutrition Policy for the WHO European Region (2000-2005) – doc. EUR/01/5026013, calling for the implementation of health policies regarding food and nourishment. The aim was represented by the willingness to achieve nutrition and food safety goals. Even if one third of Member States developed policies
The WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012 aimed to achieve the following goals:

1. Reducing the prevalence of diet-related non-communicable diseases (with particular reference to obesity);
2. Reversing the obesity trend in children and adolescents;
3. Reducing the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies;
4. Reducing the incidence of food borne diseases.

In order to achieve these goals, specific targets have been defined, based on the risk in individual Member States, with reference to the areas of research outlined above. Each one of these areas involves different actors from the public, private and nongovernmental sectors, and is regulated by a government body.

The research areas considered are as follows:

1. **Supporting a healthy start**
   Concerning maternal nutrition, food borne diseases in pregnant women, schools and pre-school institutions are involved;
2. **Ensuring a sustainable food supply**
   Leading to agricultural policies and industrial processed food – with the aim to improve the nutritional quality of food safety and supply within public institutions;
3. **Providing comprehensive information and education to consumers**
   Regarding nutrition, food safety, consumer rights, food safety guidelines, with regards to European best practices, based on Codex Alimentarius standards or EU legislation on labelling on health claims;
4. **Taking integrated action to address related determinants**
   Concerning population-level interventions to promote physical activity for health, initiatives to reduce alcohol consumption and increase levels of safe drinking water;
5. **Enhancing nutrition and food safety in the health sector**
   With the purpose of improving standards of service delivery for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of nutrition-related diseases, and increasing safety in hospitals;
6. **Monitoring, evaluation, researching**
   With reference to the evaluation of the impact of Member States’ programs and policies in order to improve both public and private research, to enhance the understanding of the role of nutrition, food safety and lifestyle factors in disease development and prevention.

Finally, other agencies with the potential to contribute to the Action Plan include the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, and the Council of Europe Co-operation and Development (OECD).

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33 ibidem.
34 Scientific basis for Codex Alimentarius standards’ work. It gives an overview of risk analysis and outlines the functions of the three FAO/WHO expert committees: the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA); the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR); and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA); and on other scientific advice provided by FAO/WHO. Codex also provides information on modalities for countries to request, access and contribute data to this process. Codex texts are considered by WTO as the international reference for food safety standards, in http://www.codexalimentarius.org/scientific-basis-for-codex/en/, 25th.Oct.2013.
Through the Action Plan initiative, the WHO Regional Office for Europe is the only agency able to coordinate international work in matters of nutritional practices within Member States. The collaboration of European Community Members aims to define a shared international code of practices especially concerning children.

This is certainly an ambitious aim, which requires the establishing of partnership both with civil society and policy makers. Both private and public actors should promote a dialogue engaging the Codex Alimentarius Commission in discussing regulatory frameworks able to influence the regional agendas on the topic of food standards, but also on food quality, food safety and hygiene issues.

Thereafter, the WHO Regional Committee for Europe may provide an assessment of the outcomes of the action envisaged by the Action Plan, in order to produce a triennial progress report on the enhancement of this complex issue.

Certainly, the WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition represents the most complete comparative research pertinent to nutritional health practice and policies, able to define the effectiveness of the social policies promoted by each Member State. As shown, in Europe the guidelines in matters of school nutrition directly deal with health and health policies and tend to refer less to cultural and religious needs.

This, according to Richard Étienne, Pascal Tozzi and Hugo Verkest, is not the case everywhere. In France, public Institutions frequently provide a choice of different foods, allowing students to respect the religious rules of their traditional backgrounds, thus avoiding forms of discrimination. However, in various countries, the school canteen menu is often marked by the influence of the Christian religion, an influence that students belonging to religious minorities may not benefit from.

In the following lines, we will discuss some European case studies dealing with school canteen services, taking into account culture, religion, ethnicity and language.

3. United Kingdom
London
In 1944 it was made compulsory for local authorities to provide school dinners, following nutritional parameters established by law. Free school meals were made available to students coming from low-income families. In the Eighties, the Thatcher government first applied cuts to funding for free school meals; in 1980 with the Education Act, they abolished the minimum nutritional standards for school meals and removed the free option for thousands of British schoolchildren, forcing local authorities to open the market to private competitors, with the aim of reducing the cost of each meal. As a result, however, a significant drop in the quality of food has been noted: as reported by Derek Gillard, in order to maximize profits and eliminate waste, several private companies have pushed schools to opt for self-service catering services, thus promoting an obvious orientation towards fast-food style solutions, such as burgers and fries. Today, canteen service is not compulsory for schools, except in the case of students from low-income families who continue to benefit from the Free School Meals initiative.

Ibidem.
Ibidem.
Ibidem.
Richard Étienne and Pascal Tozzi with Hugo Verkest, Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality. Thematic Report: Religious minorities, Département de Sciences de l’Éducation, Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3, France 2009

In Spain, the difficulties raised by school calendars have been resolved beforehand, with agreements signed by the State with main religious groups (Protestants, Jews and Muslims) to ensure that exemption from participation may be granted. In France, the Council of State (14/04/1995) resolved in favor of granting the exemption from school attendance for religious reasons, when compatible with the organization of the institution.

In the 2000s, school meals became an important issue in public debate thanks to two special testimonials, which brought the topic to public attention from two different points of view. The first case dates back to 2004, when the famous chef Jamie Oliver led a campaign\textsuperscript{42} to improve the quality of school meals, commissioned to catering companies and often consisting of typical fast-food type meals (such as fries, fried chicken nuggets, pizza and cakes). The television program \textit{Jamie’s School Dinners}, broadcast by Channel 4, showed the situation of school dinners in British canteens and created a public campaign to improve funding for school meals. The public pressure generated forced the British government to establish the \textit{Children’s Food Trust}, in order to monitor, support and spread word of a healthy food culture and daily good practices. The topic even became a UK electoral issue in the general election of 2005.

The second case dates back to 2012\textsuperscript{43}, when Martha Payne, a nine year old girl, reobtained control of her blog\textsuperscript{44} from the local authorities. The blog, created as a school project, displayed photos and evaluations of her school canteen dishes, with the aim of describing her school meal experience; it had been obscured by authorities after being accused of misrepresenting the options of the canteen service. Shortly after, a media campaign brought the case to public attention: Jamie Oliver himself published a message – \textit{Stay strong Martha} – on the social network Twitter, supporting the young blogger. Following the outcry, the blog has had great success collecting evidence about school nutrition from students, parents and teachers around the world, bringing to global attention both the issue of the right to access to food and the issue of food culture.

If great attention to the health implications related to nutrition and lifestyles has been \textit{echoed} in the British public sphere, the same cannot be said for the topic of cultural and religious aspects of food. Britain today represents a significant example of the gap between the law and everyday practices in matters of protection of cultural differences and promotion of an intercultural and interreligious society through food. Anna Gianfreda’s contribution (2010, pp. 186-192) introduces us to the United Kingdom’s legal measures on the issue:

«With the emergence of multi-cultural and multi-religious society […] the guarantee of the right to live according to “conscience” has fully entered into the priorities and objectives endorsed by all the Institutions that regulate the “public space” in which there is the social life. […] Next to the sociological fact of differentiation in the sense of multi-religious society”, she continues, “there is a multiplication of the sources of law that, at different levels, impose an increasing attention to the \textit{respect for diversity}, no longer guaranteed through a mere implementation of formal equality, but by so-called \textit{positive measures}. Those, allowing a number of facilities, remove those unfavorable conditions that affect the right to respect religious dictates of individuals and groups»\textsuperscript{45}.

Therefore, the canteen is seen by school institutions as the place responsible for:

- the promotion of respect for minorities
- the religious literacy of students, through the acquisition of knowledge about different religions.

In fact, these achievements are in line with the standards developed for school canteens by the \textit{School Food Trust} 46, which encourages all schools to promote ethnic diversity especially when students manifest religious beliefs or cultural practices that influence the dietary sphere.

“The new priority of the so-called Single Equality Schemes\textsuperscript{47}, says Gianfreda in her paper, “is in fact to raise the standards of school canteens” and “to ensure that the food appears inviting […] for all” and therefore that it is “culturally and religiously appropriate”\textsuperscript{48}.

\textsuperscript{42} For further details on the campaign: \url{http://www.jamieoliver.com/media/jo_sd_history.pdf}, 15.12.2013.
\textsuperscript{43} \url{http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/15/martha-payne-school-lunch-blog_n_1600363.html}, 17-12-2013
\textsuperscript{44} \url{http://neverseconds.blogspot.it/}, 17-12-2013.
\textsuperscript{46} \url{http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk} / 05/06/2014.
Despite the theme being well covered by regulatory agencies, the reality of school canteens still seems far fetched from the aforementioned requirements: the opening to the religious factor is mainly related to the supply of halal meat (rarely kosher) or the proposal to replace the non-halal meat with a vegetarian menu.

With reference to what has been stated, it is possible to see how in the United Kingdom, food is not included among the tools for promoting religious pluralism.

In the Moseley School canteen\textsuperscript{45} in Moseley, a Birmingham suburb with a strong multi-cultural and multi-religious population\textsuperscript{50}, the school has a “fantastic new canteen that offers a wide range of products, including halal, vegetarian and healthy options”\textsuperscript{51}, even if there is no trace of educational programs linking food to cultural integration.

Approximately 75\% of the schools under Waltham Forest Council jurisdiction, a total of 46 schools, are serving only halal meat supplied by Waltham Forest Catering. A representative of the Council explained that the choice to serve only halal meat was a logistic consideration, since many school kitchens are not big enough to allow staff to store and prepare two different types of meat\textsuperscript{42}.

The Children's Food Trust website\textsuperscript{53} describes Newfield Secondary School and Talbot Secondary School in Sheffield as the only two schools contemplating different nutritional needs based on religion (amongst those reported as cases of good practice in the canteen management). Newfield and Talbot share a canteen that “is light and bright, with contemporary décor and a café feel. The layout has been specially designed to make it easier for pupils to get around, and for wheelchair users to sit at the tables […] There are five areas, each with a till point:

- two offer cold sandwiches, pasta and snacks;
- one offers a hot main meal;
- one offers a hot main meal with a halal option;
- one (outside) offers cold sandwiches, pasta and snacks.

In the evaluation by the Children's Food Trust, the innovative spirit of the canteen is represented by the children-friendly structure, the pleasure and healthiness of the environment and the speed in service operations and payment (usually using fingerprint recognition). Regarding cultural/religious inclusion and social interaction, the only reference is related to the opinions of the students and staff, which clearly indicate how relationships between peoples coming from the two schools have been enhanced after the implementation of the shared canteen.

The Hackney neighborhood is a good field for collecting data linked with the approach of London educational institutions policies in terms of nutrition and religion. The population of the district, 213,573 inhabitants in 2010, is ethnically diverse, with 41\% of residents describing themselves as white British, 14 \% as white in other ethnic groups, 29\% as black or black British, 9\% as Asian or Asian British, 4\% as mixed and 3\% as Chinese or other\textsuperscript{54}. The neighborhood also has a large Turkish and Kurdish community. 66\% of the inhabitants were born in the UK, 5\% in other European countries and the remaining 29\% in other regions of the world. During the 2001 census, the


\textsuperscript{49} http://www.moseley.bham.sch.uk/


\textsuperscript{51} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{52} http://www.guardianseries.co.uk/news/10334813.Halal_meat_served_in_three_quarters_of_council_suppo rted_schools/, 06.06.2014.


residents of Hackney described themselves as Christians in 44% of cases, as Muslims in 18%, Jews 4%, other faiths in 3% of cases, with a further 19% not belonging to any religion, while 12% did not answer.

In addition to its demographic composition, Hackney is a particularly interesting case also because of its recent educational history. Since 2002 the district has entered into a ten-year contract with the Learning Trust, an independent organization which regulates the education of around 27,000 pupils in more than 70 schools, nurseries and play centres in Hackney. The Trust was set up in response to a critical OFSTED report. Among Hackney elementary schools (as quoted by the Learning Trust website), only two state that they give attention to religious dietary needs, referring exclusively to Islam; Benthal Primary offers a menu that always includes a vegetarian and a halal option and Baden Powell Primary asked parents to fill out a form to state special requests, specifying lawful and forbidden foods. All other schools offer a vegetarian option, with the possibility for students to bring a packed lunch prepared at home, that in any case may contain sweets or sugary drinks, as indicated by the Children's Food Trust.

None of these schools make explicit reference to religious needs, or to educational programs, or to intercultural inclusion through food. However, all the schools in Hackney propose:

- a vegetarian option;
- a different meat every day (without specifying if halal, kosher or not);
- fish every Friday (only on Fridays).

The Sir John Cass’s Foundation Primary School, located in the City of London district, pertaining to the Church of England and located in the heart of the capital, is also the only school (from those studied) which makes explicit reference to cultural and ethnic diversity on their website. According to the Race Equality and Cultural Diversity Policy report, dated April 2012, the institute has among its values and objectives:

«Be Healthy: students can enjoy good physical and mental health and understand what a healthy life style means. We provide access to physical activities and extra-curricular sports clubs. We encourage healthy eating across all cultures, eg. healthy food from around the world is provided in the dining room. Children learn about keeping healthy in science, DARE and PSHE lessons.

Religious Observance: we respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents and comply with all reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

Action Plan: we have an on-going action plan for the implementation of this policy, and for monitoring its impact. We recognize the importance of continuing appraisal and development. We ensure that references to race equality and cultural diversity issues are made in the School Development Plan (SDP). We ensure that there are references to race equality and cultural diversity issues in the school’s plans for induction and training of teaching and support staff and also for the governing body».

To conclude, a different case is that of Harrow, a suburb of London. In 2010 the Municipality proposed the replacement of all meat offered in school canteens with halal meat, indicated by

55 The institution responsible for the supervision of schools in Britain.
56 The investigation was limited to schools whose websites were online at the time of inquiry; among them: Benthal, Baden Powell, Berger, Daubeney, De Beauvoir, Gayhurst, Grazebrook, Holmleigh, Holy Trinity, Jubilee, Rushmore.
57 With references to that stated, it should be specified that it is possible that school canteens offer halal meat without specifying so and that in many cases, menus include intercultural dishes, often presented in relationships with their country of origin, ibidem.
nutritionists as the only one able to bringing together the needs of a religious community that is among the most diverse from an ethnic and religious point of view. The decision encountered harsh criticism from animal rights organizations, and the president of the local Halal Food Authority welcomed the idea of introducing halal meat in school canteens only if accompanied by non-halal meat goods, out of respect for non-Muslims. Having considered the aversion of the residents to the proposal, the town council decided not to proceed with the initiative.

4. France
Like in the UK, a School Canteen Service is not mandatory for French schools; in some cases, the municipality delegates the responsibility for the preparation of meals to an in-house catering company. In other cases, municipalities may delegate the public service to a catering company and meals are prepared in a central kitchen and delivered to a satellite one.

Considering the Defenseur des Droits guidelines: «The school catering service is a non-compulsory public administrative service, subjected to the principle of free administration of local communities. [...] Firstly this signifies that citizens are not entitled to its creation or retention and, secondly, that the entire financial burden of this service is not considered as a municipal responsibility and therefore may justify the demand for a user financial contribution. Also, when school canteens are created, the costs they impose to the municipal budget represents an optional and not a compulsory item of expenditure».

However, as the Defenseur says, even if this service is optional, «a school canteen must respect the principles of public service which contemplate, among other things, the equality of access, the continuity of the service and its religious neutrality».

Chapter III of the Rapport, dealing with school canteen service in matters of religious or philosophical beliefs, is particularly interesting for the purposes of this research. In fact, considering religious oriented needs, the Defenseur admits that: «These instances do not seem to be a priority amongst the testimonies received. Most of these expressed a simple wish for free lunches and only in few cases for the creation of halal menus. Some wished for an alternative to meat or simply the option of knowing the menu in advance, in order to predict the days of presence of the child in the school canteen. In fact, the majority of school canteens offer alternatives to the pork-based option, serving fish on Fridays, a practice that has not been challenged by the Court. Until today the Judge has not sanctioned this way of looking at religious needs. With a lack of specific guidelines, the national Council of State estimated that the absence of a meal replacement does not correspond to a violation of religious freedom. So, there is no obligation for municipalities to create specific menus able to consider such requirements or religious dietary restrictions». A communication from the Ministry of the Interior dated August 20, 2011, states that «the neutrality of public services implies that the consideration of special dietary needs based on religious belief can not affect the normal operation of the service».

60 The Défenseur des Droits is an independent French authority whose chairman is nominated by the President of the Republic for a period of six years; it is responsible for protecting the citizen’s rights against government and public administration and has special prerogatives in order to promote children’s rights, the fight against discrimination, the respect of ethics guidelines in the field of activities of security and intelligence.
63 Ibidem.
According to newspapers and literature, many cases of dispute have occurred over the years. In March 17, 2005 in Villefranche-sur-Saône, a group of families noticed that the municipal local institution was not obliged to accept their children anymore if they continued to refuse the non-halal meat served in the school canteen.

During the electoral campaign in 2012, the religious and ethnic food theme came up in the political agenda and the UMP party engaged in a cultural fight against halal meat in school canteens. Nicolas Sarkozy was supported by other French right-wing movements in the struggle against the so-called islamization of the country.

As reported by Le Monde on February 12, 2012, the Front National candidate Marine Le Pen announced during a public speech in Strasbourg, that she wanted “to prevent the distribution of halal meat in school canteens”.

During a public speech in Bordeaux on March 3, 2012, as reported by Le Monde, Sarkozy argued: «Public school canteens are bound by the principle of secularism, [...] there are no taboo subjects[...] certain issues should not be considered as a matter of religion but only as matter of civilization».

The production and distribution of halal meat in France is a delicate issue, not only thanks to its islamophobic connections; ethical and philosophical animal rights groups are in opposition too. Furthermore, certain members of Muslim communities do not recognize some halal-labeled products as halal. The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, considering the difficulties in quantifying and identifying meat slaughtered according to religious rituals on the retail market, reminds us that ritually slaughtered sheep and goats represent 48% of the total number of sheep and goats slaughtered in France, while adult cattle ritually slaughtered represent 11% of the total cattle, 13% in the case of calves.

Regarding halal, the anthropologist Dounia Bouzar, a former member of the Conseil français du culte Musulman (CFCM) and member of the Observatoire de la laïcité, underlined how Muslim parents ask above all else that their children are not forced to eat non-halal meat in school canteens. The same opinion is expressed by Mohammed Moussaoui, former president of the CFCM, who states that parents are especially asking for an alternative to meat meals, not only for halal meat.

A short study of the menus of some schools from different regions in France may help in analyzing this subject. As the analysis reveals, the school canteens examined usually proposed an alternative to pork meat, by offering different kind of meats or vegetarian menus.

**Strasbourg**

Strasbourg is a special case study because of the composition of its population. In 2008, immigrants amounted to 51,625 people, 19% of the population (6% born in Europe and 13% coming from non-European countries). Collected data placed Strasbourg above the national and regional average, among the cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants, just behind Paris (20%). In 2008, Non-European immigrants, coming from North Africa represented 28.4%, with 12.9% from Turkey, and 12.5% from sub-Saharan Africa.

In Strasbourg, school canteen services consider the option to offer halal meat and 15% of the meat served is ritualistically slaughtered.

The municipality website shows four types of menus offered by school canteen services: standard;

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64 See: [http://www.droitdesreligions.net/rddr/communes.htm](http://www.droitdesreligions.net/rddr/communes.htm), 05/06/2014.

65 [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/03/10/le-halal-a-la-cantine-un-fantasme-loin-de-la-realite_1655942_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/03/10/le-halal-a-la-cantine-un-fantasme-loin-de-la-realite_1655942_3224.html), 05/06/2014.


standard without pork (if on the menu); halal; vegetarian.

Among the canteens purposes are the possibilities for students to:
rest and be distracted;
develop conviviality;
be refreshed, lunchtime being the occasion for children to develop their taste, to discover new flavors, to understand nutritional balance and respect for the environment, to develop individual autonomy skills, as well as improve social life and personal hygiene.

Lyon
The Lyon municipality website\(^{70}\) shows three different approaches to school canteen menus:
classic menu. Consisting of five components: a starter, a protein dish (meat, fish or eggs), completed with a vegetable side dish – a cheese or dairy product - and dessert;
full menu without meat. Consisting of the same five components, where the meat is replaced by fish, eggs or protein products, usually soy-based;
food allergies menu. The menu depends on the allergies.

For pedagogical reasons, children are invited to taste all the dishes; the canteen staff itself have the task of promoting taste education amongst pupils without obligation\(^{71}\).

Grenoble
The school catering services in Grenoble\(^{72}\) offer four types of menus:
classic;
without pork;
without meat;
food allergies menu (in which case there is a specific procedure).
As shown, there is no reference to religious needs in terms of food.

Paris
The section of the municipality website dedicated to school canteen catering services is particularly rich in information about the service organization and the methods of cooking, regarding health standards as prescribed by the European and national legislation.
Parisian school catering is organized around 20 Caisses des écoles\(^{73}\), bringing together 662 public schools (311 nurseries, 302 elementary schools, 49 comprehensive school), 43 lower secondary schools, 16 high schools.
The school canteen services support around 135,000 students, a total of 22.7 million meals per year. According to provided data, 80% of elementary students access the school canteen service. The system consists of 165 indoor kitchens (60,500 meals a day), 30 hot link central kitchens (19,500 meals) and 5 cold tie central kitchens (41,000 meals).
The aforementioned website, although completed with specific information, does not make any reference to religious needs in matters of nutrition and religious or cultural pluralism.
The school canteen services are never able to offer certified halal or kosher meat and food; menus vary from the absence of pork in some menus (as in the case of the XV arrondissement), to a complete absence of pork (as in the case of the XIV, XVII and XX arrondissement).

Marseille


\(^{71}\) Ibidem.

\(^{72}\) Grenoble: [http://www.grenoble.fr/239-restauration-scolaire.htm](http://www.grenoble.fr/239-restauration-scolaire.htm)

\(^{73}\) In France, Caisses des écoles are municipal institutions which are responsible for overseeing all aspects of school life, including the canteen service, in both public and private institutions.
Unique among those observed, the Marseille case study[^74] is unusual because it offers a wide selection of intercultural dishes, including *tabbouleh* and *tagine*. Each school organizes cultural theme days to educate students on food diversity, in order to promote cultural and religious pluralism and social inclusion. No pork meat is even offered in menus.

5. Finland

As we know, Finland was the first country in the world to offer a free school meals service for all pupils; excluding a few previous experiments, dating from the early twentieth century, the service was officially founded in 1948.

At the time the meal mainly consisted of soups and porridge; the children brought bread and milk from home as an accompaniment for the meal. During the Sixties, the first variations to menus began to emerge with the introduction of processed and frozen foods and more vegetables. The Seventies saw the introduction of foreign foods, such as rice and spaghetti, products at the time unknown in Finnish family food culture.

Food distribution in school canteens started to ensure a safe, varied and healthy food supply, also through the enhancement of the availability and affordability of fruit and vegetables.

*The legislation ruling on the matter*

The municipalities are responsible for monitoring and evaluating school meals in Finland. The statutory obligations are based on the following:

- the *Basic Education Act* (628/1998);
- the *General Upper Secondary Schools Act* (629/1998);

The *Finnish National Board of Education* website[^75] states that the *National Core Curriculum* defines the achievement and evaluation criteria, establishing that each municipality and school may prepare its own method: they are free to select those they consider as the most appropriate teaching materials.

As part of the teaching curriculum, each municipality is required to develop a student welfare plan. Amongst other guidelines, the plan provides the basic principles for organizing school meals and sets targets for health, nutritional education, and includes good manners education.

To facilitate planning, the *National Nutrition Council* was appointed to observe and improve school canteens’ supply by providing nutritional guidelines for schools.

The role of school meals, as presented by the *National Board* website, is to be an educational tool for teaching the right nutrition and healthy eating habits.

*The typical Finnish menu*

The attention to health and a balanced diet is a recurrent theme in Finnish school canteens’ legislation and food culture.

The *National Board* website writes, «The objective (…) is to maintain and improve pupils’ health and wellbeing and to give them energy for their school work. School catering meets these aims by following the dietary guidelines for schools issued by the National Nutrition Council. A school lunch should equate to about one third of a child’s daily food intake. It should be tasty, colorful and well balanced».

The school menu contains all the components of a well-balanced meal, which are,

- fresh and cooked vegetables covering half of the plate;
- potatoes, rice, or pasta covering one quarter of the plate;
- fish, at least once, preferably twice a week, or meat (or beans and sprouts as part of a vegetarian diet) covering the remaining quarter of the plate;
- skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, fermented milk;

water to quench the thirst;
bread with vegetable margarine or butter-margarine blend;
berries or fruit for dessert.

**Special diet menus**

Students’ allergies, ethics and religion are taken into consideration when planning school activities and meals. The objective is to ensure that the basic diet, as it is or with minor modifications, suits as many students as possible.

Whether a student has specific health-related, religious or ethical needs in matter of nutrition, practical arrangements may be made with the kitchen staff and the school nurse.

The following special diets are available in schools in Helsinki and in the Helsinki Vocational College; on the menu, each dish is marked with a specific code and dish options are visible in the school canteen:

- Celiac diet (G)
- Milk-free (M)
- Lactose-free (L)
- Low in lactose (LL)
- No pork (P)
- No beef (B)

The meals for those with religious beliefs are based on vegetarian menus. Prohibited ingredients are not usually replaced with similar, suitable ingredients (for example, replacing pork with beef) and basic and vegetarian menus are designed to provide a varied and diverse selection of suitable main courses and side dishes (meal combination).

### 6. Denmark

The Danish public canteens represent, like others, an interesting case study because of some deeply discordant facts in the Country which came to the headlines during 2012 and 2013.

In Denmark, school is not mandatory, although education is compulsory up to 16 years old, whether provided in public or private institutions, through family education or with a private tutor.

The compulsory public school is called **Folkeskole**; it was established in 1814, it is free for all students and managed by municipalities, following the principle of autonomy but respecting the common objectives determined by the **Folkeskole Act**.

A reference to intercultural education, in terms of a global perspective, can be found on the Ministry webpage dedicated to **lifelong learning**, which states that all young people should complete an education program with global perspectives; students may also spend some time studying abroad. It is the aim of the Government that education should provide young Danes with strong academic competence and a global outlook.

However, two particular events related to the topics in discussion captured our attention.

The first, reported on March 9, 2012, saw a Muslim student being forced to taste wine and pork as part of class work at the Copenhagen Hospitality College in Valby, a suburb of Copenhagen. In fact, on that occasion, as stated by school rules, each student was supposed to try and assess every dish they prepared during cooking exercises. Facing the firm refusal of the student, the school organized a meeting between him and a local imam, in order to explain to him that from a religious point of view, there is, in fact, nothing wrong with tasting pork and wine. The student had the support both of the right-wing Dansk Folkeparti and of the left-wing Ehnedlslisten party.

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77 http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/cedir/cedir/Lex-doc/Dk_folke.pdf e http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/~media/UVM/Filer/English/Fact%20sheets/080101_fact_sheet_the_folkeskole.ashx
78 http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/General/Lifelong-learning. 05.12.2013.
The second, reported on 16 August, 2013, was related to the public scandal when the Hvidovre Hospital’s leadership admitted that all meals served by the hospital were entirely composed of halal meat. The statement transformed the local issue into a national media topic, and the same public institutions were forced to confirm the complete absence of controls (and therefore data) about public structures’ canteens meat purchases. The hospital's decision to serve only halal meat was justified in economic terms, due to the presence of patients from different ethnic backgrounds and the impossible task for the hospital canteen to serve two different types of meat.

The deputy director of the hospital said he did not believe that a method of slaughter as such has anything to do with faith, adding that all the chickens in Denmark are slaughtered following halal rituals, but no one had stopped eating chicken.

According to the newspaper, at least 30 nurseries, preschools and daycare centers in Denmark have banned the Danish national dish – pan-fried meatballs known as frikadeller – because they include pork and are inappropriate for Muslim children.

Ishøj Municipality - a town on the island of Zealand in eastern Denmark where most of the population is of African, Arab, Pakistani or Turkish origin - has introduced, to accommodate Muslim children, a blanket policy of not serving pork, including frikadeller, sausages or liver pâté, at any of its daycares or nurseries.

The newspaper also reports that in parts of Copenhagen, the dietary ban has gone beyond pork. For example, in Nørrebro, a district in Copenhagen where up to 40% of the children are Muslim, schools have banned not only pork but are serving only halal meat. According to Danish Sociologist Jon Fuglsang of the Metropolitan University College, banning pork is the wrong reaction: «Pork is an important part of Danish food culture that brings much national pride. It should be possible to serve differentiated menus for children. We should not banish certain foods in order to show respect. It is not the right way to do it. Children must learn how to think about these issues».

7. Spain

Policy developments in the past few years indicate the strategic importance of Spain. Together with Italy, Spain is a particular case study among the European scene because of the Concordat, signed in August 1953, which strengthened the Franco regime, and was designed to replace the 1851 document that the republic had abrogated. This new agreement provided full church recognition of Franco’s government. It also reaffirmed the confessional nature of the Spanish State; the public practice of other religions was not permitted. The agreement was more favourable to the Vatican than to Franco; it included measures that significantly increased the independence of the church within the Spanish system.

The system of Acuerdos developed in Spain is not expressly established by the Constitution, which merely states, in the 3rd paragraph of Article 16, the general criteria of collaboration between the State and religious denominations by engaging the public Institutions to take into account the religious beliefs of the population.

The ways in which such cooperation must take place is indicated in the Ley Organica de Libertad Religiosa (LOLR) promulgated in 1980, which, according to the Article 7, calls for the State to establish Acuerdos or Convenios de cooperación with churches, denominations and communities subscribed in the Register and which have arraigo - rootedness - in Spanish society. Article 9.2 of the Constitution calls on public Institutions to promote conditions for the effective exercise of fundamental freedoms and equality related to religion.

According to Coglievina, the Acuerdos include «general rules [...] as well as special laws, which provide specific protection to each religion, including religious dietary needs».

81 Ibidem.
In matters of nutrition and dietary needs, the access to religious food is guaranteed for those who are living in coercive structures (prison facilities, hospitals, military bases) and similar structures (particularly schools and workplaces). Regarding meats, the Spanish legislation on slaughtering allows ritual slaughter for religious reasons even though public Institutions may not necessarily offer halal or kosher meat in their canteens.

In fact, the law 26/1992 merely requires: «in public and private schools, the supply [...] of Muslim pupils [...] will have to adapt to Islamic religious precepts».

In 2007 the Perseus Program, sponsored by the Ministries of Health, Consumption, Education and Science, produced the Guía para la Elaboración General de Centros para Menús Escolares hábitos de Promoción de vida saludables, which emphasizes the inclusion of menus related to allergies or religious needs. School canteens, according to this document, offer the possibility to choose between different types of menus (e.g. avoiding pork, opting for other types of meat or refusing any kind of meat).

Aragon case
The region of Aragon published on its website a compendium of laws and recommended guidelines for specific cases of special dietary requirements management. Two courses of action are provided, each one representing a different adaptation level of the school menus:

- special menus (without prohibited ingredients or foods, with halal meat);
- normal menus, integrating religious needs by individual refusal of prohibited ingredients or foods.

In general, families appreciated the Spanish School Canteen service. However, in October, 2013 eleven Muslim families in Zaragoza decided not to complete the enrollment of their children. The refusal followed the refusal of the school comedor to serve halal meat. The event attracted the attention of both media and institutions.

The food service regulation, signed in 12 June 2000 by the Departamento de Educación y Ciencia (Education and Science Department), is concerned with food production and service within primary and elementary schools in the autonomous community of Aragon. With reference to the Reales Decretos, 1982/1998, it should be said that the right to education also includes canteen service in schools. In this respect, it is mandatory for every school to offer canteen service to pupils. Canteens vary in terms of capacity depending on the number of students served, the type of food offered and the type of activities such as preparation, cooking and storage. Canteens should adhere to all the regulations of the Aragon Municipality during all stages of production, storage, distribution and sale of food.

Each school canteen should provide a healthy and nutritious menu in line with the current regulations in Aragon. It is important to specify that each school canteen is not obliged to offer a religious or cultural menu – in fact, the Municipality of Aragon is non-religious.

Changes to the school canteen menu or food service will vary from school to school depending on a variety of factors including (but not limited to):

- how many days per week the canteen is open,
- what food preparation facilities are available.

Both the Municipality of Aragon and the school canteen service provider, according to the regulation in force, provide a menu which might be useful for each school complex. From this menu it is possible to exclude some foods and to indicate some alternative options, in cases of some students who may require special meals for medical or religious and ethical reasons and for

whom, therefore, school canteens should provide special meals where possible so that all children can enjoy a healthy and suitable meal during school hours. Cases that need special dietary needs for medical reasons may include diabetes, celiac disease and hypersensitive food allergies, while cases that need special dietary needs because of ethical or religious reasons may include members of religious communities which may promote specific cultural practices in matters of food and nutrition, and vegetarian or vegan supporters, whose menu might exclude only meat or indeed meat, fish and poultry.

8. A case study: Barilla. Something to wonder about

Barilla is a leading food company, whose most famous advertising and press campaigns convey a reassuring message about the traditional Italian family, also linked with the concepts of authenticity and health. Barilla’s health vision is strictly linked to nutrition and more precisely to the traditional Italian food culture.

The Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (BFNC), founded in 2009, is a corporate think tank whose goal is to foster an open dialogue about the wellbeing of world’s population, and to remain committed to promoting change within food production, distribution and consumption. It is involved in «developing and making available to all the major opinion and decision makers proposals and recommendations on the world of food and nutrition in order to promote a better life and a sustainable and widespread prosperity for all people».

The BCFN created the Double Food – Environmental Pyramid model, a tool that compares the nutritional aspect of foods with their environmental impact: a unique food model created to protect the wellbeing of both people and the environment. Placing the two pyramids next to each other, the Double Food - Environmental Pyramid allows people to see that the foods which are advised to be eaten more, are also, generally, those that have the lowest environmental impact. On the other hand, foods that should be eaten less are also those which have a greater environmental impact.

Finally, Barilla’s vision and mission includes reducing one’s footprint on the planet and promoting wholesome and joyful food habits, thus bringing wellbeing and the joy of eating into everyday life, in accordance with the concept of traditional Italian family.

This consideration is however particularly important, since it underlines how Barilla’s vision refers too scarcely to the promotion of cultural diversity, minorities and religious pluralism. The lack of attention paid to the matter of nutrition and cultural beliefs seemed to be confirmed when Guido Barilla, whose firm makes up almost half the Italian pasta market and a quarter of that in the US, told Italy’s La Zanzara Italian radio show:

«I would never do an advert with a homosexual family...if the gays don’t like it they can go and eat another brand. […] For us the concept of the sacred family remains one of the fundamental values of the company».

As a result of this statement, it seems evident that a brand whose advertising campaigns are strictly linked to virtues and qualities such as joy, happiness, and the importance of family do not see any promotional advantage in representing the relationships between diet and different identities, nor between food and the cultural otherness.

86 Ibidem.
Chapter III - School canteen service in Italy

The development of nutrition policies and food practices is one of the aims of public policies. According to collected data, in order to encourage educational and health Institutions to coordinate their efforts in promoting health through nutrition, the Health Minister is promoting a monitoring system, OKkio alla Salute. This is the result of a collaboration between the Italian National Government, the Minister of Health, the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, CNESPS Centro Nazionale di Epidemiologia, Sorveglianza e Promozione della Salute, all the Italian Regional Authorities in matters of Education and Public Policy, and Italian schools.

In 2012, this survey, which takes place every two years, examined a cross-section of 2,622 classes, a total of 46,483 children (6-10 years of age) and 48,668 parents, residing in every Italian Region. It highlighted that 10.6% of children are overweight, something that is more evident in Central and Southern Italy. The summarising document of the report clearly demonstrated some bad habits in children and families that might cause obesity and malnutrition. As much research has demonstrated, these habits include not having breakfast (9%), or having a not healthy breakfast (31%) frequent consumption of sugary drinks (44%), and the habit of not eating vegetables and fruit (22%).

The survey showed how education and school are fundamental in terms of learning nutritional practices, and in providing evidence-based data and policies, as the graph below shows:

As Dr. Simona Ropolo, Dr. Aurelie Giacometto, and Dr. Marcella Beraudi, nutritionists and the dietician of the municipality of Turin, have highlighted during interviews with the Benvenuti in Italia team, the survey OKkio alla Salute is not able to consider every single Italian municipality since it defines national average trends.

In conclusion, even if collected data is fundamental for every single municipality in Italy, each Regional Authority needs to define their own strategy regarding nutrition and education, in order to enhance their own situation for the municipality.

Each Government-approved policy on nutrition and food safety - oriented towards both the reduction of the incidence of food borne disease and the respect of ethical and religious considerations in matters of nutrition – depends directly on regional, provincial and local Italian officials:

90 Ibidem.
91 Dr. Simona Ropolo, Aurelie Giacometto and Marcella Beraudi work on school canteen service at Struttura Semplice Dipartimentale, ASLTO1, Turin; interview 17/09/2013.
A process that develops itself more easily in a local area, where the progressive consolidation of rules or identity practices sometimes become an explicit violation of the principle of equality, so that it looks like the diffusion of a real institutional discrimination against certain minorities. Although a survey conducted by Slow Food and including 50 Italian schools showed how 79% of the schools offer the possibility for each family to choose from menus built with reference to medical or ethical and religious considerations, there are numerous cases in which schools refuse to offer this service.

It is possible to describe three different models which are useful for building a school canteen menu, which will be analysed in the following lines. These are:

- **Family-based model**;
- **Ontological rejection model**;
- **Cultural identity rejection model**.

![Figure 1: Good practices in Italian school canteens](image)

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93 N. Fiorita, *Scuola pubblica e religioni*, cit., p. 152.

1. Family-based model

This model includes the experiences in which the educational Institution establishes direct contact with families, in order to be aware of the families’ and pupils’ needs. This is the prevalent model within Italian schools; for each family it is mandatory to complete and fill out online forms with required information. Through this information, each family can illustrate its own needs, depending on medical or ethical and religious issues.

The application of this model may be considered as good practice, since it also guarantees and protects the right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression, according to canteen logistical considerations.

Combining food needs due to both medical and religious needs, this model defends religious and ethical pluralism.

Regarding the menus, there are many possibilities:

- **Fixed formula system**, canteen menu, from which it is possible to exclude some foods;
- **Fixed formula menu and alternatives**, canteen menu, from which it is possible to exclude some foods and to indicate some alternative options, because of ethical or religious reasons;
- **Mixed system**, canteen menu, from which it is possible to exclude some foods and to indicate some alternatives; both for medical and ethical or religious reasons.

The case of the **Fixed Formula System** is represented in the municipality of **Venice** where the School Canteen Service offers the possibility of changing the predefined menu for religious and ethical reasons by excluding some foods (pork and beef, in particular) and providing a lacto-ovo-vegetarian menu.

The municipality of **Moncalieri** (Turin) proposes four different and distinguished menus, which are:

- normal menu;
- vegetarian menu;
- meat-free menu but with fish;
- pork-free menu.

Moreover, the possibility to choose alternative food is always guaranteed, when due to medical reasons (the request must be submitted and signed by a nutritionist or a doctor). The school canteen service of the municipality of **Castelletto sopra Ticino** (Novara) covers all religious and ethical needs, by providing a menu without meat, approved by Azienda Regionale 13, Dipartimento di Prevenzione, Servizio di Igiene Alimenti e Nutrizione di Arona (Department of Nutritional and hygienic disease of Arona) but the most well-structured solution is seen in the municipality of **Milan**. Even if the municipality website never makes any reference to food menus and their equivalent alternatives, the website of the appointed society, the Italian Milano Ristorazione, describes the proposal of a varied menu with healthy nutritious alternative options, covering the basics of a healthy diet and good nutrition advice, available in different languages.

Among the promoted projects, it may be useful to remember the introduction of food belonging to different cultural and religious traditions available during pre-defined special weeks. More precisely, the menu and the meal plan described on the website might be accompanied by a form containing nutritional needs, in order to meet medical nutrition therapy goals. Furthermore, it is possible to fill in forms related to ethical and religious nutritional needs.

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95 http://www.comune.venezia.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/5533
96 http://www.comune.moncalieri.to.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/827.
98 www.milanoristorazione.it, 05/06/2014.
On the 10th March 2014, Milano Ristorazione promoted a new menu concerning special diet (cat. 150, light menu, five days). This menu will be a standard one and will contain food compatible as much as possible with different religious, ethical and medical needs. This project represents the desire to consider religious food restrictions, even if vast and complex. The municipality of Lavagna (Genova) also represents a good example of the Mixed System, in which as shown in the previous lines, the school canteen service provides a meal plan, from which it is possible to exclude some foods and to indicate alternatives both for medical and ethical or religious reasons.

Families are supposed to complete online forms in order to request menus reflecting individual nutritional needs because of allergies, intolerances, medical issues, such as fauvism or diabetes, and religious and ethical considerations, where it is possible to prove:

- Religion
- Forbidden foods
- Alternative options

Inspiring principles of this policy are clearly described on the municipality web site, where we can read:

«The aim of supporting healthy nutritional practices directly addressed to schools, with reference to a scientific, integrated and holistic method, concerned with the promotion and the enhancement of educational activities able to create and build consumers' awareness in food matters.»

An example of the Fixed Formula System menu and its alternatives, whereby it is possible to exclude some foods and to indicate some alternative options also for ethical or religious reasons, is that of the municipality of Trieste.

Each family may indicate four types of food able to work as alternative options, in order to replace four types of food considered as inedible but foreseen in the meal plan.

Moreover, the municipality of Sesto Fiorentino (Florence), offers a special cultural-religious menu for:

- Adherents to Islamic traditions (excluding pork but including other meats)
- Vegetarians (excluding meat, fish and poultry);
- Other (it is necessary to specify).

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101 http://www.comune.lavagna.ge.it/mensa-scolastica 02/06/2014
The municipality of Sestri Levante (Genova) offers the possibility to ask for a religious menu, in case of:

- Lent (40 weekdays from Ash Wednesday until Easter);
- Religious reasons (excluding meat).

This case study represents the first case in which a school canteen and a municipality actively promotes religious needs, with reference to specific periods of religious practice. This is certainly one of the best practices in Italy in terms of nutrition in public institutions. Abstinence from meat is not mandatory for younger people: CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) has in fact exempted from the penance obligation people under the age of 14. Anyway, it is a dual foresight that we think is important to stress: a practice designed to respond to the needs of different religious groups without damaging other people's feelings. It is an approach quite different from that found in other occasions and in different contexts, in which the decision to offer a fasting menu on Fridays in Lent has been imposed on the whole school canteen, thereby creating unequal treatment between majorities and minorities, and consequently provoking strong critiques.

The food co-operative Cir Food can be recognized as a leader in the promotion of good practices in the field of food and religion. In 2002, Cir Food introduced special and ethnic meals in school menus in Reggio Emilia. In the same year, it activated real taste workshops, with the aim to give non-Italian families the opportunity to represent their cultures and to explain and prepare traditional recipes from their country of origin with the children. The related project promoted by Prof. A. Morrone, Medical Director of the AO San Camillo Forlanini, in collaboration with Paola Scardella, UOC executive of the National Health Promotion at INMP and Laura Piombo, a biologist and researcher, brought about the publication of a Handbook of Transcultural Nutrition.

The increasing and continuous presence of migrants has prompted health care administration to support a research project to promote the culture of diversity. Considering the importance of dietary differences in the process of adaptation to a new culture and new context of belonging, the Handbook of Transcultural Nutrition can be considered as a useful tool to combat any difficulties.

2. Ontological rejection model

Although school canteen services are important educational resources and they have an important role in the provision of food to students, and although school canteens should reflect the educational goals of the school and support and complement student learning, some municipalities in Italy decide not to differentiate types of menus because of cultural and religious needs. One of these municipalities is Adro (Brescia) who decided to offer a menu without pork in the school canteen only if this request is accompanied by a medical certificate, thereby proving a medical condition. Moreover, it represents a form of cultural discrimination, directed towards associations and religious groups, which leads to the denial of a basic right - the possibility to actively choose nutritious foods in school according to one's own religious or cultural need without a medical certificate, which, of course, cannot be related to a cultural or religious need.

3. Cultural identity rejection model

As shown, the aims of school food services and those of policies relating to healthy eating should complement each other. Ideally, positive peer pressure within an education setting will help to create a culture in which nutritious foods and healthy lifestyles are actively chosen and permeate the whole school environment, also having an impact on the family.

In 2007, the Municipality of Castel Mella\textsuperscript{104} (Brescia) declared the intention to eliminate the possibility of special menus due to religious needs – with the exception of local traditions. The choice to abolish special menus in school canteen services clearly highlights the existence of discrimination, shown in the different treatment of individuals and groups, based on arbitrary criteria concerning food and religious needs.\textsuperscript{105}

Although the representative of the local administration of the municipality of Albenga (Savona)\textsuperscript{106} proposed to introduce halal meat into the school canteen in order to actively promote social inclusion, Enpa – Ente Nazionale Protezione Animali (Italian Authority for Animal Protection) criticized the proposal, considering halal slaughter as a barbaric rite.

The halal method of slaughter, where a deep incision with a sharp knife is made in the neck, thereby cutting the jugular vein – even when stunning the animal before slaughter (like in Western and Italian slaughterhouses) - in the opinion of the Enpa representatives, should be never promoted, above all in public institutions such as schools. The result of the controversy is not even known, since the website of the Municipality of Albenga School Canteen Service does not show the menu online.

The case study of Albenga\textsuperscript{107} is linked to the widely debated issue of the ritual slaughter and its legitimacy. This issue involves the comparison between food and religious needs and the freedom of conscience, both linked to the complex question of kosher and halal certifications\textsuperscript{108}.

Religious pluralism requires education, reflection, and inter-religious dialogue and school canteen service might represent a good arena where this dialogue could take place. It might enable pupils to stand together, respecting their own differences. In Italy, some examples such as Dream Canteen\textsuperscript{109}, (a Slow Food network) might represent the introduction of such values.

For now, it is not enough. Social inclusion should be considered key, while education should be considered the venue to enhance inclusion and pluralism, religious and otherwise.

4. School canteen service in Turin

As stated in the introduction, Italian school nutritional practices are defined by SINU (Società Italiana di Nutrizione Umana) and abided by LARN guidelines (raccomandations about nutritional levels).

Before entering into media res and defining projects and activities promoted by the Municipality of Turin within schools, it is important to demonstrate how in Turin – and in Italy, as in Europe - the aim of supporting healthy nutritional practices is directly addressed to schools, with reference to a scientific, integrated and holistic method.

Comprehensive approaches are fundamental, in order to consider every child in terms of physical, mental, emotional and cultural dimensions.

However, collected data clearly shows how this multidisciplinary approach is incomplete, since it never considers religious dimensions of children and their families.

As already specified, we consider the religious dimension to be as important as others in matters of food and nutrition. Socio-economic development might represent progress in every aspect of human life.

\textsuperscript{104} N. Fiorita, Scuola pubblica e religioni, Libellula edizioni, Lecce, 2012, p.152

\textsuperscript{105} N. Fiorita, Scuola pubblica e religioni, Libellula edizioni, Lecce, 2012, p.152

\textsuperscript{106} http://www.comune.albenga.sv.it/servizi/menù/dinamica.aspx?idSezione=152&idArea=205&idCat=216&I D=346, 02/06/2014.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{108} Chizzoniti, A.G., Tallacchini, M. Cibo e Religione: diritto e diritti, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Libellula Edizioni, Tricase (Le), 2010.

\textsuperscript{109} http://www.slowfood.com/education/pagine/eng/pagina.lasso?id_pg=3, 02/06/2014.
Efforts to achieve better nourishment, health and living conditions clearly refer to what in Literature is defined as Socio-economic development. The notion of socio-economic development essentially involves a unified approach, which thereafter reflects the awareness of theoretical and empirical inter-relatedness of human life, of which religion is part.

Human nutrition is the result of a number of influences brought about by different factors and activities, those which do not have direct implications on food and nourishment are involved in an indirect way; indirect influences in any case contribute to our nutrition in some way. In this respect, religious influences in food matters may deserve further attention, in order to promote the holistic approach concerning nutritional practices within schools.

In every school in Turin, food production is centralized; In Italy, there are many examples of centralized food service systems in schools. Many schools located in Italian urban areas such as Turin use central production. One unique characteristic of the centralized food service system is that food is transported to external locations (satellites or receiving kitchens) for service.

Food may be transported either hot or cold and also in bulk or pre-plated. According to Foodservice System: Product flow and microbial quality and safety of foods, the advantages of the centralized food service System might be summarized with the following subheadings:

1. Lowering food and supply costs;  
2. Improved ingredient control;  
3. Scheduling of food preparation;  
4. Mechanization of preparation;  
5. Quality control.

There are three aspects of food quality: microbiological quality (central production often lends itself to more control over the microbiological quality of food because of the number of controls that are in place at every point in the flow of food through the system), aesthetic quality (colour, texture) and nutritional quality (centralized menu planning, purchasing, and preparation can ensure the nutritional quality of the meals in a centralized foodservice system because of the consistency and control that is possible).

According to Foodservice System: concerning product flow and microbial quality and safety of foods, there are several possible disadvantages to centralized food service systems, the most important being:

1. Equipment malfunctions can be significant;  
2. Transportation costs;  
3. Perceived loss of quality.

Considering that well-balanced, nutritious food is fundamental at all ages and stages of life and considering that a child’s eating habits are established and defined early in life, influenced by education (with references to both school and culture) and family, childhood certainly represents the time in which to teach the enjoyment of a variety of nutritious foods.

In this respect, the Ministry of Health promotes health through different initiatives that will be described and analysed in the following lines.

The purpose is to develop good eating practices and habits and to establish a healthy relationship with food.

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112 Ibidem.
**Il Menu l’ho fatto io**¹¹³! *(This is my menu!)*

This initiative is promoted by ASL TO 1 – *Dipartimento Integrato di Prevenzione* (Public Health Nutritionists from the City of Turin), Assessore alle Politiche Educative della Città di Torino, Laboratorio Chimico della Camera di Commercio di Torino (Chamber of Commerce Chemical Laboratory of the City of Turin), Ufficio Scolastico Regionale del Piemonte (Regional Education Authorities), The School Canteen Service Authorities of the City of Turin, Laboratorio Città Sostenibile di Iter (Istituzione Torinese per una Educazione Responsabile), Miur and Regione Piemonte.

The aim is to provide standards for selecting food. Previous frameworks were the training meetings that took place during 2013, promoted by the City of Turin, aimed at families and *commissioni mensa*.

The first edition will take place in 2014-2015 and will involve two classes for each school complex considered, which are:

- Carlo Casalegno, Via Acciarini 20, 10137, Turin, Circoscrizione 2
- Don Milani, Via San Marino 107, 10137, Turin, Circoscrizione 2
- G. Perotti, Via Mercadante 68/8, 10124, Turin, Circoscrizione 6
- S. D’Acquisto, Via Tollegno 83, 10124, Turin, Circoscrizione 6
- S. Pellico, Via Madama Cristina 106, 10126, Turin, Circoscrizione 8
- S. Parato, Via Acquileia 8, 10133, Turin, Circoscrizione 8
- Castello di Mirafiori, Strada Castello di Mirafiori 45, 10135, Turin, Circoscrizione 10.

This project is going to last a whole year, and it aims to analyse nutrition practices amongst school children, promote education about nutritional practices, provide standards for selecting food (with reference to health, seasonality, and origin of selected products). The final purpose is to create a menu that will be created by and decided upon by children, following a one-year education program.

During the interviews, the nutritionists of the Municipality of Turin flagged up that, since choices in food matters are made by the children, this may be considered the only project which tries also to consider religious and cultural parameters in defining a menu.

**Frutta nelle scuole**¹¹⁴ *(Fruit in Schools)*:

This initiative is promoted by the Ministry of Health and concerns the whole Italian territory. In order to enhance healthy food strategies and targets in matters of nourishment and to promote effective practice models, this projects aims to encourage fruit consumption in schools for multiple reasons:

- to enhance healthy food strategies;
- to promote healthy nutritional practices;
- to simplify the road from the producer to consumer, regarding fruits and vegetables;
- to promote the education relevant to selecting fruit and vegetables according to their seasonality;
- to improve awareness of the health-nutrition link early in life.

**Obiettivo Spuntino**¹¹⁵ *(Project Snack)*

One of the statistical parameters of the survey “Okkio alla Salute” is concerned with snacks and nibbles. In 2008, the survey highlighted that in Italy 82% of children used to consume snacks with a high calorie count; in Piedmont 78% of children fell into this group, and 79% in Turin. In this respect, the aim of the project was and is still to promote the changing of snack consumption in favour of healthier attitudes.

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First outcomes have shown that children consuming healthier snacks had increased in number, moving from 17% to 54%. It should be noted that the initiatives directly involved teachers and paediatricians, assigning them a fundamental role.

La Pietanza non Avanza (Waste Not Want Not!)
A complete education in matters of food and eating must not exclude the important topic of food waste. The City of Turin decided to promote a complex project, which involved families in need. The aim is to donate left-over dishes to such families, thereby limiting the quantity of wasted food. The schools involved in the initiative are:

- Antonelli, Via Vezzolano 20, Turin
- Aurora, Via Cecchi, 16, Turin
- Fontana, Via Gassino 13, Turin
- Spinelli, Via San Sebastiano da Po, Turin.

The initiative can be considered a testing ground for future projects.

We can conclude by underlining the fundamental role played by schools, teachers, paediatricians, nutritionists, and Education Authorities in matters of nutritional practices\footnote{Ibidem.}. As stated in the introductory observations, even if much has already been done, there is still much to do, too. An innovative approach is needed, when dealing with nutritional habits and cultural and religious dietary systems.

In Turin it is possible to ask for special menus, which are available both for medical reasons and ethical (religious or cultural) ones. Among 55,000 users, 4,500 of them benefit from the option to ask for an alternative menu (without meat, without pork or without meat and fish). Moreover, 1,300 children each year ask for a special menu for medical reasons.

Canteen operators monitor the wellbeing of children with planning services able to take into account the need for healthy food, ethnicity, religion, cultural backgrounds and social and economic conditions.

Each family is asked to fill out a form about their own food needs and to send it back to the Municipality of Turin. If a family asks for a special menu because of a medical reason it is necessary to attach a medical certificate to the request.
Forms to be completed are available on the website of the School Canteen Service of the Municipality of Turin. These are composed of:

- Form for an alternative menu (to specify if for medical or ethical reasons);
- Form for a temporary diet because of a food allergy or intolerance;
- Form for a verified food allergy;
- Form for a verified food intolerance.

Specific documentation is needed for menus related to medical issues.
As far as special menus for ethical and religious reasons are concerned, forms are not so specific.
A family may ask for a menu without pork, without meat or without meat or fish; during the interview, Dr. Filippo Valfré\textsuperscript{117} (director of the School Canteen Service in Turin) underlined that those who mostly benefit from special diets are Muslim.

In recent years, Turin has increasingly become a multicultural and intercultural city. Migrants and people belonging to specific religious and cultural traditions need to maintain a link with their culture and country; food clearly represents one of the way to do so.

Overall the analysis showed that:

The School Canteen Service in Turin follows a family-based model, with reference to the direct relationship between families and the Municipality;

It requires specific documentation only for what is concerned to be a special menu due to medical reasons;

It offers special menus to conform with ethical and religious needs;

It offers special menus without pork\textsuperscript{118} and families are not required to complete a form in order to ask for these; the only case in which it is necessary to complete a form in order to ask for a special menu without pork meat is in the case of any major medical issue.

Each special menu for ethical and religious reasons is decided without considering the representatives of the main religious communities in Turin.

\textsuperscript{117} Interview dr. F. Valfrè, Director of Servizio Gestione Ristorazione del Comune di Torino (School Canteen – Turin), 20/05/14.

\textsuperscript{118} http://www.comune.torino.it/servizieducativi/ristorazionescolastica/ (05/06/2014).
Chapter IV - School canteens and religion: an exploratory survey.

With the aim to better understand the relationship between school canteen service and religious rules in matters of nutrition, a semi-structured questionnaire was administrated in three primary schools in Turin, two in Rome and one in a colegio in Zaragoza.

1. The cross-section

Given some difficulties in defining a statistically representative sample of the target population, the research team decided to base the sampling strategy on the schools. The sampling strategy procedure was therefore based on sampling families from each school. Before showing the results, some theoretical assumptions need to be explored. These considerations are concerned with the theoretical method used by the research team, which are described in the following lines:

- The nature of plural societies, and how groups and individuals engage geographically and inter-culturally within them, with reference to the meaning of integration and religious pluralism and to the possibility of rooting social models of coexistence on these concepts;
- The relationship between food and identity, the capacity of food to describe identity and cultural forms of belonging;
- The role of the family in changing society (with reference to common lay marriage and consequently the decreasing number of marriages, new forms of families made up of persons coming from different cultural, religious, ethnic backgrounds);
- The role of the school as an educational agency, with reference to the diversity it contains;
- The significance of the school canteen service and its capacity to provide a fundamental opportunity for building of a set of coherent actions concerning the promotion of diversity and religious pluralism.

Overall, our research is concerned with schools; the cross-section is made up of schools which have been chosen in order to be as diverse and heterogeneous as possible, and which are able to represent – even if not statistically – the socio-cultural complexity and diversity which typifies Italian schools.

Children’s nutrition is the result of the economic, cultural and social level of a family, taking into account its religious background, level of secularization and social interaction. According to this statement, pluralism (cultural, religious, linguistic) means innovation – also in matters of nutrition.

If what stated clearly represents a set of considerations deserving to be observed and analysed, in order to build the research it has been necessary to translate this information into quantifiable data. Gathered data may be represented by the place of birth of the components of selected families and by their religion(s); it was decided not to ask either about the level of secularization of the families, or about their economic status.

This evidence allowed us to obtain information concerning religious pluralism in public and primary schools and in families, and moreover concerning the relationship between migrant generations and Italian ones.

This information represents a particular phenomenon, related to the ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious mélange which constantly influences our habits and behaviour in schools and at home and work, and obviously also at the table.

Since it was not possible to collect data regarding the composition of the school population for each district in Turin, Rome and Zaragoza, the cross-section was built with reference to migration data and data collected by the local government.

2. The surveys

The surveys aimed to collect data with reference to:

- significance of religious and cultural pluralism in schools
(children’s and families’ personal data); religious dietary laws within selected families; perception of religious pluralism in school canteen service.

With reference to the multicultural nature of the city of Turin, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic, French, English, Spanish, Chinese and Romanian.

Response rate is a crucial factor in evaluating the reliability of survey results; in Turin the response rate was almost 38% (from a total amount of 1,374 selected families); in Rome the response rate was almost 51% (from 546 surveyed families) and in Zaragoza the response rate was 27.5% (from 182 selected families).

Overall, the survey, conducted between December 2013 and January 2014, involved the school staff of the Gabelli, Santorre di Santarosa and Tommaseo schools (Turin), the Pisacane and Di Donato schools (Rome) and the college of San José de Calansaz (Zaragoza), and involved a total number of 848 families; 519 from Turin, 279 from Rome and 50 from Zaragoza.
3. TURIN

Table 1 shows data regarding the foreign primary school population in each district. Highlighted districts are the ones which were selected for the survey.

Table 1
Turin: foreign population in selected schools with reference to districts

<table>
<thead>
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<td>1.634</td>
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<td>391</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>334</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data - 31/12/2013

Map 1 clearly shows the size of the selected districts; the highlighted numbers show schools in reference to the districts. As revealed in Table 1, the school “Tommaseo” (District 1) is located in the city centre of Turin, while two schools are located outside the centre; the “Santorre di Santarosa” school is located in an area of the city called Borgo San Paolo (District 3), and the school Gabelli is located in Barriera di Milano (District 6).

Map 1 – Turin
Significance of religious pluralism

Data concerning citizenship\textsuperscript{119} is shown in Graph 1, by percentage. The selected schools represent three differing case studies where 59% of children attending schools are Italian citizens and 41% are not.

With reference to nationalities, Graph 2 shows that in Turin the most common foreign nationality is Moroccan, followed by Romanian, Nigerian, Chinese, Egyptian, Albanian and Filipino. There are more than 29 other nationalities which represent less than 1%. Overall, there are 38 nationalities to consider.

\textsuperscript{119} Statistical data concerning selected school student citizenship was obtained through the analysis of the data supplied by Gabelli, Santorre di Santarosa and Tommaseo. This data refers to school years 2013 and 2014 and includes the entire school population for the 3 school institutes - 1374 children in total. Within the selected area and in order to verify the incidence of the second generation area, the research team decided to question both parents and children about their birthplace. This was according to the current “IUS Sanguini” Italian citizenship law.
Graph 3 shows how a great number of the children with foreign nationalities were born in Italy (87.2%), with a small percentage of children born in Romania (4.7%) and Morocco (1.8%). 20 nations are represented. 

Graph 4 represents the much more complex situation of the parents. About half of them were born in Italy (54.7%), while 14.8% were born in Romania and 11.8% in Morocco. 35 nations are represented.

Graph 5 compares percentages of parents and children born abroad: the clear discrepancy between the two tables highlights the increasing phenomenon of the second generation, a term which refers to children of first-generation immigrants and represents 29% of the surveyed cross-section.

Graph 6 is concerned with the frequency of mixed marriages, with references to those families whose parents come from different countries. This phenomenon makes up 12% of the cross-section, 1.5% of cases are represented by families whose parents both come from different countries, while in 10.5% of the cases, one parent was born in Italy.
Considered results refer to Istat (National Statistic data) from 2012 concerning mixed marriage, as represented in the next graph\textsuperscript{120}, where mixed marriages represented 13% of total marriages in Italy and 16% of the total in North-Western Italy.

\textsuperscript{120} Melloni A. \textit{Rapporto sull’analfabetismo religioso in Italia}, cit, p. 490.
Gathered information allowed us to collect data concerning the composition of families, since there are no available databases in Turin. Data concerning religious belonging (shown in Graph 7) clearly reveals the multicultural nature of the selected cross-section, where about 55% of selected families declare themselves to be Catholic, 16%, Muslim, and 14% Orthodox. About 10% declare themselves to be atheist, 4% Protestant and an insubstantial percentage are Buddhist, Jehova’s Witness or follow the Baha’i religious tradition.
With reference to mixed marriages where both the parents declare themselves to belong to a religious tradition (4,2% of the total amount of the selected couples and 4,7% of the total amount of the selected religious couples) Graph 8 reveals the main religious communities represented in Turin. Mixed couples composed of catholic-orthodox seem to prevail (2,2%), followed by catholic-muslim, catholic-protestant (0,9%) and catholic-buddhist (0,2%) couples.
**Food habits and food rules**

The second set of questions aimed to collect data concerning:
- The existence of religious and cultural dietary laws;
- Their perceived importance;
- The need to respect these rules;
- Opinions regarding the elimination of meat and fish from school canteen menus.

With reference to the existence of religious dietary laws, **Graph 9** reveals how 28% of the surveyed families need to observe dietary requirements based on their religious beliefs, while 1,3% does not know about such rules. Moreover, 24,6% of the cross-section said that they also observe various religious food restrictions at home.
Graph 9 - Dietary laws and religious or cultural observance
(N=475; N=129)

Graph 10 is concerned with religious dietary rules. The cross-section was built with reference to those who declared themselves to be observant; atheists and religious minorities are not represented in the graph. According to the collected data, 40% of the surveyed Muslims belong to a religious tradition which imposes various food rules. Regarding Catholicism, gathered data seem to be significant. Catholicism tends to represent a religion without a precise dietary system. As discussed in the previous pages, some foods may be prohibited during certain religious periods, but there are not forbidden foods. Even though these rules are scarce and limited, a minority of the surveyed Catholics declared that they respect them. According to these considerations, 21% of Catholics respect religious dietary laws, as do 26% of Orthodox, 19% of Protestant and 41% of the Muslims surveyed. Muslims and Orthodox respondents in particular followed the rules even at home, and were followed by Catholics and Protestants.
The following graphs show the level of importance conferred to the respect of religious dietary rules.

**Graph 11** presents the results concerning school and home contexts. Although 63% of the surveyed families did not consider it important to respect religious food rules at home, 16% of the cross-section considered it important, and 21% as very important; overall 37% of the surveyed families considers their religious dietary system as a set of rules which deserves to be respected. Regarding the school context, the conferred importance of respecting religious food rules clearly decreases; 13.5% consider it as important even if not fundamental, 17.6% as fundamental. Together, they represent about 31% of the cross-section.

It is possible to state that perhaps schools cannot design menus able to take into account ethnicity, language, culture, and/or religious conditions of its students. In fact, from home to school contexts, the conferred importance of the respect for religious food rules decreases both among those who consider it as very important (-3.7%) and among those who consider it as important but not fundamental (-2.5%).

Through appropriate qualitative methods, it would be useful to verify if the school is able to offer religiously correct menus, or it just creates a kind of cultural submission which limits the capacity for the children to maintain their religious and cultural observance.

**Graph 11 - Perceived importance of religious dietary laws in children's diet**

(N=464; N=269)

Most of the religious restrictions are concerned with the consumption of meat. For this reason, they frequently represent an obstacle within the communion of the school meal. Regarding fish, although a copious number of dietary systems do not prohibit the consumption of fish, and even if fish is too expensive for a school meal, it may represent a problem for ethical and philosophical trends such as veganism and vegetarianism. On the other hand, it may represent a valid replacement for meat. **Graph 12** represents the results regarding the favourable, indifferent, and unfavourable opinions concerning the possible elimination of meat from school menus. The percentage of families against the elimination of fish from the menu is high (+20%); it therefore seems to be easier to give up the consumption of fish than meat. An important result shown in the graph is concerned with the possibility of excluding meat. If fish continued to be offered in the menu, the majority of the surveyed families would agree with (or be indifferent to) the suggestion of removing meat from the menu.
Graph 12.1 compares positive and indifferent reactions to the possibility of excluding meat from the menu to negative responses: in Turin, 65% of surveyed families would be in favour or indifferent towards giving up meat at school.

Families answering “no” regarding the exclusion of meat from the school meal were encouraged to give reasons for their answer. The semantic analysis of what they stated is showed in [graph 13], where 35.4% of those interviewed seemed to be worried about the balanced nature of meals. This is followed by 19% of surveyed families who chose not to give reasons. Most of the remaining answers are concerned with the idea that not everybody likes fish, that children are supposed to try all kinds of food, and concerns related to the quality of fish that would be offered.

Comparing collected data with the religious beliefs of the cross section, it is possible to define a map of the collected opinions. As shown in [Graph 14], most of the negative answers regarding the removal of meat were given by Protestants and Catholics (about 57% and 48%) while Muslims, Orthodox and Atheists gave a higher percentage of positive answers.
Graph 15 represents the desirability of different foods, as expressed by surveyed families. Graph 16 shows the perceptions concerning foods and their perceived link to particular religious or gastronomic traditions.
Perceived religious and cultural pluralism within school canteen service
The last part of the questionnaire concerns the perceived level of religious and cultural pluralism within the school context. It should be stated that the low level of perception might be related to the absence of this issue in home conversations. With the aim to evaluate cultural and religious pluralism in schools with reference to school canteen service, the last part of the questionnaire contains some questions related to:

Knowledge of special meals required by children;
Knowledge of number of special meals provided for religious reasons;
Awareness of children asking for special meals for religious reasons;
Knowledge of the school canteen service and of the possibilities for special and religious menus;
Opinion concerning special meals.

The possibility to answer "I do not know" was created with the aim to indicate a lack of information or knowledge about religious pluralism on the part of the surveyed families. Graph 17 shows the “I do not know” answers.
It was considered useful to collect data concerning possible factors involved in choosing the answer “I do not know”, such as the importance given to the need to respect religious dietary laws. The idea that will be shown is the following: the more families know about the concept, the higher their level of involvement will be.

Graph 18 represents the comparison between “I do not know” answers and the importance given to the need for a religiously correct menu. Since the absence of opinions regarding the issue is high, it may be stated that the percentage of families who perceive themselves as not being involved in the problem is elevated. As shown, these values significantly increase when the issue is concerned with the respect for religious dietary systems.
4. ROME

Table 2 displays data concerning the foreign primary school population with reference to the chosen districts (municipalities).

**Table 2**

Rome: foreign population in selected schools with reference to Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>IV</th>
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</table>

T.O. 1.10

1.10 1 665 733 730 8 2.21 2.82 1.21 1.12 1.13 1.15 1.40 16.9 65

Date - 31/12/2013

Map 2 clearly represents the size of the selected municipalities; the highlighted numbers show the schools in relation to the districts.

**Map 2 – Rome**

[Map Image]

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121| [www.comune.roma.it/wps/portal/pcr?contentId=NEW555876&jp_pagecode=newsview.wp&ahew=contentId:jp_pagecode, 02/06/2014.](www.comune.roma.it/wps/portal/pcr?contentId=NEW555876&jp_pagecode=newsview.wp&ahew=contentId:jp_pagecode, 02/06/2014.)
Relevance of pluralism

In the Rome case study, schools were not able to provide data on the nationality of their children, because the two institutions with whom we collaborated do not hold statistics on the matter. This lack of information is significant, especially considering the demographic characteristics of the neighbourhoods: a high percentage of foreign residents would suggest a greater awareness of the subject, given the more pronounced needs of students. These considerations are also supported by the results of the survey: more than 20% of the students included were born abroad (Graph 19). Among the most represented foreign countries are the Philippines (6.3%), Bangladesh (5.9%), Egypt and Peru (1.1% each), followed by 13 other countries (5.9% in total), for a total of 17 foreign countries represented.

As in the case study of Turin, in Rome the percentages of the place of birth of parents and children vary considerably: on the basis of the information collected, 52.4% of parents were born in a country other than Italy (Graph 20), among which Bangladesh (15.7%) and the Philippines (13.7%), followed by China, Egypt and Peru (2.9% each), Romania (2.1%), Morocco (1.2%) and Ukraine (1%), followed by 27 other States with percentages lower than 1%, for a total of 35 foreign countries represented.

The gap between the data on the places of birth of parents and children expresses, as in Turin, the importance of the phenomenon of the second generation: 30% of the Roman pupils were born in Italy to foreign-born parents (Graph 21). It is important to mention here that the Roman sample is composed of two schools instead of the three in Turin, as it was not possible to include an institute in the neighbourhood with the lowest percentage of foreign population. It is therefore possible to assume that the incidence of second generations in Rome (30%) would be lower than that in Turin (29%).
The data on mixed parental couples differs considerably from that on mixed marriages reported in Melloni (2014): our sample has lower values, comprehending 8.3% of mixed couples (compared to 18% of mixed marriages in Central Italy), of which 5.7% of couples are formed of one person born in Italy and the other born abroad (11.2% in the case of mixed marriages) and 2.6% of couples are formed of two foreign-born people (compared with 6.8% of marriages).

With regards to religious diversity (Graph 23), 38.7% of families declared themselves Catholic, 21.5% Muslim, 4.3% Orthodox, 2.9% Buddhist; followed by 1.4% of families saying they belong respectively to Protestantism or to the Church of Christ, 1.1% Hindu or Jehovah’s Witness; 0.4%, of Baha’i faith or Candomblé; while 26.9% of families are non-believers.
Religiously mixed couples make up 1.2% of the total and the 1.7% of the believers: figures which are significantly lower than those in Turin, where 4.7% of the believer couples were religiously mixed. Moreover, while in Turin, religious diversity is more composite, involving five different faiths (Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, Orthodoxy and Protestantism), in Rome the registered variety is reduced, involving only Catholicism and Islam.

**Cultural habits and dietary restrictions**

Considering the issues related to the habits and dietary restrictions of families and students, a matter of primary importance concerns dietary rules of a religious nature (Graph 24): 40.3% of families stated the presence of such rules in their religious doctrine (compared to 27.8% in Turin). Among these, 83.5% claimed they applied them at home: 83.3% of Muslims and 21.3% of Catholics (Graph 25)\(^{122}\).

\(^{122}\)The small number of respondents of other religions and confessions invalidate the comparison. Absolute data is: Buddhist (1 family out of 8), Church of Christ (3 families out of 4), Hindus (3 out of 3 families), Orthodox (1 family out of 12), Jehovah’s Witnesses (1 family out of 3), Protestants (1 family out of 4).
Like in Turin, there is a difference regarding the importance given to respect of food restrictions imposed by religion at home and at school: the number of families that do not consider respect for the doctrine important decreases by 3% from home to school (this was 6.2% in Turin). Nevertheless, 38% of believer families consider it important for children to eat school food in accordance with their faith, while 11.5% consider it important, but not entirely necessary.

Roman results about the exclusion of meat and fish from school menus (Graphs 27 and 28) are surprisingly similar to the data collected in Turin: 35.7% of families are against the exclusion of meat from menus, while 25.3% are indifferent and 39% are fully in favour. The last two values, added together, constitute 64.3% of families who are not against excluding meat from the school menu (compared to 64.6 % in Turin). 56% of Roman families are against the eventual exclusion of both meat and fish, compared to 25.2% who are indifferent and 18.7% who are in favour. The percentage of families in favour of offering a vegetarian menu is 43.9% (44.6% in Turin).
Despite many families being in favour, what are the reasons given against the exclusion of meat and fish from school menus? In the case of meat (Graph 29) like in the case of both meat and fish (Graph 30), the most common objection is that, deprived of such food, the menu would not be balanced and appropriate to children’s growth: this answer was given by approximately 57.5% of respondents in the case of meat, and 58.5% in the case of the exclusion of both meat and fish. Other objections concern the preferences of children (11.2% argue that many children do not like fish) and the intrinsic value of food variety, represented by the possibility for children to taste as many foods as possible (10.1% in the case of the exclusion of meat, 10.2% in the case of both meat and fish). Finally, the difficulty in finding a replacement for protein worries 5.4% of families.

**Graph 27 - Opinion regarding the exclusion of meat from the school meal**
(N=269; N=262)

- Unfavourable: 39.0%
- Indifferent: 25.2%
- Favourable: 18.7%

- No-meat menu
- No-meat nor fish menu

**Graph 28 - Opinion regarding the exclusion of meat from the school meal**
(N=269; N=262)

- Unfavourable: 64.3%
- Indifferent + Favourable: 35.7%

- No-meat menu
- No-meat nor fish menu

**Graph 29 - Reasons for unfavourable opinions about the exclusion of meat from school meals**
(N=76)

- Balanced diet in menus: 57.5%
- Not everybody likes fish: 11.2%
- Children are supposed to try all kinds of food: 10.1%
- Like meat: 2.2%
- Special menus are a good solution: 2.2%
- Some people’s religious limitations should not affect everyone: 1.1%
- A varied menu can meet all the nutritional requirements: 1.1%
- No answer: 14.6%
Given this data, what is the influence of religion on the beliefs of families regarding meat and fish? As suggested by graphs 31 and 32, the most numerous families are Protestants, Catholics (respectively 44% and 53%) and nonbelievers (44% and 72%). Among those clearly in favour, Muslims represent 66% (less in case of the exclusion of both meat and fish: 24%).
Graph 33 represents a ranking of the average desirability of different foods in the school canteen, as expressed by the families involved. Graph 34 illustrates the perception of the degree of affinity towards the same food in gastronomic religious traditions. These results regard only believer families, divided by faith; the report presents only data related to Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox families, in order to facilitate comparison with Turin.
The perception of religious pluralism at school
Also in this Roman case study, our team has verified the frequency of "I do not know" answers in the five questions about the perception of religious pluralism in the children's class (Graph 35). The results present once again a high percentage of families who state their ignorance on the subject. Although the percentages of those ignorant on the subject are significantly lower than those in Turin, lack of knowledge and opinion about issues related to cultural and religious pluralism in the school context concerns about 35% of Roman families (50% in Turin).
How does the involvement of families in the canteen influence their perception of pluralism in the school environment of their children? In Turin this relationship appeared solid, with a distribution of "I do not know" answers concentrated among those less affected or not affected at all by the problem of religiously correct food. The Roman case is more complex: in 54.4% of the families (75% in Turin) the lack of knowledge is connected to families with little involvement; in 14.3% (12.7% in Turin) families with an average involvement, while in 31.3% (12.1% in Turin) of families really interested in the topic.
5. ZARAGOZA

Map 3 shows the size of the Distrito Centro and the location of the Colegio San José de Calasanz. It was not possible to find data concerning foreign population within each district and schools were selected with reference to pre-existing contacts with school staff. Moreover, school staff representatives were not helpful in discussing children’s dietary needs with reference to religion. However, San José de Calasanz represents an interesting colegio: during 2012-2013, 99 foreign students were attending classes, out of a total amount of 182 students (54,4%).

According to information published by the Instituto Aragonés de Estadísticas, in 2012-2013 in Zaragoza, 13,450 (11,8%) of those attending schools were foreign students, from a total number of 113,607 students. 38,730 of them were school canteen service users; 39,493 were elementary school students, and 4,533 (11,5) were foreigners.

Map 3 – Zaragoza

As mentioned in the introduction, given some difficulties with building of the cross-section, the number of selected families was extremely limited. For this reason, during presentation of the collected results, we will refer to absolute values without any reference to percentages.

Relevance of pluralism

At first glance, an interesting analysis may be made with reference to children’s and parents’ nationality. As shown before, the phenomena of second generations is especially important: Graph 37 reveals how 37 students out of a total of 50 were born in Spain and 12 in foreign countries, while 34 parents were born in Spain and 62 in foreign countries (from a total number of 96 parents).
According to Graphs 38 and 39, Romania is the most represented country of origin (6 children and 18 parents), followed by Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Morocco, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Nicaragua, Argentina, China, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal, Ethiopia, Algeria, Ghana and Peru.
The cross-section reveals a complex overview of existing religious pluralism; graph 40 shows that 22 of the selected families declare themselves to be Catholic, 9 Orthodox, 7 Protestant, 6 Atheist, 3 Muslim, 2 Jehovah’s Witness and 1 Buddhist.

Food rules and habits
14 surveyed families stated that they belonged to a religious tradition promoting the respect of precise food rules; among them, 9 stated that they follow these rules at home every day (Graph 41).
Graph 42 compares data concerning families who follow religious dietary systems.

The results about the exclusion of meat and fish from school menus (Graphs 43 and 44) are similar to previously collected data: from 48 selected families, 32 of the families are against the exclusion of meat, 7 are indifferent and 6 are fully in favour.

Regarding the reasons for the expressed responses, the most common objection is that, deprived of such food, menus would not be balanced and appropriate for children’s growth (12 families out of a total of 16).
Perceived religious pluralism in school canteen service

Religious pluralism in Zaragoza seems to represent an important element within society. The high number of nationalities represented, and data concerning religious dietary systems, seem to confirm this. However, how do the selected families perceive this pluralism? In order to answer this question, it was necessary to consider the frequency of the answer “I do not know” regarding the attention paid to the issue.

Graph 46 clearly shows the number of “I do not know” responses recorded. The results represent families stating their ignorance on the subject (25 families out of 48) while the number of children asking for special menus at school is 12, while 36 families do not request such menus (Graph 47).

Graph 48 shows the number of gathered “I do not know” responses received relating to five questions about the issue; the surveyed situation seems to testify a lack of attention to the problem and a weak perception of the existing religious pluralism permeating the situation in Zaragoza displayed in the previous lines.
Graph 48 - Questions concerning perceived religious pluralism within children’s school class
Number of collected “I do not know”

Total answers  Don’t know

- Existence of special menus: 48 (25), 36
- Number of special menus: 48 (36), 36
- Special menus by religion: 49 (31), 27
- Awareness of special menus: 49 (27),
- Opinion regarding special menus:

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Chapter V - The religiously correct menu: how to produce commensality

In recent decades, important socio-economic changes in most developed countries have undeniably affected the eating habits of citizens in Italy and the rest of Europe. This trend is clearly due to an increase in human international migration and to the changing of the way in which we receive information and use media. Moreover, this trend has led to the spread of new dietary habits and new kinds of previously unknown foods. This status quo has, undoubtely, led to a re-thinking of school canteen services’ proposals.

The school may be considered a fundamental area in which to negotiate cultural and religious belonging, and school canteen service clearly represents a fundamental tool for the promotion of the multicultural, multi-religious and pluralist food education. Although in the past, school canteen service aimed above all to supply children with the nutrients they needed to power through the day, now it aims to reduce the current increase in the illnesses directly or indirectly related to the increase in obesity, due to bad habits and unhealthy lifestyles\textsuperscript{123}.

Obese children are more likely to become obese adults; moreover, obesity in childhood is linked to various health diseases and contributes to a higher mortality rate.

The Italian Department of Health, in order to promote and improve people’s health, produced a document entitled Nutrizione. Approfondimenti: strategie di educazione alimentare\textsuperscript{124} (Nutrition. Food Education Strategies;) which points out how health disease in childhood might be linked to an excess of protein, fats and rapid-absorption sugars, which can be detrimental to a child’s health.

Furthermore, regular physical activity performed most days of the week reduces the risk of developing, or indeed dying from, some of the leading causes of illness and death all the way from childhood to adult life. As a result of this consideration it is important for schools and public institutions to implement new strategies in order to prevent the development of unhealthy behaviours.

Physical activities may allow children to introduce some additional calories (snacks, ice-creams, chips) into their diets, while for a sedentary child the total amount of additional calories should be reduced to zero.

As shown in the previous pages of this document, the main documents and guidelines concerning health and food in Italy are represented by:

- \textit{LARN} (Recommended levels of Consumption of Energy and Nutrients) produced by SINU (Italian Society for Human Nutrition)\textsuperscript{125};
- Guidelines for healthy, Italian nutrition, produced by INRAN (National Institution for Food and Nutrition)\textsuperscript{126};
- Guidelines worked on by the Department of Health and named \textit{Strategie per l’educazione alimentare}\textsuperscript{127} (Nutrition. Food Education Strategies).

Logically, the school canteen service is only able to supply one meal per day and it is therefore not possible to produce an evaluation of children’s daily consumption of nutrients. It would be useful to consider to the division of calories and nutrients per meal, with reference to the guidelines contained in the \textit{Linee Guida per la Ristorazione Scolastica della Regione}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{123} \url{http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_246_en.pdf}, 16.07.2014.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} \url{http://www.comune.torino.it/servizieducativi/ristorazionescolastica/doc/lineeguidaregione.pdf}, 16.07.2014.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} \url{http://www.sinu.it/html/pag/nuovi_larn.asp}, 16.07.2014.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} \url{http://nut.entecria.it/}, 16.07.2014.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} \url{http://www.comune.torino.it/servizieducativi/ristorazionescolastica/doc/lineeguidaregione.pdf}, 16.07.2014.
\end{itemize}
Lombardia\textsuperscript{128} (Lombardia Guidelines for school canteen service) in the Department of Health Document Nutrizione. Approfondimenti: strategie di educazione alimentare (Nutrition. Strategies for Food Education) and in Merendomentro\textsuperscript{129}, a rulebook produced by the Department of Food and Forestry Policies and INRAN. Here is an example of the documentation described, in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Lombardia Guidelines for school canteen service</th>
<th>INRAN</th>
<th>Department of Health Nutrition - Strategies for Food Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>15% kcal/day</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>20% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>5-7% kcal/day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>40% kcal/day</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>40% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>10% kcal/day</td>
<td>5-7% kcal/day</td>
<td>10% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>35% kcal/day</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>30% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Division of calories per meal in 4 or 5 of the main meals.

The aim of this paper is not only represented by the desire to produce a menu concerning the National guidelines in matters of school canteen service only, but also to consider the ability of food to play an important part in the construction of our identity, our religious practices, and our socialization; here is presented a menu referring to different as particular religious dietary systems and rules.

The religiously correct menu was built with the intention of covering 40% of daily calorie needs, in children aged 5–10, as shown in Table 2, where we can see the LARN Recommendations (1996)\textsuperscript{130} concerning macronutrients and energy in child development.

Since this document does not recommend any value for protein consumption, to obtain such data, it is fundamental to consider the report Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases\textsuperscript{131}, illustrated in the World Health Organization paper (WHO, 2003) about diets and chronic-degenerative disease.

\textsuperscript{128} \url{http://www.aiclombardia.it/Jus/LineeGuidaRistScolastica.pdf}, 16.07.2014.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibidem

\textsuperscript{130} \url{http://www.sinu.it/html/pag/larn_introduzione.asp}, 17.07.2014.

\textsuperscript{131} \url{http://whqlibdoc.who.int/trs/who_trs_916.pdf}, 17.07.2014.
Table 2. Daily recommendations for those in an age of development, according to recommendations by the LARN and the WHO (World Health Organisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Range For nutrient consumption</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>kcal average (male and female)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,5-10,5 anni</td>
<td>1761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-nutrients</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male+Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>2,5-13,5 anni</td>
<td>10-15% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipids</td>
<td>2,5-13,5 anni</td>
<td>≤ 30% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates</td>
<td>2,5-13,5 anni</td>
<td>≥ 55% kcal/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g/day)</td>
<td>5,5-10,5 anni</td>
<td>10,5-20,5 g/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to take in account the document Carta della Qualità del Servizio Ristorazione Scolastica (Quality paper for school canteen service) produced by the Department of Culture, Education and Youth (Turin) in 2013-2014, which makes reference to the Food Pyramid produced by the Barilla Centre for Food & Nutrition (2012)\textsuperscript{132}, it was decided to consider the environmental sustainability of the chosen foods.

It is possible to read in the document:

«L’utilizzo di prodotti di provenienza locale, cioè di approvvigionamenti prossimi ai diretti produttori, privilegia forme di cooperazione fra gli stessi coltivatori, consente di limitare i passaggi intermedi, inoltre educa alla conoscenza dei prodotti tipici, garantisce freschezza e stagionalità dei prodotti, offre garanzia di qualità e sicurezza alimentare, e riduce infine i livelli di inquinamento a sostegno dell’ambiente»\textsuperscript{133}.

Production and consumption of food is one of the major users of our planet’s resources, food chain partners must work together to address food sustainability and tackle the adverse environmental impacts of food and drink products that occur all along the chain.

Among the DOP products (Protected Designation of Origin) Turin’s School Canteen Service menu offers: parmigiano reggiano, Piedmont grana padano, extra virgin olive oil from southern Italy and cheese from Piedmont. Among the products coming from a short distribution chain are butter, eggs, flour, chicken, UHT milk, yogurt, corn, and, when in season, tomatoes, pesto and fruit. Some other products, such as bananas and pineapples, come from the community-supported market. Finally, water offered within the school canteen service is from SMAT (Metropolitan Society for Water in Turin) whose production cycle is guaranteed by a copious number of daily checks.

In conclusion, the present menu contains references to both the religious dietary systems discussed in the previous pages and the existing menus within school canteen service proposals in Turin.

Regarding the possibility of minimizing meat consumption, the decision moves from the first result of the quantitative research of the present text. As shown, in Turin, 65% of the surveyed families

\textsuperscript{133} http://www.comune.torino.it/servizieducativi/ristorazionescolastica/alimentazione/prodotti.htm, 17.07.2014.
would give up meat at school, while in Rome 64% of families would be willing to exclude meat from the school canteen menu.

The consumption of meat, more than any other food, divides individuals belonging to different religious traditions, because of the differing ways in which it can be prepared. As a result of this consideration, a *religiously correct menu* may begin with the elimination (or at least the reduction) of foods causing the most difficulty in accommodating religious and cultural dietary needs.

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Figure 3. The double Pyramid by the Barilla Centre for Food & Nutrition, 2011.

**Winter menu**

1\(^{st}\) week

<p>| Moroccan orange and carrot cream, Broccoli stew Pear | Tomato and parmesan spaghetti&lt;br&gt;Chickpea burger with rosemary, Babaghanoush kiwi | Ravioli “di magro”&lt;br&gt;- filled with ricotta cheese and spinach, Omelette, Carrots with rosemary&lt;br&gt;Fruit salad | Single course&lt;br&gt;risi e bisi (rice and peas)&lt;br&gt;salad with cabbage and carrot&lt;br&gt;Chocolate dessert | Fusilli with extra virgin olive oil&lt;br&gt;Flounder with tomatoes and olives&lt;br&gt;Salad tangerine |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winter menu</th>
<th>2\textsuperscript{nd} week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bissarra (moroccoan broad bean cream) veal meatball fennel gratineé Apple</td>
<td>Lent Spaghetti Mixed salad and mozzarella pear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summer menu</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persian jewelled rice Ricotta Salad with tomatoes Apple</td>
<td>Whole -wheat Fusilli with extra virgin olive oil Cod with pepe cruschi Aubergine Yogurt with fruit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Summer menu
2nd week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single course</th>
<th>Fusilli with courgette and mint</th>
<th>Minestrone soup</th>
<th>Rice, gomasio, bean sprouts, and mushroom (Buddhist recipe)</th>
<th>Linguine with vegetables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moroccan Kefta (meatball) with yogurt sauce</td>
<td>Nietzsche's Vité Tonné</td>
<td>Salad with cucumber and tomatoes peach</td>
<td>Roll with Aubergine and ricotta (Jewish recipe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chards</td>
<td></td>
<td>Salad with carrot and chard</td>
<td>Salad with tomatoes tangerine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruit salad (strawberries, bananas and raspberries)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Watermelon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Moroccan orange and carrot cream**  
Typical Moroccan Soup with carrots, onions, orange scented potatoes.  
It represents the second dish offered during Iftar, it breaks the fast of Ramadan.

**Babaghanoush:**  
Aubergine mash with tahini, sesame sauce.

**Persian jewelled rice:**  
Basmati rice, saffron and dried fruit; it is possible to serve it during Shabbat if previously prepared.

**Codfish with pepi cruschi:**  
Tuscan recipe for Lent.

**Oua rosii (hard boiled egg):**  
Red eggs prepared for the orthodox Passover.

**Chorba with chicken:**  
Algerian recipe with chicken, chickpeas, turmeric and ginger.  
It represents the third dish offered during Iftar, it breaks the fast of Ramadan.

**Jewish salad**  
Tomatoes, cucumber and parsley.
Conclusion

School can provide a significant opportunity for the promotion of wellbeing, in terms of nutrition, a healthy lifestyle, and education. School canteen service clearly represents an important arena in which to face these issues.

Kevin Morgan e Roberta Sonnino declare that “At a first glance, the aim to serve in schools healthy and locally produced food seems to be easy to realize; but it is not, in various European countries, easy to do”\(^{134}\). The problem in Italy and all over the surveyed European areas seems not to be related to the inadequacy of school canteen service; each municipality plays an active role in offering healthy foods in school meals. The problem may concern limits regarding social, environmental and cultural sustainability and quality in terms of food in schools. The issue may be linked to the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion, generated by the educational system and the food practices within schools.

As for menus, we need to understand if special menus are inclusive or not and why; as we know, the enormous number of special menus led to a *Balkanization* of food practices and sometimes to a *ghettoization* of children asking for it. On the other hand, the standardization of menus may be a solution, too.

The problem might be solved through the possibility of building much more homogeneous and inclusive menus, in order to deal with the changing food identity of the students using the canteen. More inclusivity may move from a re-thinking of the concept of quantity of served meat in school meals. This, according to the data gathered, seems to represent the principal problem in building menus, both for cultural and religious reasons, and its exclusion seems not to represent a problem for the majority of the families surveyed.

Yet, the school meal represents (or would represent) a third of daily meals, and a quarter of weekly meals.

Beyond the protection of both food practices and cultural and religious pluralism, is there any possibility to proceed through the building of an innovative menu? Certainly, if we consider food practices as a set of knowledge concerning products and their preparation which exists in different areas of the world, school meals might be conceived with reference to the synergy of differing traditions, cultures and religions, depending on the individual\(^{135}\).

Considering this, school may provide a model for positively influencing children’s eating habits, through hands-on education about nutrition, and through community involvement. Overall, even if numerous initiatives have been undertaken to enhance school canteen service with emphasis on social inclusion and cohesion, much more still needs to be done. Workshops able to deal with children’s and school staff’s education concerning foods and food practices represent one such initiative. Learning to benefit from supporting religious and cultural diversity as a fundamental value within society seems a good starting point.


\(^{135}\) http://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/03/29/news/perch_non_mangi_la_carne_i_menu_a_scuola_raccontano_i_cibi_degli_altri-82184691/, 06/06/2014.
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