**Graphic Gastronomy**

**Bandes Dessinées, Comics, Mangas and Food Cultures through History**

**15th Conference of the European Institute for**

**the History and Culture of Food**

**3 – 5 December 2025**

**Tours, France**

Une image contenant arbre, peinture, ciel, dessin

Description générée automatiquement

**Call for papers**

Since the 1980s, growing public interest in gastronomy, food-related issues and the culinary arts has extended to the worlds of comics, bandes dessinées, manga and graphic novels, all of which now constitute a legitimized cultural field. Since the very beginning of these graphic and narrative arts, food was mostly used, as in novels, as a background element, often inspired by classical iconography to contribute towards characterization, evoke certain cultural traits, or convey the norms and values associated with food. Early examples such as Heinrich Hoffman’s *Der Struwwelpeter* (1844) or Winsor McCay's *Hungry Henrietta* (1905) and *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* (1904-1925) vividly depict the effects of ingestion, which are in reality invisible, on the bodies. Obelix’s wild boar roast, crowning the village banquet that recurs at the end of the *Asterix* albums, and other evocations of food heritage that punctuate the travels of many comics characters play a significant role in their moral economy, while enhancing the imaginary worlds that host them. When aimed at children, comics have often been used as mean of education and were regularly chosen to convey nutritional or advertising messages about food. They nowadays also contribute to the growing public interest in gastronomy and cooking that has spread across all media, particularly in France and Japan.

At least since the 1980s popular Japanese gastronomic culture has been at the heart of manga production. The *Oishinbo* series (1983-), which follows the peregrinations of a culinary journalist, initiated the genres of the *ryori manga* and *gurume manga* (gourmet manga). Both genres depict culinary practices and the art of tasting in opulent detail. French readers began to appreciate this genre in 2005 when Masayuki Kusumi and Jirô Taniguchi’s *Kodoku no gourmet* (1994, *The Solitary Gourmet*) was first translated. More recently, the *Shokugeki no Sōma* series (*Food Wars*, 2012-2019) features apprentice chef battles and advocates the search for a personal culinary expression capable of drawing inspiration from gastronomies across the globe as well as from the social diversity of cuisines and restaurant practices.

Currently, the ongoing series dedicated to the world of oenology, *Kami no Shizuku* (2004-, *Drops of God*), is enjoying worldwide success, has been adapted into an American-French-Japanese television series while sky-rocketing the sales of the wines it mentions. With sales reaching 130 million copies for the 110 volumes of *Oishinbo* and 20 million copies for the 36 volumes of *Shokugeki* *no Sōma* in Japan, these series rival the greatest successes of the Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*. Their distribution is worldwide and intermedial (anime, TV series, books, merchandising). Such comics have become an essential media of gastronomic cultures. They promote cuisine based on intercultural exchanges and offer a forum for culinary experimentation as in Yûgo Kobayashi’s recent *Fermat no ryouri*, which revisits the Neapolitan sauce by using ketchup (2018, *Fermat Kitchen*, 2023-).

In France, the bande dessinée is nowadays a major player in the publishing world and food-related publications have become more prominent within the genre of graphic reporting which is expanding since the 2000s. Already famous for exploring social and political themes, Etienne Davodeau devoted a highly acclaimed volume to “unconventional” winemaking in 2011, *Les Ignorants*, which undeniably contributed to the popularization of biodynamic wines in France. The same year, Gallimard commissioned Christophe Blain, renowned for his album about the daily life at the Quai d’Orsay during Dominique de Villepin’s foreign ministership, to devote an album to the chef Alain Plassard (*En cuisine avec Alain Plassard*, 2011). Since then, the number of original publications on gastronomy has grown steadily, with a wide range of approaches and themes, including documentary projects and journalistic investigations about the challenges and risks of our food supplies, biographies of key figures in culinary history, family sagas rooted in regional expression, and the revival of well-researched educational comics dealing with health and nutrition. The French National Library (BnF) has created a special entry, “BD Gastro” in order to promote these publications in the science and technology section open to the public at the François Mitterrand site. In the Franco-Belgian and Japanese spheres, at least, comics have established themselves as a media in their own right for gastronomic cultures, understood in their broadest sense to encompass all the knowledge, practices and forms of expression of our relationship to food.

In 2024, the Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l’image d’Angoulême (France) devoted an exhibition to the connections betweeen food and bandes dessinées entitled “Croquez ! Quand la bande dessinée met les pieds dans les plats” which confirms the richness and vitality of food comics. Scholars in media studies or literary studies have already devoted occasional but notable works to these questions. On the other hand, barring a few exceptions, social science and historical studies devoted to food have made limited headway in this vast field of investigation to reflect on how comics relate and contribute to the transmission of food cultures.

**The 15th Conference of the European Institute for the History and Culture of Food to be held in Tours in December 2025, is intended to provide an opportunity for exchange between these two fields of study - food studies and comics studies - across all disciplines. It seeks to encourage a deeper appreciation of the importance of ninth art and its potential to contribute to food studies. It also seeks to initiate a dialogue between food and comics studies concerning the ways in which the later address questions and concerns core to research on food cultures. Since the IEHCA has a tradition of broad disciplinary openness and an interest in all cultural areas and historical periods, papers can cover a wide range of fields and approaches. The notions of comics, manga or bande dessinée are considered in their broadest sense as graphic and sequential modes of expression, which some trace back to palaeolithic art, Egyptian and Greek antiquity, as well as to early printmaking traditions, well before the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the vast field of visual production forming the medium of comics.**

**Suggested topics**

**1. Comics as source and research field for food studies**

* **Comics as a source for food studies: thematic, comparative, synchronic and diachronic approaches.**

🡺 How can we write the history of the emergence of food-related themes in comics? How are the representations of cooking, cooks, the dining table and its practices, gastronomic approaches, and the expectations of guests represented? What kinds of visualizations of fears and food crises do comics offer? How do these representations mobilize the contributions of food studies, and what place do they give to scientific and activist perspectives?

* + **Food cultures and their histories through the prism of comics: expressing identities, promoting hybridization.**

🡺 How are culinary and gastronomic cultures and their expression in comics interwoven ? The connections between comics culture and food culture is especially strong in Japan and France. What is the situation in other areas producing comics, in the rest of Europe, in Turkey and the Arab world, in China, on the African continent and the Americas? How do comics help express food cultures, their relationships, hybridizations and transformative dynamics? How can comics contribute to hybridization, cultural transfers, appropriation, reconfigurations and universalization? How do comics express food identities and otherness and contribute to innovation ?

* **A medium that shapes gastronomic cultures and culinary practices?**

🡺 What role do comics play in the transmission of gastronomic practices and culinary training of readers? Can comics impart cooking skills? How are comics used for educational or professional purposes? How can recipes be translated into comics? What kind of cooking can be learned from comics? To what extent is there a perennity and renewal of old uses for educational and vocational purposes?

🡺 Are comics a new medium for transmitting culinary knowledge? What are the ways of representing food cultures and practices, the heritage of gestures and the sensory constructions that accompany them, that are particularly specific to the formal language of comics?

* + **Comics and social relations in and around the kitchen: gender, class relations, intercultural exchanges, intersectionality.**

🡺 How can the history of the deployment of these themes and their modes of expression in the medium of comics be written? How could it contribute towards understanding the processes of legitimization of these themes and of the medium, the means of economic and symbolic domination, but also gendered relations, colonial relations, the representation or structuring of identities and food heritage that are at the heart of the social construction of food?

**2. How do comics deal with, use and treat food and gastronomic themes? How are they affected by new publishing challenges?**

* + **Narration of gastronomic themes: intention, messages, effects, conveying tastes and senses**

🡺 Food and gastronomic themes give rise to an infinite variety of narrative and visual approaches, with equally diverse effects. Based on the perspectives opened by the works and their creators, what are the contributions and intentions these comics convey, what are their specific leverages and driving forces? Which place do these elements occupy in the narrative and visual compositions, how do they extend from contributing to characterization and setting to forming the core of the publications? How are food-related sensory experiences expressed in comics (appetite, pleasure, disgust, satiety, etc.)? How can comics convey sensory experiences linked to food pleasure or lack thereof, taste and distaste, the pleasures of the table and of sharing food, of the music of cooking and of the tricks of trade?

* + **Visual, narrative and intermedial approaches to food cultures.**

🡺 How can we analyse the specificities of comics in the treatment of food-related themes: scripting, rhythm and tension, use and creation of icons etc.? Do comics offer a specific treatment of these themes in comparison to other forms of graphic and textual expression? What are the potentialities of panels, strips, mise-en-page, the book form and ellipsis? Are some kind of scenes favored, with what intentions? How do comics dialogue with audiovisual media, social networks, foodporn, blogs or YouTube?

* + **What place for comics in gastronomic and culinary publishing?**

🡺 What are the dynamics of recent developments in publishing? What are the complementarities and contributions of comics in relation to other forms of culinary and gastronomic publishing? What are the prospects for these publishing projects?

**3. Reception, distribution and readership**

* + **Readers, audiences, fans, gendered approaches to ‘food’ comics.**

🡺 What do we know about the readership of these comics devoted to food and culinary themes? Does this form of expression replace or complement other media? Do comics open the world of gastronomy to new audiences and/or do they cater to an already existing audience? How do readers adapt their food culture to these different media? How do comics reflect gender differences in the way people relate to food culture?

* + **Uses and effects of reading practices.**

🡺 How do comics determine specific ways of appropriating elements of food culture? What do readers of *gurume manga* do with detailed references to recipes? Can comics encourage innovation in food and finding a culinary style? To what extent do comics help to shape individual and collective imaginations, to channel the expression of culinary sensations, to convey prejudices or to support culinary passions? Can the medium generate conversional, dialogic effects? What role do food-related themes play in exchanges between fans of series and authors, do they inspire elaborate criticism ?

* + **Comics as a means of communicating the issues surrounding food culture.**

🡺 Are nutritional recommendations, advertising pitches and surveys of our eating habits easier to digest when they are presented in comic form? How can comics be used in education and vocational training? From cookery books to cookery comics: what are the continuities and the differences? How do haute cuisine, the food industry and comics inspire each other?

**Scientific committee:**

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* **Jérôme Bocquet (Université de Tours, France)**
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**Paper proposals must include a title, name and affiliation, a short abstract (max 500 words in English or French) and a short CV (max 300 words). Presentations are expected to last 20 minutes.**

**Please submit proposals by 28 February 2025, at:**

[**iehca2025@univ-tours.fr**](mailto:iehca2025@univ-tours.fr)

**The conference will be free of registration charges.**

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