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# James Bond: International man of gastronomy?

## ABSTRACT

1. *This article is concerned with the representation of food and drink in Ian Fleming's*  
2. *James Bond novels. In particular, it examines how the author uses Bond's culinary*  
3. *knowledge and habits of consumption as an important constituent of his hero's char-*  
4. *acter. Similarly, the food choices of other characters, notably villains, are shown*  
5. *to be linked, by Fleming, to core aspects of their identity – principally their ethnic-*  
6. *ity. Bond's impulse to observe and classify, very much in evidence in the novels'*  
7. *food sequences, is examined in terms of the texts' construction of Bond as a skilled*  
8. *identifier of signs.*

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## WELCOME, MR BOND

In real life, of course, it is axiomatic that secret agents be secret. To operate otherwise is at least a professional failure, at worst a mortal one. Thankfully, fiction has quite opposite imperatives and Britain's most celebrated secret agent may be appraised in terms of his fame across a media spectrum that includes novels, radio, comic strip, movies and computer games. Doing so, it would be difficult to counter the view that it is on film that James Bond has achieved his greatest stardom. Successive actors have played the role across five decades and 22 movies in what is, perhaps, cinema's most enduring franchise. Yet, as Edward Biddulph observes in his essay "'Bond Was Not a Gourmet": An archaeology of James Bond's diet' the films 'barely feature his taking nourishment' (2009: 133) though they have certainly cemented our

## KEYWORDS

James Bond novels  
food and culture  
classification  
race  
Englishness  
thrillers

1. This date of purchase is difficult to reconcile with Bond's 'Obituary' in *The Times* by M that appears in *You Only Live Twice*. This has Bond aged 17 in 1941, suggesting he was born in 1924 and bought the Bentley aged 9.
2. By Ian Fleming Productions, formerly Glidrose Productions, publishers of the James Bond novels.

awareness of his taste for a well prepared vodka martini. Consumption, as it occurs in the films, is vested not in culinary pleasures but in the use and prominent display of goods and brands through product placement. Wristwatches, cars, cigarettes, cell phones and airlines are among the countless examples of brands that have occupied cherished screen space alongside Bond.

The Bond of the novels is also distinguished by the importance he affords to the items he purchases, is issued, or otherwise consumes. Detailed description and specific reference to manufacturers, modifications and technical specifications are recurring features of the stories. His preferred cigarettes, for example, are a 'Macedonian blend with the three gold rings round the butt that Morlands of Grosvenor Street made for him' (Fleming 1978: 152). Foreign trips acquaint Bond and the reader with a variety of other smoking materials including, in *From Russia With Love*, the 'Diplomates' that Bond judges 'the most wonderful cigarette he had ever tasted – the mildest and sweetest of Turkish tobacco in a slim long oval tube with an elegant gold crescent' (Fleming 1984a: 213). Bond's cars begin with 'one of the last of the 4½-litre Bentleys with the supercharger by Amherst Villers' (Fleming 2006: 34)<sup>1</sup> bought almost new in 1933 and painted battleship grey. Handguns, including the Walther PPK, are carried in the 'Berns Martin Triple-draw holster' (Fleming 1984a: 21) which – readers learn – is best worn inside the trouser band to the left, though a below-the-shoulder option is acceptable. In emphasizing technical details, Fleming's approach to lending authenticity to his narratives connects to a dimension of adventure and thriller writing that began with Erskine Childers' 1903 novel *The Riddle of the Sands* and has continued through writers like Frederick Forsyth to modern 'techno-thriller' authors such as Tom Clancy and Michael Crichton. Boats, weaponry, terrorist organizations, communications technology and the modus operandi of those engaged in dangerous occupations are afforded sustained attention. However, it is in the meals that Bond eats that author Ian Fleming, through the food choices of his character, most consistently and fully seeks to articulate his taste, knowledge and discernment. It is the nature of those meals, their place in Bond's overall scheme of preferences, and their connection to Fleming's authorial world-view – especially as it pertains to nationality and race – that forms my topic.

### WHOSE WORD IS BOND?

Necessarily, this article treats Fleming's novels and short stories, commencing with *Casino Royale* in 1953 and continuing until his death in 1964, as the original and canonical literary incarnation of James Bond. Yet it cannot be ignored that since the late 1960s and continuing to the present day other authors, including Kingsley Amis and Sebastian Faulks, have penned Bond books. John Gardner's fourteen authorized<sup>2</sup> novels and two novelizations between 1981 and 1996 even exceed – albeit narrowly – the volume of Fleming's original canon. Between 1997 and 2002 Raymond Benson also produced six Bond novels, three novelizations and three short stories. Add to these the Young Bond children's novels (2005–) and *The Money Penny Diaries* (2005–2008) and it is apparent that there is an enormous amount of Bond-themed writing beyond Fleming's *oeuvre*. The present study will briefly venture further than the original author's texts but, for the most part, its focus is those canonical works.

1. **'THE CHOICE IS YOURS, MR BOND'**

2. Food is an important aspect of the pleasure to be taken in the James Bond  
3. novels. It is more than an incidental pleasure. Bond's culinary choices, and  
4. those meals he has chosen for him, form a substantial strand of his char-  
5. acterization as a worldly, cultivated, individual as well as a man of violence  
6. where necessary, and passion when possible. Though ostensibly indicative of  
7. divergent components of his personality, of a discriminating near-fastidious  
8. side versus an instinctive animal side, they are in truth inextricably bound. For  
9. across all the novels and short stories Fleming frames Bond's exercise of his  
10. professional functions and physical needs – of spying, killing, eating, drinking,  
11. copulating – in terms of the ceaseless application of specialist, even arcane,  
12. knowledge to the task in hand. Critical appraisal of women's bodies, famili-  
13. arity with human pressure points (applicable to lovers and adversaries alike),  
14. the ability to recognize different perfumes, expert driving, an understanding  
15. of how a dish or drink should be made, and knowing the correct place to find  
16. it, all cohere in an unlikely raft of learning in which recognizing 'the best' is an  
17. endlessly repeated figure. As improbable skill-sets go, nobody does it better.

18. There is a delightful vignette in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* where  
19. Bond's boss, 'M', asks:

21. What the devil's the name of that fat American detective who's always  
22. fiddling about with orchids, those obscene hybrids from Venezuela  
23. and so forth? Then he comes sweating out of his orchid house, eats a  
24. gigantic meal of some foreign muck and solves the murder.

25. (Fleming 1978: 670)

27. Fleming's reference to Rex Stout's gourmet sleuth Nero Wolfe is entertainingly  
28. reflexive (Consider the Bond/Wolfe parallels of, inter alia, being genre fiction,  
29. of recurring characters across multiple texts, of their overlapping periods of  
30. publication, and – most likely – of readership, and of the characters' incorpo-  
31. ration into their respective national folklore). However, and most importantly  
32. for the purposes of the present argument, it is also enormously ironic. Yes,  
33. Nero Wolfe is notable for his obesity, for the importance he affords his meals,  
34. and for the sacrosanct nature of his meal times. Yet considered purely in  
35. terms of the frequency and extent of description their authors allot to meals,  
36. of culinary 'page time', it is Bond who consistently outstrips Wolfe.<sup>3</sup> Archie  
37. Goodwin<sup>4</sup> could, with far greater justification, ask his own seemingly omni-  
38. scient colleague 'Who's that show-off Limey spy who's forever seeing beautiful  
39. broads, finding time to eat flashy meals, smoking and drinking too much, and  
40. always managing to save the day?'

41. Gustatory interludes in the Bond stories may be divided in terms of those  
42. that recur across the corpus – some to an astonishingly frequent extent, nota-  
43. bly bacon and eggs which seem to figure in every novel – and memorable  
44. individual meals. Staple Bond/Fleming fare includes: the tense dining expe-  
45. rience in the villain's lair, where the pretence of friendliness always threat-  
46. ens to break down; the companionable meal with a colleague, archetypally  
47. the CIA's Felix Leiter, generally taken in advance of danger; the intimate  
48. meal with the lover of the moment, usually enjoyed when danger is past; the  
49. exotic foreign meal as visitor to another culture; ham sandwiches and English  
50. mustard; the familiar comfort of an egg-based breakfast; the intermittent  
51. disappointments of shoddier – i.e. egg-free – starts to the day; the joys of  
52.

3. Stout's *Too Many Cooks* that centres on a murder committed at a gathering of professional cooks and gastronomes is a rare exception.
4. Wolfe's 'confidential secretary', sidekick, and narrator of the Nero Wolfe mysteries.

good strong coffee and the horror of tea – ‘I hate it. It’s mud’. – (Fleming 1978: 736); Harper’s Bourbon; brandies and soda; Americanos (the cocktail, not the coffee); Taittinger champagne; chilled vodka; Gin & tonic with lime; Benzedrine and alcohol. Stand-out delights include: stone crabs with tankards of pink champagne in *Goldfinger*; the matchless meal at Blades described in *Moonraker*; a Brizzola at Sardi’s in New York City in *Diamonds Are Forever*; and, at the conclusion of *Live and Let Die*, a hard-earned Caribbean feast of black crabs, sucking pig, avocado salad, with guavas and coconut cream for dessert, washed down with a case of the best champagne to be found in Jamaica (Fleming 1984b: 246).

Bond’s knowledge of food and drink is a substantial part of his overarching system of discrimination and classification. For Bond is an incorrigible, even pathological, classifier. There is virtually no aspect of the world he inhabits – of people, objects, places, experiences – that is exempt from a scrutiny by type and value. In part, this critical outlook is a prerequisite and function of his job. Espionage, as a cousin of detective work, is necessarily concerned with reading signs and unearthing occulted truth. A familiarity with criminal mores and predilections, for example, is part of his professional skills. But it is simultaneously evident that Bond’s analyses of beauty (or its absence), taste (in its many formulations) and pleasure (as he and others find it) are offering readers far more than just the dope on what it takes to be a spy. Descriptions of unpleasant individuals from *Goldfinger* and *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* demonstrate key recurring themes in Bond’s classificatory processes and preoccupations.

- ‘There were deep blue shadows under Aztec cheek-bones. In one corner of the slash of a mouth there was a toothpick and in the other a cigarette. The eyes were bright pinpricks of marihuana’ (Fleming 1978: 715).
- ‘He was thin and grey-skinned, with an almost Phoenician profile pitted with smallpox. Bond guessed that he was on heroin, but not as a main-liner’ (Fleming 1978: 687).

In both of these concise accounts – snapshots of very minor characters who will contribute little to the principal narrative arc – there is reference to racial origin, delineation of ugliness and identification of specific drug use. The last might reasonably be said to attend the competent execution of Bond’s duties, and would certainly have been seen by the original readers as a more worldly, illicit, species of knowledge than in recent decades when representation of drugs has become more familiar. However, the former elements – and particularly the uncomfortable yoking of racial ‘diagnoses’ to estimations of attractiveness – are evidence of an unrelenting impulse to classify according to a world-view that modern readers are likely to find problematic. Indeed, it is easier to forgive Arthur Conan Doyle the now-debunked phrenological maunderings in Sherlock Holmes as the errors of a once-accepted scientific mode than it is to gloss the insistent racism (among other ‘isms) of Fleming and his Bond.

A repeated motif across the Bond stories is that villains are notable for their unusual, unattractive, physical characteristics as well as for a ‘foreignness’ they frequently seek to conceal. These descriptions are calculated to convey an impression of the repulsive, and Bond often experiences and expresses distaste in respect of his opponents’ appearance. Hairy hands (usually over-sized), hirsutism in general, obesity, feminine features (on men), large earlobes, ‘ogre’s teeth’, a giant head, pale skin, bitten nails, moustaches

1. and ginger hair (!) are amongst the catalogue of horrors Bond must tackle  
 2. with his adversaries Le Chiffre, Drax, Goldfinger, Blofeld, Largo and Mr Big.  
 3. Unfortunately these descriptions are so insistently married to accounts, or  
 4. 'readings', of the villains' racial ancestry that they leave an impression of pure  
 5. nastiness – sometimes with an anti-Semitic flavour – on Fleming's part. In  
 6. this respect, Fleming's prejudices and world-view connect to those of British  
 7. adventure writers of a generation earlier and more. In *The Saint Closes the*  
 8. *Case* (1930) Leslie Charteris refers to the 'birds with fat cigars and the names  
 9. ending in – heim and – stein' (2013: 27). While in *The Three Hostages* (1924)  
 10. John Buchan's hero Richard Hannay is troubled by the physical characteris-  
 11. tics and ambiguous ethnic background of Dominick Medina, of whom the  
 12. narrating hero observes:

14. I was struck by the shape of his head. The way he brushed his hair front  
 15. and back made it seem square, but I saw it was really round, the round-  
 16. est head I have ever seen except in a Kaffir. He was evidently conscious  
 17. of it and didn't like it, so took some pains to conceal it.

18. (Buchan 1992: 703)

20. Hannay's suspicion that Medina's Englishness is a facade grows stronger  
 21. when he notices that he avoids alcohol, only drinking water, while Hannay  
 22. enjoys 'an old hock, an older port, and a most pre-historic brandy' (744).

23. Fleming's coding of villains as foreign is also evidenced through their  
 24. tastes and gustatory choices. *Thunderball's* Emilio Largo, whilst described as  
 25. athletically constructed and handsome – as well as being the possessor of  
 26. hands 'like large brown furry animals' (Fleming 1978: 334) – is also figured  
 27. critically in terms of his grooming, of shortcomings that Fleming invites the  
 28. reader to interpret as typically Italian: 'The only weakness in the fine centu-  
 29. rion face lay in the overlong sideburns and the too carefully waved black hair  
 30. that glistened so brightly with pomade that it might almost have been painted  
 31. on to the skull' (1978: 334). Hence we are not surprised to learn, a few pages  
 32. later, that the pomade-using Largo's favourite drink is a 'crème de menthe  
 33. frappé with a maraschino cherry on top' (1978: 340). Blofeld also manifests  
 34. a rather effete taste at the scene of a SPECTRE board-meeting where, prior  
 35. to broaching a bitter subject, he sweetens his breath with a 'violet-scented  
 36. cachou' (Fleming 1978: 308).

37. In *Goldfinger* Bond eats a meal at his adversary's English home. Bond's  
 38. assessment of the place and the nourishment offered recognizes both posi-  
 39. tive and negative elements but, taken as a whole, expresses the sentiment  
 40. that limitless money cannot compensate for the absence of good (i.e. Bond's,  
 41. Fleming's, English) taste. The hall is 'crowded with Rothschildian pieces of  
 42. furniture of the Second Empire, and ormolu, tortoiseshell, brass and mother-of  
 43. pearl winked back richly at the small fire'. [...] 'What a dump!' [Reflects Bond]  
 44. 'What a bloody awful deathly place to live in' (Fleming 1978: 774). It is surely  
 45. not accidental that his critical summary of Goldfinger's preferences, the  
 46. chosen style of a wealthy resident alien, are presented in terms of the tastes  
 47. of a Jewish banking family and a French historical era. These, it is clearly  
 48. implied, are the false-notes of an over-rich émigré aesthetic that does not  
 49. belong and cannot get Englishness right. Goldfinger's 'plum-coloured velvet  
 50. dinner jacket' is the equivalent sartorial mistake. Yet the meal itself has several  
 51. outstanding elements. A Piesporter Goldtröpfchen '53 is 'nectar and ice cold',  
 52. and the Mouton Rothschild 1947 claret is 'delicious'. Although the food starts

badly – ‘some curried mess with rice’ – a ‘roast duckling’ and ‘excellent cheese soufflé’ are decidedly good (Fleming 1978: 782–84). Goldfinger himself neither smokes nor drinks alcohol. This frames his portrayal as host and provider in terms that necessarily diminish his potential standing as a man of good taste and clearly marks a distinction between himself and the prolifically consuming Bond. As a teetotaler he is, by definition, merely supplying wines that he has been told are of the appropriate quality, never connecting that expense to sensory experience. He is unable to taste, judge and appreciate them. These pages embody those qualities that make Fleming’s writing simultaneously enjoyable and problematic. The rendering of the experience of fine foods and wine and the display of connoisseur judgment are seductive. Yet the wider context of imperial attitudes and prejudices that frame Bond’s readings and appreciation (or not) of foodstuffs, places and people are frequently vile.

Bond’s attitudes to food, the foreign and the familiar may be considered in terms of the concepts of *neophobia* – the reluctance to consume unfamiliar foods – and *neophilia* – the willingness to try new taste sensations. It is evident that he manifests aspects of both tendencies. Many of Bond’s gustatory and other preferences are built around routines, repetition and expectation. He knows what he likes and is troubled when something even quite minor is amiss. Adherence to an unvarying pattern and concern that strict specifications not be altered – e.g. ‘shaken not stirred’ – are decidedly neophobic. Equally, Bond is also a confident traveler who frequently encounters novel foodstuffs in the course of his job as well as displaying knowledge of foods that would have been unfamiliar to many Britons at the time. As Richard Wilk argues, this tendency to range widely in culinary choices has long been a marker of high social standing – a key aspect in Fleming’s construction of Bond: ‘For hundreds (perhaps thousands) of years familiarity and comfort with foreign food has been part of the repertoire of sophistication in most civilizations, one of the essentials of cultural capital that distinguishes the educated and experienced.’ (Wilk 2008) Notwithstanding Bond’s ceaseless struggle with foreign villains and the wider context of Bond/Fleming attitudes to race and the non-British, 007 also demonstrates neophilic characteristics through the international breadth of his tastes and the extent to which he is prepared to try novel foods. His *habitus*, including but not limited to his food choices, is thus a balance of ostensibly conflicting dispositions; anchored in the solace of familiar and regimented experiences but also encompassing often-pleasurable forays into the unknown.

As a character now known mostly through his movie incarnations these aspects of Fleming’s Bond may be surprising. It is evident that the many film adaptations, beginning with *Dr No* in 1962, not only downplay 007’s interest in food but also tend to mute the most awkward aspects of the novels in which issues of ethnicity are fore-grounded. Of course, the films’ representation of an implausibly successful British secret agent thwarting evil in exotic locations has a Jingoistic flavour, but this is decidedly softer than Fleming’s unrelenting focus on the ‘blood’ and origins of Bond’s adversaries. In particular, although the movies frequently have Bond presented with a file about his opponent, there is no emphasis on Bond as a biological determinist, a decipherer of racial signs, and a skilled identifier of those seeking to ‘pass’. Likewise, on-screen the connection between his adversaries’ ethnic origins and their culinary choices is lost. The figuration of the movie villains’ tastes finds expression mostly through their architectural and design choices.

1. **BEST OF BRITISH**

2. The experience of Bond films cues us to think of 007 as a creation of the 1960s.  
 3. This has been exacerbated by the Austin Powers parodies (1997–2002) in which  
 4. the cheerfully priapic spy hero is firmly located in ‘Swinging’ London of the late  
 5. 1960s. Yet the Bond of the novels is resolutely a creature of the 1950s and, even  
 6. as Fleming’s writing moves the character into the early years of the next decade,  
 7. his outlook does not align – like Powers – with the developing Zeitgeist. His  
 8. Bond is suave but not remotely groovy. Rather, the later novels suggest a Bond  
 9. increasingly uneasy with Britain’s place in a changing world. His British food  
 10. choices, in particular, evince tastes that are far more likely to be traditional –even  
 11. nostalgic – than novel. Overseas adventures take Bond to the wilder shores of  
 12. gastronomy, but domestically he favours long-established restaurants, country-  
 13. house staples, and the plain time-honoured dishes of a British vernacular reper-  
 14. toire. Seemingly throwaway lines in *Diamonds are Forever* and *You Only Live*  
 15. *Twice* where Bond proposes lunching with colleagues at the traditional English  
 16. restaurant Scotts’ indicate his stolid, if upscale, culinary loyalties. With the chief  
 17. of staff he proposes ‘their dressed crab and a pint of black velvet’ (Fleming  
 18. 1990: 19) and for his secretary he suggests ‘our first roast grouse of the year and  
 19. pink champagne’ (Fleming 1982: 34) to celebrate a new mission.

20. The experience of wartime and post-war rationing in Britain is key to  
 21. understanding the culinary pleasures offered in the Bond novels. Although  
 22. the war in Europe reached its conclusion in 1944, the food rationing imple-  
 23. mented in Britain to address the shortfall caused by the interruption of global  
 24. trade continued for several years thereafter. The rationing of meat reached  
 25. an all time low as late as 1951. Eggs and cream were de-rationed in 1953  
 26. as *Casino Royale* was published, and it was not until a year later that butter,  
 27. cooking fat and cheese ceased to be restricted (Colquhoun 2007: 344). Many  
 28. of these foodstuffs loom large in Bond’s culinary choices, for example the  
 29. egg-based meals he enjoys in virtually every story, and the frequently refer-  
 30. enced Eggs Benedict (combining eggs and butter). Hence many gustatory  
 31. episodes would have appeared not only upscale to contemporary readers but  
 32. also specifically tempting because they described foodstuffs that were, or had  
 33. been until recently, rationed. As Ben Macintyre observes, ‘It is almost impos-  
 34. sible to exaggerate the allure of Bond’s lifestyle to a postwar Britain strained  
 35. by rationing, deprived of glamour and still bruised by the privations of war’  
 36. (2008: 164).

37. The breakfast described in *From Russia With Love* attests to Fleming’s  
 38. tendency to describe foods and products in great detail. It also reveals his desire  
 39. to portray the meal – prepared by Bond’s Scottish housekeeper May – as a  
 40. combination of British elements, augmented by a few non-British contributions  
 41. where scrupulous testing (Bond’s/Fleming’s) has shown them to be the best:

43. Breakfast was Bond’s favourite meal of the day. When he was stationed  
 44. in London it was always the same. It consisted of very strong coffee,  
 45. from De Bry in New Oxford Street, brewed in an American Chemex, of  
 46. which he drank two large cups, black and without sugar. The single egg,  
 47. in the dark blue egg cup with a gold ring round the top, was boiled for  
 48. three and a third minutes.

50. It was a very fresh, speckled brown egg from French *Marans* hens  
 51. owned by some friend of May in the country. (Bond disliked white eggs  
 52. and, faddish as he was in many small things, it amused him to maintain

Jeremy Strong

5. Blades is modelled, to a certain extent, on the real London clubs Boodles and the Portland Club. Fleming played bridge at both.
6. In a curious *mise en abyme* London's East India Club has in its hallway a large 1924 oil painting by Albert Chevallier Tayler of just such a club cold buffet table.

that there was such a thing as the perfect boiled egg.) Then there were two thick slices of wholewheat toast, a large pat of deep yellow Jersey butter and three squat glass jars containing Tiptree 'Little Scarlet' strawberry jam; Cooper's Vintage Oxford marmalade and Norwegian Heather Honey from Fortnum's. The coffee pot and the silver on the tray were Queen Anne, and the china was Minton, of the same dark blue and gold and white as the egg cup.

(Fleming 1984a: 198–99)

This definitive London breakfast is repeated in all its features almost verbatim in John Gardner's first Bond novel *License Renewed* in 1981. The continuity of Bond's morning repast is contrasted with other aspects of a changing world in which '(g)overnments could come and go; crises could erupt; inflation may spiral' (Gardner 1981: 57). The Bond of the early 1980s may be starting to show 'minute flecks of grey' and concerns about fuel might have caused the Bentley to be replaced with a Saab (Gardner 1981: 20–21) but breakfast is an ever fixed mark. The foodstuffs, specifically referenced British brands and suppliers, heritage tableware and exacting preparation are identical. It speaks volumes for Gardner's sense of what Bond readers will accept of a new novel and author, of what must remain inviolable and what may legitimately be changed, that the constituents of Bond's breakfast should be such a lodestar.

By far the most comprehensive description of a British meal enjoyed by Bond is dinner at the exclusive cards club Blades<sup>5</sup> in *Moonraker* where Bond is invited by 'M' to test whether fellow member Hugo Drax is cheating. In these pages Bond is able to perform a service for his much-admired surrogate father by using his professional knowledge of card-sharping to uphold the integrity of this quintessentially British establishment. 'M' opts for Beluga caviar followed by devilled kidney with bacon, peas and new potatoes, then strawberries and kirsch, and finally a roasted marrow bone. Bond chooses smoked salmon then 'Lamb cutlets. The same vegetables as you, as it's May. Asparagus with Hollandaise sauce sounds wonderful. And perhaps a slice of pineapple'. Drinks commence with chilled vodka – 'real pre-war Wolfschmidt from Riga' – followed by Dom Perignon '46 for Bond and Mouton Rothschild '34 for 'M' (Fleming 1978: 171). Many of the chosen dishes and drinks are redolent of what had long been club fare and continue to be fundamental to British club offerings to the present day, for example of those located in St James's, London: grilled and roasted meats, game, offal, smoked salmon, seasonal vegetables, champagne and claret. The description of an additional 'cold table, laden with lobsters, pies, joints, and delicacies in aspic' (Fleming 1978: 174) further contributes to a recognizably typical club scene,<sup>6</sup> though Fleming is at pains to stress that Blades is utterly exceptional in terms of the quality of produce and execution, as well as the availability of rare items.

Bond's smoked salmon has the 'delicate glutinous texture only achieved by the Highland curers – very different from the desiccated products of Scandinavia' and his cutlets are also adjudged 'Superb', leading him to pronounce 'The best English cooking is the best in the world – particularly at this time of year' (Fleming 1978: 172–73). The supper is thus both a nationalistic paean to a particular style of British food and a flaunting of connoisseur knowledge. Fleming constructs Blades as the apotheosis of exclusivity, delivering the highest standards of food and service to a social and financial elite. Crucially, however, the experience is not merely an exercise in accessing the best that money can buy. Blades is also defined by historical relationships and forms of



1. cultural capital that ring-fence its pleasures against unsuitable intrusions. This
2. is demonstrated in the sustained episode where Bond bests the card-cheat
3. Drax, who will later be revealed as a German, and in the anecdote concerning
4. the club porter, Brevett, 'whose family had held the same post at Blades for a
5. hundred years' (Fleming 1978: 165) and who is known to have engineered the
6. blackballing of a potential member whom he deemed objectionable.

- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

### BOND ON FRANCE

10. Bond's attitude to French food is profoundly equivocal. His work, and – not
11. infrequently – his pleasure, often takes him to France. Starting with *Casino*
12. *Royale* and the fictional resort town of Royale-les-Eaux in the north, possibly
13. modelled on Trouville, a number of the Bond novels feature him staying in or
14. driving through France. The repeated motif of Bond as an English motorist in
15. France, of his familiarity with the regions and of the best regional cuisine, is
16. notable. To twenty-first century readers, particularly British readers, driving
17. to or through France has become a commonplace event. The Channel Tunnel
18. and, prior to its opening in 1994, the expansion of inexpensive car-ferry cross-
19. ings through the last third of the twentieth century enabled an ever-expanding
20. number of Britons to venture to France in their cars. This is entirely different to
21. the situation in the 1950s where Bond's Gallic peregrinations would have been
22. perceived by contemporary readers as inherently adventurous, even without
23. the added dimensions of espionage, gambling, sex and violence. Bond's famil-
24. iarity with French foods and appropriate drinks, his confident manner with
25. French waiters, and especially his identification of any shortcomings in food,
26. service or setting offered a fantasy of worldliness and sophistication that was
27. just as wonderful and unattainable as the heroics and whirlwind romances.
28. Jerrard Tickell's *A Day to Remember* (1952) in which a group of Londoners –
29. who mostly have a deeply cautious view of French culture and cuisine – take a
30. short boat trip to Normandy provides an illuminating contrast.

31. Bond's view of French food, simultaneously appreciative of its glories and crit-
32. ical of what he perceives as its excesses or failures, embodies a stance that began
33. to prevail in England in the late seventeenth century. Kate Colquhoun identifies
34. the Francophilia of Charles II and the return to England of formerly exiled nobles
35. as the principal elements driving a Restoration-era enthusiasm for haute cuisine,
36. rarefied cooking and French chefs (2007: 164). In tandem with this embrace of a
37. French style there also began to develop a distinctly British alternative:

- 38.
39. (D)ishes which for the first time are broadly recognizable as the basis
40. of our [England's] national tradition – jowls of salmon, chines of beef,
41. boiled crayfish and legs of mutton. This was solid, plain 'English' cook-
42. ing, reliant on roasted and boiled meats and beautifully done puddings,
43. pies and cakes, food for those who derided the wasteful excesses of the
44. fancy French, or who could not afford them.

45. (Colquhoun 2007: 164)

- 46.

47. It is precisely these competing perspectives that emerge at the conclusion
48. of Chapter 2 of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* where Bond drives through
49. France. Fleming writes that 'James Bond was not a gourmet. In England he
50. lived on grilled soles, oeufs en cocotte and cold roast beef with potato salad.
51. But when travelling abroad, generally by himself, meals were a welcome
52. break in the day, something to look forward to ...' (1978: 579). There then

ensues a lengthy, acid, account of Bond's ennui with the 'sucker-traps for gourmandizing tourists' and of the 'French belly-religion':

He had had their 'Bonnes Tables', and their 'Fines Bouteilles'. He had had their 'Specialites du Chef' – generally a rich sauce of cream and wine and a few button mushrooms concealing poor quality meat or fish. He had had the whole lip-smacking ritual of winemanship and foodmanship and, incidentally, he had had quite enough of the Bisodol that went with it!

(Fleming 1978: 580)

Fleming stresses Bond's, and by implication his own, superiority to that more easily satisfied species of traveller, the tourist. Jaded, Bond's trip reaches its culinary nadir in a hideously decorated 'mock-Breton Auberge' that offers him 'sleazy provender', served by a 'surly waiter, stale with "fin de saison"' comprising 'the fly-walk of the Pâté Maison (sent back for a new slice) and a Poularde à la crème that was the only genuine antique in the place' (Fleming 1978: 580). It is not merely the food and the 'instant Pouilly-Fuissé' that attract opprobrium in this vitriolic essay. The entire experience of a certain style of dining is loftily dismissed as an ersatz. However, no sooner are these 'dyspeptic memories' described than a near-perfect French meal is recounted; 'Turbot poché, sauce mousseline, and half the best roast partridge he had eaten in his life ... [accompanied by] half a bottle of Mouton Rothschild '53 and a glass of ten-year-old Calvados with his three cups of coffee' (Fleming 1978: 580). This meal merges classic French gastronomy – the fish dish with a heavy cream sauce – and more English-styled fare – a restrained portion of a plainly roasted game bird. The venue for this fine meal is 'one of his favourite restaurants in France, a modest establishment, unpromisingly placed exactly opposite the railway station of Étapes'. This sequence emphasizes a key facet of Bond's culinary-cum-cultural knowledge; that it is presented as the purview of an elite class, not the potential patrimony of a broader social spectrum. Bond can recognize inadequate offerings. Other English travelers – including, one presumes, 'tourists', those for whom foreign travel is a novelty, those who have recently acquired the means – cannot.

• Both *Casino Royale* and *Goldfinger* also combine positive, sometimes mouth-watering, descriptions of French food with more critical accounts. In *Casino Royale* Bond enjoys a first-rate meal with Vesper Lynd, the first literary incarnation of the 'Bond girl'. Lynd has caviar, then 'grilled rognon de veau with *pommes soufflés* ... [followed by] ... *fraises des bois* with a lot of cream' while Bond also has caviar then 'a very small *tournedos*, underdone, with *sauce Béarnaise* and a *coeur d'artichaut* ... [and finally] ... "half an avocado pear with a little French dressing". This combination of expressly French dishes is pronounced 'Parfait' by the attending maître d'hôtel and Bond happily accedes to the *sommelier's* recommendation of Taittinger Blanc de Blanc Brut 1943 champagne (Fleming 2006: 62–63). Likewise, Bond and Vesper enjoy excellent, though more simply-prepared, food at the 'modest little inn amongst the pines' (Fleming 2006: 179) where their affair will briefly blossom then end in tragedy. Clean and 'sparsely comfortable' the inn offers 'broiled lobsters with melted butter' and 'delicious home-made liver pâté served with 'crisp French bread and the thick square of deep yellow butter set in chips of ice' (Fleming 2006: 189). Furthermore, the patron, Monsieur Versoix, is an example of the kind of Frenchman Bond respects and whom Fleming proffers as the right type; 'a middle-aged man with one arm. The other he had lost fighting with the Free French in Madagascar' (Fleming 2006: 180). Here is Fleming's version of the best combination of French

1. elements; of food, people and location. By contrast, Bond's adversary, Le Chiffre,  
 2. holes up in a villa that Bond visualizes specifically in terms of a more disap-  
 3. pointing version of French hospitality: 'From what Bond could see of the cement  
 4. frontage, the villa was typical of the French seaside style. He could imagine the  
 5. dead bluebottles being hastily swept out for the summer let and the stale rooms  
 6. briefly aired by a cleaning woman' (Fleming 2006: 126).

7. Similarly, in *Goldfinger* Bond avoids Orléans, 'priest and myth ridden' and,  
 8. supplementing his personal prejudices with a quick check in his Michelin  
 9. guide, decides on the Hotel de la Gare and dinner at the station buffet. His  
 10. enemy will, Bond knows, prefer the obvious ostentation of the 'five star hotels'  
 11. (Fleming 1978: 789). At the very end of *Moonraker*, Bond indulges in some  
 12. 'long luxurious planning' of a romantic motoring trip through France with  
 13. Gala Brand, and it is the predictable five star route that his fantasy eschews in  
 14. favour of a *cognoscente's* itinerary:

15.  
 16. Miss out Paris. They could do that on their way back. Get as far as they  
 17. could the first night, away from the Pas de Calais. There was that farm-  
 18. house with the wonderful food between Montreuil and Étapes. Then  
 19. the fast sweep down to the Loire. The little places near the river for a  
 20. few days. Not the chateau towns ...

(Fleming 1978: 277)

21.  
 22. Unfortunately, Bond's pleasant speculations are punctured when Gala reveals  
 23. that she is engaged, and, just as the hoped-for liaison with Tilly Masterton  
 24. is scuppered in *Goldfinger*,<sup>7</sup> so this is one of his few dealings with a beauti-  
 25. ful woman that does not eventuate in a sexual relationship. Sebastian Faulks'  
 26. 2008 Bond novel *Devil May Care* offers a pleasing variant on the theme of  
 27. Bond's ideal meal with a lover. When asked by Scarlett Papava what he had  
 28. most like to eat, Bond replies:

29.  
 30. Something easy on the digestion to start with. Eggs Benedict. Then some  
 31. caviar ... A sole meunière. Then a roast partridge. A bottle of Bollinger  
 32. Grande Année 1953<sup>8</sup> and some red wine – Chateau Batailley. A friend of  
 33. mine introduced me to it in Paris ... I'd like to have it in a hotel room.  
 34. With you. Sitting naked on the bed.

(Faulks 2008: 214)

35.  
 36. Whereas *Moonraker* ends with the dissolving of a pleasant fantasy, *Devil May*  
 37. *Care* concludes in a Paris hotel room with the more typical trajectory of its  
 38. fulfilment. Although the Eggs Benedict end up being skipped in favour of  
 39. a jug of martinis, followed by some urgent sex, this dream meal otherwise  
 40. unfolds entirely as Bond hopes.

#### 41. **BOND STATESIDE**

42. In *Live and Let Die* Bond arrives at New York's St. Regis hotel and eats a  
 43. meal in his suite ordered by CIA friend Felix Leiter. The chosen dishes have a  
 44. conspicuously American character and, barring the wine selection, would not  
 45. be unusual room-service choices nowadays:

46. Soft-shell crabs with tartare sauce, flat beef Hamburgers, medium-rare,  
 47. from the charcoal grill, French-fried potatoes, broccoli, mixed salad with

7. Though he is later  
 compensated with  
 Pussy Galore.

8. Notably, the grand  
 vintage is the same  
 year as the publication  
 of Bond's first outing in  
*Casino Royale*.

thousand-island dressing, ice-cream with melted butterscotch and as good a Liebfraumilch as you can get in America. (Fleming 1984b: 9)

Despite Bond's initial reservation about the butterscotch, Leiter's selections prove delicious and the meal is described as 'American cooking at its rare best'. This back-handed compliment sets the pattern for subsequent US fare eaten in Fleming's novels. Bond will frequently enjoy his meals, but there are disappointments too. Certain American products and dishes are identified as first rate – for example, the domestic vermouth Bond enjoys in his martini at Sardi's (Fleming 1990: 61) – but their being so is posited as surprising. New York restaurants are name-dropped and visited more frequently than their London equivalents, yet Fleming is invariably reluctant to recount American culinary excellence without also introducing a note of qualification. This is particularly apparent in the Florida restaurant scene in *Goldfinger* where Bond eats 'the most delicious meal he had had in his life':

The meat of the stone crabs was the tenderest, sweetest shellfish he had ever tasted. It was perfectly set off by the dry toast and the slightly burned taste of the melted butter. The champagne seemed to have the faintest scent of strawberries. (Fleming 1978: 723)

However, no sooner is the meal completed than Bond's American host, Du Pont, belches, wipes butter from chin, and asks 'Mr Bond, I doubt if anywhere in the world a man has eaten as good a dinner as that tonight. What do you say?'. Bond immediately experiences revulsion and disgust, particularly at his own rich gourmandizing, but it is evident that Fleming makes the vulgarity and lack of proper reserve on the part of Du Pont the catalyst for this unpleasant introspection. Bond's meal, and readers' vicarious enjoyment of his pleasure, are spoiled by shortcomings in good manners that Fleming presents as not untypical of America.

As visitors to the States in the 1950s and 1960s, Bond and his author were experiencing the country through those years in which it became increasingly apparent that Britain's best of times lay in her past whereas the United States had emerged from World War II with an expanded industrial base, and an enhanced sense of its pre-eminence in the world and future as a super-power. In culinary terms, this found expression in increased spending on prepared and processed foods, especially for higher-income groups. As Harvey Levenstein records, '(b)y 1959 Americans were buying \$2.7 billion worth of frozen foods a year, 2700 per cent more than in 1949' (2003: 108). Charting the gustatory downside of America's economic success, Levenstein observes how frozen foods and 'heat and serve' became increasingly central to restaurant offerings as these businesses struggled to cope with labour costs, food prices, and the popularity of television which 'came to anchor Americans to their homes' (Levenstein 2003: 127).

These developments in mass-dining are clearly in evidence when Bond and Leiter stop for lunch at a 'Chicken in a basket' on the highway to Saratoga:

A log-built 'frontier-style' roadhouse with standard equipment – a tall counter covered with the best known name-brands of chocolates and candies, and coloured lights that looked like something out of science-fiction, a dozen or more polished pine tables in the centre of the raftered

1. room and as many low booths along the walls, a menu featuring fried  
 2. chicken and 'fresh mountain trout' which had spent months in some  
 3. distant deep-freeze, a variety of short order dishes, and a couple of  
 4. waitresses who couldn't care less.

(Fleming 1990: 77)

6. Fleming's response to such a venue, derived from personal experience during  
 7. his travels in the United States, parallels the alienation and distaste experi-  
 8. enced by another – very different – British writer, Richard Hoggart, describing  
 9. British milk-bars in 1958 and what he terms 'the nastiness of their modernis-  
 10. tic knick-knacks, their glaring showiness, an aesthetic breakdown' (1958: 247)  
 11. It is not the specific American-ness of the 'Chicken in a basket' that offends  
 12. Fleming so much as the overall concept of a modern mass-catering and retail  
 13. model already taking root on Bond's side of the Atlantic. The model may  
 14. be American-derived but had, by the time of *Diamonds are Forever* (1956),  
 15. already begun its journey to worldwide ubiquity. In John Updike's 1960 novel,  
 16. *Rabbit, Run* the protagonist Harry 'Rabbit' Angstrom stops at a diner that  
 17. he, too, describes as 'synthetic and desultory' (Updike 2006: 27) but ends up  
 18. being pleased with his meal, an assessment perhaps coloured by his sense of  
 19. liberation at quitting his domestic responsibilities:

22. He asks for a glass of milk and to go with it a piece of apple pie; the  
 23. crust is crisp and bubbled and they've had the sense to use cinnamon.  
 24. His mother's pies always had cinnamon. He pays by cracking a ten and  
 25. goes out into the parking lot feeling pleased. The hamburgers had been  
 26. fatter and warmer than the ones you get in Brewer, and the buns had  
 27. been steamed. Things are better already.

(Updike 2006: 28)

30. If this modest sample of the fiction of the period is any guide, it is appar-  
 31. ent that American roadside and diner food was profoundly variable, even  
 32. in the Golden Age of automobiles and associated dining that would quickly  
 33. become the object of nostalgia in screen texts such as the movies *Grease*  
 34. (Kleiser, 1978) and *American Graffiti* (Lucas, 1973), and TV's *Happy Days*  
 35. (1974 – 1984).

36. Undoubtedly the most offensive sequences in *Live and Let Die* are those  
 37. where Leiter takes Bond to Harlem for drinks, food and entertainment. The  
 38. subtitle of Chapter 5 alone, 'Nigger Heaven', should trouble most modern  
 39. readers and would probably have jarred in 1954. Prior to the excursion, Leiter  
 40. compares a trip to Harlem in the pre-war years to visiting Montmartre when  
 41. in Paris, then explicitly describes the experience in terms of sexual tourism  
 42. and risky experimentation: 'One used to go to the Savoy Ballroom and watch  
 43. the dancing. Perhaps pick up a high-yaller and risk the doctor's bills after-  
 44. wards' (Fleming 1984b: 41). At Ma Frazier's the duo enjoy an 'excellent meal  
 45. of Little Neck Clams and Fried Chicken Maryland with bacon and sweet corn'  
 46. which Leiter characterizes as 'the national dish' (Fleming 1984b: 51) but food  
 47. is relegated to a subsidiary position in the survey of Harlem that Fleming  
 48. offers. A lengthily described striptease, a considerable amount of overheard  
 49. patois, observations on hair-straightening, voodoo and styles of dress, and a  
 50. nightclub 'thick with smoke and the sweet, feral smell of two hundred negro  
 51. bodies' (Fleming 1984b: 55) form the bulk of an account intended to titillate  
 52. and flaunt his traveler's familiarity.

Whilst Harlem is an exotic adventure and roadhouses may be an unavoidable necessity, Bond's US dining is generally notable for the prevalence of famous eateries. *Diamonds are Forever* features Sardi's – where the signature Brizzola steak is well received, but the Nova Scotian smoked salmon does not match Scottish standards – as well as '21' – where a Kriendler brother talks to Tiffany Case – and Voisin. Away from the big city Bond learns to rely on staples such as bacon and eggs, domestic camembert, bourbon, sandwiches and steak. In frequently choosing the latter, Bond aligns himself with many contemporary, conservative, US diners. 'Ask the average person. "What do you most associate with eating out?" and he'll probably answer "broiled steak"' observed the *Cooking For Profit* industry journal in 1952 (Quoted in Levenstein 2003: 127). Even when Bond is briefly a guest on a US submarine in *Thunderball* Fleming again takes the opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge of American foodways. Bond asks for 'poached eggs with rye toast and coffee', while the Captain's selection of 'baked Virginia ham with red-eye gravy, apple-pie with ice cream and iced coffee' (Fleming 1978: 405) is a veritable patriotic manifesto.

### THE CARIBBEAN AND ELSEWHERE

Fleming's Bond novels were all written at Goldeneye, his Jamaican holiday home. Every spring, two months' leave from his position as Foreign News Manager for a large newspaper group were used to draft a Bond book. Jamaica also provided the location for a substantial portion of two Bond novels; *Live and Let Die* and *Dr No*, while *Thunderball* features the Bahamas. His descriptions of the Caribbean, especially detailed renderings of island flora, fauna and marine life, suggest a real affection for the place and its particularities. This enthusiasm is matched in several accounts of local food, including this Jamaican breakfast featuring many fruits and products that would remain unavailable to British consumers until comparatively recently: 'Paw-paw with a slice of green lime, a dish piled with red bananas, purple star-apples and tangerines, scrambled eggs and bacon, Blue Mountain coffee – the most delicious in the world – Jamaican marmalade, almost black and guava jelly' (Fleming 1984b: 180).

However, Bond's impulse to classify, to observe traits and signs, inevitably finds unpleasant expression in a location whose history involves the coexistence and blending of races. The character of Quarrel, a Cayman islander and expert seaman who assists Bond in two novels, is presented specifically in terms of his mixed racial ancestry:

There was the blood of Cromwellian soldiers and buccaneers in him and his face was strong and angular and his mouth was almost severe. His eyes were grey. It was only the spatulate nose and the pale palms of his hands that were negroid.

(Fleming 1984b: 180–81)

For Fleming, Quarrel is improved by the fact of his partial British ancestry, making him a suitable assistant, sometime cook, and even dining companion for Bond – provided the nature of their connection is implicitly understood. Lest readers are in any doubt, Fleming offers clarity by drawing on terms from the history of Britain's class structure: the relationship is 'that of a Scots laird with his head stalker; authority was unspoken and there was no room for

1. servility' (Fleming 1984b: 181). Invoking the laird/head stalker relationship  
 2. inevitably invites comparison with John Buchan (1875–1940) several of whose  
 3. most famous adventure novels were set in the Highlands. Like Buchan's  
 4. heroes, Fleming's Bond must foil foreign plots, routinely risking death in the  
 5. service of Crown and Country. Like the heroes of even earlier writers such as  
 6. G. A. Henty (1832–1902) and H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925) Bond is also a  
 7. servant of Empire, and his attitudes in respect of colonized peoples and race  
 8. owe much to the adventure stories written at the zenith of Britain's imperial  
 9. power.

10. At a beachside restaurant in Kingston, Bond and Quarrel will choose  
 11. exactly the same dishes – lobster, rare steak, native vegetables – leaving  
 12. Fleming only their selection of drinks as an index of difference: 'Bond ordered  
 13. his gin and tonic with lime, and Quarrel a Red Stripe beer' (Fleming 1984 a: 32).  
 14. Fleming's prejudices allow him to paint what he probably regarded as a sympa-  
 15. thetic portrait of Quarrel. Like the dishes he will prepare for his 'Captain' –  
 16. 'succulent meals of fish and eggs and vegetables that were to be their staple  
 17. diet' (Fleming 1984b: 186) – Quarrel is straightforward, un-complicated and  
 18. good. He dies nobly in Bond's service towards the end of *Dr No*. However, in  
 19. his descriptions of the 'Chigroe' characters, Fleming's unshakeable sense of  
 20. a hierarchy of the races and of inherent racial characteristics finds far nastier  
 21. expression: 'The Chigroes are a tough, forgotten race. They look down on the  
 22. negroes and the Chinese look down on them. One day they may become a  
 23. nuisance. They have got some of the intelligence of the Chinese and most of  
 24. the vices of the black man. The police have a lot of trouble with them' (Fleming  
 25. 1984a: 42).

26. Bacon and eggs supplemented by exotic Jamaican fruits may be a pairing  
 27. of which Fleming approves, but in other respects the author is clearly empha-  
 28. sizing the risks that attend (what he regards as) unpropitious mixings. It is all  
 29. too easy to imagine this dialogue being lifted, verbatim, from a dinner-table  
 30. conversation between Fleming and his circle of white friends in Jamaica, or  
 31. perhaps from the bar at Kingston's Queen's Club,<sup>9</sup> of which Fleming writes  
 32. in the opening page of *Dr No*: 'Such stubborn retreats will not last long in  
 33. modern Jamaica. One day the Queen's Club will have its windows smashed  
 34. and perhaps be burned to the ground' (Fleming 1984a: 11). Given Fleming's  
 35. reactionary accounts of miscegenation, and notwithstanding the writer's  
 36. familiarity with world cuisines, one suspects he would not have appreciated  
 37. fusion food. In imagining an attack upon the club (and what it represents),  
 38. he participates in a well-worn motif of colonial and postcolonial literature.  
 39. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) offers a critical depiction of the club  
 40. as a literal and ideological laager in which entrenched views of 'them and us'  
 41. are articulated with increased vehemence by the white governing class when  
 42. native discontent threatens to explode into anger. Brenda Silver describes the  
 43. club in *A Passage to India* as the 'centre of linguistic and social conformity' (in  
 44. Tambling, 1995, 176). When the even-handed character Fielding refuses to  
 45. participate in the required affirmation of racial/national solidarity he recog-  
 46. nizes that his resignation from the club is necessary and is all but ejected from  
 47. the premises moments later. While in *The Tribe That Lost Its Head* (1956),  
 48. Fleming's contemporary Nicholas Monsarrat imagines a full-blown upris-  
 49. ing on the fictional African island of Pharamaul. Clearly modelled on the  
 50. *Mau Mau* in Kenya, Monsarrat's novel is an apologia for forgotten colonial  
 51. administrators in dusty imperial outposts. Notable for its graphic portrayal of  
 52. violence, including sexual violence, by Pharamaul's native inhabitants as part

9. Now the Liguanea Club and – since the Island's independence in 1962 – with membership open to all Jamaican citizens.

of the insurrection, the consistent solace sought by the whites in their bars, club and other segregated oases is also vividly drawn.

While Bond enjoys plain island fare, once he and Honeychile Ryder are captured the menu reverts, literally, to the established pattern of the villain providing expensive luxury – of five star accommodation, branded goods and fine dining – whilst planning their barbaric demise. At Dr No's lair, the menus are modelled on the world's most renowned restaurants and, while Bond may not be excited at the prospect, Fleming clearly intends that readers will salivate:

They might have been from the Savoy grill, or the '21' or the Tour d'Argent. Bond ran his eye down one of them. It began with *Caviar double de Belga* and ended with *Sorbet à la Champagne*. [...] Without enthusiasm, Bond ordered caviar, grilled lamb cutlets and salad, and angels on horseback for himself. When Honeychile refused to make any suggestions, he chose melon, roast chicken à l'Anglaise and vanilla ice cream with hot chocolate sauce for her.

(Fleming 1984a: 93)

In the other countries that Bond visits Fleming will consistently demonstrate his knowledge of local food and drink. *From Russia With Love* features an excellent (and, most unusually, egg-less) Turkish breakfast based on the nation's best products: 'The yoghurt, in a blue china bowl, was deep yellow and with the consistency of thick cream. The green figs, ready peeled, were bursting with ripeness, and the Turkish coffee was jet black and with the burned taste that showed it had been freshly ground' (Fleming 1978: 211).

In Istanbul he also meets Darko Kerim, whom Bond immediately affords a positive appraisal on the basis of his manly handshake. 'It was a strong, Western handful of operative fingers – not the banana skin handshake of the East that makes you want to wipe your fingers on your coat-tails' (Fleming 1978: 211). Kerim guides Bond on a Turkish tour that includes local dishes – kebab, raki, Balkan wine – discussion of rape (a worryingly evergreen motif in the Fleming novels) – as well as exotic titillation in the shape of a fight between bare-breasted gipsy women. Not unlike Quarrel, Kerim acquires esteem by virtue of his semi-western characteristics whilst simultaneously functioning as Bond's local navigator through native waters. Similarly, his loyalty will lead to his death too.

Even brief sojourns in Switzerland – Enzian firewater, choucroute, Gruyère and pumpernickel (Fleming 1978: 800–01) – and Germany – 'Krebsschwänze mit Dilltunke. That's crayfish tails with rice and cream and dill sauce. And Rehrücken mit Sahne. That's saddle of roebuck with a smitane sauce' (Fleming 1978: 683) – allow characters the opportunity to deploy their author's grasp of location-appropriate foodstuffs. *You Only Live Twice*, set mostly in Japan, describes a range of Japanese foods which would, in 1964, have been far less familiar names to western readers than nowadays, including: Kobe beef, fugu blowfish, live lobster, raw octopus and Suntory whisky. Of the latter, Bond is advised 'Stick to the cheapest, the White label [...] There are two smarter brands, but the cheap one's the best' (Fleming 1982: 44) Such wisdom would probably have been learned from Tokyo journalist 'Tiger' Saito who accompanied Fleming on the Japanese leg of his 'Thrilling Cities' world tour in 1959, a *Sunday Times* project in which the author spent five weeks visiting the world's most exciting cities.



1. As Macintyre observes, the itineraries for these visits eschewed high culture  
 2. in favour of 'entertainment, comfort and colour' (2008: 186) much of which  
 3. would find its way into his Bond novels.

4. It should come as no surprise to readers that when Bond takes a Japanese  
 5. lover, Kissy Suzuki, Fleming applies the same critical rigour to characterizing  
 6. her female attributes as he does to local cuisine. Whilst Bond is stirred by the  
 7. appearance of a group of topless abalone divers, he retains his classificatory  
 8. discernment to the extent that he is able to record that they are 'rather coarse-  
 9. nipped' (Fleming 1982: 122). And, in pairing Kissy and Bond, Fleming's  
 10. account of her attractiveness is consistently explained in terms of her being  
 11. untypical for her ethnicity: she is taller, her arms and legs longer and less  
 12. 'masculine', and with a smile that 'avoided the toothiness that is a weak point  
 13. in the Japanese face' (Fleming 1982: 128).

### 14. JUST DESSERTS?

15. For a hero who never cooks, and who not infrequently has dishes chosen  
 16. for him, Bond is undoubtedly, as Macintyre states, 'a foodie; indeed, he may  
 17. be the first action-foodie-hero in the thriller genre' (2008: 171). Despite all  
 18. the meals listed and their loving descriptions, Fleming never really offers an  
 19. account of their preparation. There is food, but no cooking. Yet, in a sense,  
 20. that is the point of the meals in Bond; they are summoned and appear as  
 21. magically as the supernatural banquet in *The Tempest*, except that 007 gener-  
 22. ally gets to relish his feasts. Fleming thinks of meals and they arrive on the  
 23. page. Bond desires a meal, and the magic of expensive catering and service  
 24. places it in front of him. The culinary process – of growers, artisans, chefs,  
 25. servants – is clearly not, in Fleming's estimation, a proper subject for his writ-  
 26. ing or skill for his character. Bond is not, like Deighton's Harry Palmer, a spy  
 27. who cooks well. Neither does he wish to be.

28. Following Bourdieu, we may conclude that Bond's tastes most assuredly  
 29. classify Fleming. This is true of the wonderful meals and of the disobliging  
 30. prejudice which coexist inseparably in the author's omnipresent classifica-  
 31. tory regime. Of course, better writers than Fleming can be faulted from the  
 32. armchair of the present for the ideological shortcomings of their own time. In  
 33. the case of Fleming and Bond, however, the absolute conviction with which  
 34. signs are interpreted, preferences are expressed, and judgments are reached  
 35. does not invite a sympathetic leeway. There remains much to enjoy, but the  
 36. aftertaste is stubborn.

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