

Teyvat Food Notes

of an entree known as Ad

from the region of

¹ Mukbang: A video, often livestreamed, displaying a person eating a large quantity of food and engaging with the audience like friends talking over dinner

slowly cooked in a rich broth. The lore excerpt about the dish states it to be so delicious and exquisite that it brought the Adeptus, illuminated and holy beasts and gods in the fictional world of *Genshin Impact* who are only present in the region Liyue, out of their secret hiding and into the presence of humans. The recipe can be obtained from a hidden treasure chest high above the Qingyun Mountains in Teyvat, where the Adeptus are said to reside, on a floating pavilion in the clouds. Peculiarly, despite the fact that *Genshin Impact* had 156 recipes in its 3 years of existence, Adeptus Temptation is the only five-star rarity recipe in the entire game. Five-star rarity is the highest rarity in the game and signifies supremacy, power, and value over other lower-rarity items. Rarity ranking systems are a common mechanic in games whether or not they are free-to-play. What is not common, however, is the level of detail and immersion that *Genshin Impact* gives to its food and culture. *Genshin Impact* is a free-to-play game, meaning the company does not make profit from people downloading and playing the game. Most free-to-play games on the phone are simple, rudimentary, and not fleshed out due to budget restraints and lack of profitability. On the flip side, even the most expensive games do not always have fleshed out worlds. Though the storyline, mechanics, and graphics of paid games tend to be much higher quality than free-to-play games, the level of detail in trivial aspects is often overlooked. *Genshin Impact* transcends these expectations by having amazing graphics, storyline, mechanics, and attention to detail, all while being a free-to-play game. It is shocking to think that a free-to-play game would put such lavish ingredients in their game food, let alone take the time to write out a real-life recipe with over 30 ingredients because these decisions show an unprecedented level of detail and care in video game standards. The care *Genshin Impact* shows for their food brings light to the importance of seemingly minor matters. Food in video games may seem incidental; however, the video game *Genshin Impact* proves food, imaginary or

real, is an important aspect that can spark cultural acceptance and influence players. The food
Adeptus Temptation, the only five-

well-esteemed people, is also commonly devoured by middle class families at holidays such as Mid Autumn Festival and Chinese New Years. There are many variations of this Fujian cuisine entree based on what part of China the consumer is located in and what ingredients can be afforded. Despite being from Fujian cuisine, it is a very adaptable dish that can be incorporated into any of the eight Chinese Cuisines. The eight Chinese cuisines are distinct styles of Chinese cooking each with their own specialties and distinct cooking methods (Su). The history of Buddha Jumps Over the Wall and the division of regional cuisines is reflected in *Genshin Impact*.

Genshin Impact creates an in-game culture around Adeptus Temptation with some parallels to the real world. The regi

attributed to the distinct Fujian Cuisine, Adeptus Temptation is not bound by any style of cuisine in Liyue. It is as if *Genshin Impact* were telling us that Adeptus Temptation is so exceptional it transcends the food culture's natural order of being divided into a particular cuisine style. The dish contains mountainous ingredients with rich flavors as well as lightly seasoned seafood, combining Li and Yue cuisines inside one big boiling gold-encrusted pot. When we look further at the differences between Adeptus Temptation and Buddha Jumps Over the Wall, the former has one definite recipe while the latter has a myriad of variations. Adeptus Temptation is exclusively consumed by the upper class in *Genshin Impact* while Buddha Jumps Over the Wall is also alternatively consumed by the middle class. The *Genshin Impact* cooking mechanism also allows Adeptus Temptation to be cooked anywhere in the world, as long as fire and a pot are present to the player. Buddha Jumps Over the Wall requires a complex kitchen with many utensils and pots to prepare the ingredients and a generous amount of time. Adeptus Temptation presents itself as a superficially glamourized parallel to Buddha Jumps Over the Wall — a dish that rises above cultural disputes while simultaneously being agreed upon that there is a singular true recipe with no variations, a dish that can be cooked anywhere anytime to perfection. It's almost as if *Genshin Impact* took what made Buddha Jumps Over the Wall unique and interesting, refined the details, and presented it as an idealized version. Adeptus Temptation is presented in a perfected fashion in order to control the way that players view Liyue and Chinese food.

Genshin Impact has made food in their game perfect to entice their players to yearn for a taste. From the delicate and shiny glass dumpling skins of Jade Parcels neatly adorned with cabbage leaves to look like a blooming flower to the succulent and luscious flesh of Tianshu Meat flawlessly cut into four symmetrical squares, *Genshin Impact* wants the player to want Liyue food. Food is arguably the heart of any culture. "Plants and animals are metamorphosed

into cultural manifestations through the crucible of flames and heat” argues the anthropologist Massimo Montanari in his well received book titled Food Is Culture, “Man forges in the smithy of the fire the created consciousness of his environment, his mythology, his history, his economy, and his gastronomy. Foo

power of national culture” (Cai et al. 461). Xinyi Chang, Tian Zhen, and Yijin Wang of Hunan Normal University deduce that online games have the potential to implicitly influence players’ cognition by carrying cultural symbols in the immersive experience of the game and praise *Genshin Impact* for the equal, sincere, and friendly manner with which the game presents Chinese culture. “It highlights China's current stance of insisting on equal exchange and mutual understanding, building a community of human destiny, and promoting common development in the world," the scholars gush in their academic analysis titled “Exploring the Innovative Pathways of Chinese Traditional Culture's Foreign Communication through 'Domestic Games Going Abroad': A Case Study of Genshin Impact” (Chang et al. 148). Tang Song from The Diplomat⁴ notices that *Genshin Impact*’s increasingly close relationship with Chinese authorities confirms the game’s crucial role as a soft power tool in shaping China’s image internationally, further realizing that although cultural diplomacy is not as effective as it should be, China is achieving successful cultural exportation through “unofficial” channels such as video games like *Genshin Impact*. Each source compliments *Genshin Impact* for its methods of spreading Chinese through a game, but none mention the downsides of such propagation.

Only Polygon lightly touched on an issue seen within the world of Teyvat—Chinese bias and the standardized perspective of real-world representation in *Genshin Impact*. Within Teyvat there is more than just the region of Liyue. There is Mondstat, a town of the free that is slowly being infiltrated and taken control of, modeled after Germany and England; Inazuma, islands of dictation and order, pursuing an impossible future reminiscent of Japan; Sumeru, a vast space stricken with rot, disease, poverty, and internal corruption meant to represent the Middle East; Fontaine, a flooded city that swears by the judicial system but constantly changes its own rules

⁴The Diplomat: A current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific, with news and analysis on politics, security, business, technology and life

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the game is a cultural element,” mentioning that the cultural elements of *Genshin Impact*

Genshin Impact goes beyond using food to persuade players into seeing Chinese culture as supreme. The game tries to influence its players to accept Chinese worldviews and ideals. The world of Teyvat has explicit parallels to real-world countries and the way these countries are portrayed sends an implicit message to the viewer of how that country should be viewed. Snezhnaya is an ice cold nation full of icy hearted powerful leaders called the Fatui that are somehow always the snakey villains behind almost every conflict in *Genshin Impact*. From the clothing, to the weather, to the geography, to the food, to the characters' appearances, to their voices, Snezhnaya implicitly conveys that this fictional realm is supposed to parallel Russia. Why would a video game villainize an entire region based off of a real-life nation that has close ties to China? Although *Genshin Impact* is from a Chinese company, the perspective and representation they choose to create each fictional region is proof that Mihoyo aims to have their views accepted internationally. If a Chinese game were to show partiality or predisposition to a Russian-inspired region in any form, what kind of assumptions and opinions would international fans have? Would they be open minded to accepting other aspects of the game such as China's culture? Consequently, creating a villain narrative for Snezhnaya is designed to align with the international view of Russia to appeal to audiences, but this approach has affected the way players think about the region. Players can share their thoughts with the community in blogs such as Hololab, created by Mihoyo, or on outside sites such as Reddit. The user DonVicker states that "knowing how society works, I doubt people would have any interest in study all the Fatui schemes to the point everyone start to hate them. Yet I see a lot of common folk with bad opinions against the Fatui." He further implores, "Is there any real lin snT (t)-2 ([opi)-2 (ni)-2 (t)-2 (hT-10 (r)3

distributed delusions⁹ for Inazumans, terrorized and threatened Mondstat's people, and had forged fake sigils of permission from Liyue, and will not hesitate to kill the traveler and other wandering people." Further answering DonVicker, *Genshin Impact's* official wiki confirms that Snezhnaya seems to be inspired by a mix of Tsarist and Soviet Russia, often using Russian words for names. But not all players readily embrace the hatred for the Russian parallel. "I really dislike how the game forces the traveler to hate the Fatui," writes user NewtoWarframe, "It's like the writers don't want people with morally gray ambitions and everyone needs to be black or white, good or evil, on your side or an enemy...the writing is so baffling to me if your[sic] gonna write a faction as the "Hated" faction." The replies are filled with players of various viewpoints, but the majority of comments agree that the Fatui deserve to be hated. "Ho yeah... sure... let's be nice to murderous evil people," one player responds while another chimes in, "Well, the Fatui didn't exactly bother to maintain a good reputation do they? Pretty much everyone in game hates them, and don't really give much reason for us *not* to hate them." Another player points out, "I mean, the Fatui are one of the main enemy's[sic] of the story, if you read through some stuff you can see that they have committed some pretty messed up crimes

the Fatui and potentially real-life Russians is to be questioned just as much as the players' grammar and spelling proficiency. Such is the beauty of the internet and of open blogs such as Reddit, and such is the influence and intricacy a videogame can have on the human ethos.

Whether you fail to recognize or dare to admit that a culture as seemingly frivolous as video games can influence your ethics and beliefs, video games can transcend the boundary between fiction and reality and are a new, effective way nations can share their cultures internationally in our generation of technology. *Genshin Impact* has proven to be very successful.)TJh(. T 0 Td(-)

some scholars may argue that *Genshin Impact* has done a phenomenal job of creating parallel versions of our world's cultures in Teyvat, it is undeniable that the game carries elements of Chinese ethnocentrism and has influenced its players' perspectives. Being aware of the ethnocentric nature of *Genshin Impact* can deepen players' understanding and awareness of cultural representation present in any video game. Realizing that any substantial form of media that is presented to us can affect our ethos and worldview leads us to question how much of our own perspective is truly our own and how much is imposed upon us by our pop culture. How much are we influenced by what we consume, both literally and figuratively, whether it be real food or a dish of fiction?

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