



# The middle landscape of urban and rural culture: The Dietary Life and Its Value Inspiration in Chinese Rural Short Videos

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**Abstract.** With the help of food as a medium, Chinese rural short videos have opened up new possibilities for equal dialogue and integration between urban and rural cultures through daily aesthetics, ritual and music banquets, and the reconstruction of the culinary landscape. They have also enabled rural culture to unleash its emotional energy and identity through independent dissemination, helping to transform local cultural confidence into rural industrial confidence. However, the instability of the middle landscape also brings uncertainty to the integration and development of urban and rural cultures. It is necessary to promote the healthy growth of local food brands and promote the long-term development of rural industries on the basis of value guidance and exploring regional characteristics.

**Keywords:** short video; urban and rural culture; food culture; the middle landscape.

## 1 Introduction

Rooted in the dual structure of urban and rural areas, urban culture is often seen as modern and civilized, while rural culture is seen as ignorant and backward.<sup>[1]</sup> With the embedding of the short video platform represented by Tiktok into the local society, the local culture, including catering culture, has gained more visibility, and the local society has been seen, appreciated and connected.<sup>[2]</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan believes that the middle landscape is a model of artificially created human habitats. Compared to the two endpoints of nature and big cities, the middle landscape appears more realistic, full of vitality, and more like the true face of life.<sup>[3]</sup> The culinary culture in rural food short videos blurs the boundaries between modern and traditional, nature and urban areas, shaping a visual cultural middle landscape. This middle landscape of urban and rural culture is formed through food as a medium. So, what kind of urban and rural cultural landscape does rural food short videos create around local cuisine? What kind of inspiration can it bring us and what reference significance does it have for the rural revitalization cause? This paper adopts purposive sampling and purposive sampling, and selects 20 short video

bloggers of rural food on the Tiktok short video platform as observation objects, trying to answer the above questions.

## **2 The Middle Landscape in the Short Video of Rural Food**

### **2.1 Aesthetic Complementarity in Daily Dietary Life**

In the past era of mass media, not only was the ownership of media tools concentrated in the hands of a few people in the city, but their vision also mainly focused on urban life, which symbolized "advanced" and "modern". Few glimpses of rural areas were often filled with stereotypes of "backward" and "ignorant" rural areas. The "daily life note" feature of short videos allows rural short video bloggers to fully exert their subjective initiative, raise their electronic devices, use food as a key medium and narrative thread, connect fragmented fragments of rural life, and let rural life enter the public's view through active and full self narration. Rural residents are seen by others in their own way through short videos, which in itself is a realization of visibility power.<sup>[4]</sup> For example, the blogger "Shicun Xiaoyue" almost always features a food on the cover of each video, and uses it as the narrative thread of the video. Through the twists and turns of the story, it immerses the protagonist's emotions and emotions. Finally, the production and sharing of the food on the cover drive the story to an end. The focus of rural food short videos is not only on the food itself, but also attempts to use food as a medium to draw a picture of the harmonious and leisurely rural life of heaven and man.

However, in the vast majority of rural food short videos, from crop cultivation to ingredient processing, there are exquisite scenes and beautiful visuals, implying that this "Peach Garden Life" is actually an aesthetic product mediated by media. The abundant dishes and rare ingredients indirectly reflect that the rural food narrative in the video is a surreal "pseudo reality", and the beautification description of daily rural food constructs a rich and leisurely rural "Peach Garden Land". However, the basic logic of its narrative is still the visual centrism and accelerated fragment presentation of urban culture.

### **2.2 A Dining Ceremony that Combines Eastern and Western Cultures**

From the limited variety of food in ancient times to the dazzling variety of cuisines worldwide today, dietary activities have evolved from purely biological instincts to a cultural behavior, gradually possessing clear and specific cultural characteristics.<sup>[5]</sup> The relationship between ritual culture and human relationships in culinary culture is a disharmonious or lacking part of local culture, but the atomization of urban life has led to people's diets becoming increasingly isolated and indifferent. In short videos of rural cuisine, harmonious neighborhoods and gatherings of family and friends are common scenes. In the face of the loss of young population and hollowing out of rural areas, this warm and harmonious daily diet undoubtedly embodies the common aspiration of urban and rural residents for a reunion life.

In addition, the emergence of short videos has brought diverse cultures into a common media field, promoting the convergence of urban and rural cultures in cultural

space.<sup>[6]</sup> Rural food bloggers creatively incorporate urban subculture elements such as hip-hop rap and fashion shows into their videos when making food, demonstrating the strong inclusiveness and creativity of local culture. In rural food short videos, the profound connotation of traditional Chinese culture is fully demonstrated, and its pursuit of the value of "harmony" is fully reflected. Various types of cultures coexist harmoniously in it, ultimately shaping a "middle landscape" of food that connects China and the West, connecting urban and rural areas, and suggesting the rich possibility of equal cross-cultural exchange through food.

### **2.3 Reshaping the Boundaries of Urban and Rural Recipes**

The current era is an era of liquidity, which means uncertainty and openness.<sup>[7]</sup> Highly mobile cities also exhibit characteristics of openness and heterogeneity in the encounter and juxtaposition formed by extensive communication and interaction.<sup>[8]</sup> Regional cuisine is also constantly converging into cities from various regions, undergoing screening and evolution, and ultimately becoming a part of urban culinary culture. In the process of urbanization and internationalization, local cuisine has gradually blurred its regional characteristics. By replicating and absorbing the "standard food products" in cities, rural food short videos not only endow food with regional characteristics and human fireworks, but also achieve cross-cultural communication between different cuisines and culinary cultures.

The legitimacy of the local characteristics of local cuisine is directly or indirectly confirmed by elements such as local dialects and authentic practices. The replication of urban foods such as spicy strips and burgers reflects the exploratory compatibility of local culture with urban culture. Short videos of rural cuisine, using food as a medium, essentially establish a cultural field that spans different regions and connects urban and rural areas, promoting rural culture to no longer remain stagnant and refuse to change, but become a cultural form full of development potential. In this process, local culture not only strengthens its own cultural confidence, but also develops precious possibilities for absorbing foreign cultures and transforming itself.

## **3 The Value Inspiration Behind the Middle Landscape**

### **3.1 Activating Identity Through Emotional Energy**

Unlike many exquisite and vibrant urban style food videos, rural food short videos represent the cultural history and values of rural society, and also contain a series of rich collective memories from taste experiences to life experiences. Viewers from different places awaken collective memory through rural cuisine, exchanging and sharing memories and imaginations of local past events.<sup>[9]</sup> The production teams of "Baoding Liu Sanjie" and "Dajing Jie: The Most Beautiful Mother" have integrated food and memories into a "nostalgic" food ceremony in the "80s Food" series. Through the mutual visits of the video protagonists and the interweaving of story lines, they have created a "food multiverse" of local memories, increasing the realism and immersion of this "nos-

talgi ceremony". At the same time, in the process of participating in the ritual interaction of "food nostalgia" together, the emotional energy brewing in the hearts of the participants is constantly stimulated, arousing people's confidence in local culture and their identification with the Chinese national identity nurtured and developed under the agricultural tradition.

Based on a high recognition of rural food culture itself, equal dialogue and mutual integration of urban and rural cultures are promoted to help rural culture overcome discrimination and misunderstandings, and to see the possibility of creative transformation and innovative development of rural culture. Gradually, stable endogenous cultural confidence is discovered in independent and voluntary contexts, helping to promote rural revitalization.

On the one hand, local culture itself is interdependent with culinary culture. Planting and cooking food are daily components of local life. Compared to industrialized urban culinary culture, local society has a more direct and harmonious integration with culinary culture, and has become an important means for rural residents to showcase themselves and demonstrate their self-worth; On the other hand, local cuisine itself has the ability to bridge cultural barriers and mobilize diverse senses, thereby shortening the long-standing psychological biases and poor communication ability between local culture and urban culture. In short video platforms that pursue visual experiences, this equality in communication is more prominent, which helps local culture to showcase its own characteristics and advantages with confidence.

### **3.2 From Cultural Self -Confidence to Industrial Self -Confidence**

One characteristic of rural short videos is their emphasis on presenting the process of rural labor, closely linking food with nature and society, shaping a self-sufficient and natural life scene. This creates a huge tension with the reality of industrialized society where food is gradually mechanized and standardized, and the dietary process is gradually personalized and atomized. As a result, returning to self-reliance and pastoral rural life has undoubtedly become the inner call of many people, and green and unadorned local ingredients have also become the pursuit object that combines local sentiment and elegant style. The emphasis on harmonious coexistence between humans and nature in daily diet implies a nostalgia for the homeland that comes and goes from the soil, and also endows rural food short videos with a moral color of hard work and diligence, inspiring people's sense of identification and belonging to local culture.

At the same time, natural and green food products can expand their popularity through short videos of rural cuisine, promoting the prosperous development of rural industries. Among the 20 Tiktok Village Food bloggers, most of them will promote local products by means of live broadcast with goods and opening commodity windows, so as to drive the development of local food industry, provide blood making function for the development of local culture, and boost the confidence of local industry through food culture confidence.

## 4 Conclusions

The rural short video opens up new possibilities of equal dialogue and mutual integration of urban and rural cultures with the intermediate landscape of daily aesthetics, ritual and music feasts, and earth and earth reconstruction, and enables rural culture to explore its own emotional energy and identity in the independent communication, and helps transform the confidence of local culture into the confidence of rural industry. However, the instability of the intermediate landscape also brings uncertainty to the integrated development of urban and rural culture. The urban and rural cultural intermediate landscape built through rural cuisine can provide an equal and harmonious media field for cultural dialogue and communication between urban and rural areas, bridge the huge cracks that have existed in the relationship between urban and rural areas for a long time, and promote the subjectivity of rural cultural disseminators in autonomous and reflexive narratives, enhancing the identification of urban and rural residents with rural culture and rural life. Cultural exchange within this media field is not idealized, rooted in the power status gap and thinking inertia of historical and cultural traditions, which makes the new picture of urban-rural communication depicted by the intermediate landscape withstand long-term tests from the status game between both sides. It is necessary to catalyze the robust growth of local food brands and promote the long-term development of rural industries on the basis of doing a good job of value guidance and exploring regional characteristics.

Under the domination of media logic, the visual logic of chasing traffic may reverse the production and production of food short videos, becoming a vulgar product that provides visual wonders. In addition, the middle landscape has an attribute that lies between the city and nature, and has an unstable nature, which can easily lead to the risk of being assimilated by one end. The consumerism trend in modern society has become a chronic problem in urban life, and there is a risk that the middle landscape in rural food short videos may fall into the pursuit of visual aesthetics, leading to extravagance and waste.

For urban residents, rural areas are not only an ideal place to escape the hustle and pressure of modern industrial society, but also a mysterious destination full of regional charm and cultural characteristics. In the increasingly saturated rural food short video market, with the help of the "middle landscape" theory, creators of rural food short videos can highlight local characteristics, create local cultural IP on the basis of diversified and vertical dissemination, promote and promote local original ecological cuisine based on local characteristic planting industries, and create food brands that are unique to local culture. Surrounding the culture of local cuisine, rural builders can transfer the "middle landscape" from the media field of short videos to the real space, externalizing it from theory to practice, such as establishing tourism industry chains such as "characteristic towns" and "farmhouse entertainment",<sup>[10]</sup> fully developing the huge potential of local cuisine to feed back the local industry through cultural integration.

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