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ARTICLE

Domesticating the French Fry

McDonald's and consumerism in Moscow

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Abstract. This article is an ethnographic study of how Russian consumers have 'domesticated' McDonald's. Specifically, I am concerned with how Russians blur the boundaries between the personal and the public, the local and the foreign, by simultaneously drawing aspects of McDonald's into the intimate spaces of their everyday lives and personalizing the public McDonald's experience. By engaging with recent debates about the nature of localization, I suggest that the Russian case is different because Russian consumers who are participating in nationalist-oriented consumer campaigns are including McDonald's as an authentically Russian, and hence indigenous, product.

Key words

authenticity • domestication • food • localization • Russia

During my yearly research trips to Moscow, I periodically visited my friend Veronika who lives in a small town several hours outside the city. Concerned that Moscow's metropolitan setting was sapping my energy and giving me an atypical view of Russian life, Veronika insisted that these visits and her home-cooked meals would both rejuvenate me and provide a more 'authentic' Russian experience. Shortly after I had arrived at Veronika's apartment in summer 2000, my hostess arranged a large bowl, electric mixer, fresh strawberries from her garden and vanilla ice cream on her kitchen table. She explained that an acquaintance had told her about the latest craze in Moscow: the 'milk cocktail' (*molochnyi kokteyl*). More commonly known

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as 'milkshakes' to American consumers, these milk cocktails were introduced to Russia by McDonald's in the early 1990s. Given that I am an American and presumably experienced in such matters, Veronika asked me to do the honors. When I was done mixing, my friend called her 85-year-old father, a decorated Second World War veteran, into the kitchen to have a sample. The older man skeptically took his glass and left the room. Within minutes, he returned with an empty glass and asked for a refill.

Today, with more than 75 outlets throughout Russia, McDonald's is a prominent feature in the local landscape. In Moscow, where the majority of restaurants are located, the physical topography of city streets and pedestrian walkways is shaped by large red signs with recognizable golden arches and arrows directing pedestrians and motorists to the nearest restaurant, and local residents use McDonald's restaurants as reference points when giving directions to friends from out of town. Political demonstrators use McDonald's restaurants as landmarks for staging and dispersal areas such as during an anti-government and anti-American demonstration in early October 1998, when marchers first assembled at the McDonald's store at Dobryninskaia metro station and were then joined by additional supporters when the procession went past the outlet at Tretiakovskaia station. Muscovite acquaintances who participated in the demonstration ate lunch beforehand at the McDonald's at Dobryninskaia metro station.¹ Whereas school groups formerly took cultural excursions to sites such as Lenin's tomb, museums and factories, today these same groups take educational tours through McDonald's restaurants and the McComplex production facilities.

Muscovites' experiences of McDonald's offer an instructive intervention into theories about the nature of globalization and the local/global tensions that social scientists have ascribed to transnational movements. Specifically, Muscovites' efforts to incorporate McDonald's into their daily lives complicate the arguments proposed by Giddens (1990, 2000), Ritzer (2004), Tomlinson (1999) and others that the homogenizing effects of global movements such as McDonaldization elide meaning from daily life. Instead, Muscovites have publicly affirmed and embraced McDonald's and its products as significant and meaningful elements in their social worlds. More importantly, however, Muscovites have incorporated McDonald's into the more intimate and sentimental spaces of their personal lives: family celebrations, cuisine and discourses about what it means to be Russian today. In so doing, Muscovites have drawn McDonald's into the very processes by which local cultural forms are generated, authenticated and made meaningful. It is by passing through this process of domestication that McDonald's has become localized.

In this article, I am concerned with the ways in which Russian consumers' experiences with McDonald's depart from local/global paradigms that juxtapose 'the global' with an authentic and unquestionably indigenous 'local'. As I will describe, Russian consumers are blurring the boundaries between the global and the local, the new and the original, through a set of domesticating tactics grounded in flexible ideologies of trust, comfort and intimacy. Through the application of these principles, Russian consumers render McDonald's restaurants and food as locally constituted (and, more importantly, as locally meaningful) phenomena and not simply as transnational entities with local features or as local entities enmeshed in transnational forces. Ultimately, my task in this analysis is to explore how the 'local' itself is reinvented through processes of domestication.

This motif of 'domestication' calls attention to Russian practices of consumption that link ideas about home and intimacy with ideas about the nation. In Russia, after an initial period in the early and mid-1990s when foreign goods were valued precisely for their *foreignness*, Russian consumers have refocused their attentions on the merits of domestically produced goods. When making selections in the marketplace, Russian shoppers consider such qualities as the cultural heritage and ethnic background of producers and their products (see also Humphrey, 1999; Patico, 2001). The appeal of the inherent *localness* of goods has only been heightened in the wake of Russia's August 1998 financial crisis, when the mass departure of transnational firms from the country not only created opportunities for domestic companies to meet market demands, but also prompted customers to support local industries for both patriotic and economic reasons. A nationwide 'Buy Russia' campaign that explicitly invoked the rhetorics of nationalism and insidership associated with the segmentary system of *Nash* ('ours') appealed to Russian consumers to give priority to domestically produced goods.²

Because the flexible discourse of *Nash* invokes claims of intimacy and familiarity, it incorporates both the imagined space of the nation, occasionally rendered as *otechestvennyi* (which means 'fatherland' and 'domestic industry', also 'patriotic'), and the physical space of the home, usually rendered as *domashnii* (which means 'of the home'), or even more simply as *bytovoi* ('of daily life').³ An approach that employs this dual sense of 'home' is critical for understanding the larger significance of McDonald's induction into Russian social life. At the same time that McDonald's and Muscovites' home lives intersect in intriguing and powerful ways, so that consumers are both taking McDonald's home with them and bringing their

home lives to McDonald's, Russians' encounters with McDonald's also reflect their interest in nationally constituted local cultures.

More important, however, while the process of Nash typically evokes a sense of nationalist qualities, Russian consumers also use it more simply to demarcate feelings of intimacy that are not exclusively national. Specifically, the emphasis on sentimental familiarity, trust and comfort that is embodied in the Nash ideology transcends absolute distinctions between local and foreign and instead creates more abstract categories of insider and outsider. As I describe later in this article, the flexible and inclusive nature of Nash emerges clearly when Russians apply it to indicate that their relationships with foreign persons and products are intimate, ordinary and meaningful (see Caldwell, 2004). In this sense, a consideration of domestication as a form of Nashification approximates the process by which goods and values acquire a state whereby they seem natural and ordinary, which Ohnuki-Tierney (1993: 6) describes as 'naturalization'.

To pursue this theme of domestication, I first consider how recent analyses of globalization and localization approach the issues of meaning and home before turning to the specific case of McDonald's and an examination of the processes by which the company and its products have been incorporated into Muscovites' daily lives. This discussion resonates with other accounts of how transnational food corporations have entered foreign markets by simultaneously responding to local practices and cultivating new local interests oriented to the company's goals (Dunn, 1999; Lozada, 2000; Watson, 1997; Yan, 2000). From this discussion, I address the processes by which Muscovite consumers have encouraged and shaped the company's efforts to 'go native' and what these efforts reveal about Russian social practice.

The material on which this article is based derives from a larger ethnographic project on changing consumption practices and food provisioning in Moscow that I conducted between 1995 and 2002.⁴ For the particular case study described here, I draw on archival materials; company brochures and advertisements; and personal visits, both alone and with friends, to various McDonald's restaurants in Moscow, the company's production and distribution facilities in a suburb outside the city and other restaurants, cafés and food shops in Moscow. Unless otherwise noted, all ethnographic observations are mine. These data are supplemented by surveys, formal interviews and informal conversations that I conducted between autumn 1997 and autumn 1998 with middle-class Muscovites ranging in age from schoolchildren to elderly pensioners. Approximately 50 university students in Moscow completed written surveys describing their eating habits, food

preferences, experiences with foreign foods and views on foreign food restaurants such as McDonald's. I conducted personal interviews with five university students. Group interviews were conducted at three schools in the Moscow region: two sets of interviews with nine children aged five to seven; two sets of interviews with nine children aged eight to 11; and three sets of interviews with 17 children aged 12 to 16. Interview questions focussed on students' eating habits, food preferences and experiences with McDonald's. My conversations with older adults (mid-thirties to mid-sixties) took place more informally over meals and visits to people's homes.

LOCALITY, HOME AND MEANING IN GLOBALIZATION THEORIES

Themes of origins, home and homeland have been important in examinations of the intersection of food practices and global systems (Bestor, 2000; Freidberg, 2001; Goldfrank, 1994; Mankekar, 2002; Wilk, 1999). National origins have attracted particular attention as foreign products have been alternately accepted and rejected by local consumers precisely because of the national traits and tastes that are associated with those products (Miller, 1998; Terrio, 2000: 248–56; Wilk, 2002). In her work on foodscapes, Ferrero argues that, 'in transnational contexts, ethnic food is also seen as a vehicle for understanding the practices of "home cooking," where food practices represent a symbolic and cultural connection with the homeland' (2002: 194).

Issues related to the notion of 'home' have also emerged as key themes in localization/globalization studies. The increasing interconnectedness of peoples and cultures throughout the world facilitates the global colonization of local communities so that the individuals who inhabit the realm created by these processes are increasingly caught between the local spaces where they live their everyday lives and the global arenas where they interact with other global citizens (Featherstone, 1995; Ritzer, 2004; Robertson, 1992; Tomlinson, 1999). Through these processes of displacement or deterritorialization, distinctive and meaningful local communities are replaced by 'non-places' that are noticeable precisely because they are 'forms lacking in distinctive substance' (Ritzer, 2004: 10). Featherstone describes these processes thus: 'Localism and a sense of place give way to the anonymity of "no place spaces", or simulated environments in which we are unable to feel an adequate sense of being at home' (1995: 102). Building on this theme, Giddens notes (1990: 140) that this tension is 'a complex relation . . . between familiarity and estrangement', a feature that Hannerz describes in his observation that cosmopolitans 'are never quite at home again in the way real locals can be' (1990: 248). By extending this

notion of the non-place, we can see, in Sassen's idea (1991) of the 'global city', a similar loss of the familiarity and intimacy that come with a 'home town'. Thus, local spaces characterized by familiarity and intimacy, such as those embodied in the notion of home, are accessible only via the imagination as an object of nostalgia (Ritzer, 2004; Tomlinson, 1999) or as a new postmodern imagined community (Appadurai, 1990, 1996).

At the same time, global processes present opportunities for localities not only to assert and affirm themselves, but also to recast the global according to locally particular and meaningful ways (Friedman, 1990; Jing, 2000; Metcalf, 2002; Miller, 1995; Watson, 1997; Wilk, 1995, 2002; Yan, 2000). In some cases, social actors refashion imported elements to fit pre-existing community standards and practices, such as Watson describes for the assimilation of McDonald's in Hong Kong (1997). In other cases, these actors appropriate imported elements and give them meaning as signs of local distinctiveness, as Wilk describes for Belizean cuisine (1995, 2002). What is common to both perspectives is that these processes are a 'culture's way of making new and unusual things part of itself' (Mintz, 1985: 120–1). Thus, localization involves processes of familiarization, domestication and shared belonging (Featherstone, 1995; Giddens, 1990; Lozada, 2000; Wilk, 2002).

The dynamic interplay between localities and globalities is captured in the notion of 'creolization', in which different cultural meanings are fused to create new forms (Friedman, 1994; Hannerz, 1987, cited in Barber and Waterman, 1995). A variation is that proposed by Robertson's idea of 'glocalization' (1992: 172) whereby 'the universal and the particular' coexist. Barber and Waterman caution, however, that despite Friedman's, Hannerz's and Robertson's visions of diversity and newly created cultural forms, models such as creolization and globalization in fact reify distinctions between "'indigenous'" (traditional, local) and "'imported'" (modern, global) elements' (1995: 241). This warning raises an important point about the distinction between content and process. Specifically, implicit in localization theories such as those described above is an acceptance that it is possible to identify and preserve the specific cultural practices and beliefs that constitute local cultures. For Watson's subjects, for instance, there is something identifiably and predictably Chinese that is affirmed in the ways in which they interact with McDonald's (see also Lozada, 2000). This insistence on authentic original content also emerges in Bourdieu's (1984) schemas of cultural distinction and Ritzer's (2004) distinction between entities that possess meaning and value and those that do not.

This emphasis on cultural content is insufficient for conveying the

complexities of the local/global experience in Russia where the origins of specific goods and behaviors are often less important than the values that Russians attach to them. Even as local and foreign observers depict McDonald's as the ultimate symbol of cultural imperialism (Love, 1986; Luke, 1990), many Russian consumers who support local businesses and commodities have transferred that support to McDonald's.⁵ As McDonald's has lost its strangeness and become familiar and comfortable, it has become, in very tangible ways, domesticated. Thus, an approach that focusses on the processes by which the local is invented and rendered familiar is more productive for understanding the case of McDonald's in Moscow. As Appadurai notes (1996: 185), the production of the local is a continuous process of creativity and adjustment (see also Pilcher, 2002). What this means is that although the social processes of localization may be culturally specific, the content of local culture is continually invented.

In the rest of this article, I explore the processes by which Muscovites and McDonald's have collaborated to achieve this domestication. This process of domestication is twofold and reflects the cooperative efforts of McDonald's and Russian consumers. The first section presents a more familiar narrative of how McDonald's interprets local interests and carefully responds to – or exploits – them (Ritzer, 1996). The second section, however, presents an alternative vision of the domestication of McDonald's in Russia. Specifically, by illustrating how Russian customers actively rework McDonald's to fit their own needs and values, this section emphasizes the agency and autonomy of Russian social actors as they engage with global processes.

FROM THE EXOTIC TO THE MUNDANE: CULTIVATING FRIENDSHIP, INTIMACY AND TRUST

Within consumption studies of postsocialist societies, McDonald's has emerged as a prime symbol of the processes and stakes at work in negotiations among local, regional, national and global forces (Czeglédy, 2002; Harper, 1999; Shekshnia et al., 2002; Watson, 1997; Yan, 2000). For the specific case of Russia, the foreign/local tension is particularly significant in light of McDonald's role among Russian institutions and its place within Russian culinary traditions. Throughout Russia's history, food has been both a celebrated aspect of Russian cultural, social and political life and an evocative symbol of national tastes and practices (Glants and Toomre, 1997). This importance was heightened during the Soviet period when, as in other socialist states, control of the food services sector provided a key venue for articulating and implementing political philosophies and social control

(Borrero, 1997; Goldstein, 1996; Osokina, 1999; Rothstein and Rothstein, 1997).

Soviet leaders linked their visions of an egalitarian communist society with the goals of producing and distributing sufficient food supplies for the population.⁶ To accomplish these tasks, authorities put the entire sphere of food services under state control; the culinary arts were standardized through the professionalization of food workers and the regulation of cuisine. Food production shifted from home kitchens and private restaurants to communal kitchens, state-owned cafeterias and food shops, workplace canteens and cafeterias run by consumers' societies (Borrero, 1997; Rothstein and Rothstein, 1997; see also Fitzpatrick, 1999; Kotkin, 1995). It was within this modernist vision of industrialized food services that privately owned transnational food corporations such as McDonald's first emerged.

After 14 years of negotiations with Soviet authorities, George Cohon, president of McDonald's Canada and *not* McDonald's USA – a distinction that Soviet leaders requested because of political tensions between the Soviet Union and the USA – opened Russia's first outlet in 1990. To attract new customers, the company quickly immersed itself in Russian daily life by highlighting not its novelty and foreignness, but its very ordinariness. Specifically, the company crafted itself as a place where ordinary people work and visit. In a continuing effort to cultivate these images of familiarity, responsiveness and accessibility, McDonald's periodically conducts market surveys. In 2000, I sat at a nearby table as a young female employee stopped young adults and asked them a series of questions about how much they would be willing to pay for different food items. The employee questioned respondents about how frequently they visited McDonald's and what they typically purchased. Then, pointing to pictures on a card, she asked respondents how much they would pay for particular items and if a specific price would be too expensive or acceptable.

More revealing, however, are McDonald's explicit efforts to position itself vis-à-vis Russians' cherished principle of *Nash* as a marker of trust, intimacy and sociality. First, McDonald's acknowledged the value that Russian consumers have historically placed on social networks and concepts of collective responsibility (Caldwell, 2004; Ledeneva, 1998; Pesmen, 2000) by situating itself as a responsive member of the local community. In addition to such activities as sponsoring athletic events and donating profits to a children's oncology program, the company has collaborated with local officials to develop fire safety programs in the city and established a Russian branch of the Ronald McDonald Children's Charity Fund. On a more

individual level, McDonald's directly facilitates connections among consumers. In summer 2000, displays in several restaurants invited children to join a collectors' group to exchange toys and meet new people. Children treat the statue of Ronald McDonald that is invariably to be found in each restaurant as a friend with whom they sit and visit.

McDonald's officials next responded to local ideas about health and nutrition as essential qualities of Nash products (see also Gabriel, 2003). Russian consumers articulate food preferences through evaluations of the purity and healthiness of particular foods. Many Russians initially found the anonymity and technological regulation of McDonald's austere and sterile kitchen facilities, as well as the mass manufacture of foodstuffs, unnatural and disquieting.⁷ One college student explained his discomfort with McDonald's by equating it to a transnational candy corporation that he had visited; referring to the latter, he commented, 'It was too clean'. A middle-aged Muscovite friend complained that McDonald's impersonal industrial kitchen was unsanitary, and several high school and university students complained that the types of food served at McDonald's were not as healthy as foods prepared at home.⁸

In contrast, Russians determine the healthiness and authenticity of foods according to where they are produced and by whom. More specifically, consumers privilege fruits and vegetables that are grown on farms in the Russian countryside or in gardens at private summer cottages (*dachas*) and then collected or prepared by friends or relatives. As one college student commented, authentically Russian foods 'grow here' and are eaten by Russians. This insistence on territorial origins emerged in the comments of many other informants such as Masha, a middle-aged mother who asserted that Russians are healthy precisely because they eat produce taken directly from the ground. Another college student acknowledged the importance of Russia's organic economy when she commented that Russian products are those grown by peasants. When buying commercial products, Muscovites claim to prefer domestically produced meats and dairy products over American and other products that are known to be filled with additives and preservatives. As part of their daily shopping practices, Muscovites ask salespersons and market vendors to verify the local origins of food items. For their part, salespersons attract customers by volunteering the information that particular products are locally grown or manufactured.

In their responses to these local preferences, McDonald's executives have joined other Russian companies in promoting the local origins of their produce.⁹ Using billboards, signs on the sides of freight trucks and tray liners,

McDonald's advertises its contract with a Russian agricultural corporation whose name explicitly invokes the symbolic power of the Russian countryside and personal gardening, *Belaia dacha* ('white cottage'). McDonald's thus reassures customers not only that its produce is Russian-grown, but also that it meets 'the standards accepted by the Russian Federation' and that it uses 'only the highest quality meat without additives and fillers'.¹⁰ In 1998, tray liners guaranteed that 'The high quality of the products of the firm "McDonald's" begins with the highest quality ingredients. . . . "McDonald's" – it is quality!' Finally, special advertising supplements, available in Moscow restaurants in summer 2000, assured customers that McDonald's provides 'The taste that you love, the quality that you trust'.

McDonald's efforts to cultivate a sense of trust among Moscow consumers emerged most visibly when the company explicitly appropriated the rhetoric of Nash.¹¹ Russian marketers frequently include the word 'Nash' on their brand labels and present Nash goods with images and themes that invoke shared Russian origins and qualities. As such, Nash belongs to a larger discourse about the value of domestic production, such as was seen in a billboard slogan during a recent advertising campaign to promote domestically produced goods that reminded Muscovites, 'When we buy domestic, we live better' (*Pokupaem otechestvennoe – zhivëm luchshe*). More significant, however, is that although Nash is more exclusive than labels such as 'domestic' or 'Russian' because it delineates subgroups within larger national or ethnic groups, it in fact supersedes concrete origins and identities because of its emphasis on trust and familiarity. As Elena, a 28-year-old artist, explained: '[Nash] does not depend on one's nation. . . . It is a spiritual belief. [Nash people] are the people to whom I tell my problems. You can switch from foreign [*chuzhoi*] to native [*rodnoi*] in a minute.' Elena concluded that Nash conveyed a sense of trust and helpfulness.

By summer 2002, McDonald's had begun invoking the rhetoric of Nash in posters that reminded consumers that the company was 'Our McDonald's' (*Nash Makdonalds*). This move enabled McDonald's to position itself within the parameters of the imagined – and, more importantly, *trusted* – collectivity to which its Muscovite customers belonged. Moreover, McDonald's claimed status as a local entity by cultivating what Featherstone sees as the essential features of local culture: 'this sense of belonging, the common sedimented experiences and cultural forms which are associated with a place' (1995: 92).

Although Giddens argues that notions of intimacy, familiarity and tradition are themselves products of modernity (1990, 2000), they are

nonetheless the markers by which Russians articulate their connections with local culture. It is perhaps more instructive, however, to consider how Russians are autonomous social actors who themselves encourage, accept, shape and discipline this sense of familiarity and intimacy. Rosaldo persuasively describes this process with his ideas about cultural invisibility: 'As the "other" becomes more culturally visible, the "self" becomes correspondingly less so' (1993: 202). As the Russian McDonald's case illustrates, this process is one that Russian consumers are actively producing and fashioning. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of how Muscovites express their autonomy by creatively incorporating McDonald's into their most intimate and personal activities: their home lives.

FEELING AT HOME: MCDONALD'S AS COMFORT FOOD

Initially, Muscovites' relationship with McDonald's was framed through themes of novelty and exoticness.¹² In 1995, my landlady Anya, a retired geologist, recalled that when McDonald's and the pizza restaurants first opened in Moscow, it was precisely their foreignness that prompted long lines of curious customers.¹³ Her brother-in-law expressed a sentiment similar to that I heard from other Muscovites when he commented that he and his teenaged son had tried McDonald's once simply for the experience, but that in general his family did not like the taste of McDonald's food and so had not returned. Several years later, during a dinner conversation on an unrelated topic, a close friend turned to me, asked if I had ever tried McDonald's food and then confessed that he had tried it and could not understand why a person would eat such food more than to try it once. Yet, even as urbanites such as my friends express their dislike for the taste of McDonald's food, they agree that the company has a certain appeal for the uninitiated and uncultured. In a 1998 interview, a Moscow university student remarked, 'People from the provinces, the first place they would go, I think, is McDonald's'.

Despite these individuals' emphasis on the novelty and social distinctiveness of McDonald's, what is more revealing is a more profound shift in Muscovites' attitudes towards McDonald's. Specifically, for many Muscovites, McDonald's has become so ordinary that it is no longer culturally marked. This shift to invisibility emerged vividly in conversations with schoolchildren and college students about what constituted Russian foods. Intriguingly, in their responses, students often included transnational foods such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola. When asked why they had included these items as 'Russian', students typically replied that they simply took them for granted and did not contemplate their origins. One college

student put it this way: 'I am used to them. They are tasty and easy to buy.' In contrast, he said, new or foreign foods were those that he was not used to thinking about and with which he did not have a 'mental association': 'They do not appear in my mind.'

Another example that illustrates this process of domestication is the extent to which Russian consumers have accepted, and even facilitated, the inclusion of McDonald's foods in Russian cuisine. As in many countries, cuisine has occupied an important place in Russian culture and social life (Glants and Toomre, 1997), and Muscovite acquaintances express great pride in being able to prepare authentic Russian dishes.¹⁴ Despite a long culinary history, however, Muscovites' food practices are changing as imported foods become more available. As one young woman observed: 'In Moscow it is impossible to distinguish between Russian and foreign foods because they are so mixed.' A specific example of these changes is evident in the 'milkshake craze' that my friend Veronika described when we prepared milkshakes at her home. By the end of the 1990s, milkshakes were available in both fast food and high-end restaurants throughout Moscow as well as at temporary sidewalk food stalls. Even vendors in the lobbies of Moscow's finest theaters and opera houses had added fresh milkshakes to their more typical intermission offerings of elegant chocolates, open-faced sandwiches, topped with smoked fish and caviar, and champagne. Russian restaurant owners now provide French fries with their main courses, and vendors at walk-up sidewalk stands include, among the usual assortment of candy bars, chips and nuts, Russian-made knock-offs named *Big mak* and *gamburg roial* (as Quarterpounders are called in Russia).

Nevertheless, these examples point only to the spread of foods inspired by McDonald's throughout the commercial sphere. What is more intriguing is the extent to which Muscovites have incorporated McDonald's into their 'home cooking' (*domashchnaia pishcha*), a domain that Muscovites consider uniquely Russian. One college student, who said that she was able to identify distinctively Russian foods, explained: 'I remember what my grandmother cooked and how my mother cooked.' In a similar comment, another student observed: 'People who cook at home cook "Russian" because they buy ingredients and then cook like they did earlier.' An academic researcher in his mid-30s stated: 'I prefer home cooking [*domashnuiu pishchu*] because home is more comfortable.'

What was particularly instructive about these individuals' insistence that foods prepared at home are authentically Russian was that their repertoires of Russian cuisine included imitations of McDonald's foods. Like several middle-aged mothers I interviewed, my landlady Anya periodically

attempts to make hamburgers at home to please her children and grandchildren, who want to eat at McDonald's, but are unable, owing to cost or time constraints, to do so. In some cases, cooks have resorted to highly creative culinary reinventions such as the meal described by one of my students. When the student's sister studied in Moscow, her host family offered to make McDonald's hamburgers at home. The promised meal turned out to be fried cabbage between two pieces of bread.¹⁵

More revealing, however, were the responses I received from schoolchildren whom I interviewed about Russian cuisine in 1998. During two sets of interviews, one at a school in Moscow and another in a town located two hours away and without a McDonald's, I asked nine children aged five to seven to draw pictures of their favorite Russian foods. In response, four out of nine children independently depicted Russian-style fried potatoes (*zharennye kartoshki*), a staple in most families' meals, in recognizable McDonald's French fry boxes. In a similarly illuminating incident at a birthday party I attended, the guest of honor, a friend's four-year-old daughter who loved French fries, could barely contain her excitement at the news that we would have fried potatoes for dinner. When she was presented with the homemade French fries, however, she took one look at them and shrieked in horror: 'But they're not McDonald's!'

Collectively, these transformations in local food habits reveal that Muscovites have effectively turned the tables on McDonald's and transformed it not simply into something that is familiar and ordinary, but into something that is authentically indigenous as well as desirable and personally meaningful. More significantly, as the comments and actions of the schoolchildren whom I interviewed illustrate, McDonald's has become the local standard against which Russians' own food practices are measured. In this respect, as McDonald's has been more fully domesticated, it has lost its distinctiveness as something alien and visible and has instead become part of everyday life.

The routinization and habituation of McDonald's into the most ordinary and intimate aspects of Muscovites' daily lives are most vivid within the context of negotiations over the parameters of both domestic and domesticated space. As illustrated in the previous section, Muscovites are taking aspects of McDonald's into their homes. Yet, more and more, they are also taking their home lives into McDonald's, a practice that Muscovite employees facilitate by rarely limiting the amount of time that customers spend in the restaurants. For individuals without accommodation, such as visitors to the city and homeless persons, McDonald's serves as a surrogate home. I have frequently observed visitors using the bathrooms to bathe

themselves and to wash out their clothes and dishes. Street children also find the restaurants to be safe havens. The store managers of a central Moscow McDonald's allow these children to sit at the tables and eat food that has been left on diners' trays. On one occasion, I watched as the store manager engaged several homeless children in friendly conversation and offered to help them with their problems. Even Muscovites who have apartments and jobs nearby elect to go to McDonald's to sit and enjoy their homemade lunches (and sometimes even a bottle of beer or two) that they have brought with them into the restaurant.

Other Muscovites have transferred their social lives to McDonald's. Instead of gathering for meals at someone's home, as was a more usual practice during Soviet days when meals in private kitchens were more cost-effective and safe from the prying eyes of others, friends, relatives and colleagues now meet at McDonald's to socialize or conduct business. One friend reported that when she and several other friends tried to organize an outing to a museum, one of the women decided which museum they could visit according to the location of the McDonald's where she wanted them to have lunch. Children and teenagers who live outside Moscow spend their weekends traveling to the city simply to visit McDonald's. During interviews that I conducted with a group of schoolchildren who lived several hours away from Moscow (and the nearest McDonald's), the students excitedly described how frequently they traveled to the city with their friends simply to have dinner at McDonald's. Similarly, several college students confessed that before they had come to Moscow to study, they were unfamiliar with McDonald's. After spending a few months in the city, however, they had quickly begun congregating at McDonald's with their friends for late night meals and conversations.

Birthday parties, which Muscovites generally observe at home or at the family cottage, now represent the most obvious example of these efforts to refashion McDonald's as a domestic and socially significant space. Brightly colored posters and flyers invite children to celebrate their birthdays with a formal party organized and hosted by McDonald's staff.¹⁶ Such events occur regularly throughout the city and, on weekends, the restaurants are often busy with multiple parties taking place simultaneously. During one such party that I witnessed in September 1998, two female McDonald's employees supervised a group of about 15 10-year-olds. As several parents chatted and snacked at a nearby table, the children played games, gave presents to the birthday guest, ate hamburgers and French fries and drank sodas. After the party, the two employees cleaned up the area and removed birthday decorations from the walls. Muscovites with more limited

resources organize their own birthday parties at McDonald's. I sat near one such party and watched as a group of children chatted and played together at a table that their parents had decorated themselves. The parents first delivered their food orders from the counter and later divided a cake and other sweets that they had brought with them from home.

As these examples show, the emphasis that Muscovites place on the comforts and intimacy associated with home emerges in the ways that they interact with McDonald's. For these individuals, McDonald's occupies an important space within the rituals and ideals that give meaning to their daily lives. As a place invested with meaning, value, delight and, more importantly, heightened sociality, McDonald's is an intrinsically and authentically local space (cf. Giddens, 1990; Ritzer, 2004; Tomlinson, 1999).

THE DOMESTIC OTHER: CREATING THE NEW LOCAL

In many ways, Muscovites' experiences with McDonald's appear to resonate with the premises underlying the McDonaldization thesis: that the routinizing nature of McDonald's facilitates its insinuation into the organization and regulation of daily life and that McDonald's' inherent rationality replaces indigenous, and hence more authentic, meaning with its own set of values and practices. At this point in time, however, it is impossible to predict whether complete McDonaldization will eventually be achieved in Russia. Yet preliminary comparison of McDonald's with other food transnationals in Moscow suggests that, as of now, McDonald's has not yet achieved the same degree of rationality in Muscovites' everyday lives.

Specifically, we can look to the spread of coffee shops and sushi bars (sometimes coexisting in the same café) across Moscow during the past three years. There is an obvious sameness particularly among Russian coffee shops, as managers educate their clientele as to proper (i.e. American-style) coffee etiquette and tastes. The manager of one coffee shop boasted that his goal was to turn his Russian patrons into American coffee connoisseurs. Muscovite consumers have visibly adapted themselves to these changes by substituting cappuccinos and espressos for their more usual afternoon teas or instant coffees and by learning to debate the subtleties of muffins, bagels and other American pastries. Most noticeable is the change in social relations that has accompanied these shifts: previously, afternoon tea was a social occasion when co-workers would stop working for a few moments to sit and socialize with each other. In Moscow's coffee shops, however, it is common to see individuals sitting alone and working on school or work projects while drinking a cup of coffee. In contrast, even as Muscovites treat coffee shops as impersonal and generic settings, they continue to approach

McDonald's as a trusted social space where they gather with friends and relax. More importantly, Muscovites are actively manipulating McDonald's by refashioning the eating experience to reflect their own ideas of what constitutes private space and personally meaningful activities. Hence, at this stage, McDonald's has not yet reached the same degree of homogeneity as that pursued and promoted by its competitors.

I have grounded my analysis in an ethnographic perspective (Caldwell, 2004) that proposes that Muscovites are autonomous social agents – even when their choices are constrained by external forces. Thus, by focussing on Muscovite consumers as individuals who actively engage with the institutions and forces with which they coexist, I have drawn attention to the ways in which Muscovites produce and enact the domesticating process of Nash. Although Muscovites may in some ways be complicit partners with McDonald's in this process, it is ultimately these consumers who set the indigenous standards that McDonald's must exploit and satisfy. Finally, because my intent in this article was to highlight the ways in which Muscovites are finding and making meanings within new cultural systems, a focus on the domesticating process of Nash as a particular form of localization calls attention to the ways in which Muscovites do not simply appropriate and refashion foreign elements as familiar and special, as happens in processes of glocalization, but rather reorient their attitudes, feelings and affections in order to experience and know the foreign as something mundane and, hence, part of the local landscape. Despite the power of McDonald's to position itself as local, Muscovites are the final arbiters of this distinction.

In this article, I have suggested that the uniqueness of McDonald's experience in Russia is evident in the ways that consumers affirm its place in local culture not simply by embracing it as just another part of the ordinary routines of daily life, but more accurately by taking it for granted. For many Muscovites, McDonald's has become, in Rosaldo's terminology, 'invisible'. Furthermore, at the same time as Muscovite consumers have accepted McDonald's as a local and personally meaningful experience, they have privileged it over other, more visibly foreign and uncomfortable, experiences. This quality of domestication emerged clearly when two Muscovite friends, a young middle-class married couple, recounted their driving vacation across the USA. Vera commented that because she and her husband were comfortable with the service and food at the McDonald's near their home in Moscow, they stopped at a McDonald's restaurant along an American interstate, but were surprised to find dirty facilities. They were even more astonished, she added, to discover that the food in the American

McDonald's was not as tasty as that in Russia. Ultimately, Vera and her husband decided not to visit another McDonald's while they were on vacation, but to wait until they returned to Russia. As Vera noted, the McDonald's restaurants in Moscow were familiar and trustworthy and thus distinct from their North American prototypes.

By extending values of trust and intimacy to McDonald's, not only are Russian consumers reworking local understandings of such fundamental concepts as the private and the public, the domestic and the foreign, the personal and the popular, but they are also setting the standards that McDonald's must meet in order to flourish. McDonald's is more than a localized or a glocalized entity in Russia. By undergoing a specifically Russian process of localization – Nashification – it has become a locally meaningful, and hence domesticated, entity.

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Notes

1. A photograph that appeared in newspapers throughout the USA in 1999 captured the image of an elderly Russian veteran, dressed in a suit adorned with medals, eating at McDonald's following a political parade (Lovetsky, 1999).
2. For a more detailed discussion of these trends, see Caldwell (2002).
3. I thank an anonymous reviewer for adding *bytovoi*.
4. See Caldwell (2002, 2004).
5. Tim Luke describes the McDonaldization of the Soviet Union as the 'McGulag Archipelago' (Luke, 1990).
6. Food production offers a valuable insight into gender roles and expectations during the Soviet and post-Soviet period, particularly since industrial food production was intended to liberate women from the duties of the domestic realm. Because an extended analysis of this topic is beyond the scope of this article, I would refer interested readers to Goldstein (1996) and the essays in Glants and Toomre (1997).
7. This contrasts sharply with what Yunxiang Yan describes regarding Beijing consumers who see McDonald's as a paragon of nutrition and technoscientific development (Yan, 1997).

8. Cf. Ohnuki-Tierney (1997) for a related perspective on Japan.
9. I discuss this in more detail in Caldwell (2002).
10. These quotations were taken from McDonald's tray liners.
11. See also Humphrey (1995) for a discussion of the ideology of Nash in Soviet and post-Soviet practice.
12. See Campbell (1992) for a discussion of the role that novelty plays in consumer choice.
13. A writer for *Fortune* magazine ironically compared attendance at Moscow's McDonald's to that of another major Moscow attraction, Lenin's tomb. While the 1990 attendance rate at Lenin's tomb decreased to 3.2 million visitors (9000 daily average), the attendance rate at the new McDonald's just blocks up the street soared to almost 10 million (27,000 daily average). A young Muscovite professional explained her preference for standing in a two-hour line at McDonald's instead of at Lenin's tomb in this way: 'At least you can get something to eat here. Who wants to stand in line to see some dead guy?' (Hofheinz, 1990: 11).
14. Moscow's Museum of Public Dining offers a fascinating look at the important role that cuisine has played in Russian culture throughout the last several centuries. Former chefs guide visitors through impressive collections of cooking implements, menus, cookbooks and plastic food displays. As further proof of the value placed on cuisine, several walls in the museum are devoted to pictures honoring chefs and other individuals known for their contributions to Russia's culinary traditions.
15. One reviewer pointed out that the Russian *kotleta* might be analogous to this cabbage hamburger. I agree that this is likely, but it is nonetheless significant that the hostess in this story chose to call her dish a 'McDonald's hamburger'. I thank Mary Kay Taylor for this story.
16. Compare with Yan's descriptions of birthday parties in Beijing (2000: 216–17).

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