

Translating Metaphors at Table: Figurative Language and Food in Emilia-Romagna Tourism Discourse

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Abstract

Food terminology plays a crucial role as a micro-specialised language used in tourism discourse to promote local cuisine and represent local dishes as appealing to tourists. The language of food traditionally makes extensive use of metaphorical and figurative expressions (e.g., see Demaecker, 2017), which are powerful tools for persuasion (see Ferrari, 2018). When translating these metaphors into other languages, the challenge lies in maintaining their persuasive impact. Considering the extensive use of figurative expressions in food-related communication, the study investigates Italian tourist materials on Emilia-Romagna's food and their English translations. It specifically focuses on how metaphors originally found in the Italian texts are translated and mediated into English to better persuade different target audiences. Adopting a corpus-assisted perspective, the article analyses the different translation strategies used by Italian institutions in the tourist materials. Results show that metaphors are primarily rendered with direct translation of metaphorical concepts and terms. The study also highlights the omission of certain metaphors in the translated text, as well as their adaptation to better fit the target language both conceptually and linguistically. Metaphors are occasionally paraphrased or explained in the target language, and in a few cases, they are not translated and left in the source language.

Keywords: Metaphor, Food, Translation, Tourism discourse, Leaflets

1. Introduction (Note 1)

In contemporary tourism discourse, food is more than a sensory experience – it is a cultural signifier, a persuasive resource, and a site of linguistic creativity. The language of food, often regarded as a form of “micro-specialised” discourse (Maci, 2020), plays a central role in shaping the appeal and authenticity of tourist destinations. As such, food-related language is not merely descriptive; it frequently draws on figurative and metaphorical patterns that enhance the emotional and cultural resonance of promotional texts (Demaecker, 2017; Ferrari, 2018). Metaphors in this domain serve a double function: they stimulate the imagination and guide interpretation, while anchoring culinary products to broader narratives of identity, place, and tradition. However, the metaphorical richness of food discourse poses considerable challenges in multilingual tourism communication, especially when such metaphors are deeply rooted in culturally specific conceptualisations (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015; Demaecker, 2017). Translating food metaphors thus involves a careful negotiation between conceptual fidelity and cultural accessibility.

This article explores food-related metaphors and their translations in bilingual (Italian and English) tourist promotional materials, focusing on Emilia-Romagna, a region internationally renowned for its culinary heritage. Drawing on Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004), it investigates how metaphorical expressions are employed to construct persuasive narratives in tourism discourse and how they are rendered across languages. Particular attention is paid to the strategies adopted in metaphor translation – from direct transfer to substitution, paraphrase, or omission – as well as to the broader implications of metaphor translation for the representation of local identity (Faber & Márquez, 2005; Newmark, 1985; Shuttleworth, 2017).

1.1 Metaphors, Food & Translation

Language reflects the cultural structures through which reality is understood. As such, translators must go beyond simply finding equivalent words; they are tasked with bridging fundamentally different ways of experiencing and interpreting the world (Katan, 1999). In this perspective, food, as part of our cultural experiences, is not just about nourishment but a powerful expression of cultural identity, history, and social values (see Marco, 2019). Hence, translating the language of food requires more than just linguistic accuracy; it requires careful adaptation of meaning.

Translating food goes beyond just language and presents several challenges. Among others, these include the absence of certain ingredients in the target culture and the difficulty of finding suitable substitutes, and the need to adapt dishes to meet the tastes and expectations of the target audience (Chiaro, 2008). Therefore, the translator(s) must carefully balance between authenticity and adaptation, making sure that representations of food remain appealing without losing their local essence (Chiaro, 2008). This balance becomes particularly crucial in tourist promotion, where local food needs to be promoted and presented as appealing to visitors, potentially leading them to try local dishes (see Antón et al., 2019; Sims, 2009).

In this background, several studies have highlighted the central role that metaphors – namely, expressions in which one concept is understood in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) – play in food discourse. On the one hand, metaphors can shape and better explain sensory experiences and sensations – taste, texture, smell, even touch (see Huo et al., 2020; Schifferstein et al., 2022; Zhou & Tse, 2020). On the other hand, metaphors representing food do not simply describe sensory sensations but also mediate social relationships, cultural meanings and authority within the food community (see Nacchia, 2024). Metaphors can influence our moral views on food and the body by shaping how we perceive and evaluate eating, health, and physical experiences related to food. For instance, Weele (2006) finds that metaphors describing food as *fuel and machine* focus on efficiency, health, and function, possibly separating health from pleasure and can foster a mind-body dichotomy, where bodily pleasure is seen as potentially sinful or dangerous.

Scholars analysing food metaphors argue that certain metaphors are so conventional that it may be impossible to talk about food without using them (see Nacchia, 2024). Indeed, certain primary metaphors which draw on shared sensorimotor experiences, for instance, thought is food, are so conventional that they may be considered universal. However, several studies have shown that food-related metaphors are culture-specific in both their conceptual elaboration and linguistic realisation (Tseng, 2017). While the underlying experiences may be common, the way metaphors are conveyed varies significantly across cultures.

Due to this cultural specificity of metaphors, especially at a linguistic level, their translation represents a range of issues that stem from the complex interaction between conceptual meaning, linguistic form, and cultural conventions. One of the major difficulties involves determining whether the translation should prioritise the underlying conceptual structure of the metaphor or its contextual interpretation (Dobrzyńska, 1995; Mohammad et al., 2007; Prandi, 2015). This becomes particularly intricate in cases involving polysemy or lexical ambiguity, where a metaphor may recall multiple layers of meaning depending on context. Cultural specificity further complicates the process, as metaphors often rely on shared knowledge or values that may not be easily transferable from one language to another (Rizzato, 2021; Rossi, 2016).

We have found six main translation strategies from the substantial body of literature on the topic (see also Demaecker, 2017; Faber & Márquez, 2005; Järve & Kerremans, 2023; Newmark, 1985; Prandi, 2015; Schöffner, 2016; Shuttleworth, 2017; Tebbit, 2013):

- I. *Direct translation* - the metaphor is translated from the source language (henceforth SL) into the target language (henceforth TL) using the same metaphorical expression, preserving the original structure and image (e.g., “cibo per la mente” becomes “*food for thought*”);
- II. *Adaptation* - the metaphorical expression in the SL is modified to use a culturally familiar metaphor in the TL. The image or symbolism may change, but the metaphorical meaning is preserved across languages. For instance, the source domain of sport can be preserved across languages, but a metaphor may involve baseball in the SL and football in the TL.

- III. *Substitution* - the metaphorical image in the SL is replaced with a different metaphor available in the TL that performs a similar communicative function and can work as a functional equivalent, which maintains the figurative style of the expression but is likely to change the meaning of the metaphor and draw from a different source domain. For example, “*in bocca al lupo*” (literally “into the wolf’s mouth”) in Italian is often translated as “*break a leg*” in English. Although the source domains are different – animal danger vs. bodily harm – both serve the same pragmatic function of wishing good luck.
- IV. *Paraphrase* - the metaphor is rendered non-figuratively by rephrasing it with an explicit, literal explanation (e.g., the Italian metaphor “*quel progetto è naufragato*”, literally “that project has shipwrecked”, is rendered non-figuratively in English as “*that project failed completely*”). The metaphor can be rendered figuratively as well, but the comparison involved in the SL is rendered more directly in the TL with a simile.
- V. *Borrowing the term* - the metaphor in the SL is not translated and kept in the original language. For instance, “*comfort food*” is a metaphor in English and is not translated into Italian;
- VI. *Omission* - the metaphor is entirely omitted in the translation or replaced by a non-metaphorical expression.

These decisions involve navigating both the conceptual level and the linguistic surface, which may or may not align in the SL and TL. For example, the Italian liquid metaphor “*ondata di migranti*” can be directly translated in English as “*wave of migrants*”, maintaining both the metaphor and its conceptual mapping. In contrast, expressions like “*re dei formaggi*” may be translated as “*king of cheeses*”, a choice that reflects the translator’s interpretation and adjustment of sociocultural connotations, especially when alternatives like “*prince of cheeses*” might have been semantically accurate yet contextually inappropriate. Similarly, Newmark (1981) brings the example of “*other fish to fry*”, which can be translated in French as “*d’autres chats à fouetter*” [literal translation: “other cats to whip”]. These examples underscore the translator’s critical role in mediating between languages and cultures, shaping how metaphors travel and resonate across discursive spaces.

1.2 Research Objectives

Building on the previous discussion of the implications of metaphor and translation, this study investigates how food-related metaphors function not only as rhetorical devices but also as culturally embedded tools that contribute to the construction of persuasive narratives. A key objective is to explore how such metaphors are translated or mediated across Italian and English materials targeting international audiences. By focusing on the figurative framing of Emilia-Romagna’s culinary heritage, the analysis aims to shed light on the extent to which metaphor is strategically employed to enhance cross-cultural appeal. We further examine how translators’ decisions align with broader promotional discursive strategies aimed at more effectively persuading different target audiences.

The paper first presents the materials (Section 2) and methods (Section 3) used to explore these aims, followed by the analysis which includes a quantitative overview (Section 4.1) and a qualitative discussion of results (Section 4.2). The conclusion is provided in Section 5.

2. Materials

The dataset for this study consists of food-related brochures and tourism magazines published by Italian institutions from the 1960s and the early 2000s and is part of a Project of National Interest on tourism discourse in Italy during the same period. Specifically, we gathered leaflets, brochures and magazines on Emilia-Romagna published by the Italian National Tourist Board (*ENIT - Agenzia Nazionale del Turismo*) and local Tourist Information offices (*IATs - Informazione e Accoglienza Turistica*). The study focused on Emilia-Romagna, an administrative region in Northern Italy, as it is internationally recognised for its culinary heritage. It has one of the highest concentrations of DOP (*Denominazione di Origine Protetta*, Protected Designation of Origin) and IGP (*Indicazione Geografica Protetta*, Protected Geographical Indication) products – including Parmigiano Reggiano, Prosciutto di Parma, and traditional balsamic vinegar from Modena – and is frequently referred to as Italy’s “Food valley” (Olivieri & Giraldi, 2015). The texts were carefully read to find bilingual texts promoting local food. All printed materials were scanned at high resolution and were processed using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software and converted into plain text (.txt) format to ensure compatibility with corpus analysis tools. Two specialised corpora were compiled: one with the original texts in the source language, Italian (DIETITALY_FOOD_ITA), and the other with their corresponding translations in English (DIETITALY_FOOD_EN). Table 1 shows the number of tokens in both corpora. The Italian corpus (DIETITALY_FOOD_ITA) comprises 60,195 tokens, while the English corpus (DIETITALY_FOOD_EN) includes 61,752 tokens.

Table 1. Overview of the corpora

Corpora	N. Tokens
DIETITALY_FOOD_ITA	60,195
DIETITALY_FOOD_EN	61,752

3. Methods

In the present study, metaphor is understood in both its linguistic and conceptual realisations in discourse (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008). Each metaphor has a linguistic expression — for example, “*the masterpiece of dairy arts*” — which reflects an underlying conceptual mapping, such as FOOD IS ART. The corpus was examined using the concordancer tool of the LancsBox X software (Brezina & Platt, 2023), which enabled systematic exploration of lexical patterns to identify figurative language. Adapting the procedures proposed by Pragglejaz (2007), we first generated a frequency wordlist from our dataset, from which we extracted food-related terminology across the corpus. Each food-related term

was then analysed through concordance lines to determine whether it was employed metaphorically, based on collocational indicators on the contrast between contextual meaning and basic meaning. Once metaphorical usage was established, we focused on the identification whether metaphors were directly translated, substituted, paraphrased, or omitted in the target language, as outlined in Section 1.1. To ensure reliability, two annotators independently analysed the same dataset using a shared methodology. Only metaphorical instances that received double agreement were retained for discussion in the final analysis, thereby reinforcing the validity of the findings. In cases when one metaphor in the source language was translated with multiple translation strategies (e.g., borrowing the term followed by a paraphrase) both translation strategies were counted in the quantitative analysis.

4. Analysis & Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Overview

We identify a significant number of metaphor occurrences used to describe food in both corpora. The corpora present 143 metaphor occurrences, specifically 74 in DIETITALY_FOOD_ITA, and 69 in DIETITALY_FOOD_EN. The data show a considerable trend towards more literal approaches to metaphor translation. Table 2 below shows the extent to which these procedures are employed in our dataset.

Table 2. Overview of translation procedures in the dataset

Translation procedures	Percentage (%)
Direct translation	76.00
Adaptation	5.33
Omission	12.00
Borrowing the term	2.66
Paraphrase	4.00

As shown in Table 2, we find a strong preference towards direct translations of metaphors, suggesting that most metaphors are rendered with minimal changes to maintain their original form. Specifically, in 76.00% of cases, metaphors are translated literally (e.g., a personification like “*nobile vino*” becomes “*noble wine*”). Omitting the metaphor is a recurrent translation strategy in the dataset (12.00%). In this case, the metaphor in the SL is rendered with a non-metaphoric translation or without any translation at all and simply omitted in the TL (e.g., “*prodotto signorile*” simply translated with “*product*” without any modifiers). Adaptation and paraphrase occur quite frequently, respectively, with a frequency of 5.33% and 4.00% and reflect attempts to convey the meaning of a metaphor in a culturally

or linguistically appropriate way. Borrowing the term without any translation is the least common strategy at 2.70%.

When metaphors are rendered with equivalent metaphors or adaptations, their source domains are identified to provide an overview of the most typical source domains in the two datasets. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of source domains in the dataset

SOURCE DOMAINS	DIETITALY_FOOD_ITA (%)	DIETITALY_FOOD_EN (%)
PERSON	66.22	57.97
JEWEL	6.76	5.80
JOURNEY	10.81	10.14
ART	5.41	5.80
PLANT	4.05	5.80
OTHER	9.46	14.49

Table 3 shows the number of occurrences for each source domain in the source texts and in the target texts. The domain of person is the most recurrent in both the Italian source texts (66.22%) and the English translations (57.97%), possibly suggesting that personifications in the source texts are likely to be rendered with equivalent metaphors from the same source domain. Domains such as journey and jewel occur with similar frequencies in both languages, respectively 10.81% and 6.76% in the Italian dataset and 10.14% and 5.80% in the English one and may imply possible direct translations from the source texts (henceforth ST) into the translated text (henceforth TT). Domains like plant and art occur slightly more frequently in the translated text, suggesting that adapted metaphors in the TL are more likely to draw from these domains.

These translation procedures and the respective source domains are further discussed in the following section.

4.2 Translating Metaphors of Food From Italian to English

As discussed in the previous section, the analysis of food-related metaphors across the Italian source texts and their English translations reveals the presence of all five translation strategies identified in the literature, as we have discussed in section 1.1.

First, we identify instances of *direct translation*, in which food metaphors in Italian are preserved in English with no lexical or conceptual variation (Tables 4, 5 and 6). In Table 4, the metaphor “*il capolavoro della casearia mondiale*” is used to describe the prominence of Parmesan cheese within the global dairy industry, framing it as a work of art — specifically, a masterpiece. This metaphor is directly translated into English as “*the masterpiece of dairy arts*”, maintaining both the linguistic form (the direct equivalent of “capolavoro” is

“masterpiece”) and the conceptual structure, preserving the underlying metaphorical mapping FOOD IS ART, where Parmigiano Reggiano is elevated to a unique, elite status; it is not merely consumed, but admired and culturally valued, like a painting or symphony.

Table 4. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
Tra i formaggi , il capolavoro della casearia mondiale , il parmigiano reggiano, fondamentale per il completamento di qualsiasi nutriente, digeribilissimo. (A tavola in Italia, 1980)	Among the cheeses we find the masterpiece of dairy arts , parmigiano reggiano, fundamental as a complement to nearly all first courses, unsurpassed at the end of a meal, tasty, nutritious, easily digested. (At table in Italy, 1980)

In Table 5, we identify another instance of direct translation concerning “Parmigiano Reggiano”. In this case, the metaphor “*questo re dei formaggi da condimento e da tavola*” is rendered in English as “*the king of cheeses, both for condiment and as a table cheese*”, preserving the linguistic structure and the underlying conceptual mapping FOOD IS ROYALTY, which could be interpreted as relying on the broader primary metaphor QUALITY IS STATUS, which is present in both languages.

Table 5. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
Il «parmigiano-reggiano», questo re dei formaggi da condimento e da tavola , richiede un lungo e paziente procedimento di lavorazione e di stagionatura naturale, prima di essere immesso sul mercato. (A tavola in Italia, 1980)	The “ King ” of cheeses “ Parmigiano Reggiano ”, both for condiment and as a table cheese, requires a long and patient procedure and a lengthy period of natural aging before it is placed on the market. (At table in Italy, 1980)

As for the extracts in Table 6, we identified the conceptual mapping WINE IS A PERSON, a form of personification in which human qualities are attributed to wines. “*Lambrusco di Sorbara*” is described as “*giovanile*”, directly translated as “*youthful*”, highlighting traits typically associated with human vitality. Similarly, Albana wine from Dozza and Bertinoro is characterised as “*nobile*” and “*potente*”, both directly translated as “*noble*” and “*strong*”. These personifying attributes not only construct the wine as a character but also activate the metaphor WINE IS ROYALTY, where the wine’s perceived quality is expressed through hierarchical and culturally resonant social categories, in line with the primary metaphor QUALITY IS STATUS.

Moreover, the extract discussed in Table 6 presents an additional challenge that does not align with a case of direct translation: the adjective “*mordente*”. This term is a nominalisation of the present participle of the verb “*mordere*” (to bite). Technically, “*mordente*” refers to any substance capable of fixing colouring agents used in the dyeing of fabrics, furs, and leathers in the form of an insoluble compound (Treccani, n.d). However, the word is also used figuratively to convey meanings such as aggressive spirit, drive, determination, competitive energy, or an assertive or simply persuasive force that leaves an impression on others’ emotions and sensitivity (Treccani, n.d). Its closest literal equivalent in English is “*mordant*”, which similarly denotes a substance used prior to dyeing to help fix colours in textiles or leather (Collins, n.d). Figuratively, however, “*mordant*” in English typically means “*sarcastic*” or “*bitingly critical*”, thus lacking the motivational and persuasive connotations carried by the Italian “*mordente*”. Therefore, here the translator decided to reinterpret the metaphorical expression by using the adjective “*sharp*”. In our opinion, the translator’s choice could be explained as *adaptation*. Since the adjective sharp can describe a point or edge which is very thin and can cut through things very easily or you describe someone as sharp because they are quick to notice, hear, understand, or react to things (Collins, n.d.). In particular, when referring to taste or smell, “*sharp*” typically indicates a rather strong or bitter quality, though it can also suggest something clear and fresh. The use of “*sharp*” does not correspond to either the literal or figurative meanings of the Italian “*mordente*”. Instead, it represents an adaptation of the original to the target language’s cultural context, in which the wine’s character was intended to convey determination and assertiveness — a strong personality. What the two terms share is the notion of “*determination*”, a quality that can be associated with both “*mordente*” and “*sharp*” in their broader metaphorical usage. These two linguistic metaphors thus represent different lexicalisations of the conceptual mapping WINE IS A PERSON, which, according to the translator, is more appropriately expressed in Italian by the adjective “*mordente*”, and in English by the adjective “*sharp*”.

Table 6. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
Tortellini, lasagne, tagliatelle col prosciutto, funghi, canestrelli di pollo, la famosa cotoletta alla bolognese, il mordente, giovanile Lambrusco di Sorbara, il nobile, potente vino Albana di Dozza o di Bertinoro , il Sauvignon di Castel San Pietro, le braciole di maiale, il manicaretto di piselli novelli, la sfoglia verde, il pan speciale. (L’Italia 244, 1968)	Tortellini, lasagne, tagliatelle with prosciutto, mushrooms, canestrelli of chicken, the famous Bolognese veal cutlet, the youthful, sharp lambrusco of Sorbara, the strong, noble Albana wine of Dozza and Bertinoro , the Sauvignon of Castel San Pietro, pork chops, the dainty dishes of new peas, the green noodles, the pan speciale. (L’Italia 244, 1968)

There are several instances of paraphrase, in which the metaphor is rendered non-figuratively

by rephrasing it as a simile or an explicit explanation. In the extracts presented in Table 7, the Italian text uses the adjectives “*leggiadri*” (graceful) and “*vigorosi*” (vigorous) — terms that primarily denote human traits, attributing elegance and physical vitality to the wine. The translator, however, opts neither to translate nor to adapt these figurative expressions, instead choosing the adjective “*exquisite*”. According to Collins (n.d.), “*something that is exquisite is extremely beautiful or pleasant, especially in a delicate way*”, which, while positive and evaluative, lacks the metaphorical richness and personification conveyed in the original. In this case as well, the translator(s) bases their decision on a point of connection between the source and target languages — namely, the notion of “delicacy” evoked by the Italian adjectives “*leggiadri*” (graceful) and the English adjective “*exquisite*”. Whilst “*vigorosi*” (vigorous) remains untranslated in the English version.

Table 7. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
I vini, leggiadri e vigorosi , spesso spumeggianti, ideali per favorire la digestione. (A tavola in Italia, 1980)	The wines are exquisite , often sparkling, ideal for aiding digestion. (At table in Italy, 1980)

The translator(s) opt for a paraphrase in the example presented in Table 8. In the source text, both a metaphor and a simile are employed. First, we encounter a personification, where the adjectives *grassa* (fatty or heavy) and *opima* (generous) directly modify the noun *cucina* (cuisine), relying on the conceptual metaphor CUISINE IS A PERSON. By presenting the contrast *non grassa, ma opima* (literally “not heavy, but generous”), the author suggests the liveliness and richness of the cuisine. Secondly, in the simile, the fertile and abundant *cucina* is compared to *le antiche divinità della terra* (“the ancient gods of the land”) and *i grandi alberi sani e frondosi* (“the great, healthy, leafy trees”).

Whilst the simile is directly translated from Italian into English — preserving both its conceptual and linguistic elements — the metaphor CUISINE IS A PERSON is paraphrased in the English version. The translator(s) explain the concept of *cucina grassa* (“heavy cuisine”) by rendering it as “*a cuisine that makes heavy use of oils*”, and unpack the notion of *opima* through the use of three synonyms: *fertile*, *rich*, and *fruitful*, which are echoed throughout the simile in the text. What is missing in the English text is the direct grammatical and conceptual relationship between the adjectives *grassa* (fatty or heavy) and *opima* (generous) and the noun *cucina* (cuisine), which served as the basis for the original metaphorical mapping. Instead, the translator(s) have chosen to explicate the Italian construction, thereby diluting the immediacy and personifying effect present in the source text.

Table 8. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
Una cucina non grassa , ma opima: come le antiche divinità della terra, come i grandi alberi sani e frondosi. (A tavola in Italia, 1980)	It is not a cuisine that makes heavy use of oils, but it is rich, fertile like the ancient gods of the land, fruitful like the huge, healthy, leafy trees. (At table in Italy, 1980)

We also identified instances of borrowing — specifically, the retention of the original term without translation. In the example found in Table 9, the metaphor CUISINE IS A PERSON, conveyed linguistically through the adjectives “*grassa*” (heavy) and “*dotta*” (erudite), is not translated into English; instead, the original Italian adjectives are retained.

Table 9. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
Della cucina bolognese parlerò il meno possibile. Di lei “ grassa ”, dopo che “ dotta ”, tutti sanno abbastanza. (L’Italia 244, 1968)	I shall talk as little as possible of Bolognese cooking. Everyone knows about Bologna the “ grassa ” (stout, heavy) as well as Bologna the “ dotta ”. (L’Italia 244, 1968)

Lastly, we observe cases of omission, where no English equivalent is provided at all — either due to the perceived untranslatability of the metaphor or editorial choices related to genre or audience expectations — resulting in a loss of figurative richness.

As shown in Table 10, the typical food *cappelletti di Romagna* (filled pasta) is anthropomorphised in the expression “*Nel loro ventre c’è ricotta*” (“There is ricotta cheese in their stomach”), which invites the reader to perceive the *cappelletti* as human, endowed with a stomach. However, the English translation omits the reference to the stomach entirely; the translator opts instead for a more direct and concise rendering which serves a paraphrastic purpose: “*they contain.*” Similarly, in Table 11, the adjective *gagliardo* (vigorous/sturdy) is not included in the English translation. In Table 12, the phrase “*il gusto di un cordiale e signorile prodotto tipicamente italiano*” is rendered without the adjectives *cordiale* (cordial) and *signorile* (refined/gentlemanly), further reducing the expressive richness of the original.

Table 10. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
<p>I cappelletti di Romagna (modellati sul cappello a lucerna dei gendarmi di una volta) non vogliono confondersi coi tortellini di Bologna: (...) Nel loro ventre c'è ricotta, uova, petto di cappone, pepe, noce moscata e formaggio. (L'Italia 249, 1969)</p>	<p>The cappelletti of Romagna (modeled on the tri-cornered hat that used to be worn by the gendarmes) should not be confused with the tortellini of Bologna. (...) They contain ricotta cheese, egg, capon breast, pepper, nutmeg, and cheese. (L'Italia 249, 1969)</p>

Table 11. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
<p>Rossi, i vari tipi di Lambrusco, emiliani, il gagliardo Sangiovese DOC di Romagna, il Bosco Eliceo, il Gutturnio, il Bonarda. (A tavola in Italia, 1980)</p>	<p>Reds, various kinds of Lambrusco, Sangiovese, Bosco Eliceo, Gutturnio, Bonarda. (At table in Italy)</p>

Table 12. Comparison of Italian ST and English TT

Italian ST - D-ITA	English TT - D-ENG
<p>[Marsala] Anche se dietro non c'è da aspettarsi Maometto, ma il gusto di un cordiale e signorile prodotto tipicamente italiano. (L'Italia_245, 1968)</p>	<p>[Marsala] But do not expect Mohammed behind it but the flavor of a typically Italian product. (L'Italia_245, 1968)</p>

5. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the metaphorical representations of food in institutional tourism discourse, with a particular focus on how such expressions are translated from Italian into English. Through a corpus-assisted methodology, we analysed the extent to which metaphor functions as both a rhetorical and cultural tool in the promotion of Emilia-Romagna's culinary heritage. Specifically, we were particularly interested in exploring how metaphorical meanings were negotiated and adapted in the target language.

As regards our quantitative findings, the data reveal that direct translation is the most preferred translation choice, followed by omission, adaptation, paraphrase and borrowing the term. The prevalence of direct translations might reflect an overall tendency to preserve the original metaphorical imagery where possible, thus maintaining conceptual fidelity. Nonetheless, the prevalence of direct translations and omissions may also suggest less effort in finding accurate equivalents or creative solutions to effectively render metaphorical meanings in the TT. Despite the presence of paraphrases and adaptations, which show a more explicit effort towards pragmatic translation rather than a literal one, their occurrence is limited if compared to direct translations, showing an overall tendency to stick to more traditional translation practices.

In terms of qualitative observations, we find that the translation choices vary significantly across texts, reflecting both linguistic constraints and editorial decisions. Direct translations in the dataset seem to prioritise the underlying conceptual structure of the metaphors rather than their contextual interpretation (see Mohammad et al., 2007; Prandi, 2015). Furthermore, a notable proportion of adaptations and paraphrases points to a more complex negotiation between metaphor preservation and audience accessibility. These reflect translation choices aimed at enhancing target readers' comprehension rather than preserving the exact original meaning and form of the metaphors. In particular, adaptations such as the rendering of *mordente* as *sharp* highlight the translator's interpretive agency in aligning metaphorical connotations with the expectations of the target readership (see Katan, 1999).

The observed instances of omission and paraphrase, especially in expressions rich in cultural specificity, indicate a potential loss of figurative nuance, with implications for how local identity and culinary authenticity are conveyed internationally. While strategies like borrowing or non-translation allow for some preservation of cultural flavour, they often rely on assumed familiarity or are supplemented by parenthetical glosses.

This study underscores the dual role of metaphor as both a linguistic and cultural mediator in tourism discourse. The act of translating food metaphors is not merely a technical operation but a culturally loaded process that shapes how regional identities are represented and recontextualised across languages (see Chiario, 2008).

Despite the insightful results, this study presents some limits. The dataset was limited in size and geographical areas. Thus, future research could expand this line of inquiry by expanding data from other regions, both in Italy and in other countries, to explore the main ongoing tendencies in terms of translation choices in the field of tourism communication. Furthermore, the ephemeral nature of printed tourist materials limited the possibility of a diachronic analysis, as many materials are not archived or maintained over time. This dataset includes tourist materials that have been preserved by Italian institutions over the years, although a potential loss of materials cannot be entirely excluded. Future research should expand the dataset to include tourist materials published in recent years to add a more comprehensive perspective to the study. Overall, a larger and more diverse dataset would be necessary to shed light on metaphor behaviour across languages and cultures.

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Note

Note 1. The essay was conceived by both authors; however, sections 1, 2, and 4.1 were written by Ilaria Iori and sections 3, 4.2, and 5 by Dario Del Fante.

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