Effects of Age on Taste Perceptions in a Food Service Context  
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According to age-stereotype literature, older people are perceived inefficient, and slow. Having old employees, therefore, can decrease customer satisfaction. Five studies show that in food domain, having an older employee increase taste perceptions. We show age effect is driven by two beliefs: “slow food is good” and “Grandma knows best.”

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The population is aging. In 1990 9.2 percent of the population was 60 or older; by 2013 it was 11.7, and by 2050 it is expected to reach 21.1 (United Nations 2013). The aging of population has significant implications for the workforce. The 55+ segment is growing three times the rate of U.S. labor force, and is expected to reach 25% of the labor force by 2024 (Toossi 2015). At first glance it would seem that this predicted workforce expansion could provide an employment opportunity for older workers and vice versa. Alarming, elderly people face important challenges in the workplace (Kauffmann, Kring, and Sczesny 2015). They are perceived to be inefficient, slower to learn, and poorer at remembering than younger counterparts. (DeArmond et al. 2006; Ng and Feldman 2012). In the foodservice industry, where speed and efficiency are valued, perceptions that older employees are slower or get confused result in a belief that older workers can decrease customer satisfaction (Bae and Dae-Young 2014). In other words, restaurant managers tend to adhere to the stereotype that old equals slow, and assume that slow equals bad (Luoh and Tsaur 2011; Bae and Dae-Young 2014). The premise of this research is that this notion may be incorrect. Although older workers are indeed perceived to be slower, we argue that when it comes to food, slow is good. Similar to the time taken by a craftsman to perfect a project, we argue that consumers have a lay belief that “slow food = better food”. Grounded in the literature about the Slow Food Movement, which advocates a more thoughtful consumption and preparation of food (Dunn et al. 2011), we argue that in food context, slowness can be associated with effort and care. Therefore, because older people are slower this slow pace can lead to positive perceptions from consumers.

More formally,

Hypothesis 1: When food is prepared by an older (younger) person, consumers will evaluate it as more (less) tasty.

Hypothesis 2: The effect of age on taste evaluation is mediated by the perceived preparation time.

With four studies we demonstrate that although consumers indeed think that the older cook takes longer to prepare food, they also believe the food prepared by her will be tastier than that prepared by a younger person.

Study 1 (N=648) was conducted online using MTurk. Each participant evaluated 2 products (from a total of 8 products investigated). For that participants saw a picture containing the photo of the producer (which was young or old), and the information about the producer’s age. Congruently to the literature on age stereotype we show that people tend to judge non-food related products (e.g. fashion accessories, electronics, decoration services, nail polisher) more negatively when designed and developed by older people in comparison to their younger counterparts. How- ever, for food or beverage products (e.g. cookies, soup, cake, chicken and tea) we found an inverse and positive impact of older age.

In study 2, 109 undergrad students participated in a cupcake tasting. The product was supposedly made by Tiane, the cook, who had either 25 or 55 years old. We manipulated age with two hired ac-

REFERENCES
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