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The Sweet Bonds of Society: Food Symbolism in Bridgerton

Abstract

Food has a vital role in a person's life. It provides sustenance and ensures the proper functioning of the mind and body. It has also always had a social role in encouraging interaction and connection. Additionally, many religions relate food and eating to sexuality, as in the Bible or Kama Sutra. Both forms of food symbolism, communality, and sexuality are present in Netflix's Bridgerton (2020-ongoing), adapted from Julia Quinn's book series (2000-2013). Famous for being close-knit, the Bridgertons exhibit incessant camaraderie and deep emotional connection. This paper argues that the series often conveys their familial intimacy through food and eating. Moreover, food is used to show romantic connections and conflicts, such as when Daphne and Colin express desire for their respective romantic interests while eating sweets. Likewise, cherries arguably represent Lady Featherington's daughters' virginity. Finally, food serves as a powerful symbol of the social status and knowledge available to (wo)men in Bridgerton.

Keywords: Bridgerton, food, symbolism, class, family, desire, virginity

1. Introduction

Bridgerton is a major pop-culture phenomenon and Netflix's most-streamed original series in 2024, with 21.42 billion views (Adgate). Having premiered in late 2020 and awaiting its fourth season in 2026, the series has captivated the globe, making millions of fans and inspiring, among other things, reading clubs, Regency-like balls, and fashion trends. Due to such a strong cultural impact, the series has also sparked academic discussions. Critics have discussed its portrayal of alternative history (Markasović "The Bridgerton"), color-blind casting (Burton), erasure of Black

history (Clarke; Hemmert; Rose), and sexual violence (Romano). However, food is an underrepresented avenue of academic research on Bridgerton,[2] to which this paper aims to contribute.

At first glance, food seems a topic too mundane to be explored, but upon closer inspection, it proves rich with social and cultural meanings. Hence, books such as Maggie Lane's Jane Austen and Food (1995) and Damianne Candice Scott's article "Sanditon and the Pineapple Emoji Craze: Why This Jane Austen Fan Is Offended, and Why You Should Be Too!" (2021) highlight the symbolism and role of food in the Regency narratives that precede Bridgerton.[3] According to Sarah Sceats, "food is our centre … and inextricably connected with social function" (1). Moreover, food and eating convey "unwritten rules and meanings, through which people communicate and are categorised within particular cultural contexts" (Sceats 1). By way of cultural analysis and close reading of selected scenes from the series, this paper aims to prove that food has an active role in portraying Bridgerton's social, familial, and romantic relations rather than being a mere opulent backdrop of the Regency era.

In line with the view that food has many meanings and purposes next to the vital one, Michael Owen Jones asserts that all food-related practices are "subject to symbolization, from the phenomenon of food itself to production and procurement" (11). Mainly, food is crucial in defining family and class, since communal eating signifies belonging to the same social group.

Furthermore, sharing food often fosters deep emotional connection, as "[f]riendship, sisterhood, sibling love, altruistic caring, responsibility, religious communion: all use the well-established vehicle of food-as-love" (Sceats 21). The love and emotional connection obtained through (sharing of) food can also be of a romantic and sexual nature, as suggested even in religious contexts, such as the Bible. Hence, food represents "a currency of love and desire, a medium of expression and communication" (Sceats 20).

All these forms of food symbolism, food as a social marker, an expression of familial and romantic love, and a representation of sexuality and desire, are present in Bridgerton. As the analysis of selected scenes that include food will show, the series uses it to depict the Bridgerton family's closeness and connection as well as the protagonists' desire toward their romantic interests.

Relying on the rich symbolism of milk and desserts such as cake, ice cream, and cherries, the series portrays the characters' social positions and connections as well as their gender-based differences in (sexual) knowledge. Simultaneously affirming the many cultural meanings of food and eating as depicted in the series, this paper claims that food is a powerful symbol of social status, knowledge, and agency available to (wo)men during the Regency era.

2. Social Role of Food in Bridgerton

2.1. One's Place at the Table: Social Class and Gender

According to Carolyn Daniel, "[r]eading fictional food events provides us with knowledge about the social and family relationships, manners and morals of a given period" (1). In the Regency era, food had a strong social element within aristocratic circles, where dinner "was one of the most showy and extravagant meals, particularly if the[re] were guests. Guests would be seated around a large table in the dining room, one of the most lavishly decorated rooms in the house" ("The Regency Period"). The show-makers of Bridgerton are keenly aware of the cultural significance of food and its role in the Regency period. Consequently, in both its TV adaptations of Julia Quinn's book series and its original story, Queen Charlotte (2023), the series abounds with buffets, dining tables, and sideboards full of extravagant food and drinks. Set in the early nineteenth century, or the Regency era, when social rituals exacted extreme gentilesse and when balls, house parties, and dinners offered opportunities for important social affairs such as courting and conducting business, Bridgerton delivers many scenes with the typical role of food as a marker of social class. Present at public balls and family meals, the elaborate food displays testify to the wealth and social status of their providers, meaning the royalty and aristocracy to which Queen Charlotte and the Bridgertons (and the Featheringtons) belong:

> *As all the mamas in the early 1800s know, our beloved Bridgertons aren't just titled; they're rich and their table proves it. The foods we see in Seasons 1 and 2 represent some of the Regency era's luxury eats, including venison, ice cream, sugary pastries and tea. Most people didn't eat like that. The working-class diet consisted of bread and porridge, maybe supplemented with meat, not the lavish foods and drinks we see in Bridgerton. (Robey)*

Allowing its high-class characters to feast themselves literally and the viewers to feast their eyes, Bridgerton also employs food-related practices as narrative devices to exhibit the characters' social positions based on their gender.

One such scene, which seems to appear as pure comic relief, highlights the differing social positions between female and male Bridgerton siblings, namely the milk scene in episode three of season one, "Art of the Swoon." When its female protagonist, Daphne, is unable to sleep due to troubling thoughts about her withdrawn love interest, Simon, she visits the kitchen to find comfort in the form of warm milk. She is joined by her eldest brother, Anthony, and the viewers are treated to a humorous scene in which the siblings stare blankly at the kitchen furnace. Admitting that they have no knowledge whatsoever of the "inner workings of that thing," they quickly opt for cold milk, which Anthony proclaims is "most refreshing, given the heat" (00:14:47). Confirming that "[f]ood events are always significant . . . [since] they reveal the fundamental preoccupations, ideas, and beliefs of society" (Daniel 1), the milk scene reflects the Bridgertons' aristocratic status and their (expected) reliance on servants to procure, prepare, and serve food, without them having to do anything but focus on other, more important (romantic) concerns.

However, the milk scene does more than merely depict Daphne and Anthony as the typical, kitchen-unsavvy aristocrats of the Regency era. According to Barbara Formis, "[m]ilk incarnates the potentiality of a nutritional facility that would not be synonymous with naivety and ignorance, but rather the key to a clairvoyant and absolute knowledge" (39). Hence, as the primary source of food, milk represents one's knowledge in all of its aspects. Although Daphne and Anthony are equally inexperienced in the kitchen, the scene still portrays the female protagonist as inferior to her elder brother based on her gender and the concomitant lack of 'worldly knowledge.' Namely, as soon as Daphne admits her lack of knowledge on how to operate the furnace, she stares expectantly at Anthony. This reflects her awareness that, as a woman, she has limited access to knowledge and inner workings of the world of her time, while Anthony, as a man, is allowed to do and know much more—so much that Daphne has a hard time fathoming the limits of his knowledge. Men's superior social position and knowledge are indeed confirmed minutes later when Daphne questions him on the reasons why Simon—who is at the same time Anthony's closest

friend—is so disinclined to marry and have children. The scene exhibits the siblings' differing social positions and their awareness of these gendered differences:

DAPHNE: Surely you must know things.

ANTHONY: The things I know are certainly not for your ears.

DAPHNE: How foolish of me [a woman] to even wonder about such things. (00:15:13)

Hence, when Daphne looks at Anthony to warm up the milk, her assurance that he would know how to operate the furnace results from her experience of being kept ignorant as a woman, as opposed to men, who are allowed to know much more.

Moreover, Daphne is unaware that her brother, who is in a relationship with a working-class woman whose social position prevents him—a Viscount—from marrying her, is likewise troubled by thoughts of his romantic interest. Thus, their shared lack of knowledge in attempting to warm up the milk reminds Anthony of the constraints of both of their social positions and the frustrations that arise from them. Spurred by this moment of familial intimacy and his own lack of freedom due to social constraints, Anthony tells his sister about Simon's lonesome past as an only child whose mother had died during childbirth, which in turn spurs Daphne's growing attachment to Simon. Hence, the milk scene shows that "food is never just something to eat: even when it is mundane and everyday it carries a meaning" (Daniel 1). In this case, it testifies to the Bridgertons' aristocratic status, highlights the difference between the knowledge Anthony and Daphne possess as a young man and a young woman of their time, shows their bonding, and thus propels the romance narrative.

Next, although Daphne, her mother, and all other aristocratic women in Bridgerton are not in charge of procuring, preparing, and serving food themselves, the cultural connection between women and food is still present in the series. According to Sceats, "in western culture women have traditionally borne most of the burden of … nourishing others, with all that this implies of power and service" (2). Though the power of women in the Regency era was severely limited, especially when compared to men, Bridgerton depicts food almost as a weapon that allows women to strategize and achieve their goals despite men's intentions. For instance, a sequence of scenes with food is used to depict female agency when Daphne is persecuted by Nigel Berbrooke. A baron and an

esteemed member of society, Berbrooke is nevertheless an unsuitable match for Daphne due to being significantly older, physically unattractive, overbearing, and even violent.[4] When Anthony pressures Daphne to marry him, three scenes ensue in which food and drink are shown as weapons of female agency that help save Daphne from the unwanted marriage.

First, while being invited for the afternoon tea at Queen's court, Daphne's mother, Violet Bridgerton, realizes the role of food and drink as 'social lubricants' for learning about other people's affairs ("Shock and Delight"). Next, she concocts a plan to invite Berbrooke's mother for an afternoon tea, which, of course, includes cake and pastries. Finally, Violet thus uses this well-established Regency ritual of tea and biscuits (Robey) as a weapon to save her daughter from a bad match by instructing her maid to likewise offer refreshments to Mrs. Berbrooke's maid downstairs in the kitchen and engage in gossip. As a result, the women learn about an illegitimate child Berbrooke refuses to support and spread the gossip further. In effect, he is shamed away, and Daphne is saved from an unwanted marriage. Additionally, these scenes subvert the stereotype of gossiping as an idle and harmful activity and show instead how "it can be used to spread information about a person whose behaviour is harming the group, and the person's banishment or reformation restores order and teaches others about the expected norms" (Markasović, "Gossip, Girl"). By combining food and gossip to achieve their goal, Violet and her maid confirm that food and "its activities offer multiple possibilities for expression and action" (Sceats 8) since all those scenes—the afternoon tea at Queen's court, at Bridgertons' drawing room, and their kitchen Thus, the dinner scene shows that the hero and the heroine want the same thing, a happy family, only Simon has never allowed himself to admit his heart's desire. Through this "social act of eating" (Muñoz-González 87), Bridgerton uses food as a symbol of familial bonds and love.

2.2. Food as Love: Familial and Romantic Connections

Violet's use of food and drink to facilitate gossip as the female weapon in the Regency era (Markasović, "Gossip, Girl") is motivated by love and care for her daughter and her future. It is one of many vivid examples in which Bridgerton uses food as an expression of love (Sceats 21) and deep emotional connection among the family members.

In the very first episode, “Diamond of the First Water,” when Daphne and Simon are only pretending to be courting each other, Violet and Lady Danbury, Simon’s Godmother, similarly devise a plan that centers on food. Realizing the young couple’s compatibility even before them, the ladies arrange Simon’s visit to the Bridgertons’ house for dinner to allow him and Daphne to get acquainted with each other. Their women’s plan is consolidated by Lady Danbury’s suggestion that Simon “is quite fond of gooseberry pie” (00:37:10), a dish that Violet confirms her cook is most renowned for. The very next scene shows Simon—who is aware that he was set up by his Godmother—at the Bridgertons’ dinner table, surrounded by spirited debates and uninhibited laughter among the family members.

On the one hand, the family dinner shows the Bridgertons’ closeness that surpasses the strict social etiquette. When Simon notes: “All of you at one table, even the children,” Violet responds: “I realize it may be unfashionable, but we like each other” (00:38:24). This points to the Bridgertons’ atypical aristocratic attitude, which allows children Gregory and Hyacinth to sit and eat together with the adults at the same table, even if they misbehave. According to the Regency etiquette, “the children would eat their meal earlier than their parents and would be put to bed before their mother and father had to prepare for dinner” (“The Regency Period”). The young Bridgertons’ throwing of peas and bickering that ensues only reinforces the family camaraderie, embodying the typical “[f]riendship, sisterhood, sibling love, altruistic caring, [and] responsibility: all use the well-established vehicle of food-as-love” (Sceats 21).

On the other hand, for this very reason, the family dinner scene functions as an important narrative device for the romantic developments between Daphne and Simon. Namely, romance “plots are traditionally constructed around a series of obstacles that must be overcome before the hero and heroine can reconcile and fall in love” (Roche 5). These obstacles can be external and internal, but strongest romances have both since falling in love requires “tak[ing] off the social masks that we wear and to bare our self to another, sharing insecurities and anxieties, hopes and dreams, willing to see the other and to be seen” (Roach 23). In season one, the couple’s external conflict consists of Anthony forbidding Daphne to marry Simon because he knows Simon as a rake and a confirmed bachelor who has been with many women. Without knowing Simon’s true reasons for his promiscuous behavior, Anthony believes that Simon will continue with those habits after marriage

and break his sister's heart. However, the real, internal conflict that keeps Simon and Daphne apart once they recognize their feelings for each other is Simon's trauma resulting from his mother's death and his father's, the Duke of Hastings', abandonment because he had a stutter when he was a child. Simon refuses to procreate so that his father's line dies with him, and he does not want to marry Daphne because he knows she wishes to have a large family like the one she was born into. Regarding that, the Bridgertons' family dinner is a powerful symbol of Simon's internal conflict that shows the viewers that there is hope for the main couple's reconciliation and overcoming the obstacles.

Simon's reaction to the familial love and closeness that go against the social rules shows that his sworn rejection of marriage and procreation is not his heart's innermost desire but a result of his trauma of abandonment. Relying on the attitude that "food clearly is a signifier of belonging" (Sceats 139), Bridgerton shows that Simon enjoys the family ritual he was denied at his own home since childhood. Thus, the dinner scene shows that the hero and the heroine want the same thing—a happy family—only Simon has never allowed himself to admit his heart's desire. Through this "social act of eating" (Muñoz-González 87), Bridgerton uses food as a symbol of familial bonds and love.

3. Food and Sexuality in Bridgerton

3.1. Blame the Dessert: Food as Expression of Desire

In literature, whether theoretical or fictional, food, love, and sex are strongly connected. As such, Carolyn Daniel notes that "the connection between food and sex is complicated, involving and intertwining of two drives or appetites that … are not easy to disentangle or identify as distinct" (82). Sceats also argues that fiction "is filled with occasions on which courting, seduction or even the simple affirmation of love are accompanied by food or drink in one way or another" (21). A piece of fiction, Bridgerton leans heavily on the link between food and sexuality, having its protagonists express their sexual desires through food in multiple instances. Most often, that food consists of desserts such as ice cream or cake.

To illustrate, Daphne's budding sexuality and desire for Simon are depicted in a scene involving a desert in season one, episode three, "Art of the Swoon." Once again, being a young debutante in the Regency era, Daphne has been taught nothing about sexuality, neither her own nor in relation to a partner. That does not mean that young Regency women did not feel sexual desire, only that they could not recognize it for what it was and were embarrassed once they felt it. Daphne is thus seen as being overcome and then dismayed by her desire as she watches Simon lick ice cream off a spoon in a pastry shop. The viewers know what she feels, but Daphne is only able to make sense of her feelings later, during a conversation with Simon, in which she enquires what there is except for friendship that makes a marriage. Simon answers: "You will know when you know" (00:32:41), meaning that she will feel sexual desire, but Daphne urges him to explain since she genuinely does not know. He then reveals that marriage includes "a natural continuation of what happens at night. When you are alone" (00:32:51), that is, her own sexual pleasure. Daphne is visibly shocked at Simon's revelation of knowledge she should not possess as an unmarried woman, but even more so because she realizes that what she felt when she saw Simon licking the spoon is desire and that he is the husband she is searching for.

Here, it is possible to return to the milk scene to discuss the link between milk, knowledge, and sexuality. Daphne and Anthony's kitchen conversation is about platonic matters, but the imbalance between their respective ranges of knowledge can be tied to the issue of sexuality. In her paper on "Sexual Politics of Milk," Barbara Formis claims that milk is a "sexual metaphor for knowledge" (36). Tracing the connection between milk and sexuality back to Aristotle, who claimed that "milk … is fundamentally related to sexual procreation" (41), not only for its similarity to sperm, Formis sees it "as a symbol of pleasure and ecstasy" (36) due to its primary function of breastfeeding and quenching of thirst. Viewed in terms of sexuality, the milk scene also shows the disparity between Anthony's male position in society, which is uninhibitedly sexual, and Daphne's utter lack of knowledge on sexuality, both male and female, which is a direct result of the social ideology of the time. Next to the fact that sexual knowledge was kept a secret from young women during the Regency period (and even later), Bridgerton makes it a central conflict in Daphne and Simon's married life since he refuses to climax during intercourse and provide sperm for Daphne to bear his

children. She is unaware of his actions and intentions, since the knowledge about sexual acts has been systematically kept hidden from her.

There is a similar scene in which food coveys desire in season three, the protagonists of which are Daphne's brother Colin and Penelope Featherington. Only now, the male protagonist lusts after the heroine. Both the books and the series depict Colin as a man who loves food and "is always hungry" (Quinn 122), which has prompted the actor Luke Newton, as well as numerous YouTube videos, X posts, and TikToks, to call him a 'hungry boy.' This designation also alludes to the "parallel between sex and eating" (Meadow and Weiss 11). Indeed, Colin's passion for food is directed at Penelope once they share a kiss and he realizes his romantic feelings for her. In "Forces of Nature," episode three, Penelope invites Colin for a private conversation in a tent at a fair, where cakes and pastries are sold. Conversing about her new suitor, Lord Debling, at one point, Penelope eats a piece of cake and licks her fingers (00:21:13). This act of eating mesmerizes Colin in the same way that Simon's licking of the spoon has mesmerized Daphne, bringing him to a stark realization of his sexual desire for Penelope, whereas before, he only saw her as a friend. More to the point, Colin is soon after seen tasting the same cake and looking after Penelope in the distance. His facial expression is open to interpretation: he either wishes to take the same pleasure in the cake as did Penelope but cannot because his enjoyment of food is spoilt by seeing Penelope flirting with Lord Debling, or he yearns to 'taste' Penelope by tasting the same cake because he cannot do it in another way. One thing is clear, though: the cake scene makes both Colin and viewers aware of his hunger for Penelope.[5]

Colin's hunger for food throughout Bridgerton can also be seen as what Rosalyn M. Meadow and Lillie Weiss define as "an emotional hunger and the need to be loved. More than that … [a] denial of needs, a denial that is being expressed through starvation in the midst of plenty" (10). Indeed, it is only in season three, after Penelope distances herself from Colin for having overheard that he would never court her, that he realizes she has provided him with emotional support and nurturing that he, albeit growing up in a close-knit family, never really had at the level he needed.[6]

Moreover, Colin and Penelope's cake scene echoes with yet another scene in which the cake symbolizes emotional connection, love, and sexuality. In episode two of season one, "Shock and Delight," while Penelope's pregnant and unmarried cousin Marina is confined to her room,

Penelope brings some cake to comfort her. They converse while eating, and Penelope asks how she became pregnant. Much to Penelope's puzzlement, Marina answers: "Cake" (00:16:46), and then explains how her lover and the father of her child brought her cake and biscuits to be able to endure hours-long sermons in the church. Highlighting the lack of female education on sex and procreation, this cake scene simultaneously confirms that "the use of food as support behavior increases interpersonal closeness" (Hamburg et al., qtd. in Muñoz-González 87). Next to Marina and Sir George Crane's romantic relationship, the scene depicts food as a vehicle of emotional connection between Marina and Penelope since the former entrusts no one else with the story of how she conceived her child. Hence, desserts are prominently tied to emotional intimacy, love, and sexuality throughout Bridgerton.

3.2. Popping the Cherry: Food as (Lost) Virginity

Another dessert shown in Bridgerton—fruit—is also tied to issues of sexuality, more specifically, virginity, and that would be cherries. According to Caitlin Hines and her analysis of metaphors that denote "women as desserts," the cherry connotes a young and attractive (virgin) woman, ready to be consumed by a man, or the female hymen explicitly (150-51).

In season three, episode one, when the Crown's official, Walter Dundas, arrives at the Featherington house to verify the validity of the inheritance document, which Lady Featherington indeed forged in favor of her daughters, a bowl of cherries can be seen in the drawing room where their conversation takes place ("Out of the Shadows"). The cherries serve as a powerful symbol of (lost) virginity and a red herring of what is to come. Namely, Dundas warns the lady that, according to the document, one of her daughters must soon provide a male heir who would inherit the Featherington estate. Otherwise, Dundas will be forced to investigate the document's validity and, in the case of forgery, transfer the estate to another male relative, leaving the Featherington women destitute. Claiming that "it is a good thing the document is not forged, and that [her] girls do so love their husbands" ("Out of the Shadows" 42:35), Lady Featherington is befuddled by Dundas' bold act of eating a cherry from the bowl. Since cherries are popularly associated with female virginity and since to 'pop the cherry' is a slang expression for losing one's virginity, this suggests

that Dundas is aware of the forgery and that he is urging the Featheringtons to produce an heir by way of copulation.

Given that the two elder daughters are already married, they are presumed not to be virgins any longer, which would make Penelope the only one whose cherry has to be 'popped.' Once again, embodying Regency women who grew up without any sort of instruction in sexual matters, Philippa and Prudence reveal to their mother that their conjugal escapades end before they even begin, preventing them from conceiving ("How Bright the Moon"). Namely, Philippa is still a virgin, and Prudence has slept with her husband only once on their wedding night. Nevertheless, Penelope will have her cherry popped soon, and she will become pregnant, out of wedlock to boot, which—if found out, would put her in great danger of being called promiscuous, which is yet another meaning of the word cherry (Hines 151).

All in all, rather than being a passive object for consumption, food in Bridgerton plays an active role in the narrative— portraying the social and gender positions of characters, their inner conflicts and desires, and their sexuality.

4. Conclusion

Despite its global popularity and the academic discussions on race and gender it has sparked, Netflix's TV series Bridgerton has not been researched on the topic of food, and this paper aims to fill the gap. The analysis of several key scenes has shown that Bridgerton abounds in food symbolism that surpasses a mere representation of wealth among the Regency aristocracy.

In her discussion of food symbolism in Jane Austen's Regency novels, Maggie Lane states that food "is used to define character, forward the plot and enhance the theme" (141). The same can be seen in Netflix's TV series Bridgerton, adapted from Julia Quinn's popular historical romances set in the Regency period. Moreover, the use of food in Bridgerton provides nuanced portrayals of the social class and gender of its characters. Specifically, milk and its preparation denote not only the position of the Bridgertons as aristocrats with no knowledge of household tasks but also highlight the differences between men's and women's knowledge, as sanctioned by society and represented

by Anthony and Daphne. In line with that, the afternoon tea and biscuits and the concomitant activities, such as gossip, are presented as weapons of female agency against men's desires.

Although Bridgerton is a historical romance narrative similar to Jane Austen's novels in respect to the Regency era they both belong to, the former departs from the classic Regency novels by including explicit sexual scenes. Consequently, food functions as a powerful symbol of sexuality and desire in the series, as witnessed in many scenes that include desserts such as ice cream, cake, and cherries. Relying on the widely known metaphor "the woman as dessert" (Hines 145), the series explicitly ties the protagonists' desire to their consummation of cake. This is evident in Marina's story about her late lover as well as with Daphne and Simon, and Colin and Penelope. Thereby, the series also subverts the mentioned metaphor of portraying women as desirable objects to be consumed by showing Simon as an object of Daphne's desire while eating ice cream. Finally, evoking the same metaphor, only now with fruit, the series uses cherries to denote the soon-to-be-lost virginity of Portia Featherington's daughters.

All in all, this paper has shown that food and food-related practices come with a "wealth of subsidiary meanings" (Sceats 9), which Bridgerton heavily employs. Presenting food as a symbol of social class, familial relations, and sexuality, it shows that food is significant in both the series and real life, and a valuable topic of research. While this paper focuses on Bridgerton, it might also provide a methodology for the exploration of the role of food in other media.

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[2] In a rare discussion on the topic of food in relation to Bridgerton, Jo Coghlan presented "'Fridgerton': Food and Fandom in the Television Series Bridgerton" at "Love Conquers All": Exploring the Pop Culture Phenomenon of Bridgerton," a recent academic conference held by Australia's Popular Culture Network in January 2025. However, the presentation discussed the peritextual, Bridgerton-inspired fridge arrangements in real life rather than the meaning of food in the series.

[3] While Lane discusses Austen's deliberate symbolism of food and its moral role in art and the Regency life in general, Scott criticises the casual depiction of the pineapple and its consequent erasure of colonialism and slavery.

[4] Berbrooke's violent and immoral nature is evident in his readiness to accost Daphne when she finds herself in a garden without a chaperone ("Diamond of the First Water" 00:49:35; Markasović "Gossip, Girl").

[5] Colin and Penelope's cake scene is also commendable for showing Penelope (and the actress, Nicola Coughlan) as a woman who opposes the tall and slim beauty ideal, unabashedly enjoys food, and is seen as an object of desire precisely while enjoying cake. In the modern age, bent on "starvation diets and the dream of a body as slender as a reed," and when female "sense of self-acceptance … hangs on a very slender thread (Bordo 247), it is commendable that Penelope's glow-up, which is achieved by her losing a significant number of pounds in Romancing Mr Bridgerton (2002), does not include losing weight in the 2024 adaptation of her love story. Therefore, Bridgerton sets good standards for its (young and female) viewers, that it is healthy to enjoy food and sweets without having to be skinny.

[6] Several scenes support this observation, such as when Colin returns from his travels and gives Eloise a present, but she blatantly ignores him ("Out of the Shadows"), or when he tries to talk to his friends about true love and intimacy but they mock him ("Old Friends").

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