Food Identities at Home and on the Move
This exciting new series responds to the growing interest in the home as an area of research and teaching. Highly interdisciplinary, titles feature contributions from across the social sciences, including anthropology, material culture studies, architecture and design, sociology, gender studies, migration studies, and environmental studies. Relevant to undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as researchers, the series will consolidate the home as a field of study.
Food Identities at Home and on the Move

Explorations at the Intersection of Food, Belonging and Dwelling

Edited by
Raúl Matta, Charles-Édouard de Suremain and Chantal Crenn

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK
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Contributors

**Meredith E. Abarca** (PhD in Comparative Literature, University of California at Davis, 2000) is Professor of English at the University of Texas at El Paso. She teaches Chicana/o Literature, Mexican-American Folklore, Major American Authors, Literature of the Americas and Literary Studies. She also teaches graduate courses that examine the intersection of literature and globalism, cosmopolitanism and food as cultural and theoretical discourses. She is the author of *Voices in the Kitchen: Views of Food and the World from Working-Class Mexican and Mexican American Women* (2006). Her work has appeared in *Food and Foodways* and *Food, Culture & Society*, as well as in edited collections and encyclopaedias.

**Voltaire Cang** (PhD in Intercultural Communication, Rikkyo University, 2008) is Senior Researcher at the Tokyo-based RINRI Institute of Ethics. His work focuses on Japanese ‘intangible’ heritage and its relationship to Japanese society, culture and identity, in areas concerning food studies, material culture and the study of Japanese cultural traditions such as the tea ceremony. His most recent publications include ‘Japan’s Washoku as Intangible Heritage: The Role of National Food Traditions in UNESCO’s Cultural Heritage Scheme’ (*International Journal of Cultural Property*, 2019) and ‘Policing Washoku: The Performance of Culinary Nationalism in Japan’ (*Food and Foodways*, 2019).

**Chantal Crenn** is Associate Professor of anthropology at the University of Bordeaux Montaigne and researcher at the units ‘Passages’ and ‘Les Afriques dans le Monde’ (CNRS). She is Editor-in-Chief of the international journal *Anthropology of Food*. Her research lies at the intersection of food and migration studies in the context of south-western France, with a particular focus on Malagasy elites, agricultural workers from the Maghreb and commuting migrants from Senegal. Among her most recent publications are the special issue ‘Migration, Food Practices and Social Relations’ (*Anthropology of Food*, 2010); ‘Ethnic Identity, Power, Compromise and Territory’, in J. Maclancy (ed), *Alternative Countrysides: Anthropological Approaches to Rural Western Europe Today* (Manchester University Press, 2017) and ‘Ce que les musulmans nous disent de la campagne girondine’ (*Ethnologie française*, 2017).

**Roos Gerritsen** (PhD in Anthropology, Leiden University 2012) is an independent researcher whose work focuses on popular visual culture, Tamil film, media, food, urban spaces and the senses in south India. Her current project explores new urban food practices in India. It revolves around questions of healthy and ethical food practices and the ways in which urban middle-class citizens in south India articulate ‘everyday utopias’ and the good life. The project specifically uses visual research methods to
Contribute to sensorial experiences of such emerging urban practices. Her publications include the monograph *Intimate Visualities Fandom, and the Politics of Spectacle in South India* (2019, AUP), ‘Intimacy on Display: Movie Stars, Images and Everyday Life in South India’ (in *Visual Anthropology*, 2016) and ‘Keeping in Control: The Figure of the Fan in the Tamil Film Industry’ (in *Studies in South Asian Film & Media*, 2016).

**Rebecca Haboucha** is PhD candidate in Archaeology with a specialization in heritage studies at the University of Cambridge. Her other degrees include an MPhil in Archaeology and BA Honours in Anthropology from the University of Cambridge and McGill University, respectively. Rebecca's doctoral research examines how to sustainably preserve Indigenous cultural heritage impacted by climate change in the Global North and South. She has worked with the Dehcho First Nations in sub-Arctic Canada, as well as with Quechua and Aymara peoples in northern Chile. Indigenous foodways is one aspect she explores, as it and its associated intangible heritage are being lost. Her other research interest includes the heritagization of food, particularly in relation to minorities within larger cultural and religious minorities. Her most recent publication is ‘On the Edge of the Anthropocene? Modern Climate Change and the Practice of Archaeology’ (with J. E. Meharry and M. Comer, *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, 2017).

**Aline Hémond** (PhD in Anthropology, University Paris X Nanterre, 1998) is Full Professor of Anthropology and researcher at the University of Picardie Jules Verne, France. Her research interests focus on aesthetic and identity processes, critical heritage studies, anthropology of ritual, Mexican and Latino studies. Since 2014, she has been conducting fieldwork on Indian artistic mobilities between Mexico and the United States. Among her publications are *Peindre la révolte. Esthétique et résistance culturelle au Mexique* (2003); the special issue ‘Comidas Rituales’ (ritual foods; *Anthropology of Food*, 2014) and 'Habiter par l'art: migration mexicaine et art muraliste social à Chicago, Pilsen', in O. Lazzarotti, G. Mercier and S. Paquet (eds) *La part artistique de l'habiter: perspectives contemporaines* (L'Harmattan, 2017).

**Nora Kottmann** (PhD in Japanese Studies, University of Düsseldorf, 2015) is Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo since September 2018. She works on the research project (Re)Locating Intimacy – Spatial Perspectives on Personal Relationships in Contemporary Japan, as well as on a project on German expatriates in Tokyo. Her research interests include mobile and multi-local biographies/relationships, the Japanese foodscape/community in Düsseldorf, personal relationships, intimacy, sociology of family, sociology of space and methods in social science research in area studies. Recent publications include the monograph *Heirat in Japan. Romantische und solidarische Beziehungswelten im Wandel* (Marriage in Contemporary Japan. Romantic and Solidary Relationship-Worlds in Flux) (2016) and the co-edited volume *Japan in der Krise. Soziale Herausforderungen und Bewältigungsstrategien* (Japan in Crises. Social Challenges and Coping Strategies) (2018).

**Daniela Lazoroska** (PhD in Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2017) is Postdoctoral Researcher at the International Institute for Industrial Environmental
Economics at Lund University. Her doctoral thesis ‘Eating the Favela: The Taste for the Good Life in Contemporary Brazil’ examined eating practices and body culture as modes of asserting agency among underprivileged youth in a favela. Lazoroska is currently researching sustainable urban governance in Malmö, Sweden. Her research interests span across youth and body culture, everyday lives and lifestyles, mobilization and social change.

Raúl Matta (PhD in Sociology, University of Paris – Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2009) is Senior Lecturer in Food Studies at Taylor’s University in Kuala Lumpur and Principal Investigator at the University of Göttingen in the project FOOD2GATHER, funded by the European Commission. Between 2014 and 2017, he has led the projects ‘Food as Cultural Heritage’, based at the University of Göttingen and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), and FoodHerit, based at the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement and funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR). He has conducted critical research on food heritage and other cultural and political uses of food in Peru and Mexico. Papers in Social Anthropology, the International Journal of Cultural Property, Anthropology of Food, Food and Foodways, Revista Colombiana de Antropología, as well as in several edited volumes. He is member of the editorial board of the journal Anthropology of Food.

Elsa Mescoli (PhD in Political and Social Sciences, University of Liège, 2014) is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies (CEDEM) and Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Liège. Her research interests include the study of cultural practices (especially food and art practices) in context of migration, the discrimination of Muslims and the public opinion on migrants, with a focus on asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants. Among her recent publications are ‘Food Practices among Moroccan Families in Milan: Creative Adjustments of Cultural Repertoires’, in M.-P., Julien and N. Diasio, Anthropology of Family Food Practices: Constraints, Adjustments, Innovations (2019), ‘Cultures alimentaires et appartenances. Une ethnographie dans l’espace de la frontière’, in L. Lika, A. Weerts, J. Contor, and S. Wintgens, Frontières: approche multidisciplinaire (2018).

Giovanna Palutan (PhD in Anthropology, Università di Genova, 2013) is Postdoctoral Researcher with fifteen years of experience in themes related to public space, citizenship, food practices and identity construction with regard to migrants and refugees. A member of the research group FOR (Food and Refugees) at the University of Padua, she is currently conducting fieldwork in Rome hospitality centres for refugees. Her publications include ‘Cibo e rifugiati nella città capitolina, tra pratiche di emergenza e tentativi di agentività’ (Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo, 2018); Il noi politico del Nordest. Migranti, locali e Victor Turner (2010); and ‘A Town on the Move: The Social Drama’s Narrative Redressive Phase in a Political Contemporary Setting’ (Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society, 2008).

Donatella Schmidt (PhD in Anthropology, Indiana University, 1991) is Full Professor at the University of Padua. A cultural anthropologist with twenty years of experience
in themes related to political participation, identity construction and gender issues with regard to migrants and refugees, she started the research group FOR (Food and Refugees) at the University of Padua. She is part of the Guarani network located in Brazil, and is the founder of a research unit aimed at studying the devotion to Saint Anthony of Padua in contemporary settings. Her publications include ‘All’ombra del baobab. Rifugiati, emergenza e considerazioni sul dono alla periferia di Roma’ (DADA, 2018); Tra Sciamani, rivitalizzazione e turismo. Storia di un fenomeno di globalizzazione religiosa tra i Guarani del Sud del Brasile (2018); and Acqua, Pane, Devozione. Sant’Antonio tra l’antico e il contemporaneo (2016).

**Eija Stark** (PhD in Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki, 2011) is Adjunct Professor in Folklore Studies at the University of Helsinki. Her current research deals with the cultural history of petty trade in Finland. Stark’s research interests cover the history of social class, functions of folklore, narrative culture, critical approaches to archives and intellectual history of Finnish and Nordic folklore studies and ethnology. She has published several international peer-reviewed articles on folklore’s role in class distinctions and in ethnic/linguistic boundaries.

**Charles-Édouard de Suremain** (PhD in Ethnology and Anthropology, University François Rabelais, 1994) is Research Director at the research unit PaLoc ‘Local Heritage, Environment & Globalization’ (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement). He has conducted fieldwork in Africa (Congo, Mali, Tunisia and Algeria) and Latin America (Guatemala, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Mexico). In the field of food uncertainty and poverty alleviation, his research has focused on hunger and the body, food insecurity in cities, the political dimensions of street food, food of migrant returnees, child’s nurturing environment and malnutrition. Currently, he conducts critical research on food heritage making in Latin America and its relations to development programmes. He is Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Anthropology of Food* and recently published the edited book *Patrimonios alimentarios. Entre consensos y tensiones* with Sarah Bak-Geller and Raúl Matta (El Colegio de San Luis, 2019).

**Meltem Türköz** (PhD in Folklore and Folklife, University of Pennsylvania, 2014) is Adjunct Lecturer at Bosphorus University. Her research interests include the cultural history of Turkish republic, narrative and oral history methodology, food imaginaries, puppetry theory and practice. Her most recent publication is *Naming and Nation-Building in Turkey: The 1934 Surname Law* (2018).
Acknowledgements

This book follows on from a session at the 2017 Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF). Although, unfortunately, they were not able to participate in the volume, we would nevertheless like to thank Joana Lucas and Jón Pör Pétursson for their excellent contributions that day. We are grateful to Miriam Cantwell, Lucy Carroll and Veerle Van Steenhuyse at Bloomsbury for their interest in taking this project to publication, as well as to the anonymous reviewers who commented on it.

This book would not have been possible without the support of the French National Research Agency (ANR) in the framework of the project FoodHerit (ANR-13-CULT-0003), the German Research Foundation (DFG) in the framework of the project ‘Food as Cultural Heritage’ (MA 6129) and HERA JRP in the framework of the project FOOD2GATHER. Our appreciation also goes to friends and colleagues for academic assistance. We hope that the following list is exhaustive: Nicolas Adell, Neyra Alvarado, Stephanie Assmann, Steffan Igor Ayora-Díaz, Ishita Banerjee, Regina Bendix, Frida Calderon-Bony, Patrice Cohen, Ada Engebrigtsen, Hákan Jónsson, Antonio Marques da Silva, Xavier Medina, Fabio Parasecoli, Ayari Pasquier, Camila Pierobon, Krishnendu Ray, Élodie Razy, Cornelia Reiher, Gun Roos, Julia Roth, Alice Sophie Sarcinelli, Edda Starck, Émilie Stoll, Ayumi Takenaka, Laura Terragni, Laurence Tibère, Neiva Vieira and Eli Wentzel-Fisher. Finally, we want to express our profound thanks to all the contributors of this volume for their patience and hard work.

The Editors
When I began reading Raúl Matta, Charles-Édouard de Suremain and Chantal Crenn’s edited collection *Food Identities at Home and on the Move: Explorations of the Intersection of Food, Belonging and Dwelling*, I immediately thought of our physical bodies as the literal and symbolic anchor that links food, belonging and dwellings. The chapters in this collection begin from a perspective of dwelling which is understood as ‘a form of thinking and “being” in the world’ in many different ways; thus, the chapters offer diverse perspectives on how people prepare food, acquire it, consume it and reject it as a tool to help give them a degree of agency in defining the places they are constantly re-creating as home. Home, in this collection, is a site that gives us a sense of belonging that is not limited to a permanent physical structure. Home is presented as ‘a practice and combination of processes that are not necessarily circumscribed to the physical structures of a home as “shelter”, but also not disconnected from the material world.’ The collection explores how people’s foodscapes are what convert the material world into a tangible dwelling. What makes it possible for food to become ‘a form of thinking and “being” in the world’ is that material, symbolic and metaphorical narratives people give to their foodscapes.

Drawing from some of my most recent ideas about food identities, I would like to suggest considering the centrality of our physical bodies as a source that interlinks food, belonging and dwellings. It is through our bodies that we understand and express social, emotional and cultural meanings of our ever-changing foodscapes. The body experiences, archives and remembers food’s material and symbolic ecological, historical and economic realities. In exploring the body as that which defines the concept of dwelling, ‘the way people make themselves at home in the world by connecting to and expressing their environments and surroundings’, home becomes an organism that is constantly changing, adapting and transforming itself as our bodies adjust to flows of migratory and global changes.

Annia Ciezadlo in her book *Day of Honey: A Memoir of Food, Love and War* speaks to these adjustments of migratory changes. Once a special correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* in Baghdad and *The New Republic* in Beirut, she writes about how the practice of cooking and eating creates a feeling of home and offers a taste of belonging. As a journalist, she often finds herself being assigned to cover a story in places filled with the conflicts of war. She writes about how through cooking, she transforms every new location into a dwelling filled with flavours, textures and aromas that make her body be the site of home. She writes,

> When I’m in a strange new city and feeling rootless, I cook. No matter how inhospitable the room or the streets outside, I construct a little field kitchen. In
Baghdad, it was a hot plate plugged into a dubious electrical socket in the hallway outside the bedroom. … I cook to comprehend the place I’ve landed in, to touch and feel and take in the raw materials of my new surroundings. I cook food that seems familiar and foods that seem strange. I cook because eating has always been my most reliable way of understanding the world. I cook because I am always, always hungry. And I cook for the oldest of reasons: to banish loneliness, homesickness, the persistent feeling that I don’t belong in a place. (2011: 8)

Ciezadlo’s words capture the deep-rooted function that food – preparing it, gathering it and consuming it – has as the ‘raw material’ to create a home out of any geopolitical and social–cultural realities. By engaging with the ‘raw material’, by fusing familiar ingredients with unfamiliar ones, she bridges spaces that would keep her as an outsider in a new place. These new culinary spaces allow her not only to understand the world but also, and most importantly, to anchor herself in the world. The food as the materials used for creating a dwelling are incorporated into the body making it the site to build a new home suited to ever-changing circumstances (Fischler 1995). The body is home.

Ciezadlo invites her readers to experience this bodily form of dwelling in the world so no matter where one finds oneself, as long as we can feed our bodies, we will be at home in the world. She writes,

If you can conjure something of substance from the flux of your life – if you can anchor yourself in the earth, like Antaeus, the mythical giant who grew stronger every time his feet touched the ground – you are at home in the world, at least for that meal. (2011: 8)

The idea of being at home, at least for one meal, is something that cultural anthropologist David Sutton addresses in his discussion of how food, memory and the senses work together to facilitate what he calls ‘the return to the whole’ (2005: 305). This return provides the feeling of being home; this wholeness is created by the emotional experiences brought about from the familiarity of flavours, textures and aromas provided by food – real or imagined. Food, therefore, is a site of memory that enables the return to the whole, at least for one meal.

A meal that gives substance to the body creates that sense of wholeness, not only because it helps keep the body alive but also because it acts as a reminder that each and every one of us belongs in the world. A body that needs to be fed can shift the ideological importance often placed on discourses that assign national, cultural and social value to people based on ethnicity, race, religion, economics, gender and sexual orientation. Migration, dislocation and relocation places people in situations where they have to feed their bodies and the bodies of others in order to create a sense of belonging that requires adjustments to once embrace traditional culinary practices. A number of chapters in this collection illustrate this process of modification to aid in the process of re-rooting oneself in new dwellings. In particular, this point is critically teased out by Rebeccha Haboucha in Chapter 2, ‘Reimagined community in London: The transmission of food as heritage in the Afghan diaspora’.
The need to belong in the world ‘at least for [one] meal’ at a time is of such a necessity that even just imagining a meal is equally crucial. The cookbook *In Memory’s Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezín*, a collection of recipes remembered and written by women who survived living in a concentration camp at Terezín (Theresienstadt) during the Holocaust, exemplifies this imaginative process. ‘In order to survive, you had to have an imagination,’ states Bianca Steiner Brown, a former inmate at Terezín. Late at night, women would share recipes by asking, ‘Do you know such and such a cake? … I did it in such and such a way’ (De Silva: 236). To survive the enormous hunger these women felt, they spoke so much about food and recipes that they created the expression ‘cooking with the mouth’ (Ibid. 237). In this particular historical moment, belonging in the world with a sense of human dignity was attainable not by feeding the physical body but by imaginatively feeding the soul with food filled with cultural and emotional significance. Culinary moments filled with dignity create a moment of returning to the whole as a feeling of belonging, a case in point presented in this collection by Charles-Édouard de Suremain’s chapter, ‘It’s the comedor that dwells in me!’

A physical body is also fed with foodscapes that carry the intention to function as reminders of our historical and ancestral lineage. In my current ethnographic digital archival project, El Paso Food Voices (https://volt.utep.edu/epfoodvoices), which consists of gathering food stories from residents of El Paso, Texas, a number of people speak to this kind of foodscape. Chuck wagon caterer Wayne Calk for over thirty years has cooked from two Chuck Wagons he outfitted. Keeping the ‘romance’ and ‘heritage’ of the cattle drive culture alive so that future generations don’t forget this part of US history is what motivates Wayne to take out the wagon, set up the campfire and cook with Dutch ovens. Machelle Wood, museum programme specialist, offers cooking classes at the Magoffin Home museum where participants cook from the first cookbook published in El Paso, Texas. For Wood, food powerfully communicates the humanity of those who live in the past, and through the senses this past is felt vividly in the present. Two of the four chapters in Part Three of this collection echo this process of bridging historical times to the present.

The food identities are as varied and dynamic as the notions of what makes a dwelling a home in which to belong in the world. In an effort to capture this complexity embedded within our food identities, I use the term ‘culinary subjectivities’ to address a central communality of this identity marker: our body (Abarca 2017). As a term, culinary subjectivities simply states that we are culinary subjects and that we have a degree of agency in shaping what kinds of subjects we can or want to be at different stages of our lives. This culinary agency becomes the blueprint for building dwellings for belonging in the world.

Cuban American playwright Eduardo Machado describes this degree of agency in his memoir *Tastes Like Cuba: An Exile’s Hunger for Home*. After years of searching for a ‘real’ Cuban *tamal*, once presented with a dozen of them he reaches this conclusion which shows how his life’s journey which included living most of his life in the United States impacted his culinary subjectivity.

If home had a new meaning in my mind, what did that mean about taste? It was while I was staring down [at] that little packet of corn and pork that I realized how
much my standards had changed. The tamal was delicious, I knew that much, but how did it compare to the tamal of my youth? … And then it hit me. I didn’t care. I didn’t want to compare them. That was a different home, a different time, with a different family around me. There was no way to get it back. And anyway, I no longer wanted to be the kind of Cuban that lets what was lost get in the way of the beauty and joy and life and food that was staring me in the face. (2007: 337–8)

This degree of agency is expressed differently by every culinary subject as the circumstances in individuals’ lives are unique to them.

In El Paso Food Voices, for example, Yolanda Chávez Leyva uses her culinary agency to decolonize her diet from the modern food industry by reclaiming ancestral foods of her native Chihuahua Desert and Mesoamerica. In the process, she teaches her grandchildren with ‘attention and intention’ to reconnect with ancestral foods so that they too can experience the histories and knowledge embedded in food by touching, hearing, listening and tasting food while it’s been cooked and consumed. Parul Haribhai, whose food story is also part of this archival project, speaks of her journey from growing up as a ‘very picky eater’ to becoming a ‘self-proclaimed foodie’ as a result of being addicted to Indian spices. Once she found herself living on her own away from India in the early 1990s, a culinary nostalgia for the flavours of home became the catalyst in transforming her relationship with food. She experienced an appetite for Indian spices as an ‘emotionally flavored hunger’ (Lupton 2005: 321). Another food story found in El Paso Food Voices archive is that of chef and restaurant owner Roman Wilcox who runs an all-plant-based restaurant. He captures his culinary agency as a manifesto of responsibility. The philosophy by which he runs his restaurant is based on his responsibility to the environment and the community. His plant-based menus are his response to mass-produced foods that have unhealthy consequences for the earth and everything living on it. His policy of ‘paying it forward’ expresses his sense of responsibility that no one should be denied a tasty and healthy meal for lack of economic resources. People’s culinary agency is the tool to build dwellings, an action clearly illustrated in Chapters 1 and 3 of this collection.

Culinary subjectivities address the nuances between people’s cultural heritage and migratory journeys. This form of subjectivities refers to a marker of identity that encompasses but also moves beyond the limits of identity politics. Both of these points are clearly illustrated in the opening and closing chapters of this collection. These culinary subjectivities are not restricted to national boundaries as the foods we incorporate into our body become part of who we are, transcending these kinds of borders (Fischler 1995). Culinary subjectivities are embodied/sensory performative acts that nourish and feed our sense of who we have been, who we are and who we will become historically, culturally and socially. Thus, these gustatory performative acts capture a poly-temporality: past, present and future. They link us to that past but are not replicas of once-lived experiences. While informed by the past, they are embodied sensory and emotional expressions of burgeoning sociocultural identity constructions. Our culinary subjectivities weave together the foods’ dietary and symbolic significance that daily feed our physical body and our social self. Culinary subjectivities are lived, archived, recognized and performed in, with and through our bodies.
I refer to the body’s centrality to our culinary subjectivities as embodiment, a system of knowing that combines sensations, emotions and movement. It is a performed knowledge that communicates by doing, speaking and thinking with and through the body (Giard 1998; Heldke 1992). What makes this form of knowledge and knowing possible is the symbiotic relationship between food literally consumed to maintain a physical body and its rhetorical use to negotiate a social, cultural, historical and political sense of self. Two Spanish words succinctly express these differences that convey meaning in unity: nutrir (to nourish) and alimentar (to feed). Nutrir is the process of biologically sustaining the body with proteins, nutrients and calories. Food nourishes the physical body. Alimentar, as the act of feeding and eating, encompasses a rhetorical process that sustains the social, cultural, imaginative, spiritual and affective self. It is through the physicality of our body, along with its physiological and biological organisms, that the senses translate foods’ flavours, tastes and textures into emotions and memories (Shepherd 2012; Le Breton 2017). The body prepares, gathers, consumes and rejects the histories, cultures, economics and politics that foodscape contain (Carolan 2011). Our body conveys a food narrative that expresses how and why we are what we ate, what we eat and what we will eat in a future time (Bost 2013).

In his memoir Pig Tails ‘n Breadfruit, Austin Clarke beautifully illustrates the centrality of the body in our ever-changing formations and expressions of our culinary subjectivities. While giving the recipe for making pig tails and salted beef, Clarke writes,

One thing about cooking that comes from slave days is that you have to feel-up everything. … You have to touch-up the food and love-up the food. Rub your two hands over the pig tails and salt beef, together with the seasoning. If you do not touch-up and love-up the meats and the ingreasements, your food is not going to respond and taste sweet when is done. (1999: 64)

In the action of ‘feeling-up’, the verb to feel carries three distinct meanings. First, it refers to feeling food through an array of awareness: textures, spiciness, sweetness, softness, sourness, tartness, bitterness, sharpness and so on. Second, we also feel emotions when cooking and/or eating that derive from the immediate present, while cooking or eating, and/or from memories of previous experiences that encapsulate pleasure or anxiety, joy or sadness, excitement or disgust, curiosity or anxiety, nostalgia or reassurance. Third, we feel the rhythms that come with an array of culinary tasks: gathering ingredients, preparing foods and daily rituals of consumption.

Clarke also introduces the concept of ‘ingreasements’. He writes, ‘Whatever it is we cook, we call it food, in the sense that any combination of any ingredients (“ingreasements”), of whatever quality, that we put into a pot and cook is food’ (p. 2). The term ‘ingreasements’ addresses a sensory and performative process of knowing how to combine available foodstuffs and grease them up with a dosage of historical and cultural seasoning by preparing and cooking food by feel. The interjection of the word ‘grease’ underscores how the oils that are released from meats, seeds and plants are part of the seasoning. Since the implements of measuring and mixing all the items added to a pot are the fingers and hands as food is being felt-up, the secretion of bodily salt is
also part of the flavouring of food. For Clarke, it is by ‘feeling-up’ the ‘ingreasements’ that a person’s bodily salt flavours the emotions expressed while cooking which are then absorbed while eating.

As he reminisces about the defining aspect food has for him, Clarke shows how it connects him to the culture of Barbados, to the historical residue of colonization and to the flow of global economies. But most significantly, he shows the process of learning to embrace a heritage expressed through his mother’s embodied culinary knowing. His mother’s cooking nourished his physical body, but it also shaped his character. As he recalls his childhood, he states, ‘the food my mother cooked was never intended only “to stop a hole” in my belly. More importantly she had it in her mind that her food was to make me “feel good”, make me grow into a strong young man and give me “big, big brains”’ (p. 212). Adulthood and geographical distance make it possible for Clarke to recognize how his mother’s lessons, which she transmits by feeling-up her food, influence his food memories, his culinary practices and the stories he (re)creates to speak about how food defines his character and creates his place in the world.

The significance that food’s material reality has on people's ever-changing constructions of their social selves finds expression through their interpretation of food’s symbolic and metaphorical implications (Holtzman 2009). It is in this articulation that foods become performative acts of embodied knowledge (Taylor 2003). Food practices, memories and stories about food experiences are central to our culinary subjectivities which are lived viscerally, expressed in practices and recognized in narratives – where these are performed, spoken or written. Through these narratives, I’m suggesting, we negotiate our desire or rejection to accept certain dwellings as places of being at home.

Embracing a critical understanding of our culinary subjectivities and the centrality our bodies play in this form of identity marker represents, for me, a hope. By embracing this form of embodied identity marker – which we all share, as food does influence a substantial portion of who we have been, who we are and who we can became – we might move beyond the divisive rhetoric embedded in current identity politics. By understanding how feeding our bodies is the very process of creating our place of dwelling in the world, migration (voluntary or forced) will not leave us feeling rootless. Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa demonstrates how the ability to feed our bodies shifts our understanding of our place in the world and our connection to others. In her earlier and most well-known book *Borderlands /La Frontera: A Mestiza Consciousness*, food is used as an index of Mexican cultural identity and representation of nationalism (Anzaldúa 1987). With the onset of Type 1 diabetes, Anzaldúa’s intimate relationship with food changed, and eventually so did her metaphorical/symbolic use of food in her world view. In her last published autobiographical essay ‘Now let us shift’ she writes,

> With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings – *somos todos un país*. Love swells in your body and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything – the aboriginals in Australia, the crows in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. (Anzaldúa 2002: 558)
Foreword

Anzaldúa began her autobiographical reflections with the development of what she called a ‘mestiza consciousness’ to address bi-national and bi-cultural border politics and approached the end of her life with what I call a food consciousness: a theory of pragmatic embodied epistemologies where knowledge is acquired through the sensations and emotions that food awakens in the body (Abarca and Pascual Soler 2013).

The centrality of the body in defining our culinary subjectivity, the necessity of feeding such a body – for basic survival, but also with food filled with material and symbolic cultural, historical and social significances – makes the body the apparatus through which we think of how we are at home in the world. It is the body’s ability to digest foods that embodied histories of trans-border crossings that provide the possibility of re-imagining our dwellings even in periods of transitions and migrations due to a variety of geopolitical and socioeconomic realities.

30 June 2019

Notes

1 Any reference to ‘in this collection’ is addressing Matta, de Suremain and Crenn’s Food Identities at Home and on the Move.

2 I have explored the theoretical implications of this concept in a number of graduate seminars and conference papers. However, in the chapter ‘Afro-Latina/os’ Culinary Subjectivities’, I tease out a number of these arguments.

References


Introduction

Food and the fabric of home

Raúl Matta, Charles-Édouard de Suremain and Chantal Crenn

The idea of compiling this volume came up during the 13th SIEF (International Society for Ethnology and Folklore) Congress on the topic of Ways of Dwelling: Crisis – Craft – Creativity. The congress, held from the 26 to 30 March 2017 at the University of Göttingen, Germany, opened up to investigation the myriad ways of dwelling from the perspectives of ethnology, folklore and cultural studies. At the congress, we convened a panel of speakers to discuss and explore the ways in which people turn food into a means to locate themselves, act and dwell in the world. This appeared to us as a necessity as our current times have witnessed the consolidation of two trends resulting from and encouraged by the dominance of the neoliberal agenda in all dimensions of society; the effects of economic crises; racism; war and the diffusion of mobile communication technologies. The first trend is the accelerating process of population displacement and migration, both forced and voluntary. The second is the disconnection between food producers and consumers in developed and developing countries, related to the ‘almost complete subjugation of civil society to an industrialised food system’ (Tornaghi and Van Dyck 2015). This context taps into the multidimensional and dynamic meanings of the notions of home and food, and has made it difficult, if not impossible, to apprehend the spaces of home and dwelling as enclosed or bounded, just as in the same manner we cannot apprehend our cultural heritage and identities as something fixed and continuous. By putting together this volume, we contend that the intersection of home and food is an excellent entry point for capturing the co-dependent actions and complex (re)assemblages of people, objects and ideas when it comes to finding a place for ‘being’ or ‘becoming’ in a disruptive and uncertain world. The chapters included here aim to fill a gap in the ethnographic literature on the relationship between home and food and its overriding role in the construction of social identities.

The next sections review how the relationships between home, food and mobilities appear in the existing literature in order to better situate the contributions to this volume.

Food identities at home …

In an exhaustive summarizing paper on the meanings of home, sociologist Shelley Mallett (2004) observes the polysemy of the term and shows how it is variously described as
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combined with or related to house, family, haven, self, gender and journeying. According to her review, home can be both a physical dwelling place and a lived space of interaction between people, places and things whose boundaries can be permeable or impermeable. The latter understanding of home as something porous and unfixed is reflective of the current times of increased mobility and a rapidly shifting global environment. Today, depending on the context and who uses the term, home can be both singular and plural, fixed and mobile, stable and changing. Home can prompt feelings of comfort, relief and security, but also feelings of uneasiness, confinement and precarity. It can thus be constitutive of a sense of belonging and central to existence, while at the same time either reflecting or generating a sense of marginalization and alienation. In sum, home functions as a ‘repository for complex, interrelated and at times contradictory socio-cultural ideas about people’s relationship with one another’ (Mallett 2004: 84).

In spite of its several meanings and usages, most of the social sciences literature has tended to identify home with the bounded space we usually call ‘house’. Mallett reveals that various authors have contributed to establishing a ‘white’, Western idea of home that privileges a physical structure such as a house or building – a ‘localizable idea’ controlled in all its dimensions (social, economic, moral and aesthetic) by domestic communitarian practices (Douglas 1991). Home in this view is a ‘space’, a container, a reality that is static, autonomous and can exist independent of its human subjects. Paraphrasing the definition of space provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, such an understanding of home could be that of ‘the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things [including people] exist and move’. Ideas about privacy, intimacy and comfort are therefore prominent and recurring themes in contemporary analyses of the meanings of home.

Equating home with house is, however, useful in putting emphasis on the symbolic nature of physical structures. Historian Élie Haddad (2014) sees the physical house as a material sign of the social memory of a place, rooted in the subjectivity of the house dwellers. Folklorist Regina Bendix (2019) recalls that houses have stories narrated not just in architectural histories but also in the materials used to build them. House and home narratives prompt remembrance and contain representations of the physical environment, social hierarchy and economic opportunity (p. 16–8). These considerations apply to the domain of the kitchen (Abarca 2006; Ayora-Diaz 2016). Although recognizing these perspectives as crucial for understanding the dwelling complex, we approach the practice of dwelling from the way people themselves experience and understand their living environment. Indeed, the chapters in this volume analyse the dynamic way in which everyday practice – with a bigger part of it occurring outside the house – makes home meaningful to those who dwell in it.

Our intention resonates with anthropologist Tim Ingold’s (2009: 29) criticism on the notion of space as a describer of the world we inhabit. To him, space is ‘the most abstract, the most empty, the most detached from the realities of life and experience’. This is a stand the authors in this volume have generally and indirectly embraced by reason of their disciplines, which typically place strong emphasis on human agency. Important to the rationale of this collection are the considerations by anthropologist Elia Petridou (2001: 87–8) who suggests that, instead of space, the concept that should be used to capture the ontological significance of home is ‘place’, in the sense given by
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That is, as a context ‘for human experience constructed in movement, memory, encounter, and association’ (p. 15), which acquires its meaning through practice and, as such, forms part of the everyday process of the creation of the self. Petridou elaborates further and paraphrasing anthropologist Mary Douglas, who has written on home as a ‘kind of space’ (1991), invites us to see home as ‘a kind of place’ (2001: 88).

This meaning of place (and, by extension, of home) challenges most widespread views that establish a relationship between a place and an identity and between a place and a sense of belonging by relying on notions of stability and enclosed security. Geographer Doreen Massey (1992) observes that such views have taken root in a whole range of settings: the emergence of certain kinds of nationalisms (see Anderson 2006; Billig 1995; Ichijo and Ranta 2016), the marketing of places for investment and for tourism (see Kaneva 2011; Fuentes Vega 2017) or the burgeoning urban enclosures (see Soja 2000). To Massey, all of these are ‘attempts to fix in the meaning of places, to enclose and defend them’ (1992: 12). However, she argues that interpreting places as bounded enclosed spaces defined through a negative opposition against the Other beyond the boundaries is untenable because ‘the identity of a place does not derive from some internalized history. It derives in large part, precisely, from the specificity of its interactions with “the outside”’ (p. 13).

In this reading of place as home, the identity of a place is open and provisional, as it is formed by the co-presence in a place of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the effects this co-presence produces. This makes the identities of places inexorably unfixed, and they are so because they are built by social relations that are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing (Massey 1992), and always stretch beyond the area referred to as a place. Therefore, people’s attempts to find (and ‘build’) their place in the world relate to what Ingold has coined as the ‘dwelling perspective’ (2000: 185–8). Drawing on and expanding the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger (1971), to whom building is a form of dwelling and dwelling is a form of thinking and ‘being’ in the world, Ingold addresses dwelling as the way people ‘make themselves at home’ by connecting to and experiencing their environments and surroundings. Dwelling is the way people engage with the world in their imagination and/or ‘on the ground’: the world does not appear ‘ready-made’ but comes into being and takes on significance through its incorporation into everyday activities (Ingold 2000: 3–5). The meaning of home resulting from this perspective emerges thus from a nexus of doings and sayings (Schatzki 1996), as well as from affections and nostalgic memories (see chapters by Haboucha; by Crenn; and by Türköz in this volume) that merge in ‘a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging’ (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 23). Such forms can be unstable and might refer to different localities. Home thus becomes the ‘kind of place’ that provides contexts for human experience and for the display of a set of practices through which home gets its meaning while people acquire a sense of belonging and identity. Inspired by the dwelling perspective, this volume adopts a relational and phenomenological approach to the notion of home. We see home as a practice and combination of processes that are not necessarily circumscribed to the physical structures of home as ‘shelter’ but also not disconnected from the material world.

The material used in this volume to evoke home, belonging and cultural identity is food. Food and foodways (the latter understood as the activities, attitudes and
behaviours associated with food in our daily life) are a site of dwelling and ‘being’ in the world. They constitute one of the strongest and most easily available markers of cultural identity as they involve deep, visceral affects. Food can draw, maintain or reproduce the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Lévi-Strauss 1965; Douglas 1984; Goody 1982; Appadurai 1981; Bourdieu 1979) but can also threaten these boundaries and function as a bridge across the borders of cultural communities (Cohen 2000; Ray 2016; Shamini Perry 2017). Moreover, it is a universal topic: food is something that almost everyone feels able to talk about, and sharing food is an entry point to widen our and other’s social understanding. The studies in this book stress the fact that, perhaps due to its ubiquity and pervasiveness, food, like the term ‘home’ has various meanings. It can be a dish or a recipe, an agricultural product or a ritual object, a basic need for survival or an item of social distinction, a ticket to a better future or an object of nostalgia.

The ways food smells, feels, tastes and is cooked motivate emotion and memory in a more powerful way than other reminders of home and the places we inhabit. However, it can do more than that; anthropologist Emma-Jayne Abbots (2016: 118) states, 

The embodied experiences of migrants’ food spaces, and the ways that multi-sensory cues – such as visual displays, textures and smells – create a familiar home environment that can provide both security for some and unease for others. In so doing, they not only move beyond discussions of ‘taste’ and remind us that purchasing, preparing and consuming food is experienced through all the senses, but also that these practices can effectively transport migrants back ‘home’.

Food exists in a realm beyond space and time, and nurtures forms of representations such as narratives, stories and arguments that shape our subjectivities and the way we present and represent ourselves and the Other (see the chapters by Stark; by Lazoroska; and by Türkööz in this volume). The centrality of food for one’s identity has, for instance, been portrayed in many literary works, and emblematized by the famous example of ‘Proust’s madeleine’. Elaborating, food scholar Meredith Abarca (2017: 36) writes,

The palate’s memory – guided by the principles of taste, the senses and the body – enables us to recognize the symbolic characteristics associated with significant social and cultural episodic aspects of our culinary subjectivities. Through embodied performance we open the possibility to be able to taste that who we are today is seasoned with the culinary (ever-changing) inheritance we have received throughout history from those who make up our ancestral gene-cultural pool.

However, the embodied performance of food seems to be less reflective than objective in societies with strong ties to custom, where bodily form and physical attributes associated with ingestion may serve to measure levels of belonging or conformity to society (Massot 2007; Petrou and Connell 2017).

In the following, we argue that the connections between food, the self and one’s place in the world extend beyond the physical act of eating and the sensory experience it provides – the act of incorporation, to use the terms of sociologist Claude Fischler (1988) – as well as beyond the transmission of food knowledge within domestic settings.
If food reminds us of who we are, it also reminds us of who we can be (and where and with whom). Food is an appreciated expression of communitarianization and creates opportunities for creating personal relationships, making friends and erotic seduction. This is due to the sociality of cooking and eating meals, and because food is now a firm component of globally circulating media (self-) presentations (Kautt 2019). A useful concept to broaden our understanding of people's dwelling practices through food is that of 'foodscapes.' The concept more generally defines the physical, social and institutional environments that encompass all opportunities to obtain food and to support the preservation and development of culinary knowledge within a given location (Mielwald and McCann 2014; Mikkelsen 2011; Ayora-Diaz 2012). Markets, food outlets, cookbooks, restaurants, fishing ports, small and organic producers, food media, culinary schools, community kitchens and food regulatory institutions may all be considered components of foodscapes. To put it differently, a foodscape usually refers to the physical constellation of 'houses' that make food available to a certain group of people.

Yet, and in accordance with our take on 'home', we address the experience of food from a relational perspective that focuses on the way people connect with others and the environment physically and symbolically through myriad food-related practices, rather than solely focusing on eating habits and commensality (see chapters by Gerritsen, by Palutan and Schmidt and by Suremain in this volume). Only a relational perspective can reveal foodscapes as socially constructed places wherein food practices, values, meanings and representations intersect with the material and environmental realities that sustain the practices of food (Dolphijn 2004; Goodman 2016; Johnston and Goodman 2015). In his compelling work on food and memory, anthropologist David Sutton (2001) argues that the food parcels sent abroad to emigrants by the inhabitants of the Greek island of Kalymnos contributed to reconstituting community and re-creating cultural continuity outside the island. These travelling foods, according to Sutton, restored the fragmented world of the displaced through reconstructing and evoking the sensory totality of home. Similarly, Abbots (2011) documented that, for Ecuadorians, sending cooked guinea pig – a powerful symbol of home – to immigrant kin in New York fosters the formation of transnational households. In a more recent study, historian Alex Ketchum (2019) shows how the feminist restaurants and cafes in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s 'were far more than just a place to eat, acting as sanctuary and refuge to homophobia and fear'. She explains that these places fostered community and provided gender nonconforming individuals with a family after their biological families had rejected them. By granting these people feelings of security, feminist restaurants provided 'homes away from home.' The above examples suggest that it is at these intersections between the physical and the imagined that foodscapes contribute to situating the lives of individuals and social groups in the world. The increased mobility of people and objects further complicates this process.

... and on the move

Studying the fabric of home through food in migration contexts entails considering the role food plays in the circulation of people, goods, capital and values. It also
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necessitates examining its impact on the people that migrate as much as it does on the people already living in host societies (Calvo 1982). Today, perhaps more than ever, migration evokes ideas beyond the movement of people, as it encompasses several diverse social configurations and projects that vary, in almost limitless manners, the ways people make themselves at home. Migration, in its broader sense, including mobility, is therefore imperative to understand and explore the possibilities of food as a means for people to affiliate with a history, imaginary, neighbourhood, social group or nation (Parasecoli 2014). Dealing with food in the context of migration has the power to magnify the processes of belonging to a place. However, we argue, as do Meier and Frank (2016: 362), that accounting for the rise of mobilities1 should not lead us to neglect immobilities:

Mobilities such as commuting between places of work and places of residence, migrating, being a tourist or fleeing from bad circumstances to a new place are accompanied by reaching, living, creating, experiencing, leaving, maybe also by being caught in concrete places. As we move from place to place, mobilities are closely interrelated to immobilities.

Mobile people do indeed dwell and ‘make’ places – even those who are sometimes forced to settle in a territory. All the while, the flows of people, objects and images influence those who are sedentary as well as their logics of local, national and global affiliations. However, as the evidence in this volume reminds us, the globalization that produces mobility and immobility should not be associated with homogeneity and standardization, be it in terms of food or in a broader cultural sense. Voltaire Cang looks into the journeys of sushi chefs, ingredients, capital and, even, values associated with sushi and explores the geographies and global forces that bring into question the usual materiality of this food. Nora Kottmann reveals how Japanese women working in the ‘Japanese foodscape’ of the city of Düsseldorf increase their sense of personal accomplishment, for example, by integrating into German society, although this often means keeping a distance and stressing difference from the Japanese expat diaspora constituted before their arrival. Other chapters (Crenn; Haboucha; Hémond; Palutan and Schmidt) demonstrate that central to the processes of dwelling enabled by Moroccan, Afghan and Mexican immigrants in Italy, France, the United States and the United Kingdom is their ability to compose a reflexive food nostalgia which is characterized by developing both locally and beyond the borders and ideologies established by nation-states (Gellner 1983). These contributions resonate with the findings of Sabar and Posner (2013) in Tel Aviv. There, they showed that the restaurants run by asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea are not only traditional ‘national’ restaurants that reinforce community and prompt remembering but also sites of cultural hybridization and trans-nationality, ‘where various cultural and ethnic groups have created their diaspora identity, merging familiar and novel experiences’ (p. 216). The experiences embodied in immigrants’ foods and spaces of commensality, made of material, cultural and symbolic assemblages may create a somewhat familiar, domestic environment that can provide emotional security or, conversely, embarrassment. Such instances of this embarrassment are seen in cases of exiles from privileged backgrounds
who associate cooking with menial labour and some foods from the country of origin to lower classes (Tuomainen 2018). Food, then, transcends space, borders and time and calls upon the anthropology of emotions and memory and approaches capable of handling the various material sources of food creation and consumption (Holtzmann 2006; Mata-Codesal and Abranches 2017; Parasecoli 2014, Sutton 2001; see also chapters by Türköz, by Crenn and by Mescoli in this volume).

Avoiding the pitfall of equating globalization with standardization when addressing the creation of ‘feelings of belonging’ (Weber 1968 [1922]) is not sufficient to apprehend the dwelling endeavours undertaken by immigrants caught in the meshes of the economic and political issues at stake in host societies. As anthropologist Roger Bastide (1950) argued, what matters is not to interpret the food and eating practices of immigrants in terms of assimilation or, conversely, in terms of an impossible identification due to a (supposed) perception by locals of the immigrants’ culture as incompatible. What matters is to account for the complexity of food cultures and accurately grasp the quotidian culinary adjustments that serve the fabric of home within the social frameworks of the host society (Bastide 1984).

This raises questions about the production of nationalism in its food-related variations, that is, as forms of banal nationalism (Billig 1995) which manifest themselves on and through the plates as much as through resistance against it. People often link nations to emblematic dishes that may empower them to make assumptions about the nature of a nation’s history, society and identity: for example, couscous from the Moroccans, sauerkraut from the Germans, pizza from the Italians, foie gras and frog legs from the French, paella from the Spanish and sushi from the Japanese. But people also build upon relationships between food and nation to develop critical stances towards their own national affiliations. For instance, in France the presence of halal foods in non-ethnic food outlets has been a way for people of Maghreb origin to assert their ‘Frenchness’ (Tersigni 2014; Crenn and Tozzi 2015; Rodier 2014). Mexicans in the United States engage (perhaps sometimes unconsciously) in everyday resistance practices in response to the forces undermining the social status of Latinos: their offerings in the food sector are particularly extensive and diverse, from the most basic to the most refined, granting them physical and political presence in the urban public space (Hémond, this volume). In Italy, a country where discourses around gastronomy always have been and still are sites of identity awareness (Hubert 2000; Siniscalchi 2014), the relationship between food and nation is a trope for political engagement. The ban on opening new kebab shops in Venice as an effort to preserve the city’s cultural heritage is a clear illustration of this. Another example in Italy, although ideologically at odds with the latter, is the one presented by Palutan and Schmidt in this volume in the case of refugees in Rome. The authors document current initiatives bringing together locals and homeless refugees to cook and share food. There, hospitality and food aid emerge as a means to fight rising extreme nationalism by creating contexts enabling communication, interaction and reflexivity between refugees and members of Italian society.

A rather under-explored site from where to address the interplay of food, home and migration are food writings such as essays and scholarly works, as they contribute in particular ways to the fabric of home. As pointed out by sociologist and political
scientist Krishnendu Ray (2007), the poor visibility of small-scale ethnic restaurateurs in the United States stems from the fact that the majority of them have not had sufficient rhetoric about their cooking skills, seen by the ‘gastronomic elite’ – journalists, critics and scholars – as ordinary and comprised of menial tasks. Ray also noted that if the Jewish and Italian food cultures have been the subject of a higher number of studies indirectly helping to assert these groups’ belonging to the United States, it is in part due to the nostalgia of academics, many of whom are ‘third-generation immigrants’. The book by historian Donna Gabaccia We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans (2000), which posits that the sense of belonging to the United States nation lies in a vibrant ethnic entrepreneurship, constitutes a good example of the above. Its focus on Italian food somehow omits equivalent processes enabled by members of more recent waves of migration. Sociologist Jean-Pierre Hassoun states that latent in Gabaccia’s book is the obligation for immigrants to comply with the norms of the majority in order to exist. In his own work, Hassoun (2010) shows how immigrant restaurateurs strive to adhere to the locals’ health and nutrition values, since it is a crucial step for them to be recognized as full members of the society and maintaining their means of subsistence. This could result in restaurateurs losing customers of migrant origin who want familiar food ‘from the past’ and gaining more inquisitive customers (both immigrants and locals), who are willing to join the evolving ethnic foodways (Tuomainen 2018). Ray (2007) recalls that ethnic restaurateurs, despite the fragile situation in which they may find themselves, nevertheless have agency and, through their culinary creations, familial and diaspora ties, and a propensity for self-exploitation, are able to find their place in their adopted country and play a crucial role in re-imagining a nation’s cuisine – and, by extension, in re-imagining the host nation.

Anthropologist Anne Raulin (1999) studied the economic and cultural dimensions of the everyday life of ethnic minorities in Paris and the essential role they play in their affirmation. She argues and stresses the importance of clothing and food as fragments of material culture that allow immigrants and locals to interact on a regular basis across racial, ethnic and social boundaries and create contexts of urban sociability together. Raulin describes situations and contexts close to Elijah Anderson’s idea of ‘cosmopolitan canopy’ (2011), that is, a public space where a diversity of people put aside their wariness and feel comfortable around one another, contexts in which food supply and consumption play a predominant role. Similarly, in London’s Brick Lane (also known as Banglatown), the annual curry festival is instrumental in making this rundown area once again attractive for ‘native’ Londoners and reaffirms the sense of home for the ethnic restaurateurs running the event (Frost 2011). The above examples indicate that the physical presence of immigrants and their culinary knowledge, their reflexivity about the tastes of the people they feed, and their real or imaginary journeys in their countries of origin transform the ways of eating in and thinking about host societies in everyday and consistent manners (see Haboucha; Crenn in this volume). Economic resources being foremost for some immigrants, food businesses adapt to the tastes and trends in vogue to allow a permanent settlement in the country of arrival. Professional activities in the food sector provide economic anchoring and become one of the dimensions immigrants have to manage in their projects of symbolic belonging (Martiniello et al. 2009; Kottmann in this volume). However, strategies of belonging
may also unfold in the intimacy of the domestic home. For instance, the chapter by Elsa Mescoli applies a material anthropological approach in which objects owned by immigrants (e.g. kitchen utensils from the country of origin) move to the fore as key elements for the display and assertion of social and economic status.

The immigrants’ quest for food ‘from home’ highlights the centrality of culinary practices in their lives and the strong relationship between food and a sense belonging to a place, thus providing a window into their intimate culture and psyche as well as into the mobilities and social geographies of food (Raman 2011). This is particularly explicit in Marte’s work (2007) with Dominican immigrants in New York City. Using the technique of food mapping (or food memory maps), she was able to track the diasporic entanglements of body-place-memory through the connections the participants in her study had to specific food sites, allowing her to understand how immigrants navigate their local places, reimagine their cultural memory and sense of home, and share their immigrant histories with younger generations as well as with other marginalized groups.

The chapters in this book demonstrate that immigrants’ food cultures provide a good lens to see how newcomers attach themselves to a place through their involvement in interethnic relations and the ways in which they relate to host societies’ ideology and social, economic and nutritional conditions.

Studying the links between food and home, particularly in contexts of mobility or migration, necessitates careful consideration of gender issues, while avoiding any stereotypes. As Tuomainen (2018) recalls, most of the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship fails to look at the gender dimension by focusing predominantly on males’ experiences as entrepreneurs or labourers in the food sector – for another insightful exception, see Sabar and Posner (2013). Meah (2013) notes the paradox in which research on food and gender finds itself. She argues that a primary focus in denouncing the living conditions of women ‘caught in the kitchen’ tends to neglect the analysis of food as an economic and symbolic resource as well as a site from where to exercise agency and power and turnaround situations of domination. In contrast, chapters in this book highlight the use women make of food to become masters of their own destiny (and, therefore, of their ‘home’) despite being involved in relations of domination and subordination.

The concept of intersectionality mobilized by Elsa Mescoli stresses the complexity of food-related situations experienced by Moroccan women in Italy whose analysis, she argues, requires considering together with the dimension of gender that of ethnicity and class. Examples from different contexts point to the centrality of analysing gender relations in the culinary practice and profession. In Voltaire Cang’s chapter, one can see that male domination is still a reality in the world of sushi, even if the situation is changing slightly due to recent transformations in the industry. Nora Kottmann provides a more hopeful view by showing how working in Düsseldorf’s Japanese food sector becomes a means for Japanese women to fulfil individual life plans and make themselves at home. In London, Rebecca Haboucha presents Afghan women in London in a role of both custodians of Afghan culinary knowledge in the domestic field and guardians of traditional Afghan culture in the public domain. Finally, Chantal Crenn accounts for a reversal of the stigma of the ‘Arab immigrant worker’ in the vineyard
area of Bordeaux. This was only possible when female cooks and food entrepreneurs of Moroccan origin started creating versions of Moroccan cuisine seen as acceptable by locals and by foreign tourists to the area.

**Structure and content**

This volume unfolds into three parts within which the chapters explore, from novel approaches, different social contexts in which the meanings of home operate. Although some themes are present in every part, the chapters are arranged according to their central emphasis.

Part One, ‘Food identities in motion’, includes four chapters in which authors explore how gastronomic and culinary practices help to establish or reinforce national or regional character in the context of the movement of people and ideas. In Chapter 1, Voltaire Cang focuses on the transformations in Japanese culinary identity through Japan’s most well-known food: sushi. He argues that the global popularity of sushi affects the personal and professional identities of sushi chefs. To support his point, Cang looks into the current situation of sushi chefs trained in Japan who are working abroad and, through specific examples, discusses their roles in shaping both Japanese food culture and a profitable professional identity in the host society. In Chapter 2, Rebecca Haboucha explores the transmission of food as heritage in the Afghan diaspora in London, both within and beyond the familial dwelling. Through the accounts of forcibly displaced Afghan women, she argues that culinary practices can forge reimagined, creolized communities that overcome regional differences in the homeland, while attesting to a group’s willingness to identify with their host nation without belittling their cultural identity of origin. In Chapter 3, Elsa Mescoli argues that migration not only prompts changes in the ways we eat, cook and obtain food but also fosters new relationships that push individuals to reflect on their everyday practices. Focusing on the stories of Moroccan women living in the suburbs of Milan, she describes how they strategically display their cultural and culinary backgrounds during interactions with locals to assert belonging and social capital, as they seek to establish new lives and networks. In Chapter 4, Chantal Crenn examines how in the vineyards areas of south-west France – heavily marked by ‘whiteness’, ‘Europeanness’ and Catholicism – female restaurateurs of Moroccan descent make their ‘origin’ the basis of culinary innovations and ‘ethnoscapes’ linking France and Morocco. She argues that the professional culinary practice allows these women not only to play the role of ‘passers-on of memories’ through which they create territorial anchoring and a feeling of home but also to achieve a sense of citizenship in an environment rather hostile to them and their ancestors.

Part Two, ‘Public foodscapes’, includes four chapters that enrich the contextual picture of contemporary urban life by examining how food practices and experiences operate in the public space and provide senses of attachment and dis-attachment. In Chapter 5, Giovanna Palutan and Donatella Schmidt offer a comparative study on two food aid initiatives addressed to refugees and asylum seekers in the city of Rome, Italy. Focusing on the moments in which food is prepared, offered and received, they look at
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Food as a tool capable of creating spaces of communication, interaction and reflexivity between refugees and sectors of the host society. In Chapter 6, Roos Gerritsen takes the reader on a food tour across the city of Chennai, in India. By exploring new food practices performed by the middle class, she proposes a new reading of the city and its transformations, which are marked by the search for pleasure, by anxiety and by the emergence of new meanings of belonging, health and the 'good life'. In Chapter 7, Charles-Édouard de Suremain provides an ethnographic account of the functioning of one welfare kitchen (comedor) in the Mexican city of San Luis Potosí to analyse how the most impoverished fit into society and the urban space. Focusing on the sequence and the micro-politics of the meals, he shows how food enables urban citizenship for the comedor beneficiaries, despite the hard lives they endure. In Chapter 8, Aline Hémond analyses the development of Mexican food businesses in immigrant neighbourhoods of Chicago. She argues that Mexican regional restaurants and street food outlets offer Mexicans in Chicago a continuity, a nostalgia and a 'palatable memory' that allows them to find their place in the city but also gives them the possibility to draw a ‘culinary border’ between Mexicans and non-Mexicans.

In Part Three, 'Food narratives of subsistence', four chapters consider biographies, storytelling and folktales as reflective of different models of past and current life-sustaining sociality. In Chapter 9, Meltem Türköz explores nostalgic discourses about a disappearing ritual performed in western Turkey on the first consumption of seasonal fruit. She unpacks memories and discussions about these rituals contained in blogs and hypertext dictionaries to examine the role of food practices as a vehicle for nostalgia. She argues that childhood memories of the home as a site of family union and generosity act as anchors for the self while moving towards the unknown. In Chapter 10, Daniela Lazoroska analyses the refusal to eat or drink due to the fear of poisoning among favela youth in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. By presenting an account of the specificities of ‘not eating’, she analyses how the fear of contamination functions as a way of controlling a volatile lifeworld, outlines the boundaries of the body, and impacts the youth’s experience of the contours of ‘home’ and community. In Chapter 11, Eija Stark scrutinizes Finnish folktales to explore the power relations between the majority members of the peasant society and the Roma ethnic group, from the perspective of food and eating. By focusing on the figure of the Roma as food beggars, she sheds light on the use of folklore (and its food motif) as a rhetorical means of sending messages outside the community and as a vessel for constructing insiders’ sense of belonging to a majority community. Finally, in Chapter 12, Nora Kottmann analyses the life narratives of young Japanese women working in ‘Japanese’ food businesses in the German city of Düsseldorf, and discusses the importance they attach to their work in regard to their own life plans. Interestingly, she shows how the ‘Japanese foodscape’ allows these women to follow individual paths to individual solutions, while distancing themselves from the ‘classic’ Japanese community – mainly composed of expat workers – which they consider confining.

The chapters collected in this book offer different and complex views on the way people use food to negotiate ideas of ‘home’ in the current worldwide context of uncertainty, mobility and displacement. Together, they stress the capacity of food in its multiple variations – from foodstuff to foodscape – to move us not only as consumers...
but also as individuals and citizens. Our hope is that this volume will trigger further questions around the globe and bring recognition to the possibilities of ‘life-making’ (Bruner 1987) at the intersection of food and home.

Notes

1 The term ‘mobilities’ refers to the increasing and various movements of people, objects, information and ideas, and to an approach in the social sciences ‘in which movement, potential movement and blocked movement are all conceptualized as constitutive of economic, social and political relations’ (Urry 2009: 491–2).
2 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/venice-bans-kebab-shops-preservedecorum-traditions-city (retrieved on 6 May 2019)

References


Introduction


Notes

1 The author visited the TSA in Shinjuku in late 2015 and joined a half-day introductory sushi-making course. The data on the TSA is from personal communication with the teaching staff and administration officials, unless otherwise indicated.

2 The author visited KK’s restaurant in May 2017 and conducted interviews on two days; correspondence by e-mail continued for several months.

References


Note

1 Where authenticity follows Russell Cobb’s (2014: 6) notion that it can never be set in stone by a community or group, because 'the construction of the artifice of authenticity depends on the context'. This definition therefore considers time and place in flux and accounts for the fluidity of intangible cultural traditions in diaspora and more generally.
Reimagined Community in London

References


Notes

1 In a previous article, I highlighted how these dynamics – where the gender dimension still plays a crucial role – can also operate in the public space and within relationships involving a broader social environment and a plurality of actors, including institutional bodies and associations (Mescoli 2015).

2 Located in a predominantly rural area south-east of Casablanca, Fqih ben Saleh belongs to the Béni Mellal-Khénifra region, which is where most Moroccan migrants living in Italy come (see Mescoli 2014).
3 Mounia was born in Fes, the imperial capital of Morocco until 1912, where the state bourgeoisie (to which she belongs) and the political representatives of the country have their origins (Mescoli 2014). Fes ‘benefits from an established reputation as a holy city’ (Istasse 2016: 39) and it is ‘arguably the cultural heart of the country’ (Crawford, Newcomb and Dwyer 2013: 9). Its historic centre has been inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 1981 and the city is also known for its traditional cuisine, that occupies a central place in the global imaginary on Moroccan gastronomy.

4 This discriminatory naming process includes the fact that street vendors have also been called marocchini (Moroccans in Italian) since the 1980s. Indeed, the first Moroccan migrants who arrived in Italy in the 1970s were mostly farm labourers.

References


Notes

1 For instance, in Sainte-Foy-La-Grande, which counts 2,321 inhabitants after the census of 2013 (INSEE 2013), there are no fewer than 10 ethnic businesses (Vietnamese, Chinese, Moroccan, Syrian).
2 https://www.worldheritagesite.org/list/Saint-Emilion
3 Foie gras is a French culinary specialty made with fresh liver from ducks and geese fattened by gavage. Magret is a fillet of lean meat, cut from the breast (pectoral muscles) of a goose or duck.
4 The research was conducted in the framework of the FoodHerit project (https://foodherit.hypotheses.org/), funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR).
5 Lucien Georgelin (marmalade) and Berticot (wine) are small food industry entrepreneurs in Lot-et-Garonne, south-west France.
6 While I observed the décor, Saadia explained to me that in Morocco, like in France, there are labels that indicate high-quality, local products such as IGP Argan and AOP olive oil from Tyout Chiadma, among others.
7 French extreme right political party.
8 Saadia has been the subject of no fewer than a dozen articles in the local newspapers.
9 She typically purchases supplies from shops close to her restaurant to save money.
10 The Lot-et-Garonne department is a producer of prunes in France, while Moroccans have a long history of migration in the region. The tajine with Agen prune has become as much the emblem of this cultural cross-breeding as a mark of belonging to the local place.
11 Moral economy in the sense of an active process of individual and collective resistance in the face of lived economic and political inequalities. James Scott (2000) called it a subsistence ethic.
12 According to Jackson et al. (2013: 79), exoticism in Europe derives its current meaning from orientalism.
13 During my visit, we paused in front of the bread oven. ‘I don’t know how to use it yet, but I use it to bake cakes. Soon I will learn to make bread and then I will be a true Moroccan cook!’ Naïma said.
14 La Via Campesina is an international, social movement that, since 1993, campaigns for the right to food sovereignty and respect for small and medium-sized peasant communities and indigenous people.

References


Notes

1 This essay is the result of a collegial work; however, Giovanna Palutan is mainly responsible for the sections ‘A top-down hospitality model: The Astalli Centre’ and ‘The humanitarian variable’; and Donatella Schmidt for the sections ‘A bottom-up hospitality model: The Baobab Experience’, ‘A comparison of the two case studies’ and ‘The sense of food for activists and volunteers: Between humanitarianism and agency’.

2 It is the so-called ‘European refugee crisis’: in 2016, due to the Dublin III Treaty, which places severe limits on the movements of migrants, Paris, Rome, Athens, Budapest, among others European cities were forced to house emergency camps – illegal, provisional and intra-territorial – which became at the same time the recipients of constant police clearance intervention and of bottom-up hospitality models.

3 The Baobab Centre originated from an abandoned warehouse owned by the National Railway Company, Ferrovie dello Stato, formerly known as Hotel Africa and located behind the Tiburtina station.

4 Injera is a spongy flatbread in Eritrean cuisine.


6 See, among others, Francesco, don Pietro e i volontari dell’associazione Baobab, Gianguido Vecchi, 1 April 2018, Corriere della Sera (https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_aprile_01/francesco-don-pietroe-baubab-419766c-34ff-11e8-8de8-ad207e8187ca_print.html); Il centro Baobab a Roma è un antidoto contro il razzismo, Nicola Lagioia, published 27 July 2016 on Internazionale (http://intern.az/1upL).

7 From January to October 2016 minors were more than 8,000, half of which were below 14 (source: Eurostat). Unaccompanied minors came mostly from Eritrea; however, there were youngsters from sub-Saharan Africa (especially Nigeria but also from Gambia, Mali, Senegal and Guinea). On the subject see UNHCR: https://www.unhcr.it/risorse/carta-di-roma/fact-checking/minori-non- accompagnati-dati-tend enze-del-2016.

8 As Barbara Pinelli wrote in her work on the vicissitudes of a Togolese woman settled in Milan, asylum seekers in Italy experience ‘a sense of time suspension and a perception of life as being stuck in a stagnant present caused mainly by the long administrative procedures’. On policies regarding asylum seekers and the Italian juridical framework see Pinelli (2016: 30–4).

9 It should be specified that Baobab activists asked for institutional involvement to accommodate transit migrants by means of (1) participation to official round tables; (2) moving public opinion by inviting journalists in Via Cupa and by organizing cultural events, marches and sit ins; and (3) demonstrative occupation of a state-owned abandoned building.

10 To know more about users, see the Annual Report of Centro Astalli: http://centroas talli.it/rapporto-annuale/ (available in Italian).

11 The soup kitchen relies, on the one hand, on the available budget used to buy the meat and fresh products and, on the other, on food supplies and food donations, often coming in at the last minute.

12 The flow drops during the Ramadan period and in the summer months, when many migrants head towards tourist and rural areas in search of seasonal work.

13 The economic crisis in Europe brought a large number of people below the poverty line needing food assistance. See, Hebinck et al. (2018).
Food Identities at Home and on the Move

14 Interview to Magda, 8 December 2017.
16 Mary Douglas wrote, ‘Food is not only a metaphor or vehicle of communication; a meal is a physical event. After a year or a decade, the sequence of meals can be counted, as real as colonnades through which people can walk. Food may be symbolic, but it is also as efficacious for feeding as roofs are for shelter, as powerful for including as gates and doors. Added over time, gifts of food are flows of life-giving substance, but long before life-saving is an issue the flows have created the conditions for social life. More effective than flags or red carpets which merely say welcome, food actually delivers good fellowship’ (2003: 11).
17 Food is the foundation of social movements and personal commitment which brings together collective activism and institutional support (Counihan and Siniscalchi 2014) in which there is the consciousness that it is the nourishment of sociality within a community.
19 Interview to Sonia, Baobab volunteer, Rome, 17 January 2018 (ibidem).
20 As the editors state in the introduction (p. 3), dwelling ‘is the way people engage with the world in their imagination and/or “on the ground”: the world does not appear “ready-made” but comes into being and takes on significance through its incorporation into everyday activities.’

References


Notes

1 In this chapter, I use pseudonyms for all individuals, groups and establishments.
2 In Tamil Nadu villages, pesticides also are seen as the cause of rice being unhealthy (personal conversation with Heribert Beckmann, 27 August 2018).
3 Dosa and idli are two commonplace tiffin varieties in South India. They both are made from fermented rice and lentil batter.
4 In India, food that contains meat is commonly labelled ‘non-veg.’
5 In Tamil Nadu, tiffin is the term for a light meal, usually eaten in the morning or evening.
6 Idli is a fermented rice with lentil dumplings and ragi kali is a millet ball served in lentil sauce.
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Notes

1 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a group of thirty-four ‘developed’, industrialized and democratic countries with liberal economies.

2 Out of sixty-three programmes of this sort in the world in 2014, twenty-two are related to Latin America and the Caribbean (Fao 2015: 29).

3 See the DIF website: https://www.dif.cdmx.gob.mx/programas/programa/programa-comedores-populares; and the FAO website (2009): www.fao.org/3/k8093e/k8093e.pdf (see p. 15 on the ‘right to food’).

4 On comedores populares in Mexico City, see: https://munchies.vice.com/es/article/ypxb3y/asi-funcionan-los-comedores-comunitarios-en-la-ciudad-de-mexico. For an analysis across Mexico, see Arzate Salgado et al. (2009).


6 This type of paternalistic position is the subject of lively criticism in the anthropology of development (Escobar 1991; Olivier de Sardan 2005).

7 Caritas is an international confederation of Catholic charitable organizations with a presence in over 200 countries, which has operated in Mexico since 1973 (https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/lat-in-america/mexico/).

8 A former silver trading route that stretches over 2,500 km, linking central Mexico with Texas and New Mexico in the United States.

9 See the comedors’ website: https://caritasanluispotosi.org/programas/comedores/.

10 In accordance with their wishes, my informers’ identities have been changed, except that of José Antonio.

11 The smallest note in Mexico is worth 20 pesos (less than 1 euro).

12 See McMillan (1991) for an anthropological reflection on food policies, based on several case studies from around the world. See also the dossier coordinated by Pisani (2009).

13 This analysis joins Bloch and Parry’s 1989 edited volume on the ‘moral’ dimensions associated with uses of money in the contemporary capitalist system.
It is a brief prayer, or a little Christian song, with variable and often improvised content, recited by the guests before the meal in order to thank God for the food.

There is abundant literature on these questions. See, for example, Perrée (2014), Mancini (2015) or Grunzinski (1992).

The construction of gender relations through dance in this context would be an interesting research avenue to explore. See the work of Cowan (1990) on these questions in Greece.

The directory describes the comedor as a ‘family’-sized business, offering ‘community food services provided by the private sector’.

The subject of emotions has been little considered in anthropology (Crapanzano 1994), and even less so in food anthropology (Lorcy 2010).

Here understood in the emic and localized sense, not the universal and psychological (Lutz and White 1986).

This is the idea espoused by Douglas in her analysis of institutions (1986).

The ‘melting pot’ echoes the idea of ‘small places, large issues’ which is characteristic of Eriksen’s approach (2001).

On the negative effects of conditional food aid in a Mexican village, see Suremain (in press).

References


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Notes

1 Funding for this research was provided by the FABRIQ'AM programme (ANR-12-CULT-005).
2 Nixtamalization is a very old Mesoamerican process by which corn kernels are soaked and cooked in lime water (or more traditionally a mixture of ash and water). The drained grains are then milled to obtain a dough of nixtamal or 'masa'.
3 This is a pseudonym.
4 We see that the drug trade route easily follows the same cross-border circuit from Iguala to Chicago as that of regional food products. At the same time, immigrants are forced to take more uncertain and perilous routes in their migration project (García Palafox 2015).
5 I thank my readers, especially Frida Calderon-Bony, for their thoughtful remarks on the relationships of otherness in the public space.
6 Red pepper mixed with red tomatoes (to be distinguished from green tomatoes or physallis).
7 Indio means Indian but also, in the Mexican popular lexicon, ‘dirty’ or ‘uneducated’. On chilli pepper as a social and ethnic marker, see Katz, 1990.
8 Another aspect that contributes to the enjoyment of chilli peppers: children are fond of fruits sprinkled with sweet pepper and hot pepper. This dimension of consumption among children is also very important in the transmission of tastes (Suremain and Cohn 2015).
9 Hence the existence of small restaurants serving family food called comidas corridas which are only open from 11.00 am to 6.00 pm.
10 Chicago is the birthplace of the famous Deep Dish Pizza, which more resembles a quiche than a pizza and can be dressed with multiple toppings.
11 This refers to the idea of Carlos Tortolero, director of the National Museum of Mexican Art, who declares, ‘It is a museum for all Mexicans without frontiers’ (personal communication).

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Notes

1 First fruits in agricultural settings have received attention from early anthropologists, in particular James Frazer (1922 [1990]), focusing on imitative or homeopathic magic.

2 The first fruit ritual has elements of ancient and medieval harvest festivals, and has parallels in religious festivals such as Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah.


4 Though there is empirical support for the origin of a number of tree fruits to the Silk Road, as recent research has demonstrated (Spengler et al, 2018), a conclusive connection between Turpan and turfan is yet to be made. Meanwhile, the etymologist and linguist Sevan Nişanyan links the etymology of the word turfan to trefan (treyf, trefa) non-Jewish food among Jews (https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=turfandaandlnk=1). The Rosh Hashanah custom of placing a ‘new fruit’ on the table is also practised among Turkey’s Sephardic Jewish community, who place turfanda fruits on their table.


6 A study on 256 participants in an email group at Marmara University found that users search for web pages for assistance and support with learning and teaching religion, to communicate with like-minded people, organizing religious celebrations, performing religious duties, to participate in joint Koranic recitation and prayer, to protest religious restrictions and lifestyles, and to check their knowledge of religious knowledge (Vardi 2012).

7 https://ruhungidasitkaplar.com/tr/guzin-yalin

8 https://yemek.mynet.com/renk-ve-tat-cumbusu-meyveler-1154491

9 Oleaster, or Russian olive.


According to definitions attributed to the Ottoman lexicographer Şemsettin Sami, the term çifît, which has a range of meanings, comes from the Persian cehûd/cuhûd, which originated from the Arabic, yahûd, and that it was used for Jacob's son Judas for committing adultery with his daughter-in-law (Oral 2010: 21).


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Notes

1 SKS KRA; KT 37:1936. Vihti. Ekström Fanny. All the materials are stored in the Finnish Literature Society’s Archive Materials on Traditional and Contemporary Culture in Helsinki. The footnotes referencing excerpts of folktales excerpts indicate their location in the manuscript collection. The first part of the entry, ‘SKS’, refers to the Finnish Literature Society (in Finnish: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura); the second indicates the specific archive, ‘KRA’ for the Archive Materials on Traditional and Contemporary Culture. The third part refers to the specific collections, such as ‘KT’, ‘KRK’ and so forth. The final portion of the entry refers to the collection year, the location of the tale and the name of the collector.


4 SKS KRA; E. 40.1936. Vuokselä. Inkläinen E.


8 SKS KRA; KT 161a.1936. Polvijärvi. Tanskanen R.

9 SKS KRA; Akaa. Teodor Sirén a) 1904.


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Notes

4 This is certainly by no means specific to Düsseldorf’s Japanese food sector: Farrer (2015: 9) and others have shown that ‘restaurant kitchens in cities around the world are increasingly staffed by young migrant workers’.
6 42,205 Japanese nationals were living in Germany in 2015, but already 45,784 in 2017 with 11,907 of them being permanent residents.
7 Here the term Japanese (food) community refers to both Düsseldorf’s ‘Japanese community’ and Düsseldorf’s ‘Japanese foodscape’. For the usage of the term ‘community’, also see footnote 12. The question of authenticity in ‘Japanese’ cuisine cannot be discussed here. For a comprehensive overview of this with respect to Korean restaurants in Berlin, see Byun and Reiher (2015).
8 I refer to the term (not) belonging in the understanding of Gammeltorft (2018: 77). Here, ‘(not) belonging’ indexes (often ambivalent) relations or disconnect.
9 This was a collaboration with Prof. Dr C. Reiher from the FU Berlin. For further information on the projects conducted in Berlin and the joint projects as well as an international workshop, see https://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/forschungswerkstatt-japan/ (accessed 2 April 2019).
10 One significant exception was one male interviewee, who was already in his sixties (see the third section in this chapter).
Short, exemplary field research reports are available online: http://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/oasien/blog/?p=17737 (accessed 2 April 2019) and http://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/oasien/blog/?p=17883 (accessed 2 April 2019).

The other common employment opportunities for young Japanese women in Düsseldorf, for example, in hair salons and language schools, will not be considered within the scope of the present chapter.

For a critical discussion of the term ‘community’ – as well as of the often similarly used term ‘diaspora’ – see Brubaker 2005 and Manzenreiter 2017: 107). When referring to Brubaker and Manzenreiter throughout the chapter, no inverted commas will be used in the following.


This is a striking difference when compared with migration to South and North American countries, where it has been mostly permanent (see Adachi 2016; Manzenreiter 2017).

2,759 women and 2,628 men, the majority of them being between thirty and fifty years old.

This was the case until the 1980s, when Chinese cuisine in particular quickly gained popularity, soon followed by Thai cuisine (Kessler 2012: 151; Möhring 2016: 312).


It is important to note here that sushi, unlike other dishes, did not primarily come to Germany via Japanese expatriates but rather found its way to Germany as a lifestyle product via the United States (Mladenova 2013: 292).

For this highly successful culinary globalization and its underlying causes, such as culinary politics, the transnational culinary field and contact zones and intrinsic culinary appeal, see Bestor (2011), Farrer (2015), or Walravens and Niehaus (2017).

All names of people have been changed to protect their privacy.

Buckwheat noodles.

One can assume that her parents wanted her to get a stable and socially idealized white-collar job in a large company.

Deep-fried seafood and vegetables.

In all of our cases, this was explained by men’s professional ambitions and subsequent obligations and/or by the women’s child-rearing duties.

Based on the talk (Japanese) Women in Berlin’s (Japanese) Foodscape by Prof. Dr Cornelia Reiher at the international workshop on Gender, Migration, and Food: Women in Japanese Foodscapes in Berlin and Düsseldorf, FU Berlin, 23 June 2017.

Kato (2015: 221) in this context speaks of jibun sagashimi in (self-searching migrants), Ono (2009: 43) of sotokomori or 'someone who withdraws from society by moving outside of Japan'.

References


