

# **COOKING IN DAILY LIFE**

**An explorative research on cooking as a means of relating to the world**

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Master thesis  
June 2017



## Abstract and keywords

Cooking and eating is an important part of our life, and therefore gets a lot of our time and attention. Existing empirical research on food and eating culture shows that cooking is primarily a social activity, closely connected to memories. These memories can cause culinary nostalgia, the emotional longing for a dish from the past. By means of dishes as cultural artefacts and traditions, cooking bonds people and strengthens their collective identity. This collective identity can be specified into a personal cooking related identity, which can be used to distinguish oneself from others. In the process of cooking, the kitchen forms a liminal space where nature meets culture: ingredients are turned into dishes with symbolical meaning.

By taking an exploratory approach, this study analyses the liminality in the act of cooking, which is used as a means to relate to the world. This qualitative research focusses on contemporary cooking culture in Western society and attempts to give an insight into the twofold liminality in cooking: liminality in time and in place. The research question is: *'To what extent and in what way do selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of daily life?'*

During 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews, 12 Dutch and non-Dutch respondents, most living in and around Rotterdam, were asked about their habits and thoughts on cooking. The results are analysed and structured by means of thematic analysis, resulting in two main themes: cooking in relation to time and cooking in relation to place.

Because of the liminality in cooking, the interpretation of time and place becomes indefinite. Cooking aided respondents in structuring their time and helped them to make sense of the vague concept of time. Through time related associations, cooking structured the hours in the day, the days of the week, the seasons, and phases in one's life. By using cooking as social time, especially in the weekends, cooking for others helps to create and sustain social relationships and encourages social bonding. Furthermore, it is used to discover and make sense of the world, by discovering other places and their related cultures through cooking adventures. It helped respondents to get a sense of place and define their own place in this world. They related to the world in the way they valued awareness of the origin of their food and the sustainability of their cooking habits. Another way in which the respondents related to the world was by adjusting their cooking habits to the place they were in, it determined and limited one's cooking options.

In contrast to most existing anthropological research on cooking, this research focussed on food and cooking culture in Western society and concentrated on present-day, contemporary daily cooking. It has explored the field of liminality in cooking and distinguished the themes of time and place in the process of relating to the world by means of cooking.

cooking, domestic cooking, cultural identity, personal identity, liminality

## Table of contents

<b>Abstract and keywords .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Theoretical framework .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.0 The daily habit.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.0 An anthropological approach to cooking food in everyday life .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.0 Food, cooking &amp; identity.....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 Personal identity.....	14
3.2 Collective identity.....	16
<b>4.0 Cooking &amp; liminality .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>5.0 Cooking &amp; notion of place.....</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1 Exoticism .....	21
<b>6.0 Expectations.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Method .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>The kitchen and liminality in place and time.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Part 1: Cooking &amp; time .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Part 2: Cooking &amp; place .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Topic list.....</b>	<b>51</b>

## Preface

Already a while ago, I started this thesis project, thinking I would finish it just as easily as I had worked my way through other courses of the Art, Culture and Society master. Due to several circumstances, it became a rather long-term project, with focus on the ‘long’ part, but I managed to finish it. And I am quite proud of this accomplishment!

I found writing this thesis was actually rather a nice activity. It was fun to meet new people and talk to them about a subject I personally really enjoy. Also, the delicious foods I was served were a great advantage of interviewing passionate cooks. I appreciate to have had the opportunity to do a master program at university, even though the long days in the library during the writing of this master thesis were at times destructive to my social life. Now this master thesis project is over, I am planning to repair the damages.

In the process of writing, many great people have supported me and contributed in several ways to this research. In this preface, I want to express my gratitude to them.

Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor prof. dr. Stijn Reijnders for his quick response, flexibility and advise on the execution of the research. My research question and structure needed some rigorous changes, so thanks for the comprehensive explanation of your suggestion and the clear remarks.

Thanks to my mom for meticulously checking every comma and quotation mark, and the discussion about the applicability of the Dictionary of Current English (New Edition), which looked like it came straight out of the 70’s. I want to thank my father, for his technical and motivational support. You encouraged me to finish this project.

I want to express my gratitude to the thesis group and its mentor. Your encouragement, the supportive phone calls and the stickers on my progression chart really helped me to pursue my weekly goals and eventually finish my master thesis.

Additionally, I want to thank all respondents for making time for their interview and sharing their thoughts. It was a pleasure to get to know you and hear your thoughts on the subject of cooking.

I want to thank my friends, family and colleagues, for their support and their motivational messages, and in particular Adinda, who helped me decipher the doctor-style handwriting puzzles.

Lastly, I want to thank the faculty for the interesting lectures I have had the pleasure to attend. They sparked my enthusiasm and formed the base of my interest in the social world and its structures and processes. The acquired knowledge from the lectures assisted me in writing this thesis.

Suzy Maton

Rotterdam, 26 June 2017

## Introduction

Everyone eats. It is therefore not surprising that food and cooking play an important role in our lives. Some even say cooking is what distinguishes us from animals. It distinguishes humans culturally, with food we express our identity (Lévi-Strauss & Weightman, 1994). And a study from 2012 states that it distinguishes us biologically as well, from our more animal-like ancestors. Cooking softens tough fibres, which makes it easier to digest and more time efficient to consume. This means we could eat more per day, which increased our brain size (Herculano-Houzel, 2012) and at the same time have spare time to spend on other things, developing our species for example. However, some argue against the statement that cooking is only for humans. Wolves (and now dogs too) bury the bones they find, not only to have some for later, but also to let the meat ferment, making it easier to digest. One could say this is a form of cooking. Another study reported about monkeys, who began to season their food when they were relieved of the search for it and had more time to experiment with flavours (Kawai, 1965).

The way food and cooking are playing a role in our lives is changing fast. A rise in the popularity of cooking programs can be seen on YouTube and television, on billboards, in the cooking section of bookshops. Even an entirely food related television channel that is broadcasting 24/7, called 24Kitchen, reaches 3 million households in the Netherlands alone (Dagrapporten programma's, n.d.). Food festivals and food related merchandise stores pop up in many large cities. Baking materials and meal packets with fresh unprepared ingredients in the supermarket, all these trends promote domestic cooking.

Especially because of the internet, access to recipes has become significantly easier. Although many households have sufficient recipes in the form of cookbooks and physical recipe collections, the amount of online recipe databases is growing fast (Davis et al., 2014). The benefit of these databases compared to traditional cooking books is that recipes can easily be searched and compared. When searching for a Spaghetti Bolognese recipe in a cookbook, most likely one recipe will be found. When searching for the same dish online, many different recipes will pop up. Community based recipe databases will show alterations suggested by others, and ratings of the recipes, making it easier to select and follow the recipe. Any question about the recipe, for example substitutions, can be asked immediately.

On the other hand, we spend less and less time on preparing our food. We are less advanced in culinary skills compared to 15 years ago, due to innovations, easy accessible convenience foods and the fading culinary labour division (Meah & Watson, 2011). The

marketing of pre-packaged and processed food thrived after WWII, when the long-lasting foods were no longer needed on the battlefield. They were sold to housewives as a convenient way to put food on the table fast. The hardly expiring foods also provided safety in food supply, making it appealing, especially in the uncertain times just after the war (Thompson & Cowan, 1995). Despite having many alternatives, the microwave meals and instant ingredients have not disappeared from our supermarkets. The amount of delivery services and options is growing more than ever, withholding us from having to cook ourselves, and providing dishes originating from all over the globe. In the city, international and fusion food can be bought on almost every corner of the street, which gives us hundreds of options without the effort.

Because we can eat more than necessary for our survival and have more time than needed to collect our food, we have the luxury to express our identity and class through the things we eat and cook (Giddens, 1991). Eating and cooking a dish enables one to be something: cultured, British, healthy or concerned with the environment. Or to not be something, defining the otherness: eating pork reveals that someone is not Jewish or Muslim, or does not adhere to the respective food related rules the religion dictates. So what we cook and eat, exposes a lot about ourselves. One study from 1981 (Sadella & Burroughs) gave the participants five lists of foods related to five different types of diets, for example a vegetarian diet, a fast food diet and a diet which consisted of synthetic foods. Then they asked them what kind of person would eat these foods. The researchers found that the participants had strong associations between these food habits and personality traits. The participants reported similar descriptions of who they imagined would eat those foods.

The same process can be seen with cultural identity, the expression of identity by a social group as a whole. National or regional dishes are a good example. They communicate a lot about what the nation or region stands for, what they think is good and important and what they deal with on a daily basis. For example, a dish from South-Italy will consist of the ingredients growing in the region, and will, in comparison with the North of Italy, show that the region was once quite poor. At the same time, these dishes keep the social group together, they provide a collective identity. The members of the social group form memories around the dish, and share and bond over it with their group members.

We live in a time where cultures become more and more fused, physically as well as digitally. The world is globalising. People are moving all around the world, especially with the recent refugee crisis, and they are bringing their culture and food habits along. International and fusion food can be bought on almost every street corner, blurring the line

between cultures and identities. In addition, increasing internationalisation is stimulating this fusion as well. International trade, and better access to information from all around the world causes rapid cultural and gastronomic exchange (Karaosmanoglu, 2009). Recipes from all over the world can be found through the internet wherever one is located. Everyday dinner is becoming increasingly diverse.

How do people deal with these changes? Is expressing personal and cultural identity through food still important, and if so, how do people nowadays use daily life cooking to form their identity? Especially in a time of fusion, this question is becoming increasingly important. Do people hold on to, or form their identity and culture by means of food?

In order to obtain a broader understanding of these subjects, 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews are held with 12 respondents. They were asked about their thoughts and habits on the topic of cooking in daily life. These results were analysed and structured into two topics: cooking in relation to time and cooking in relation to place.

This research questions how people deal with cooking on a daily basis and focusses simultaneously on immigrants, travellers and Dutch residents. The research question of this master thesis therefore is: ‘To what extent and in what way do selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of daily life?’.



## Theoretical framework

*Research question: To what extent and in what way do selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of daily life?*

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This chapter will give an overview of the existing research on the subjects of eating and cooking. It starts with a summary of the research on cooking in general, the motivations to cook and why it is important to humans. This part is followed by an anthropological approach to cooking food in everyday life. It gives an understanding of how a society deals with food and cooking and how those concepts are defined. Furthermore, the link between cooking and identity is explored in two forms: personal identity and collective identity. Then the liminal aspects of cooking are explained, how the kitchen is a liminal space where nature becomes culture and where time and place are less strictly defined. This liminality of cooking is further explained in the following paragraph on cooking and the notion of place and exoticism in cooking. Finally, this theoretical framework is extrapolated into the expectations for this research.

### 1.0 The daily habit

Food is one of the most crucial conditions for survival, but we do not merely prepare it to meet our nutritional needs. We make it more difficult and more luxurious than it needs to be, which can give us joy and satisfaction. Pleasure is one of the main reasons for cooking, especially for men (Daniels, Glorieux, Minnen & Van Tienoven, 2012; Cairns, Johnston, & Baumann, 2010). Food and cooking is thoroughly incorporated in our daily lives. We spend a significant time of our day preparing food, eating it, looking at it in the form of commercials, ads and television shows and talking about it with our friends and family (Rozin, Bauer & Catanese, 2003). Food traditions also help us structure and make sense of the vague concept of time (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). It brings repetition and divides our time on earth.

Furthermore, cooking for others seems to be more pleasurable than cooking for ourselves. Sidenvall, Nydahl & Fjellström (2000) show that retired women even cook healthier for others than for themselves. They do not get the same pleasure out of cooking for themselves as they do from cooking for their friends or family and therefore spend less time on dishes for themselves. Cooking and eating is very closely, if not inseparably, connected to

social interaction. Those who are eating alone have a high risk of poor nutritional intake (Davis et al, 2000).

Not only the eating itself is social, we talk about cooking and food and learn a lot from the people around us. We share recipes out of excitement, or we share them to show expertise in the role of cook or food expert (Clair, Hocking, Bunrayong, Vittayakorn & Rattakorn, 2005). Another reason to share our culinary thoughts and knowledge is to give us a sense of validation in our role as caretaker in the family. Cooking as a chore, a form of providing nutrition, can often be taken for granted in the role of females. By showing others how it's done and retelling stories about their role as homemaker, mothers claim their recognition and appreciation, thereby expressing family and cultural identity. The motherly meal and daily structured eating moment seem to be very important for a family. It strengthens the group identity and helps to construct the family (Lupton, 2000).

In addition to cooking meals ourselves, we even seem to enjoy seeing others doing the cooking and tasting, for example in the form of cooking shows. This seems odd, because cooking is predominantly connected to our senses. The most important senses when cooking, smell and taste are lost through television. Watching cooking programmes fulfils our desires through the fantasy it shows us (Ketchum, 2005). It teaches us about our social and sensual possibilities. Other house chores are much less likely to get such a treatment. This shows how cooking and food is such a structural part of our daily existence.

## 2.0 An anthropological approach to cooking food in everyday life

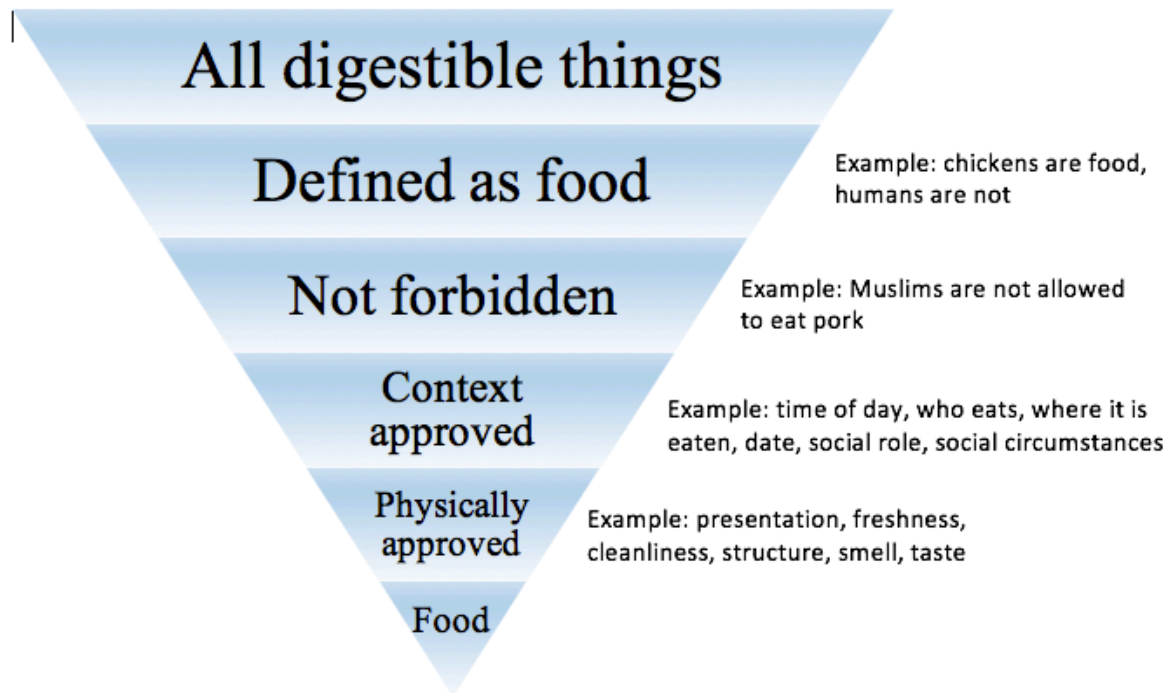
Something as versatile as food can be hard to define. It seems to be very important to us, for physical survival, but also for our mental state. We can get very happy when we eat a certain dish we like. Also, what food is, seems to be defined differently by different people, in different contexts, times of day and many other variables. However, concerning the act of cooking, not much empirical research is done. At the moment, there is a lacuna in the research on modern day cooking culture in Western societies. Much anthropological and ethnological research has been done on food and eating in relation to culture, especially on foreign, solitary, or more secluded cultures (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). In this research, these studies will be used as a basis for the theoretical framework for this research on cooking culture.

Food can bring about a lot of emotions (Baker, Karrer & Veeck, 2005). It is one of the best ways to bring back memories, due to its reach to all of our senses (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett,

1999). We can see it, smell it, feel it in our mouths, taste it, sometimes even hear it, like the crackling crust of fresh bread. Many people can relate to the sweet nostalgic memories of a childhood comfort dish. The excitement when trying to cook a foreign recipe, or the sadness when tasting the flavours that recall memories of a loved one who passed away. Not only do familiar dishes have physical value, also knowing that a dish is what defines one and one's past, accounts for a great amount of the value of the dish (Baker, Karrer & Veeck, 2005). Knowing that the same childhood dish one is tasting, came from a factory, can spoil a lot of the fun. It is striking that both known and unknown foods can cause these emotions. Knowing that a dish is from a certain culture or place in the world can be thrilling and spark ones interest. Food from home is familiar, brings comfort, security, efficiency and is easy. However, new foods can bring excitement.

The incongruence between wanting to explore new foods and at the same time longing for familiar foods, is often called "the omnivores paradox" (Kittler, Sucher & Nelms; 2011). It is believed to be a remainder of the time when we had to search for our food. Humans are omnivorous, biologically speaking, which means they must eat a lot of different kinds of foods in order to survive. In pursuance of a healthy diet, humans had to actively seek for and experiment with unknown foods, also called 'neophilia' (Veeck, 2004). This is dangerous, because those unfamiliar foods may be harmful or poisonous. It is safer to eat what is already known, what is known to be healthy and to refrain from eating new, dangerous foods (neophobia). Thus, on the other hand, humans also kept holding on to familiar foods. What to eat and what not to eat, or what is food and what is not, is passed on to later generations, which increased the chances of survival for the group. Over time, not only the practice of eating and cooking itself has become drenched in traditions and social expectations, so do the related phenomena. How to cook, how to eat, what constitutes a complete meal, the role of men and women in the kitchen, which dish is eaten when and with what other dishes, or which dishes especially not, are all defined in our culture and way of living. We still have the behavioural traits which aided our ancestors to survive.

So culturally speaking, some things are food and some are not. For example, an ice cream is food, except if it drips on the couch. Then it is not food anymore, it is classified as dirt. Only the symbolic value and context here defines what is food, often called the symbolic schemes of edibility (Sahlins, 1990). Most Dutch people will eat pork and chicken, but will never eat dog, cat, or guinea pig meat. How people define and classify food, can be understood in several stages, as illustrated in the scheme on the next page.



*Image 1: Food classification scheme as based on Sahlins (1990)*

The first stage would be everything that can be digested by a human. In theory, that is the most universal definition of what food is (Fischler, 1988). Next, the culture defines what is food and what is not. Things that are digestible, but not nutritious, not nice to eat, or defined as something else, a dog being defined as a pet for example, are eliminated. This definition can also change according to the need of food. In the case of great hunger, the borders of what food is and what not, will be broader. In most European countries, roadkill would not be seen as food, in contrary to some poorer countries. The following step is eliminating forbidden foods. Muslims are not allowed to eat pork according to the Islamic laws, defined in the Koran. It is important to note that pork not is defined as something completely inedible. If a Muslim is forced to eat it, or cannot eat anything else due to shortage, he or she is forgiven and can eat the pork. The fourth step is approval of the food in the context it is eaten in. Most people will not eat cake for breakfast and won't eat poached eggs as dessert. Serving caviar at kids' parties will be frowned upon and eating a whole roasted lobster with several side dishes during a construction workers lunch break will be too. In this way, there are many implicit social rules around food that influence the definition of it. The last phase is physical approval of the food. While, or even before we bring the food to our mouth, we observe it to make sure it is safe to eat. In an instance we judge the presentation,

freshness, smell, structure, and many more factors. Serving soup in a trash can is not a good idea due to negative associations. If the texture of the food does not meet our expectations, we will hesitate to eat it. If finally all of these rules and classifications are met, we are convinced to eat the food. And if we don't spit it out, it will contribute to our physical state.

Distinctions between culture related foods are not that strict anymore, due to globalisation and internationalisation. People travel easily around the world, move to other countries and exchange information about their culture, norms and values with people from all over the world in a matter of seconds. Our personal and cultural identity therefore is less stable than it was years ago, in a time where a person was very likely to obtain the same occupation his or her parents had. Thus, food definitions can be altered over time by influences from other cultures. An example of this change is eating insects. Something that was an abomination for a long time in Western cultures, and is now slowly becoming trendy and being defined as a nutritious and culturally approved meal ingredient.

This phenomenon of globalisation and internationalisation also makes it hard to define to what cultural group a certain dish actually "belongs" to, making authenticity a human-made illusion (Cobb, 2014). It is difficult to define, because a home cooked dish cannot be preserved (Ferguson, 2006). Spaghetti Bolognese for example will be different each time it's made: one time the tomatoes are cooked little longer, or there is just a little more oregano in the dish, making it slightly different than the previous time it was made. Changes on larger scale also happen. One likes the dish more with a certain ingredient added. So, where can one find the real spaghetti Bolognese? 'Nowhere', seems to be the answer.

Also, when talking about food, people often mean different terms (Borghini, 2014). However, many of those terms are not interchangeable. A distinction can be made between the idea of the food and the preparation, often described as the recipe, and the dish itself. For example, spaghetti Bolognese is what we call the combination of ingredients that makes the dish which the majority of people will define as typically Italian. Yet all those ingredients could be combined to make a completely different dish, which is where the recipe and preparation methods come into the picture.

To conclude: there is no clear and solid definition of what food is. The rules around food primarily depending on the social group one is participating in. Also, the definition of what a certain dish entails, is often quite vague. Those definitions are to be made by each person for themselves.

### 3.0 Food, cooking & identity

What someone eats and does not eat, can reveal a lot about that person. Just like the with clothes one wears, the stuff one buys and the house one lives in, food is a language to express and stress our identity (Lévi-Strauss, 1997). Through food habits, other people can distinguish one's personal beliefs and life style. Just like in the case of personal identity, cultural identity can also be expressed through food. A certain group can stress the importance of cooking a certain dish and ascribe this food or dish to themselves. These cultures, or groups with a collective identity often stress self-esteem within the group and thereby distinguish themselves from other groups (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004), in this case by means of certain foods. Others will eventually recognize those foods as belonging to the group.

However, more and more people are buying partly or entirely processed foods and do less of the cooking themselves, which makes it increasingly difficult to use cooking as an instrument for identity forming (Fischler, 1986; 1980; 1988). These processed foods do not have an elaborate history, have an unclear origin, or do not belong to any collective cultural identity, making it more and more difficult to identify their cultural values. As a result, it is becoming more and more difficult to use cooking and food to stress one's own identity. It seems like, for those who do not cook, this social action is shifting to brand identity instead. For example, eating more expensive brands in a way to express wealth and good taste. Because the preparation of food is to a greater extent done before it reaches the consumer, the identity forming shifts to what the consumer buys instead of what he cooks (Philips, 2003).

#### 3.1 Personal identity

A person becomes the food he eats. Literally, because the nutritious compartments of the food are incorporated by the body. The mouth is the border between the "inside" and the "outside" (Rozin & Fallon, 1987). And figuratively speaking, because pasta "is Italian" and being Italian is directly linked with (consuming) pasta. Italians are often called 'Macaronies' by Americans, which demonstrates this principle (Fischler, 1988). The things one eats define how one eats, how many time is spent on making and eating the things one eats, with whom one eats, where one eats and when one eats.

In such manner, each time one eats or decides not to eat, one defines who and what one wants to be. Some do this more consciously than others. The expressed identity can be influenced by life course experiences (Bisogni, Connors, Devine & Sobal, 2002)

An important term in this matter is 'habitus', coined by Bourdieu (1977). Habitus stands for the social background, norms and values one has inherited by upbringing and social interaction. The way caretakers, close friends and relatives behave, has a large influence on how one will behave and think about certain subjects. If one's parents cared about healthy food and always served unprocessed, fresh food, there is a high probability this person thinks it is important and will cook the same kind of foods. In this way, the food style of the parents is maintained. It shows the world who one is and to what social group one belongs.

Others will recognize these signals too, which can be used to change the view people have on a person. Distinction, the process of defining one's status and influencing the perception others have (Bourdieu, 1984), can also be found in the field of food and cooking. Three types of capital are defined in the distinction theory, of which two are very important in expressing identity through food. Economic capital, or wealth and cultural capital, one's behaviour, knowledge and skills. It was found that people with the same economic and cultural capital like and ascribe value to the same things. The same holds for food and cooking. Certain foods and cooking habits are carried out by a certain socio-economical group. For example, people with high cultural capital and low economic capital tend to care about healthy and tasty food, which they show by spending a lot of time and energy in making these foods themselves. People with both low cultural and economic capital tend to eat more fast food. This phenomenon can be used to change the way other people look at someone. By copying the actions and knowledge of another social-economic group, the identity is shifted towards the associations of that group.

Since the publication of the theory, there has been a lot of critique. The distinction between socio-economical groups and their distinctive food habits are not that separate and clear anymore as in the time when Bourdieu came up with the distinction theory. Social groups are mixing and highbrow taste is making place for cultural omnivorism (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Just like a biological omnivore picks different kinds of foods, the gastro-cultural omnivore picks foods from several social groups and makes a mix to his or her own liking. The same person can easily eat fast food and go to a multiple Michelin star restaurant in the same year, without being frowned upon by friends and family. However, this does not mean that the distinction theory is completely false. Omnivorism does not imply that every person is equally likely to consume a specific product (van Eijck 2001, p. 1180).

### 3.1.1 Cooking habits

In addition to what one cooks, how one cooks is also part of personal identity. Some people have a chaotic cooking style, some put a lot of energy in *mise en place* and preparation, some follow a recipe very closely, some just wing it. Cooking style and habits can also change in different contexts (Hartel, 2010). When cooking in someone else's kitchen, cooking during a camping trip or cooking for a special occasion, cooking styles can differ. These habits can differ between gender (Cairns, Johnston & Baumann, 2010), age groups (Nu, MacLeod & Barthelemy, 1996) and social class, (Detre, Mark & Clark, 2010). Certain habits concerning cooking can also be inherited and passed on to other generations. Examples are adding a certain (secret) ingredient to a family's trademark dish, or serving the food in a certain way. When a lot of people copy this certain food habit, it can become a habit of a collective identity.

### 3.2 Collective identity

The belief that one becomes what one eats, has led to several cultural defined food habits, related to the principle of characteristic absorption. A good example is eating foods that resemble the part it would benefit. A walnut looks like a brain, so eating walnuts should be good for the brain. Some ideas about cannibalism have derived from this way of thinking. By eating a deceased person, the soul of this person is provided with new bodies to live in, the person is "recycled" (Thiessen, 2001). Another cannibalism-related idea is that the cannibals will take over characteristics of the eaten person (Lindenbaum, 2004). Other examples are cultures who do specifically not eat some foods, because it has negative characteristics. Vegetables that are too soft will make the person weak (Fischler & Chiva, 1986). These association and related rules eventually define a food tradition for the group. It states what to eat, what not to eat. Rules and traditions around food bind people within social groups, like families (Baker, Karrer & Veeck, 2005), countries (Yiakoumaki, 2006) or religious groups (Mannur, 2007). It forms and strengthens their collective identity.

When a social group or culture distinguishes good food from bad food, they will eventually identify their group and their culture with those good foods (Crouch, M., & O'Neill, G., 2000). Naturally, this is a very slow and long process, not defined by a decision point in what food is and what culture it belongs to. The dishes cooked by a certain cultural group become a collective belonging, a token, used to remind the members of the group to the group feeling, morals and values (Durkheim, 1959). Sooner or later other cultural groups may



accept this identification and acknowledge it as an established fact. They recognize the other group by means of their symbols, such as their food. The way we identify roasted guinea pig as Peruvian food, waffles as Belgian and curries as from India, are some examples.

Here again, it is important to point out that cultures and food identification is not that strict anymore, due to globalisation, internationalisation and the forthcoming fusion foods. Sometimes, this instability in cultural identity is counterbalanced by consciously sustaining a certain eating pattern. Certain foods can be eaten out of ethnic solidarity (Kittler, Sucher, & Nelms, 2011), for example among third generation immigrants who try to stick to the diet of their ancestors. One research even found significant health improvement among a group of diabetic Australian Aboriginals after they substituted their modern diet with processed foods with the diet of their ancestors (O'dea, 1984).

### *3.2.1 Food traditions*

Traditions are an essential part of cultures and social groups. Through repetitive activities in the form of rituals or traditions, the social relationships within these groups will strengthen (Durkheim, 1959). Symbols, like in this case the specific dish or recipe that is associated with the group, remind the members of the collective feeling they get when performing the ritual or tradition. This phenomenon allows the members of the group to keep feeling part of it, even when they are not with other group members. These processes help form an identity and a bond that transcends individual boundaries (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). In modern days, these traditional, group bonding recipes can be seen at birthdays, in the form of birthday cake, wedding cakes or in the form of an Easter cake that is made yearly during that holiday (Mintz & DuBois, 2002). Another example are the traditional dishes that are made collectively in the case of an Anglo-Saxon funeral (Lee, 2007). The attendants of the wake and the funeral prepared food at home, and gave it to the mourning family, as an act of caretaking. The act of sharing food brought the group together, physically and mentally. Food remains were thrown in the grave as symbol of closure of the life of the deceased. Food is closely related to our life, we need it for survival and it is a big part of our lives until we die.

### *3.2.2 Nostalgia*

And because food is such an important part of our lives and cultures, we link a lot of memories to the foods we cook and eat. This can result in culinary nostalgia, a form of personal nostalgia (Stern, 1992), the phenomenon that culinary objects can evoke nostalgic emotions. A dish can remind someone of a certain holiday trip this person once took in his

early years. The smell of it can recall memories from that particular part in the life of this person. Culinary nostalgia makes us long for an idealised past (Havlena & Holak, 1991). Especially food can cause these nostalgic feelings, because it engages in multiple senses (Baker, Karrer & Veeck, 2005). We can see it, smell it, taste it, we can even hear the sizzling when the meal is being cooked. The parts in our brains for senses and memory are closely linked. No wonder that our favourite recipes are often linked to positive memories.

Nostalgia, however, does not always have to be personal. If a culture or social group has the same collective memories, the memory becomes part of the culture itself. Certain dishes, like Christmas pudding or Thanksgiving turkey, remind whole nations of the associated holiday periods (Duruz, 1999). It is therefore not uncommon for people to cook recipes from their past with the purpose to bring back these memories.

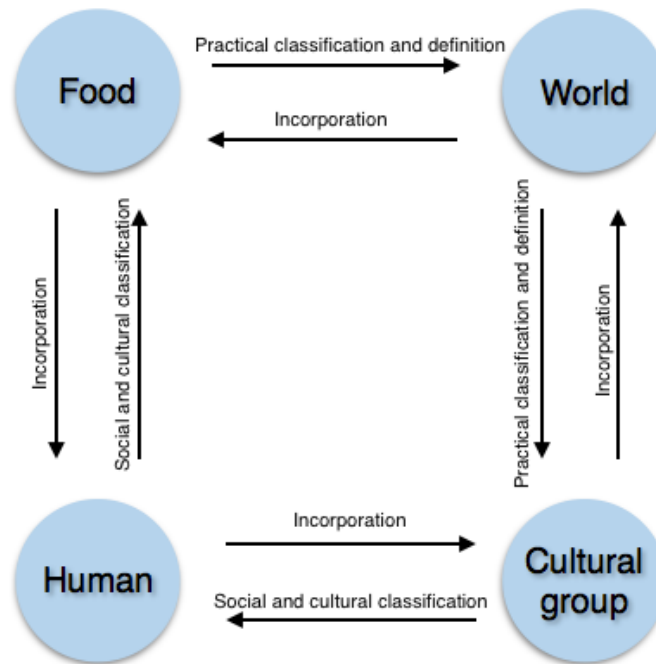
#### 4.0 Cooking & liminality

In the process of cooking, the kitchen plays an important role as a liminal space, a space where nature and culture meet and the borders between the two are vague (Turner, 1979). The kitchen is the place where nature is turned into culture. Food, a product from nature, is turned into a cultural product, in the form of a cooked dish. Natural processes like boiling water and fire, are used to alter raw ingredients and organise them in a specific dish.

If this phenomenon is looked at in a larger scale, one can see a bifold circular process around food. To identify a food, something tangible and natural, one must determine its place in the world, an intangible definition based on social interaction (Lévi-Strauss, 1997). Food therefore is a language of a society that helps determine one's place in the world.

According to Mary Douglas (1966), there are two directions in the process of the liminal food loop. The first direction is from food to world. Food is eaten by humans. Humans are in turn part of, and therefore incorporated in a cultural group. This cultural group is incorporated in the world, the place where the group lives and which it interacts with. The world is in its turn (literally) incorporated in the foods it produces, minerals and cells grow from the soil into a plant. This makes the circle complete. The other way around is from world to food. The world and its terrain, weather and other natural processes determine how the social group interacts with the world and each other. The cultural group defines how a human, from birth on, is behaving and what he looks like. On their turn, humans define what food is, through natural and cultural processes, as explained in the previous chapter. Humans

turn food into culture, the natural components of the world get symbolical value (Douglas, 1966, 1979). Which of these natural components are and are not eaten, determines what the world looks like and how it evolves. This circular process brings continuity to the practice of food consumption and the symbolical value it produces.



*Image 2: Liminal food loop as based on Douglas (1966) & Lévi-Strauss, 1997*

Mary Douglas (1997), however, does not fully agree with this theory, stating that the theory is too broad and does not focus enough on small-scale social relations. In a family setting for example, some foods can have specific associations which do not occur in the overall cultural group. For instance the tradition of eating French fries on Saturday, or pancake Wednesday. Strauss would see the human as a passive participant without own agency.

Another way in which the concept of liminality can be seen in the act of cooking, is “flow”. Flow can be described as: “a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present and future.” (Czikszenmihalyi, 1974). Flow can occur in many different activities. Likewise, it can ensue while cooking and have special characteristics. Cooking is crucial to our survival, although this can be debated in the current developments of takeaway foods and supermarket meals, but can at the same time be a very pleasant activity, which is made much more elaborate than necessary. When someone is skilled enough, one can completely focus on the cooking and

forget other issues. One can be so submerged in the act of cooking that social expectations and one's place in the world can be forgotten. It is quite clear what should be done first and what next, there is just enough challenge during the cooking process for it to stay interesting and it can seem like the time is passing faster than normal. For those who love to cook, the act of cooking can be rewarding and pleasant itself, without knowing what the result will be. This is, until the cook is distracted and the challenges exceed his or her skills, or there is not enough challenge. This is when boredom or anxiety kick in and the liminality and flow is gone.

Because someone can be so emerged in the act of cooking, there can also be found liminality in cooking as a vague border between cooking and free time. When someone likes to cook, cooking will be classified as a hobby or leisure activity. However, it can also be looked at as a chore or daily task, something that is not very nice to do, but has to be done.

When cooking dishes with a nostalgic memory, dishes from the past, there is a liminality between the past and the present. New memories are attached to old dishes.

## 5.0 Cooking & notion of place

Next to going back in time, cooking enables one to wander through the culinary world of unknown places. By cooking dishes from other areas, one can get a taste of what people from the other side of the world are eating, get a taste of their culture and their lives. And this phenomenon is getting more and more ordinary. Cuisines have fused to a point where dishes cannot be defined by cultural origin anymore. Cook & Crang (1996) note that all foods are cultural artefacts and the act of cooking is a displaced practice. We cook dishes of which the recipes and techniques are completely new to our ancestors, let alone our grandparents. We daily eat foods that have never grown on the soil we are living on. And this produce from other areas can have very diverse flavours, due to the soil and weather circumstances. So the dish cooked with a tomato from one side of the world can taste very different than one from the other side. This sensation is sometimes exaggerated by the associations with a certain place (Trubek, 2008). Wine is a good example to illustrate this. The wine fields in France are marked off in regions, with a protected name. So wine from the same hill can both end up in a bottle with a protected name and high esteem, and in a less admired bottle.

### 5.1 Exoticism

This exclusivity can also be found in the definition of exoticism. As explained in earlier paragraphs, new, unknown foods are dangerous, but can have great benefits. They can therefore cause excitement and attract attention. As a result, it is not surprising to see a general trend towards foreign objects and experiences (Heldke, 2003, p. 18) and thus foreign foods (Johnston & Baumann, 2007), cooking foreign foods and searching exotic recipes.

As explained by Johnston & Baumann (2007) exotic and non-exotic cannot clearly be defined. Foods can be placed on a scale from barely exotic to very exotic. Also, these foods can shift on the scale during time, from more exotic to less exotic. For example, Indian curry was more exotic 20 years ago than it is now. Indian restaurants open in Dutch cities, giving the inhabitants the opportunity to get to know the foods. This brings us to a new view on exoticism. Régnier (2003) states that something exotic is parallel to something geographically far away. And although these products are invented or made in a place far away, it is possible to get these exotic foods delivered at home quite fast through an internet order. It could therefore be said that exoticism in modern day society is not only about the distance, or the difficulty to obtain certain objects, it is also about how many people within someone's social group know about this object.

This process is used to show expertise on exotic things and to gain and maintain social status (Johnston & Baumann, 2007). By expressing knowledge and cultural capital, by eating and talking about exotic foods, other, less exotic foods, become more common, and less worthy of appraisal. These foods then slide down on the exoticism scale and get incorporated into the common diet.

When these foods become more usual, experimentation will occur. After all, the symbolical value of the authentic dish has decreased significantly. Other ingredients will be added and new flavour combinations will be made. This process can be defined as a form of friendly cultural appropriation (Rogers, 2006). People from one culture use the cultural aspects of another culture to fuse it into their own.

### 6.0 Expectations

From the existing research on food culture, it can be concluded that food is used as a binding material for social interaction. It helps to bind families and other social groups by forming traditions around food. This collective identity can be expressed by means of food. As a group eats certain foods or does not eat particular foods, it shows what the group stands for and who

is included or not included in the group culture. The same holds for personal identity, people can show who they are and what they personally think is important, and can develop their own style. Because of this social mechanism, people can use food to distinguish themselves from others. By using food as identity indicator, they can show which social group they belong to. These social groups also create a distinction between what is food and what is not, and which foods are good and which ones are bad. Food can therefore be looked at as a collection of cultural artefacts. These food artefacts bind and identify a social group. Those foods and related traditions can produce a collective memory and lead to culinary nostalgia. Because certain foods are acknowledged to be related to a certain culture, one can express distinction and gain recognition by expressing knowledge about particular other culinary artefacts, called culinary exoticism.

It can be anticipated that cooking is a social binder too and that people use it to express their cultural and personal identity. By showing the world what they cook, they can distinguish themselves from other social groups and form their own personal identity. Based on the research on food culture, it can be predicted that people cook new foods from other cultures, because they want to gain status and because of the new taste and excitement of the discovery. Furthermore, it is expected that the main reason for cooking is pleasure and taking care of oneself and others, thereby forming social bonds within families, friends and other social groups.

In contrary to existing research on food and cooking culture, this study will particularly focus on the cooking cultures in Western society and will concentrate on present-day, contemporary daily cooking. It will discuss the concept of cooking in relation to liminality in time and place. It can be expected that people use the liminality of the kitchen in relation to place and time to form their identity and form a connection to the world.

## Method

This master thesis analyses to what extent and in what way selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of everyday life. This study takes an explanatory approach in order to answer this research question and subjects like personal identity, cultural identity, symbolical value, cooking traditions and the motivation to cook are addressed. In this chapter, the chosen method is discussed and compared to other research methods. Furthermore, the method of data collection is summarized and a description of the research sample is given. Lastly, the method of analysis is discussed, explaining the structure of the obtained data.

### *Chosen method*

One of the benefits of qualitative methods is their ability to describe and display social phenomena in the way they are experienced by the study population (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). Therefore, this research style was most suited for this research, which investigated the social phenomenon of cooking.

Within the field of qualitative research, there are a few options with regards to method. Focus groups, observations, ethnography and individual interviews are a few. One of the disadvantages of focus groups is that the opinions of the participants can be influenced when hearing the viewpoint of others, resulting in socially desirable responses. The method of observation would not have been thorough enough for this research, as it focusses on the associations and thoughts on cooking as well, next to how is cooked. A more suitable method would therefore have been ethnography. However, the set timeframe limited the options in that area, which made it impossible to execute an exhaustive ethnographic research. When investigating personal matters, an interview as the chosen form of data collection is best suited (Kvale, 1987). For that reason, personal interviews were the chosen method for this research.

The interviews were semi-structured, making it able to probe for more information and clarification of answers during the interview, when talking about opinions and perceptions of the respondents (Louise Barriball & While, 1994). Most participants were interviewed separately, except for two couples, who were interviewed together. This was to ensure a richer understanding of the discussed phenomena, considering the fact that people make sense of the world from within it, thereby obstructing objectivity (Taylor & De Vocht, 2011).

### *Method of data collection*

Participants were collected through snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). A total of 12 participants were interviewed. The majority of the respondent sample consisted of Dutch residents: one couple in their 30's, expecting a baby, one food blogger, a programmer with a passion for cooking, one student couple living together with other students and a mom of two small kids. To stress the notion of place in cooking, non-Dutch people were also included in the sample. The group of participants therefore also included two female Syrian refugees, an Australian student who is studying in the Netherlands, and two participants from the United States with a blog on international cooking. The Syrian refugees and Australian student obviously have once changed the place they live in, which could affect the way they think about cooking in relation to these places. With their blog, the American bloggers teach others from around the world about cooking and recipes from other places. The non-Dutch respondents' perceptions of place with regard to cooking contributed to this research on cooking in daily life. Except from the American bloggers, all participants were living in and around Rotterdam. The participants were selected to be involved in cooking on a daily basis. The age of the participants ranged between 23 and 50 and the ethnicity was diverse. Education was not a variable in this study.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>
Sasha	Female	36
Mo	Female	50
Rabab	Female	36
Meike	Female	35
Niels	Male	31
Karin	Female	34
Margot	Female	23
Jeroen	Male	26
Fatma	Female	35
Robert	Male	48
Pete	Male	24
Danny	Male	33

The procedure of the interview was explained to all respondents at the beginning of the interview. Before the interviews were held, the participants verbally agreed upon being recorded and were informed about their rights as participants, about what was being studied and what was expected from them. The use of a written consent request form was cancelled after two interviews, because it tended to raise suspicion amongst the respondents, causing them to be more careful when answering questions. Considering the relatively insensitive topic, there were little to none ethical objections or considerations. Respondents were ensured



that participating in the research was voluntary. They were clearly informed about the option to skip a question, in case they did not want to answer it for any reason.

When this was a possibility, the interviews were held face to face, at the participants' home. If this was not possible, for example because of the distance, the interviews were held through Skype or at another place, agreed upon by the participants. Visual and auditory contact was chosen to ensure that further questions could be asked directly and any doubt, hesitation, enthusiasm or any other noteworthy emotion could be recognized. The interviews were held in English or Dutch, whichever was more convenient for the respondent. In case of the interviews with the Syrian women, languages were switched throughout the conversation.

Although some participants are professionally engaged with food and cooking, the interviews focussed on personal experiences and associations with selecting and cooking dishes and the discourse around it. Respondents were asked about different subjects regarding cooking, such as if they liked to cook and why, for whom they cooked, what they thought cooking entails and if they thought it is important to cook. Furthermore, they were asked about practical information, such as the frequency of their cooking activities and where they got their ingredients and recipes. An outline of the topic list can be found in the appendix. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, in some interviews additional questions were posed, in order to probe for more information on a certain topic.

### *Method of data analysis*

The research data consists of 10 in-depth interviews, of about an hour each. Some respondents talked more elaborately, some were more practical or could not answer elaborately due to a language barrier.

All the interviews were transcribed into edited transcriptions, meaning that every word spoken is transcribed, but not as specific as verbatim transcription (Hycner, 1985). Irrelevant sounds or not related conversations are omitted. Subsequently, these transcriptions were coded descriptively, while preserving the participant's own language. The collected data was then filtered on relevant clauses. These were on their turn structured into main sections and subsection, forming the structure for the thematic analysis. For this analysis, the respondents' quotes were dissected, compared and interpreted in three different themes. The first, introductory theme analyses the liminal characteristics of the kitchen. The next two paragraphs are on cooking in relation to time and place. The analysis was done by hand, using

a printed version of all transcript, structured on topics by means of colours for topics and letters for subtopics.

The results of some participants were processed anonymously.

## Results

As stated in the previous chapter, the structure of the analysis is divided into three subsections. First, the kitchen as a liminal space in time and place will be discussed. Secondly, cooking in relation to time is analysed. How do respondents use cooking in order to structure and make sense of time and how do they travel in time through the liminality of the kitchen. Lastly, cooking and place are looked at. This paragraph discusses the place related associations respondents have while cooking and how certain places can affect their cooking habits. All topics give insight in how and to what extent selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of daily life.

### The kitchen and liminality in place and time

In a symbolical, associative and in many occasions subconscious way, respondents tend to see the kitchen as a liminal space. The kitchen and the process of cooking that takes place there, provides a space in which time and place are less specifically defined. By cooking particular dishes, one can travel through countries and time. Robert (male, 48) states “there is so much I can never finish. There is so much out there and there is so much I still don’t know.”. For skilled cooks, the kitchen is a liminal space between free time and working time. Those who are not afraid to experiment and are skilled enough, indicate they use cooking activities as a moment of relaxation. Likewise, Sasha (female, 36) states she looks “at the repetition of cooking as meditation. The process was soothing”. She used these meditational cooking moments to process and deal with her difficult childhood. Most of the cooking by these participants is intuitive, they do not have to think a lot about what to do. Danny (male, 33) explains: “I think it is the most easily available moment of flow in a day, because my body and psyche are fully focused. They are not bothered by other problems, which I do experience during other activities, [problems] like procrastination. Or hunger haha.” He also mentions to look at it as a sport: “I like to do everything at the same time”, explaining that he is completely absorbed by the activity in those cases. This is congruent with the state of flow like Csikszentmihalyi (1974) has described it. Niels (male, 31) thinks it is a relaxing activity after a full day of work. It makes him focus on the rest of the day.

Next to losing a clear awareness of time, the awareness of place can also become more ambiguous when cooking. As Margot (female, 23) puts it, you can go on holiday in your own

food, by cooking foods from all around the world. The two refugee women use their cooking skills, known recipes and eating habits to hold on to their place of origin.

Because of these liminal characteristics of the kitchen, respondents tend to use their cooking habits to structure their time. It helps them to make sense of the passing of time and gives structure by means of cooking traditions and time related associations. The liminality in place causes them to associate certain places with particular dishes or cooking styles. It helps to define their place in this world. The next two paragraphs will explore these phenomena and analyse how the respondents use these to relate to the world.

### Part 1: Cooking & time

How much time is spent on cooking and eating, depends on one's lifestyle. Karin (female, 34) has to cook relatively quickly, because her kids are hungry and have to go to bed after dinner. Meike (female, 35) remarks that the cooking and eating tradition in her household can take up the whole evening. She suspects this will change in a few months, when her first baby is born. It is not surprising to see that people who enjoy cooking tend to spend more time on it. Danny (male, 33), very fond of cooking, explains how the process of cooking is more important to him than eating the food, because he spends more time on the first activity. Karin (female, 34) on the other hand, does not find her passion in cooking and would rather spend time on other activities. That the amount of time spent on cooking is also culturally determined, is stressed by Rabab (female, 36), who laughingly says: "Yes, cooking a Syrian dinner takes around 3 hours. And your [Dutch] dinner just 20 minutes!".

Participants mention to use food and cooking to structure their time. Some use it to break up their day, other participants for example stated they depend their cooking activities on the day of the week, or on the season. Some participants also mention having certain cooking phases. Because of these associations to specific periods in time, one can develop nostalgic feelings with some foods or cooking styles. Furthermore, this chapter will analyse the phenomenon of cooking as social time and the relation with recognition of one's role in this world.

### *Hours*

The respondents who enjoyed the act of cooking, stated they use it to structure or break up their day. Pete (male, 24) uses it as a study break when he is reading papers for his upcoming exams. Danny (male, 33) gives a similar statement, explaining his daily rhythm by means of his cooking rituals: “It really breaks my day. I am an absolute night person, so the time I have before and after cooking is about the same. And between those times, there is some of a daily returning ritual, in which I am deliberately focused on it. It relaxes me.”

### *Days of the week*

From the interviews, it can be noticed that respondents cook more elaborately in the weekends. Simply because they have more time in the weekends, but also because the weekend should be a time for indulgence, relaxation and social activities around food. More time and attention is paid to the meals of the weekend. Working days are reserved for quick and relatively healthy food. As Niels (male, 31) stated: “from Monday to Thursday, cooking should be a little healthier and easier.”. Danny (male, 33) tells he never makes Chili con Carne on Saturdays, because it is just too simple.

Some foods are specifically related to a certain day of the week. For example shawarma on Friday for Meike (female, 35): “Yeah, it is very strange to eat shawarma on a weekday. Not very strange, but I am used to that, it is just a Friday night meal.”, and Filet Americain for Niels (male, 31): “For me it is typical nostalgic Sunday morning food.”.

Because of the time issue and fun association, the division of labour cooking can also differ. Jeroen (male, 26) explains how his father cooked in the weekends, because he liked the activity and his mom cooked on workdays, making sure there was food around 5 ‘o’clock, so the busy family members could all eat at a time that suited their schedule. Margot (female, 23), living with other students, explains the informal cooking division she and her housemates have adopted: “it is just about who has time and who wants to do it. We all take turns in cooking.”. There is no clear agreement on who cooks when and Margot (female, 23) states that the division is roughly equal. Karin (female, 34) explains she and her husband alternated cooking duties, but this division has not survived the birth and time-consuming care of their second child.

### *Seasons*

Many respondents declare to cook differently in different seasons. Seasonal fruits and vegetables are bought to keep a sustainable cooking lifestyle, but also due to the association with the foods or cooking techniques. Jeroen (male, 26) states that he would not normally eat stewed pears in July, although he enjoys the associated ambiance during the wintery holidays. Meike (female, 35) makes a similar statement: “especially the time of year [has a big influence], in the summer we do more barbecues. In winter, it will be more stews, so the season also influences what we cook.” Fatma (female, 35) explains how during Ramadan, an abundance of food is cooked for dinner, partly to compensate for the fasting during the day and partly because of the festive touch the nocturnal dinner has. These annual cooking rituals can give structure and help to make sense of the vague concept of time (Wolin & Bennett, 1984).

### *Phases*

Another time-related subject found during the research, is how respondents talk about cooking phases in their life. One example is how Pete (male, 24) explains how his cooking style and habits have changed now he is a student. His apartment does not have a lot of equipment, which affects the way he cooks. He explains the dip in cooking extravagancy as a phase that will pass when his student days are over. Jeroen (male, 26) gives a comparable illustration when making a comparison between the cooking quality of first year and final year students. He states that it is expected and acceptable to have bad cooking skills and put in little effort in one’s first year of university and that this phase then has to pass.

Mo (female, 50) gives a very specific case of a cooking phase when she talks about her Dupuy lentil phase: “because I just go in phases, sometimes I am in my Dupuy lentil phase, so now I am making lamb with Dupuy lentils, very tasty. And sometimes I am completely into legumes.”.

### *Nostalgia*

When asked about nostalgic cooking, most participants note that cooking nostalgic recipes is not primarily about the memory connected to the dish. First and foremost, it is about the flavour that is appreciated. This is quite obvious, because no one would cook a nostalgic dish of which the flavour is disliked. Fatma (female, 35) explains: “You think it is tasty, because your mother made it, the traditional things, and then you make it and like it.”. Some foods are nostalgic, according to Meike (female, 35), but are not cooked especially for the feeling of nostalgia. Danny (male, 33) shares this thought, he sometimes cooks the Polish sauerkraut his

grandmother taught him to make, because he enjoys the taste and the huge transformation the ingredients undergo, one of the main pleasures of cooking for him. He also mentions cooking the traditional Saturday night chili he was served as a child, not in a way to keep the tradition, but because it is an easy, quick and tasty recipe, which fits perfectly in his low carb diet on working days.

Although nostalgic recipes are not intentionally cooked to recall old feelings, many respondents mention they have recipes with certain memories or associations. Margot (female, 23) gives an example of the strawberries with sugar her grandparents served when camping: “I don’t make it very often, but when I see strawberries, I think about those memories. And sometimes I make it, just because it’s tasty.”. Pete (male, 24) speaks about the importance of traditional foods for the bonding of a family: “There is a reason grandma has a secret recipe of something you know, because it’s passed down through families. You will probably not know your ancestor or your second or third cousin, but you probably are going to know some sort of family recipe, or something your grandma or your mother even made.”. Karin (female, 34) explains to have nostalgic feelings when she cooks French toast or semolina pudding: “When I am preparing that, I think about when my mother made it. Very funny, but I don’t make it intentionally out of nostalgia, I also just like the taste.”.

The associations connected to a certain recipe are often time related. Associations such as seasons, days of the week and phases in life are often mentioned by the participants. Another cooking related association is explained by Danny (male, 33): “Last summer I went to Italy, where I was served a five-course menu every day. I acquired a lot of new cooking ideas, which I carried out last autumn.”. Pete (male, 24) also likes to create the recipes he learned while traveling. He passionately recalls the techniques used when making Georgian Khachapuri, a dumpling with very juicy meat inside. Margot (female, 23) mentions the apple crumble recipe she shares with her boyfriend: “Well, that is kind of our apple crumble, so you could say that is nostalgic.”. Niels (male, 31) has a similar story about a pizza recipe book he bought when he and Meike were in a phase of misunderstanding in their relationship, which they discovered during one time they tried to cook together.

“It is actually quite a funny story. It was at the beginning of our relationship and Meike had a hard time hearing what she did wrong, well, at least wrong in other people's eyes. And I was overenthusiastic, because I wanted to teach her how to cut an onion perfectly. Because people often just do chop chop chop and then throw it into the saucepan, no, when you want to shred an onion perfectly, you have to chopchopchop, chop, chop and then chopchopchopchop. So in

my abundant enthusiasm, I didn't see how Meike experienced it as negative feedback. That happened a few times, after which I bought the pizza recipe book. Somehow, that worked perfectly. And the pizza is still in our repertoire.” (Niels, male, 31)

### *The weekend: time for cooking and friends*

A striking pattern which can be noticed in the interviews, is how people talk about cooking for themselves, in comparison to cooking for others. When they cook for themselves, often on working days, respondents regularly mentioned to cook very quick, easy meals, or eat leftovers. Also the style of cooking is more spontaneous and unstructured. Karin (female, 34) mockingly gives a vivid example of her cooking experiences in the time she lived on her own. “First I lived alone, and cooking was very displeasing, because I did not have any motivation for it. It was all so tiresome, to have to come up with new dinner ideas and I have sat on my couch a few times, watching television, eating without any joy, throwing it in the trash halfway, because it had no taste at all. But there was no love in it! [laughing] You could definitely taste that.” Jeroen (male, 26) mentions that he would not cook very elaborately for himself, “it is just less fun”. Niels (male, 31) agrees on this subject. He states that when he cooks for others, mostly in the weekends, he cooks “more elaborate, with more finesse and more effort, absolutely”.

But why do respondents put more effort in cooking for others, and why can they get more satisfaction out of it in comparison with cooking for themselves? The answer seems to be because people like to care for other people. Respondents mentioned that they like to make sure others are not hungry and feel welcome and at ease. They also love to cook the things they know others like. Niels (male, 31) expresses his love for Meike through his risotto making skills: “There is nothing in the world with which I can make her happier than a plate of risotto. So maybe that is the reason why, if I may say so, I have become quite good at it. Because I know I am doing her a big favour.” Robert (male, 48) does the same thing indirectly with his international food blog. When he found out his website attracted a lot of visitors from Qatar, looking for Filipino recipes, he figured those people are working migrants, building the cities of Qatar. He then decided to focus more on Filipino cuisine, to help them cope with the homesickness and let them recreate the flavours and memories of their culture.

Respondents know what their partners like and dislike and make an effort to cook the things they enjoy. Fatma (female, 35) can exactly name the meals her husband likes most: “meat with mushrooms and white sauce”. When asked why he likes to cook for others, Niels



(male, 31) responds: “I like it when other people are enjoying the food, as a cook you are the bringer of joy. And it is kind of nice to take care of others. You know, I also like it when others make an effort for me”. In the same way, Karin (female, 34) tries to adapt the menu to the intensity of the workday of her husband: “when he has had a tough day, I make something like pasta or potatoes, because he needs the extra carbs”. Pete (male, 24) also takes the needs of his friends into account when he cooks for them. He explains how he changes the carb and protein balance in the dish according to the need for fast or slow burning energy.

Respondents noted that they cook more extravagant when cooking for others. Jeroen (male, 26) states when he cooks for others, he at least cooks “something more unique, or more than one course”. Margot (female, 23) agrees and adds that it also has to do with a little show-off. Beautiful dinners, like the quiche with vegetable slices in a neat spiral form she has recently made, would not come to mind when she is cooking just for herself. On a less conscious level, respondents also show the need of reciprocity when making an effort for others. That does not mean the food has to be of the same quality, but the effort others put into making the food that they provide, has to be roughly equal. Margot (female, 23) tells a story of when she lived with housemates who did not put any effort in preparing them a nice meal. They often heated a bag of IKEA meatballs with a bag of IKEA meatball sauce. This annoyed her, because she did make an effort and received nothing in return. Jeroen (male, 26) adds that cooking for others comes with a responsibility, which is more easily taken when cooking for others than for yourself. “When you cook for yourself, you are able to care less [about the quality of the food and the effort put into it], but if everyone in a group is cutting corners, at some point you are only eating junk.” Niels (male, 31) mentions that he is often the one who cooks for others, but also really would like someone else to cook for him with the same enthusiasm.

Because cooking for others has such expectations and comes with a responsibility, respondents mentioned to be “as German as possible with the recipe” (Pete, male, 24), following the recipes as meticulously as they can. Margot (female, 23) also affirms she follows the recipe more closely when cooking for others and takes less risks. Karin (female, 34) confirms this reasoning by explaining when she takes risks while cooking for her kids, there is a possibility she cannot provide them with food. This is not an option, so extravagant and difficult recipes are very unlikely to be chosen.

Respondents also love cooking for others because it enables them to let them try new dishes and flavours. By providing food, one gives something of oneself (Clair, Hocking, Bunrayong, Vittayakorn & Rattakorn, 2005), it provides a way to express one’s opinions,

morals, values and identity. Sasha (female, 36) started her international food blog because “I felt like I could get more people excited to try new foods”. She uses self-called recipe bridges, familiar ingredients people already know, to make exploring new dishes easier. “Instead of finding the strangest thing, like deep fried tarantulas, I find an ingredient that people already know, like carrots, and say: so we eat carrots, they eat carrots, let’s use that as the bridge and learn how they make carrots.”

### *Talking about cooking*

Because humans eat together a lot, it can be expected that people talk about food a lot too. They express their thoughts on food and cooking and compare cooking style and skills with others. Danny (male, 33) confirms this by talking about his experiences of him and his friend, observing each other and comparing their cooking styles. His friends’ style is more organized, with careful mise en place, while Danny (male, 33)’s style is more chaotic and spontaneous. By comparing and talking about cooking, the respondents declare to have learned from others. Most of them learned from their grandparents (Fatma, female, 35), parents (Margot, female, 23), (Pete, male, 24) and friends (Danny, male, 33), or from others who shared their recipes and techniques (Sasha, female, 36), (Robert, male, 48), (Jeroen, male, 26). Some of the respondents express their interest in chatting with professionals, like cooks and butchers about flavours and cooking techniques.

Talking about food and cooking is a much appreciated and performed part of the cooking ritual. Participants mention they sometimes share recipes or ask for a recipe when they enjoyed a certain dish. In order to find foreign recipes for her blog, Sasha emailed some restaurants and foreign bloggers. Mo (female, 50) mentions she shares “the classics” with her friends, and Rabab (female, 36) sends her recipes to her sister, friends and mother-in-law. “For my sister, I always have to write it down, otherwise she would forget haha.” Meike (female, 35) sometimes sends her friends pictures of the food she made, and some respondents also ask professionals for advice. When Niels (male, 31) wanted to roast a pig on a fire, he called a chef he knew: “He gave me some advice, which I completely ignored. And now we do it exactly in that way.” By sharing a recipe, one can gain a sense of validation in one’s role as caretaker in the family, or show expertise in the role as skilful cook, thereby expressing personal, family and cultural identity (Clair, Hocking, Bunrayong, Vittayakorn & Rattakorn 2005). Niels (male, 31) acknowledged the expertise of an acquaintance by asking him specifically for his knowledge.

### *Cooking and eating as social time*

As stated earlier, cooking is closely linked to social activities. People cook together, talk about food and cooking, invite each other to eat food and share their food with others. Niels (male, 31) expresses his thoughts on why food and cooking are social phenomena, closely linked to emotion: “Humans are social animals. You are happy when you are together, maybe that is what life is about, you want to connect with other people, which is all about emotion. And that starts at the table, food is very basic, so the two united, is even more emotion.”

Fatma (female, 35) cherishes the tradition of Ramadan, although her husband does not fast during that period. She explains that the night time dinner during Ramadan is a very important social happening. Normally on workdays, the family is quite busy and everyone eats at his own convenient time, but during Ramadan, the whole family eats together after the sun goes down and everybody has time for each other. Friends and family are invited and a big meal is prepared. For Fatma (female, 35), the Ramadan is not primarily about the fasting, she thinks the first and foremost drive for the traditions is the importance of eating together. Karin (female, 34) too uses the moment of eating the food at the dinner table as an essential calm moment of the day, a moment to talk and have attention for each other.

Sasha (female, 36) agrees on the importance of cooking and social connection. She gives another example on how people bond over cooking: “I found a lot of cultures around the world finding community in cooking together. So maybe somewhere in Africa pounding cassava, you know it takes hours to make, or rolling empanadas or making ravioli, it takes a lot of people and it is a lot of work. And as that is happening, you are communicating, you’re talking, you’re getting, you know, making memories.” Because cooking is so closely related to social interaction, respondents tend to seek for food experiences from other cultures, in order to get to know other cultures and their people. Robert (male, 48) states that cooking different dishes “is a great way to get to know other people, other cultures”. Many respondents make a similar statement. Mo (female, 50) says “it is the best way to get to know a culture, because the food always brings you to people. And if you are really interested in people, you are also interested in their cuisine, because it is so closely connected.” She also explains it the other way around: “I think people who enjoy cooking and food from other cultures have an open mind and are more tolerant. I associate the fear of other cultures and their foods with narrow minded people, you know, the “own people first” mind-set.”. The idea that interest in food reflects an interest in the world in general, is confirmed by Pete (male, 24), saying: “Eating is something everybody does. If you are not creative and you are

not inspired, or energetic about cooking, if you don't have flare or excitement in something so basic and fundamental in your life, well then where does your excitement lie?"

Food and the act of cooking is also used as a reason for social interaction. Meike (female, 35) points out that cooking and eating is "nice entertainment while being together. And a good reason to be together." Fatma (female, 35)'s neighbour sometimes brings some Dutch food for her to taste, and they discuss the flavours, associations and recipes. Robert (male, 48) points out that talking about food is "a great way to sort of break the ice". Pete's (male, 24) statement is in line with Roberts opinion: "If you can meet someone from another country and talk to them about the food, you have that base, it sort of breaks down that social barrier. No one is trying to be special. Maybe vegans are, but nobody is trying to be special about what they eat. It brings social connection through so many cultures and so many people." Not surprisingly, many social activities are based around food and drinks, like dinner parties and social drinks. The main activities on these events are eating, drinking and talking. An example is the dinner the international society of Margot (female, 23) organises each year, where new members get acquainted with each other and bring their national dishes and sweets along to share. Margot (female, 23) describes the joy in letting others taste a part of your culture: "People are quite proud of their foods, they identify with it. You share with others what you are used to. And it is fun when people are disgusted, or when they absolutely love the food." Jeroen (male, 26) adds that food is the most likely cultural aspect to be shared with people from other cultures, because it is so tangible and visible.

## Part 2: Cooking & place

Cooking and the activities around it, help respondents to determine their place on this earth. This paragraph examines how cooking can help one gain recognition, aid in getting a sense of place, and how participants use their cooking habits to care for the world. Furthermore, it is analysed how place can affect one's cooking habits with regards to limitation and determination in what is cooked. Lastly, it is explained how diversity in place in the act of cooking can contribute to the joy of cooking.

### *Recognition and one's place in the world*

By cooking for friends, and talking about cooking skills, one can gain and sustain recognition for their role in this world. Pete (male, 24) expresses his view on cooking and being a man, stating that "as a male, you have to know how to cook. And on another level, you want to be

as useful as possible, to society, to your partner, to your friends and to your family, so yeah, you should definitely know how to cook.”. Fatma (female, 35) explains that in her culture, being a good cook is an important part of her role as the woman in the family. She prepares the food for family and friends and is responsible for the food at festivities. Niels (male, 31) expresses this recognition for the role of the mother when he says: “I have so much respect, deep respect for the fact that my mom has put food on the table for 25 years, that is just a hell of a job!”

Meike (female, 35) explains how this strive for recognition and high food standards can also cause anxiety when others try to cook. In the intention of reciprocity, people tend to be afraid the food they cook is not as good as the food that is provided to them. Niels (male, 31) then explains that the recognition is not found in the food itself, but in the act of cooking and taking care of the other. He loves to be one who is being cooked for, and states that he would enjoy a simple meal that is made with love just as much.

#### *To get a sense of (a) place*

Respondents also indicated they cook certain dishes to get a sense of place of their own, or to discover other places.

Sasha (female, 36) talks about how she uses cooking to help her get a sense of home and recreate that feeling for her daughter: “I think it was a way of trying to find a sense of belonging, because I was in and out of foster homes and I grew up with different families and I never really felt my place in the world. So I think, once I had a daughter, I was a little bit lost about how to raise her. So part of it was for me to, kind of, see the world. You know, every week, you know, what’s going on and find my place in it, but then also to create a different kind of life for her. So I wanted her to feel like the world was friendly, that she had a place in the world and the world was loving.”

Robert (male, 48) started his international cooking blog to help him get a sense of the world, to learn other people and their cooking habits are not that different at all. He explains: “when you learn about different cuisines, you realise everybody likes the same kind of flavours. Some like it spicier, some like it a little blander, but sweet, sour, salty, all those things. What tastes good in one country, usually tastes good in another country too.”

Rabab (female, 36) explains how the Syrian dishes she cooks are determined by the state she comes from. Each state has its own dishes and food style. In Aleppo, for example, they use certain sweet elements in traditional dishes, while people from Rabab’s state use savoury flavours. In her state, As-Suwayda, in southwestern Syria, people are allowed to eat

pork, in contrast to other states, where Islamic groups rule. By cooking other dishes, one can learn about other countries; what grows there, geography, norms, values, beliefs, religion, daily rhythm and wealth. Many respondents express their interest in that correlation. Like Margot (female, 23), who discovered this analogue between morals, values, and food: “It has a purpose that Islamic people do not eat pork, and it means that they have completely different dishes. In that way, culture is linked with religion, it shows people’s opinions and what they see as the truth. So what they think is important and how they think about it. In this case, a good life, healthy, not putting polluted things in your body, that kind of stuff. Which ultimately goes back to the philosophy of their whole life, actually.”

Mo (female, 50) tells a similar story about the cooking styles she discovered while travelling, which are parallel to the local nature and lifestyle:

“I like to eat where the people from Cape Verde eat themselves, those fishermen. It’s so cheap too, and it reflects the way of living there. I ask them, what is genuinely from here? Lots of fish, fish stews, baked fish, all kinds of fish in all kinds of ways. Some goat meat and so on, you can see them run around in the mountains there haha. And on the Philippines, they often held cock fights, and afterwards they would have roasted rooster legs. The one who lost, was put on the grill. Yeah, it is a poor population, they eat everything.”

What kind of foods are from what place is often debated about. Karin (female, 34) gives an example of Moroccan food: “We sometimes cook Moroccan, or at least if you can call it Moroccan. Because that definition is mainly based on our idea of what Moroccan food is. I don’t think real Moroccan people cook it in that way”. Margot (female, 23) and Jeroen (male, 26) have a similar discussion about the origin of dishes and the possibility to recreate it in an authentic way “If we go to a Thai restaurant, what we get is probably not Thai at all. And I think to make a dish the way it is served in the country of origin, I think we do not understand enough of their taste to be able to reproduce it. I know approximately how it should taste, but if I try to get the flavour right by tasting it, then I won’t be able to do it. So in that case, I cannot travel, so to say, to the place of origin of the dish”.

#### *Awareness of food origin and environmental impact*

Because the food one eats comes from the earth, by cooking, one can have an impact on the environment. Many respondents are aware of this fact and feel responsible and take it into account when putting together their menu for the day or the week.

Mo (female, 50) tells about the trend to eat locally grown produce, which she thinks is a positive development. She states to “really enjoy lychees for example, but I eat them

preferably in the area where they grow”. Mo explains this attitude reduces CO2 emission, because the food does not need to travel as far. She continues about the excessive choices people have in supermarkets and how people could reduce the waste by having less choice. Meike (female, 35) agrees: if people care more about their food and put more effort into it, it would benefit the sustainability of the food production chain.

Many respondents declare to eat less meat than before, in an effort to care for the earth. Danny (male, 33) articulates his thoughts on eating meat and how we as humankind and as government should actually struggle more with the act of eating animals:

“Because it's so incredibly inhabited, eating meat, and everybody really likes it too. There are few people with the moral realization, and the willpower and some sort of other urge to resist it, but than the least we can do is to be more aware of what it exactly means to eat meat. Because I think the way we deal with meat is really absurd. It's so weird, we may really hope that animals do not have any consciousness. Yes, I really hope that so much. I do not believe that very much, but if there is a god, then I think we can be judged on that. That you when you reach heaven, you say: "Well, I've lived well". "You have not lived well, you have participated in the biggest genocide ever occurred on earth! And you never even doubted it." Well, that's what I think, and I think if a bit of consciousness would return, it would be a very good thing.”

Niels (male, 31) states he would really like to eat less meat too, but it doesn't fit his low carb diet. This diet focuses on meat and vegetables, so Niels ignores “the earth for a while and think about myself, until I have reached a healthy weight again.”

Next to physically caring for the earth, a trend towards awareness of the origin of food can also be noticed. Niels (male, 31) experienced this awareness whilst preparing the pig to cook on a campfire. “Putting the pig on the spit, it's quite a mental threshold. You see that it's a pig. One the one hand, it is confrontational, but on the other hand, you know you are eating him from A to Z.” Danny (male, 33) points out that this awareness will benefit everyone. To let people know how dependent our society is on the agricultural sector. In a recent discussion with colleagues, he came up with the idea to let all the packages expose where the food has come from. “So if it concerns a vegetable, show crops on a field, if it's pasta, show a factory and for meat, show the slaughterhouse. Just to bring a little more emotion back into our products, which are now actually offered in a completely abstract way.”

Meike (female, 35) explains that she thinks eating good food can be encouraged by exciting people about cooking and teaching them how to do it. “If you put more effort in the food you make”, she tells, “you have more attention to the quality of the products”. In such an attempt, Niels (male, 31) tried to change the Sunday movie night take-out habit into the activity of cooking for all his friends. In that way, he enjoyed the food more and at the same time inspired others to cook more often too.

#### *Limitation and determination in place*

How and what people cook is greatly affected by the circumstances, facilities and available ingredients. So where people are in the world has a significant influence on their cooking activities too. Although foods can be available all over the world, what is directly available is often used in the daily meals.

The place where one lives, determines how one cooks and what flavour combinations one uses. Rabab (female, 36) gives a nice example of how every state and city in Syria has its own unique flavour combinations. “The kind of dish is different in every city in Syria. For example in Aleppo, they use sweet flavours in their dishes. We don’t. I do not like it when I eat it, so I don’t use it. And maybe my kind of dish is also different from other cities. Every city has a special dish, typical for that city.” Another example is given by Niels (male, 31), who tells about the difference in serving herring in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, due to difference in moral, and his interest in the matter.

Fatma (female, 35) explains that she shifted the times of cooking and eating to match the Dutch lifestyle now she lives in the Netherlands. Her traditional cooking times do not fit into the schedule of activities she and her family now have in the new culture, and it is easier to adapt her schedule than to work around the Dutch daily structure.

Because of this correlation between the land of origin, its way of living, and the ingredients and taste of a dish, respondents often note that they search for “authentic” experiences when trying to find new and unknown foods. However, when cooking themselves, most respondents do not see any problems if a certain ingredient is missing. They easily replace it with something similar. However, the outcome can then be completely different. Pete (male, 24) explains how a dish he discovered in Brazil tasted a lot different when he made it again in Australia, due to the available ingredients. The mojito chicken in Brazil was sweet and caramelized, due to heaps of sugar in the cocktail. In Australia however, he bought a premixed mojito, which was much lower on sugar and had other proportions. Pete



(male, 24) explains “Using what is locally available, the outcome is going to be very much different, so it is not going to work out the same way”.

The place where one cooks, can come with limits to facilities and ingredients. The majority of the respondents express their gratitude for the possibility to cook themselves and having a place to cook the way they prefer. Fatma (female, 35) tells about the time she lived in a refugee camp with her two kids and husband, where the food was provided by the organisation, and no one had any cooking equipment. It confined her in her freedom and made her reliant on the organisation of the camp to feed her kids, who did not like the food provided. To cope with the situation, she used ingredients that were available, like mayonnaise and ketchup, to make the food more attractive for her kids. Because he is restricted in food choice during the lunch break at his work, Danny (male, 33) notes that he makes extra chili on a weekday and takes it to the office, to make sure he is not “subjected to that canteen food”. With this expression, he distinguishes himself from those who do eat the food in the canteen.

These limitations in facilities and ingredients can also aid in becoming creative in what and how to cook. Like the example of Niels (male, 31) roasting a pig on a fire for a group of friends in a clubhouse: “So I thought, okay, it has to be culinary, how in the world are you going to facilitate that in such a clubhouse? I mean, those four miserable burners, you cannot make anything decent on those, so I’ve gone back to the base. These are my ingredients, [...] how can we make sure that we can do something really cool, something really culinary. And then at some point, the idea of campfire pops into your head. That is such a big boy’s dream. A pig on a spit. So then you pitch it to the others.”.

Limitations seem to be a welcome challenge, but only when it is occasional and when one has the time and means to take on the challenge. Mo (female, 50) agrees on that statement, explaining that “when you are poor, it is not about delicious food or anything, it is about survival. And once you can meet that basic need, you can open up to flavours and the pleasure of eating.” Danny (male, 33) points out how limitations can also form a cultural cooking style:

“If you look at the Surinam culture, where the group identity is very strong, I think there is a technical barrier when you have to cook food for 20 people. So that leaves only some things to eat, chicken for example, to name but a few. And herbs and spices are very easy to use when cooking for big groups, you just throw them in. So then you are left with foods that are

easy, cheap, very seasoned, and a little forgiving with regards to placement in the pan and the preparation techniques.”

### *Diversity in place*

Variety in place with regards to what is cooked, seems to be important for many of the respondents. They show interest in dishes from other places and make an effort to teach themselves how to cook those foods. Now Rabab (female, 36) lives in the Netherlands, she enjoys discovering Dutch dishes and trying to cook them. An example is how she asked around and searched online for a recipe on Dutch meatballs. She states she loves trying new things from other places. The respondents enjoyed their food more if they ate something different every day. Karin (female, 34) explains: “If you cook with fresh herbs for example, one day you do it like this, the other day you do it like that. You just have much more variation.”. Margot too states that she like to ensure variation in her daily meal. She explains it makes one more aware of the quality of the food and lets one appreciate it more.

Respondents with kids mention this motivation for diverse cooking too. Karin (female, 34) explains the importance of providing her kids with different foods each day, because they have to get used to the different flavours. This makes it easier for them when eating at someone else's place and will help them later on in their lives with making positive social contact. Mo (female, 50) agrees on the subject when she tells about her childhood. Because of the occupation of her father, she and her family have lived in a lot of different countries, like Turkey, Kuwait an Iran. She tells: “So you eat so much different things as a child, you won't have this fear for weird or different foods later on”.

Next to variety in food per day, Fatma (female, 35) emphasised the importance of variety in the elements of one meal. She noticed how Dutch people tend to have efficient meals in which everything is put together in one pan. All ingredients have one flavour and are eaten as a whole, while in Syrian cuisine, many small dishes are made, all with their own distinct flavour.

## Conclusion

In this conclusion, the obtained data of this research is compared and interpreted in the context of the existing research on these topics. The findings are compiled and structured in order to make a contribution to the scientific research on the field of cooking and liminality. Additionally, a description of how this research has contributed to the existing research on cooking and liminality is given. Furthermore, the drawbacks of this research are discussed, as well as the validity and reliability of the chosen research design, concluding with suggestions for future research.

This research focused on the question to what extent and in what way selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of daily life. It made an attempt to form an understanding of present-day, contemporary daily cooking in Western society. This study analysed the activity of cooking and its liminal characteristics in relation to place and time. By means of in-depth semi-structured interviews, a total of 12 respondents were asked about their cooking habits and thoughts on the subject. This research identified two main themes in the area of cooking and liminality: cooking in relation to time and in relation to place.

On the basis of the analysis of the data, structured in two themes, related to place and time, a few conclusions can be made. The activity of cooking was often used as a way to relax, for example after a long workday. Respondents who were skilled enough to intensively focus on the activity, and could allow themselves to be absorbed by it, sometimes reached a state of flow (Czikszenmihalyi, 1974). Because cooking is connected to memories and traditions, it helps to structure time on different levels. It divides one's life into different sections, is influenced by seasons, helps to construct rhythm in days of the week and divides the days into sections. Some respondents for example used the cooking ritual to break their day and to encourage them to focus on the remaining part. Cooking helped the respondents to make sense of and structure the vague concept of time, a theory that is also supported by Wolin & Bennett (1984). Cooking as social time helps to remind the respondents of their family and social groups and aids them in defining their place in this world. By the things that are cooked, and the level of importance the respondents ascribe to cooking, they expressed their cultural and personal identity. Cooking makes someone part of a family or social group. It provides recognition of someone's existence in the world. It is important to note this process is not performed intentionally. Although most respondents denied to deliberately express their identity by means of cooking, implicitly, this process was clearly recognizable. This

recognition of one's place in the world, was also present when cooking for others. Cooking gave respondents recognition in their role as caregiver or head of a family. It also ensured acknowledgement in their role as a cooking expert, or cooking fanatic, which is consistent with the theory of Clair, Hocking, Bunrayong, Vittayakorn & Rattakorn (2005).

Next to making sense of time, respondents also used cooking as a means of making sense of the world. Some used cooking to help them get a sense of home, or create this sense for others, for example by recreating the foods from their place of origin. Respondents seemed to actively seek for other places in their cooking activities, to relate to the world and its different places and cultures. Respondents were discovering the world from their kitchen by cooking dishes from different regions of the earth and exploring the corresponding cultures with their associated morals and values. Respondents related to the world when cooking as they spoke about the awareness of food origin and changed their cooking habits in an attempt to care for the earth and cook more sustainable. Furthermore, in the context of place, they cooked the locally available produce and adapted their cooking habits to the place where they were located. Most respondents stated to long for diversity in place in their daily diet. They let themselves be influenced by other places to keep the act of cooking interesting.

This research contributed to the existing base of research on the topics of cooking and liminality in place and in time. It showed how cooking strikingly fits in the theory on the state of flow (Czikszenmihalyi, 1974). When being absorbed in the activity, cooking enables the definition of time and place to diminish, creating a liminal space in the kitchen. Preceding research on liminality mostly focused on other subjects than cooking (Douglas, 1966, 1979, 1997; Turner, 1979; Lévi-Strauss, 1997). When it did focus on the liminality of cooking, it was quite often closely linked to the definition of food. This research provided insight into the liminality of the act of cooking with regards to time and place. Its analysis in two themes showed how people use the liminality of daily life cooking in order to relate to the world. In the analysis of this liminality in time, the current theories on culinary nostalgia (Stern, 1992; Baker, Karrer & Veeck, 2005) were confirmed. Because food is so closely related to the senses, people create cherished recipes to recreate feeling from the past. On the subject of exoticism, this research added a new insight into the matter. The motivation behind exoticism did not only seem to be gaining recognition and distinguishing oneself (Johnston & Baumann, 2007), but also to get to know other places and cultures, and help make sense of the world and the origin of foods. The results of this study also comply with existing theories on collective identity, how food and cooking, and talking about these subjects, help people to bond and express their group culture. This research however added to the theories of personal identity,

that people can express their personal cooking identity by talking about cooking and comparing themselves with others. When talking about their habits and thoughts on cooking, and comparing their cooking style, respondents noticeably distinguished themselves from others (Bourdieu, 1984), not only by ascribing value to cooking or not cooking, but also by what they cooked and what they did not cook.

### *Drawbacks*

A difficulty in this study was the language barrier in the interview with the two Syrian refugee women. The interviews were held in English and Dutch, switching languages when the respondents did not understand a certain question, or when they could express a certain word or thought better in the other language. The two women were learning Dutch at the moment of the interview and their level was already quite advanced, for conversations in daily life. During the interview, however, it was difficult to go into depth and the respondents had difficulty expressing their thoughts on the subject comprehensively. Sometimes the level of proficiency in English was also not enough to have an elaborate conversation.

The interview in this research had a very loose structure, allowing respondents to speak freely on their habits and thoughts regarding cooking, contributing to the explorative nature of this research. As can be expected, the reliability of this research therefore is lower in comparison to researches with a strict interview structure. The thematic analysis in this research divided the expressions of the respondents in a section on liminality and cooking in relation to time and to place. Because of the unstructured nature of the interviews, some quotes can be arranged in another category. This could affect the validity of this research.

### *Future research*

Future research can be focused on a clear definition of cooking, and a separation between cooking culture and food culture. Another scientific field that still has to be discovered, is cooking related to cultural discovery. In the interviews, respondents mentioned to enjoy discovering other areas of the world, and explore other cultural identities through their food. It can be researched how people use cooking for their cultural discoveries.

Scientifically, a lot is known about cooking and fulfilling a role as caretaker, and about the role of food and cooking within a family. However, the field of cooking in relation to making friends and maintaining relationships, is relatively unexplored. Respondents noted to take pleasure in inviting friends and cooking for them, or making friends by cooking together.

Future research can aim on clarifying and interpreting the social phenomena around cooking and friendships.

In addition, there is still a gap in literature regarding how people express their personal and cultural identity, and to what extent this process is carried out intentionally. An example of a research in this field can be a social media analysis, focussing on visual posts of people forming their identity through photos of what they have cooked.

### *Contribution*

Existing research on cooking, identity and liminality has primarily focussed on remote and solitary societies. This research on the contrary, has focussed on food and cooking culture in Western society and concentrated on present-day, contemporary daily cooking. This study has analysed to what extent, and in what way, selecting and cooking dishes provide a way for people to relate to the world, within the context of daily life. It has explored the field of liminality in cooking, and has distinguished the themes of time and place, thereby contributing to the existing knowledge on cooking culture.

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# Appendices

## Topic list

### **Interview design – semi-structured in-depth interviews**

#### Officiële deel

Bedankt voor het meewerken aan dit onderzoek!

Dit interview is een onderdeel van het onderzoek voor mijn master scriptie.

Ik zal je wat vragen stellen over koken en jouw mening daarover. Er zijn dus geen foute antwoorden.

Mocht je een bepaalde vraag niet willen beantwoorden, dan kun je dat aangeven en dan slaan we die over.

Ook kan je op ieder moment het interview afbreken.

Aan het einde van het interview zal ik je vragen of je wilt dat de resultaten anoniem worden verwerkt.

De master scriptie zal alleen in het archief van de universiteit terecht komen en gestuurd worden naar alle deelnemers die dat willen. Mocht het ooit gepubliceerd worden, dan zal ik opnieuw toestemming vragen.

#### *Official part*

*Thank you for your cooperation in this research!*

*This interview is part of the research for my Master Thesis.*

*I will ask you some questions regarding cooking and your opinion on it. This means that there are no wrong answers.*

*If you would rather not answer one of the questions, you can say so and we will skip the question.*

*You can also end the interview at any moment.*

*At the end of the interview I will ask you if you want the results to be processed anonymously.*

*The Master Thesis will only be placed in the archive of the university and be sent to all participating interviewees. In case the document will ever be published, I will ask your permission again.*

1. Vind je het goed als ik dit interview opneem?  
*Do I have permission to record this interview?*
2. Dus je bent een [beroep], kan je me daar iets over vertellen?  
(In het geval dat beroep niet relevant is: Dus je houdt van internationaal koken, kan je me daar iets over vertellen?)  
*So you are a [occupation], can you tell me something about it?*  
*(In case occupation is not relevant: So you like cooking, can you tell me something about it?)*
3. Dit interview gaat over koken, wat versta jij daaronder?  
*This interview is about cooking, what would be your definition of that term?*
4. Doe je dat regelmatig, koken?  
*Do you do it often, cooking?*

5. Vind je koken belangrijk?  
*Do you think it is important to cook?*
6. Wanneer begon je te koken? (Hoe, waar, wie leerde/inspireerde je?)  
*When did you start cooking? (How, where, who inspired/taught you?)*
7. Wat vind je leuk aan koken?  
*What do you like about cooking?*
8. Waar haal je de recepten vandaan?  
*Where do you get the recipes?*
9. Waar haal je de ingrediënten vandaan?  
*Where do you get the ingredients?*
10. Vind je authenticiteit belangrijk?  
*Do you think authenticity is important?*
11. Als je kookt, voor wie doe je dat dan meestal?  
*For whom do you often cook?*
12. En waar vindt het plaats?  
*And where does it take place?*
13. Vertel eens over een keer dat je uitgebreid kookte, wat kookte je en hoe ging dat? (van het bedenken van het menu tot de laatste kruimel)  
*Tell me about one time you cooked an elaborate dish. What did you cook and how did it go? (From the moment of selecting the recipe until the last bite.)*

Dat was het voor dit interview. Bedankt voor het meewerken!

Wil je anoniem verwerkt worden in de master scriptie?

*That's it for the interview. Thank you for participating!*

*Do you want your interview results to be processed anonymously?*