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Sharing Meals, Making Meanings: Foodways among 2nd and 1.5 Generation Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

Second- and 1.5-generation immigrants must negotiate multiple cultures: the culture(s) of their parents and the dominant culture where they grow up. Foodways, then, play a critical role in the construction of cultural identity, marking group inclusion and/or exclusion. This study explores how people with inherited in-between identities construct meaning in their everyday lives through food. It examines the intersections of diaspora, acculturation, and food in Halifax, Nova Scotia—a small city with historically low immigrant retention rates. Through sharing meaningful meals with eight participants and supplementing these insights with semi-structured interviews, I find that foodways act as sensory, material, and symbolic markers of belonging and difference for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants. Participants constructed connections to and were ascribed different from peers, family, and heritage through the relational and multisensory nature of food. This study shows how living together with difference can manifest through meal sharing, which helps create a sense of community for those whose identities are rooted in culturally in-between spaces.

Keywords: foodways, second- and 1.5-generation immigrants, selective acculturation, cultural identity, Nova Scotia

Food as narratives of family and belonging

When I showed up at Daisy's house on a dark, cold January evening, I had not anticipated how warm I would feel when I left three hours later. Daisy welcomed me with yuzu tea and taught me how to make *kimchi-jjigae*, a Korean stew that was hot, sour, and hearty. Kimchi hit the oiled pot with a sizzle and slowly softened as we sautéed pork belly, canned tuna, and tofu. Then went in a gochujang sauce mixture that stained the stew red. Once ready, dinner was punctured by slurps and metal spoons scraping ceramic bowls when we mixed stew with rice. While her roommates washing dishes provided background noise for our conversation, I learned that Daisy's relationship with her cultural identity was complicated, much like my own. I wondered why we had never talked about our shared experiences before, despite being acquainted during high school. I thought to myself, "Perhaps it's because we had never shared a meal."

Eating stew and drinking tea are gateways to immigration stories and childhood memories. They also bring us to discussions of parental hardships, assimilative sacrifices, and the question, "Where does this situate me?" The formation and maintenance of identity are processes that every individual grapples with throughout their life. Cultural identity is of particular significance for members of diaspora groups who are physically separated from the locus of their cultural background or heritage. By coming of age in a different cultural context than their parents, second- and 1.5-generation immigrants go through unique processes of identity construction (Rowe 2012; Somerville 2008). This paper focuses on adults who were either born in Canada to immigrant parents (second-generation immigrants) or who immigrated to Canada when they were children (1.5 generation immigrants). Both second-generation and 1.5-generation immigrants (Rumbaut and Rumbaut 1976) must negotiate the heritage culture(s) of their parents and the dominant culture where they are born or raised.

Simultaneously, food plays an essential role in the social construction of identity (Guptill et al. 2016). Encompassing what we eat, how we eat, and under what circumstances, the concept of foodways refers to the cultural, social, and economic practices related to food production and consumption (Guptill et al. 2016). Moreover, foodways mark inclusion and exclusion, representing membership (or a lack thereof) to nations and ethnic groups (Guptill et al. 2016). Framing this project through foodways, rather than just food, allows me to explore its social, cultural, and sensory significance. For first- and second-generation immigrants, heritage foodways, or the food practices inherited from past generations, are particularly important because they act as a tangible link to the diaspora's culture of origin. However, cultures and the foods that represent them are not clear-cut entities. This leads to my research question: What role do foodways play in the construction of cultural identity among adult children of immigrants?

To explore this, I refer to theories related to ethnic boundaries and acculturation (Barth 1969; Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). I situate my study in an era of 'multiculturalism,' where the co-existence of transnationalism, globalization, and white hegemony complicate all facets of life, from governmental policies to the intimate relationship between food and cultural identity (Gabaccia 1998; Duruz 2005; Sigrist and Michaud 2023). Using participant observation to capture the multi-sensory and embodied elements of food preparation, consumption, and commensality, I cooked and ate meals with participants and supplemented these insights with semi-structured interviews. My lived experience as a child of Chinese immigrants is central to my data collection and analysis as well. Through this work, I seek to understand how a sense of community can be fostered

between diasporic communities and amplify the narratives of a growing portion of the population of Canada.

Literature review: Scanning the recipe

Roughly chop ethnic boundaries, identity, and place

Anthropological understandings of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries are both reinforced and complicated through globalization and transnationalism. Barth's (1969) work on ethnicity rejects the notion that ethnic groups are static and ascribed with inherent differences. Instead, Barth (1969) argues that they are constructed and maintained through ethnic boundaries. The cultural features within these boundaries may change, but what matters to an ethnic group is the "continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders" (Barth 1969, 14). Ethnicity is thus a social process that is made and remade through internal and external constructions of difference. According to Barth (1969, 15), what defines the group is the ethnic boundary itself and "not the cultural stuff that it encloses." However, as boundaries blur through transnationalism, it is worth critically examining what this "cultural stuff" entails and how it changes or persists throughout generations.

A globalized world characterized by migration and mobility complicates the notion of boundaries. Today, the relationship between ethnic identity and place is no longer taken for granted (Wimmer 2008; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Anderson's (1983) concept of imagined communities is a helpful way of framing ethnicity for second- and 1.5-generation immigrant heritage identity. Originally describing the rise of nationalism, Anderson (1983) argues that a single group, consisting of too many members to know personally, must imagine connections to each other to feel part of a community. Extrapolating this concept beyond imagined connections to *each other*, second- and 1.5-generation immigrants might imagine connections to a *place* they, in many cases, have never lived, to solidify heritage group identity. Scholars like Rios and Watkins (2015), for example, find that members of the Hmong diaspora in the United States maintain trans-local relationships through photographs of imagined landscapes of their homeland. Exploring the mechanisms diasporas use to construct connections to place, such as sensory processes like foodways, is therefore crucial for a more nuanced understanding of ethnic heritage identity.

Similar to Anderson's (1983) idea of imagined belonging, Wimmer (2008, 973) defines ethnicity as detached from place and rather "a subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry." In the context of multicultural societies, Wimmer (2008) writes that some individuals aim to overcome ethnic boundaries by boundary blurring; some may even embrace cosmopolitan identities in which they perceive all individuals as part of a single, global community. This agency to shift and blur ethnic boundaries is significant because ethnic identity may have command over other personal statuses (Barth 1969). Accordingly, some first- and second-generation immigrants may prefer to change their position within the existing ethnic boundary hierarchy. This repositioning can be done through assimilation into the dominant society in hopes of escaping minority stigma or gaining power or prestige (Wimmer 2008). Although geographic place becomes less relevant to ethnicity in multicultural societies, diasporic populations must strategically situate themselves within ethnic boundaries.

Lamphere (2007, 1134) suggests we pay attention to how this "cultural construction of difference" changes intergenerationally, between first-generation immigrants and third- or fourth-generation immigrants. Whereas new immigrants typically maintain cultural traditions, later generations may have what Waters (1999) calls ethnic options. Writing about descendants of white European immigrants to the United States, Waters describes their ethnic identity as flexible and optional rather than ascribed. Commonly associated with the concept of ethnic options is symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979), in which ethnic identity can be deprioritized and expressed through symbols when desired rather than integrated into everyday life. My project seeks

to understand where second- and 1.5-generations fall on this spectrum. To what extent do they express pride in their heritage, and how? How much of their cultural identity is voluntary rather than ascribed? Acculturation and identity in children of immigrants, and the dance between maintaining one's heritage culture and adapting to dominant society, is a subject of debate in the literature. Most sociological and anthropological theories examine assimilation in its intersection with race and class. In segmented assimilation theory, Portes and Zhou (1993) argue that, depending on structural barriers, some children of immigrants may be successful in assimilating into the dominant society and others will be blocked, in part due to racialization. Within segmented assimilation theory are three possible outcomes, which Portes and Rumbaut (2001) empirically test. The first is consonant acculturation, in which parents and children absorb mainstream culture at an equal rate. The second is dissonant acculturation, in which children's adaptation to mainstream society greatly outpaced that of their parents. Lastly, selective acculturation describes when children maintain core elements of their home culture while gaining key elements of mainstream society.

Overall, current scholarly conversations focus on acculturation and ethnic identity as a means to examine economic and social outcomes for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). I argue that it is important to examine second- and 1.5-generation identity as an end in itself because of its critical role in perceptions of self-worth and belonging. Further, studies examine acculturation in large, Western cities that are ethnically diverse, such as New York and Los Angeles (Luthra et al. 2018). My project examines the acculturation of 1.5- and second-generation immigrants in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a smaller Canadian city where immigrant retention rates have historically been low (Ramos and Yoshida 2011), and where 83 percent of residents are white (Statistics Canada 2023).

Drizzle in foodways

Food is an important marker of inclusion and exclusion within group membership (Mintz and Du Bois 2003). Maintaining culinary distinctions fosters a sense of personal belonging to groups, and the ways that we prepare, consume, and share food allow us to define for ourselves and others who we are (Guptill et al. 2016). Walker (2012, 204) writes that "choices about what is eaten, and with whom, are part of a range of strategies available to groups that may wish to either differentiate or align themselves with other groups, both in response to and in initiation of intergroup interactions." The element of choice in foodways means that commensal code-switching may be a strategy for assimilation, especially given that food is a marker of social and economic distinction (Walker 2012; Bourdieu 1984; Goffman 1959). Compared to other cultural symbols of identity, food's unique significance comes from its "indispensability and polysensorial character," as well as its embodied nature as a form of identity work (Walker 2012, 191; see also Guptill et al. 2016). The food preferences and dining practices of children of immigrants are thus a powerful lens through which we can understand ethnic identity and acculturation.

Although acculturation theories depict the efforts of second-generation immigrants to assimilate despite ethnic othering in mainstream society, it is possible that food is an exception in individuals' desires to cross boundaries. Gabaccia (1998) writes about the role of ethnic foods and immigration in the construction of American identity. She argues that immigrants may want to maintain familiar foodways for multiple reasons: to keep social connections with others from the same country of origin, or to signify cultural values, for instance (Gabaccia 1998). In discussing Italian immigration to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gabaccia (1998, 54) says, "to abandon immigrant food traditions for the foods of Americans was to abandon community, family, and religion." In this sense, food provides a sense of pride and identity, enabling immigrants to separate themselves from Americans, who, in the words of one Italian boy, "were people who ate peanut butter and jelly on mushy white bread that came out of a plastic package" (Gabaccia 1998,

55). It is unclear whether second- and 1.5-generation immigrants would experience cultural pride to the same extent or desire such differentiation from the dominant population, given their upbringing within mainstream society.

In an ethnographic study of the assimilated Lebanese diaspora in New England, Rowe (2012) finds that informants generally did identify as American, only identifying as Lebanese when discussing, preparing, and enjoying food. Moreover, their maintenance of Lebanese foods did not conflict with their assimilation into mainstream American society. Rather, it allowed second- and third-generation immigrants to construct *parallel* Lebanese and American identities (Rowe 2012). In line with past scholarship (Joseph 1999; Shokeid 1988), food was seen by the dominant population as the least offensive and threatening aspect of ethnic identity. In this sense, heritage foodways allow diasporic populations to maintain their heritage identity in a low-profile manner (Rowe 2012). Here, the maintenance of cultural foods represents selective acculturation for diaspora groups, who may alter their lifestyles in other ways to achieve assimilation.

Let marinate in the rise of multicultural foodscapes

Many immigrants desire to maintain authenticity in their foodways. Others have created "westernized" versions of their heritage foods that make them accessible to the dominant society. The rise of fusion foods and the accessibility of various cuisines in Halifax complicates the binary notion of heritage food versus western food, warranting exploration in relation to cultural identity construction for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants. A qualitative study in France found that Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs hybridize their heritage food with French food to appeal to a mainstream audience (Sigrist and Michaud 2023). They use this in-betweenness in cuisine to ensure their economic survival, protect themselves from exclusion and marginalization, and ensure the continuity of Brazilian identity in the diaspora (Sigrist and Michaud 2023). This is another example of selective acculturation in which a fusion of heritage and host cultures acts as a means of economic empowerment and ascension into the middle class (Portes and Zhou 1993). Although some studies see this as ethnic erasure, others state that "creolized" versions of cuisine developed as a "creative response to expectations of assimilation" or to avoid stigma (Rowe 2012, 227).

Globalization, which has made way for multiculturalism, manifests in Western cities' diversifying foodscapes. Now, the 'cultural stuff' of an ethnic group is no longer confined to that group. Ortiz's (1940) concept of transculturation, which asserts that cultures merge and converge during encounters, is particularly salient in the study of multicultural foodscapes on second-generation immigrant identity. A "day-to-day confrontation with cultural diversity" through food points to intercultural interaction between ethnic minorities and dominant society as an exchange rather than as a unidirectional attempt for ethnic minorities to assimilate (Gabaccia 1998, 105). That said, the creation of fusion foods by immigrants in the first place implies that, on a group level, ethnic minorities must compromise aspects of their heritage to accommodate the dominant population, making the process involuntary. The extent to which a dish's 'authenticity' to its cultural origin matters to second- and 1.5-generation diasporas has not been thoroughly explored, especially in a city like Halifax that does not have large ethnic enclaves.

Methods: Collecting ingredients

In a skillet, conduct participant observation; transfer to the oven for interviews

The population for this study is second- and 1.5 -generation immigrants living in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). Using posters and social media posts, I recruited five participants who were second generation and three who were 1.5 generation, having immigrated to Canada between the ages of two and seven. Ages ranged from 20 to 55. Ethnic backgrounds were diverse, with participants having family ties to East Asia, South Asia, North Africa, West Asia, the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, and the British Isles.

Sharing a meal as method

There were three components to data collection: cooking, eating, and semi-structured interviews. I asked participants to cook and eat a meal with me that was meaningful to them at their homes. All participants opted for a meal and interview, and all but two also opted to cook together. Most hosted me at their homes; however, one prepared their dish at a university office, and another met me at a restaurant. During this process, I conducted informal, semi-structured interviews as they guided me through meal preparations. Both cooking and eating are all-encompassing, sensory, material, and social processes that are best explored through participant observation (Adapon 2008). Broadly paying attention to modes of cooking, use of ingredients, and food and table etiquette, participant observation allowed me to gain an embodied understanding of the multisensory elements of cooking, eating, and commensality. Instead of being told that making biryani is a time-consuming process, I stood at a stovetop sauteing onions, rummaging through cupboards, and chatting between sips of SodaStream water until my legs and voice grew tired.

Relatedly, I used senses as both objects of study and means of inquiry (Howes 2019). Particularly during participant observation in the kitchen, attending to the instructional elements of cooking and the senses participants evoke is crucial. Harris (2021, 103) writes that sensory education is "a complex negotiation between explicit instruction and embodied learning," which, during cooking, relies on the researcher focusing on sensory directions related to taste, appearance, texture, and smell. My task was to interpret both the sense-evoking instructions given by my participants and my own sensory experience in the kitchen and dining room. As an outside guest to the private sphere of participants' homes, I acknowledge that my presence may have influenced the domestic food production processes participants chose to share. However, participant observation still helped me understand the hands-on nature of food that other methods would not allow. I then thematically coded this data using NVivo for analysis; here, I refer to each participant using a pseudonym and have edited their quotes for clarity.

Analysis: Tasting the flavours of research

Plate, serve, and dig in

The ambiguous cultural and ethnic boundary lines that second- and 1.5-generation populations living in multicultural societies experience are reflected in participants' self-perceptions of cultural identity. Nearly all participants alluded to or explicitly articulated feelings of 'in-betweenness' growing up. This 'in-betweenness' was marked by a tension between not fitting in with peers because of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, yet not fully identifying with what one participant referred to as the "cultural script" of their parents' heritage. I therefore argue that second- and 1.5-generation immigrants have distinctly hybridized cultural identities, characterized by both adaptability (a "best of both worlds" feeling) and alienation (an "in between worlds" feeling). This hybridization experienced by participants is in line with Bhabha's (1994) and Pieterse's (1994) arguments that globalization and transnationalism create cultural hybridization rather than homogenization. Moreover, I argue that the foodways of second- and 1.5-generation immigrants are a material representation of their hybridized cultural identities. For participants, foodways acted as sensory and material markers of belonging to Canadian multiculturalism but difference from peers. Heritage foodways marked a connection to family through commensality and memory, but were limited by second- and 1.5-generations' geographical distance from their parents' homelands.

The Appetizer: Difference from, and belonging to, 'mainstream' culture

Foodways and difference from peers

Many participants described their cultural identities as being rooted in difference due to interactions with peers that created a sense of otherness — the feeling of being excluded and reductively labelled as belonging to an outsider

group. For all, the local context of school or neighbourhood was instrumental in their experiences of not "fitting in," showing that perceptions of self are place-based and relational. Food played an imperative role in constructing participants' notions of difference. Heritage foodways prevented most participants from gaining "full access" to mainstream society, pointing to their acculturation as selective but involuntary. All participants, except Milo (Greek, Montreal, 2nd gen.), spoke about how food amplified their differences from peers. Four of eight participants described experiencing what is anecdotally dubbed a "lunchbox moment" in school—when those around them expressed distaste for their food or repulsion by its "stench." Ahmed (Irish Bengali, HRM, 2nd gen.) said,

> When I had friends come over, they're like, "What is that? Yeah, it stinks." Or, they would say my house smelled funny. Or, that I smelled funny, because eating a lot of curry, the spices come out of your skin. So, I remember being very, very conscious of food the whole time I was growing up. It had a lot to do with my identity. I just knew, okay, not only am I different, *I even bloody smell different*. I eat different. I have different tastes from everybody. Everything just seemed different.

Figure 1: Ahmed's chicken curry with potatoes. Photo by author.

Although participants like Rebecca (Eastern European, Toronto, 1.5 gen.) and Natasha (Lebanese, HRM, 2nd gen.) brushed these experiences off, others found that food-related experiences with peers impacted their cultural identities.

Conversely, this alienation can serve to enact ethnic pride. Sam (Libyan, HRM, 1.5 gen.) was relatively unbothered when people sneered at her food, saying, "It just brings a good sense of pride. I'm like, 'Yeah, you think it smells stinky? But listen, it tastes good, OK?'" According to AJ (Pakistani, HRM, 2nd gen.), who loved the South Asian food his mom made growing up, "no one ever really complained" about his lunches. Still, his mother told him not to microwave his food at school as to not disturb people with the smell. At home, he said his mother would fry onions in the garage, because she was "really self-conscious" about making people uncomfortable with the smell of the food, even in their own home. For Sam and AJ, food was a positive marker of difference that reflected a hybrid cultural identity, in the "best of both worlds" sense of it, allowing them to maintain desired aspects of their heritage culture while otherwise integrating into the mainstream. However, the consumption and production of their preferred cuisine came with a constant acknowledgement (either from them or their parents) that it set them apart from their peers.

Heritage foodways and the journey of acceptance

For other participants, heritage foodways were stark markers of difference that took them on a journey from rejecting to embracing their heritage cultures. Daisy (Half Korean, HRM, 1.5 gen.) said food was an "insecurity for a bit" as she was growing up, questioning "why am I getting this food for lunch when the other kids are getting Lunchables?" She added that it was not until she made friends who accepted her as a person that she felt comfortable eating Korean food around others.

> I remember all through junior high, basically, I told my mom to stop packing lunches… That was something I brought up, being like, "The kids think it smells bad." Or they think it's weird.
>
> … But now I go into high school,

university, and I'm like [to friends], "You'll be better if you drink this tea with me, take my word for it!" "You'll really like this soup!" I'm trying to share as much as I can. I really like cooking for people in the house and I'm always offering.

Figure 2: Daisy's kimchi jjigae. Photo by author.

As Daisy's story illustrates, the smell of Korean food involuntarily set her apart from her peers growing up, which othered her. However, she now expresses that sharing food with friends "who are outside of the Korean community" makes her "so proud to be Korean" and "so excited to share my Korean-ness." By sharing heritage foods, Daisy both dissolves the boundary between 'us' and 'them' and solidifies her Korean identity. Through her hybrid 1.5-generation positionality, she reframes the dichotomization between ethnic insiders and outsiders as something that can bring people together when both parties embrace this difference through sharing rather than one-way assimilation (Barth 1969).

Edward's (Chinese-Hong Konger, Richmond, 2nd gen.) rejection of the "Asian part" of himself materially played out through a refusal to use chopsticks, even at home, during secondary school. However, he came to realize the importance of Chinese food when he moved to Halifax for university, saying that the move pushed him to "miss that Asian part of me," because he "felt like a minority for once" and the food "felt too Western." Today, Edward says that Asian food is "part of my happiness." Yet, he said he "only really brings Asians" to dim sum, because "dim sum's so important to me, that if I brought people who aren't familiar with dim sum or don't really do certain dishes that they don't like, it affects me." Whereas Daisy's acceptance of the Korean part of her identity was constructed alongside a desire to share Korean foods, Edward's experience with peers who have rejected the foods important to his heritage identity led him to become protective of it. By only sharing dim sum with other Asians, Edward maintains an ethnic boundary and ascribes his own difference, giving himself the agency to internally construct a boundary between insiders and outsiders rather than allowing external voices to ascribe him an Other identity.

For second- and 1.5-generation participants, particularly those who are racialized, heritage foodways were a symbol of everyday 'us versus them' otherness (Said 1978). Second- and 1.5-generation immigrants are uniquely placed to challenge this dichotomization because they exist with hybrid identities. My participants' experiences with food and peers show that the ascriptions of their identity as 'exotic' by the mainstream act as a barrier to Portes and Zhou's (1993) selective acculturation. Without mainstream acceptance, it is difficult for the second- and 1.5-generations to gain upward socioeconomic mobility while maintaining bicultural identities (Portes and Zhou 1993). In response to Othering, these participants create strategies, such as finding the peers that do accept them and sharing with them important dishes, to 'gain access' to belonging in the mainstream society where they live, while maintaining heritage foodways.

Celebrating Canadian multiculturalism

Despite food setting them apart from peers, nearly all participants felt comfortable with what they referred to as a 'Canadian' way of life, associating it with multiculturalism and diversity. Participants' identities are thus characterized both by feelings of difference from peers and belonging to a ubiquitous Canadian culture. For instance, all participants expressed an adaptability with food, enjoying cooking and eating cuisines from around the globe. AJ said he mainly eats lentils and curries for dinner but has burrito potlucks and crêpe lunches with friends. AJ felt his cultural identity

was distinct from both his parents' and from "the predominant Western culture" because "it's just like a hybrid; I feel right in between." Sam believes that living in Canada has exposed her to foods she otherwise would not have tried while living in Libya:

> I would have never tried ramen [or] butter chicken. I've only ever eaten [Libyan food], or pizza or hamburgers, so it's either very cultural or a very basic idea of what North Americans eat… [The diversity of food here] forces you to not stay in your little box; you can try new stuff, and you don't have to be afraid.

It is therefore important to note that although all participants have experienced assimilation to Western lifestyles, the contents of Canadian culture are dynamic and transcultural, characterized in this historical moment not just by "pizza or hamburgers." Instead, the growing accessibility of various types of heritage foodways to various demographics has become symbolic of Canada's multiculturalism. While no participant discussed fusion foods or hybrid cuisines as being influential to their cultural identities, most celebrated the wide range of cuisines at their disposal by way of living in a Canadian city, acknowledging that the importance of commensality extended beyond the sharing of their heritage cuisine.

Overall, participants' relationships with cuisines other than their own show that multicultural Canadian foodways also influence cultural identity. At the same time, participants' commensality and crossing of ethnic boundaries through sharing different types of foods is changing the nature of what is considered 'mainstream' in the first place, evincing foodways to be a transcultural process (Ortiz 1940). The notion of Canadian identity is constantly being renegotiated due to the multicultural, mosaic nature of Canadian culture, and the social and dynamic nature of sharing food. In other words, mainstream foodways influence identity for second- and 1.5-generation participants, and their identities and backgrounds are influencing mainstream foodways. That said, most participants chose to make dishes from their heritage cultures for me. While participants' choices may have been influenced by the nature of this project, it is also possible that heritage foodways hold greater significance to participants' cultural identities than what they perceived to be Canadian foodways.

Figure 3: Natasha's gochujang crispy tofu with broccoli and rice. Photo by author.

The Entree: Difference from, and belonging to, 'heritage' culture

Despite participants rejecting many parts of their parents' cultures, everyone acknowledged that having a connection to their heritage cultures was important to them. AJ's thoughts on Pakistani culture sum up the feelings of all participants: "There's a lot of good in it. The aggressive hospitality. Sharing your home and what you have with people. That part of that particular culture, it's a source of joy and happiness, and so, I kind of kept it."

Largely, food and commensality were the "good" symbols of heritage culture that participants wanted to maintain. All participants, except Natasha, shared with me a dish from their parents' culture that they ate growing up, and when discussing the ways that food is meaningful to identity, everyone referred to experiences from their childhood, connections to family, and memories of home.

Sutton (2010, 217–218) writes that the "union of the senses" is key to food memories, "through the notion that memory has multiple interacting sensory registers.' While I will not delve into psychosensory explanations for the importance of food, it is worth noting that the unique experience of food-making and consumption is what makes food such a strong point of memory, nostalgia, and transnational connection.

Heritage foodways as a connection to family

Seven of eight participants chose to share with me a dish that evoked in them feelings of joy and comfort. Each dish had sensory, ritual, or social significance, pointing to heritage foodways as a material and symbolic mechanism through which second- and 1.5-generation immigrants validate connections to immediate family. For Sam, Rebecca, and Edward, commensality played a key role in the cultural transmission of heritage foodways. Sam chose to share with me zumeeta, a Libyan dish that is communal in nature:

> We eat [zumeeta] at home for my family. Everyone eats it at home… You can eat it in big groups… we'll do a big bowl, and we'll sit around and eat it. You all just put your hand in there and go for it… When I eat stuff like this, I feel clean, just because everything there's just stripped to basics, like you saw: sugar, olive oil, some mysterious powder, and that's it. It feels clean, it feels good, I feel connected.

Figure 4: Sam's zumeeta. "it smells like olive oil and my grandma." Photo by author.

Sam later told me the "mysterious powder" in zumeeta was ground barley, after asking her family. Sam further said that, when it comes to eating Libyan food with her family, "I won't have to explain myself. They just get it." Heritage foodways thus allow her to "feel like I have in common something with my family," which is important to her, given that "I live a very different lifestyle [from them]."

Rebecca shared similar sentiments, saying that "I definitely start to feel like I'm losing [the Eastern European] part of myself" when she is not around family and not eating that food. Rebecca's meal included a set dining table with a pot of tea ready upon my arrival, and she articulated that the social act of eating brings her family together:

> I think food is the primary way we connect. Because whenever I'm at home, if we're not going for walks, we're eating. That's just what we do; we spend time together by eating. You might not even be talking to each other, but you're at least sitting together and sharing, which is nice…You don't just show up to spend time with someone without the pinnacle of it being food.

While participants' identities were uniquely hybridized, numerous participants said their parents' cultural identities were more heavily influenced by their home countries. Given these differences in lifestyle and knowledge across cultures and generations, commensality and food's indispensability acted as a crucial bridge between second- and 1.5-generation immigrants and their parents. Heritage foodways allowed parents and children to connect despite other differences.

Alongside commensality and domestic food production, the sensory nature of food was important for memory and connections to family. Ahmed, who prepared his father's curry, described it as "very, very down-home" and "earthy," walking me through the process of how his father would prepare it. Moreover, preparing the curry with me evoked specific, visceral memories of his father from childhood. While sweating the onions with a blend of garlic, ginger, and warm spices, Ahmed told me he would routinely hang around the kitchen

Figure 5: Rebecca's pelmeni. "When I am just feeling down, it's what I go for; if I just want something that's warm and filling, that's what I go for. It reminds me of being a kid, it reminds me of being at my parents' house." Photo by author.

while his father cooked dinner, and that he "would always be over his shoulder, smelling the curry coming out." Twenty minutes later, Ahmed peered over the stove and said, "That is literally what I grew up on, right there in that pot." The multisensory nature of foodways also came up with Edward, who described dim sum as an all-encompassing ritual that connects him to this Asian identity:

> I really like the etiquette in enjoying dim sum, and the atmosphere of all the people serving dim sum and pushing the carts… And I really like the way they communicate. It's very nice and friendly if you speak their language… It's kind of like a networking event. And one of the social etiquettes is calling them beautiful and handsome. … And the etiquette of pouring tea for other people, I really like that. And, instead of saying thank you, my dad taught me that you could use the gesture of tapping your fingers…

For Edward and Ahmed, the atmosphere associated with dim sum, or the smell and visual of curry in a pot, were crucial connections to their fathers and to childhood memories that they made a concerted effort to maintain. Again, the sensory nature of foodways made these dishes into mechanisms through which participants connected with family and cultural identity.

Figure 6: Edward's dim sum. "I also really like dim sum because it's also my origin, half of my origin. It's nice, even though I haven't been to Hong Kong or China for like 13 years, I'd say. So being able to have this makes me feel like I'm back there." Photo by author.

At the same time, most participants were not too concerned with 'authentically' preparing dishes. AJ used an online recipe for biryani instead of preparing the day-long, layered version his mother made growing up. Ahmed took great inspiration from his father's curry and felt that he was "honouring" his father's memory by making it, but made slight alterations, such as marinating the chicken overnight or using a teaspoon instead of measuring by eye. Most participants, except Edward, were not bothered by preparing and eating heritage foods that they did not perceive to be fully authentic if they were similar enough to spark a memory or foster a connection.

Participants' lack of concern with exact meal replication demonstrates that heritage foodways are not static objects to be preserved. Rather, more important to participants was reproducing the dish in some form as a symbolic connection to heritage. Adapting heritage foodways, which are grounded in parents' cultures, to participants' own lifestyles and to the mainstream context where they grew up shows that heritage foodways are both dynamic and have *symbolic* importance to second- and 1.5-generation immigrants' cultural identities.

Heritage foodways as connections to imagined geographies

Heritage foodways were not only a connection to participants' parents, they also acted as transnational connections to generations past and to heritage countries. Milo pointed out that "so much of identity is place-based." When breaking down their identity as a Greek Montrealer, they said that, "it feels like [Montreal] is very much a part of me." However, they added that their Greek identity "comes from my parents and comes from people in my own community." As explored above, place plays a strong role in the construction of cultural identity because the local neighbourhood or school shapes values and lifestyles. But, for those raised in a separate environment from their parents, the "heritage" aspect of cultural identity has less of an opportunity to be directly influenced by parents' countries, cities or villages. Instead, that part of participants' cultural identities is largely shaped by what Milo referred to as imagined geographies:

> So much of how we define ourselves is based, on the one hand, on the physical places that we live and that we encounter every day, but also the imagined geographies of where other people are; where we've thought about. Greece is a real place I've been to. But Greece is also more than that. It's the place where my father was. And in a way, there are parts of it that are utterly inaccessible to me.

Since the physical places that shaped their parents are inaccessible to second- and 1.5-generation immigrants, heritage foodways become an especially significant connection to their cultural backgrounds, contributing to an imagined placemaking of heritage.

Figure 7: Milo's yemista. "It takes a lot of effort to make, and I associate it with feelings of home, feelings of relaxation, feelings of comfort." Photo by author.

Apart from discussions of immediate family, Daisy, Sam, Natasha, and Edward all alluded to the idea of "feeling connected" to their heritage culture in a more ambiguous sense through food. When putting together a mixture of *gochujang*, *gochugaru*, soy sauce, kimchi and tuna brine for a stew, Daisy explained that she had not done it according to any recipe and joked that "I feel like I'm just guided by my ancestors." Sam said she recently bought a mortar and pestle to grind her own spices because it helps her feel closer to Libya, which she considers home:

> You feel so disconnected, and you're like, I want whatever, anything, that will connect me back. And just the grinding motion, I'm like, this is very similar. … At least for me [food is] a constant

> connection back home. Back home, I *would* do this.

Through physical separation from place, food preparation became a sensory and material symbol of not just family, but of 'heritage culture' more broadly for participants. Once again, the all-encompassing nature of foodways meant it allowed participants to construct connections to heritage places, despite not being immersed in their everyday environment.

For Dessert: Barriers to heritage foodways

Domestic food production & distance from parents' homelands

Although participants attributed food to be an important part of their cultural identities, five participants expressed barriers to recreating dishes they ate growing up, limiting their connections to their heritage cultures. This was largely because they did not grow up learning to cook from their parents, due to not living in the same context in which their parents grew up, difficulty with recipe translation, or priorities outside the kitchen. Only Daisy described actively helping cook family meals while growing up, but even so, said, "I haven't learned, like, 90 percent of my mom's recipes."

Sam attributed her lack of intrinsic ability to replicate her parents' dishes to a physical separation from the environment in which her parents grew up, limiting intergenerational skill transmission. For example, she said she had trouble making Libyan foods because she did not have the repetition and practice that people who grew up in Libya, surrounded by family would have, "Because they did it when they were young. Everyone's like, "here, do this, I can't do it anymore because I'm old," and then you'd start doing it and it becomes your responsibility. Similarly, Rebecca said her grandmother's cooking knowledge was simply a result of "having done it for however many years," and AJ said his aunts would have learned to cook "just by watching [their] mom" back in Pakistan. Not having domestic food production skills transmitted intergenerationally has implications for cultural identity, given its commensal significance. Rebecca continued:

> I really fear losing that connection to my family and my culture by not having that food. Literally all I need to do is just learn how to make it, but it's one of those things that I feel like is passed down through your family.

While the nature of the home economy is changing for everyone as social norms shift (Short 2007), participants expressed that they would have learned recipes more naturally had they grown up in their parents' homelands.

By way of growing up in Canada and assimilating into 'mainstream' culture, another barrier some participants faced was only knowing how to cook using measurements, when their family's recipes were often based on approximation. Sam, AJ, and Natasha all said they learned to cook from online sources such as YouTube, following recipes with measurements. The dishes Sam and Natasha learned from the internet were ones their parents did not cook. Sam expressed difficulty learning how to make her family's Libyan food, when she was used to cooking in units:

> [Zumeeta] also has no rhyme or reason. My mom will pour, and I'm like, "How many grams is that?" She's like, "What do you mean? Put stuff in!" … It makes it so much harder to cook this when you've learned in a way that you can't translate it to this. So like, you can't translate measurements to this because nobody can tell you a measurement. They're like, "Just look with your eye." I'm like, I can't look with my eye, because when I learned, I wasn't trained like that.

Rebecca, AJ, and Ahmed told similar stories of asking parents or grandparents to teach them to make their favourite dishes without much luck, because of their lack of measurements. In Ahmed's words, learning to make his dad's curry "was a nightmare" because of his father's lack of precision. AJ was given measurements in units that, to him, carried no weight.

> We all make fun of my mom for 'two sips of vinegar…' Like when she describes recipes, she's like, 'oh yeah, just do it a little bit of this, a little bit of that, two sips of vinegar.' And it's just like, how am I supposed to replicate that?

The dissonance between participants' tendencies to cook quantitatively in measures

and parents' habits of cooking by eye reflects a lack of physical immersion in their heritage communities. Consequently, participants lack access to family and community members who would otherwise be present to constantly reinforce their food practices. Using measurements is not necessarily incompatible with heritage food production. Nonetheless, the difficulty of recipe replication for participants shows that second- and 1.5-generation immigrants must negotiate the desire to maintain heritage foodways while lacking the material skills to make this food. This tension points again to the in-between state in which this group often finds itself, as well as the symbolic importance heritage foodways often take on as a consequence.

Figure 8: AJ's chicken biryani. "Biryani was always the special dish. It's the one food, with biryani, that I could eat every day for the rest of my life and never get sick of it. … It embodies hospitality and celebration and all that stuff." Photo by author.

The specific techniques of cooking are not the only barrier. AJ and Edward said the primary reason they did not cook growing up was because of parental and/or self-imposed pressures to spend that time studying.

> Because [my parents] were also very much like, 'oh you gotta focus on school, so don't worry about any of the cooking or any of that stuff.' Which in retrospect, I feel like I lost out on being able to hang out and cook with my mom. Because she was very much focused on trying to help us be the best we could be at school … but as a consequence, we never really got to spend time in the kitchen (AJ).

The high value placed on education in Edward's and AJ's households reflects, broadly speaking, assimilation efforts for upward socioeconomic mobility and increased prestige. Although the desired assimilation outcome is selective acculturation or a 'best of both worlds,' this example shows that some immigrant households may see successful integration and the maintenance of heritage food traditions as a trade-off, where a stronger cultural connection may be sacrificed. Assimilative pressures therefore exist not only externally from peers, but also internally from the household, limiting second- and 1.5-generation immigrants' heritage identities.

Conclusion: Foodways as togetherness

After a big meal, sit and digest

Being a second- or 1.5-generation immigrant is full of contradictions. You are not fully entrenched in your parents' cultures, nor are you fully embedded in a dominant norm; mechanisms like food simultaneously mitigate and accentuate cultural difference. Returning to my research question of 'what role do foodways play in the construction of cultural identity among adult children of immigrants?' I found that foodways are sensory, material, and symbolic markers of belonging and difference that ultimately strengthen the notions of self that are otherwise rooted in in-between spaces.

Heritage foodways mark a difference from peers, but food adaptability marks belonging to Canadian 'multiculturalism.' Most participants expressed a rejection of heritage foodways due to a feeling of othering from peers that stemmed from the smell or appearance of their food. However, they found an eventual acceptance of heritage foods and heritage identity through a strategic reframing of ethnic boundaries and group inclusion/exclusion (Barth 1969; Mintz and DuBois 2002). Participants also celebrated their belonging to multiculturalism in Canada through eating various cuisines and contributed to multicultural foodscapes themselves by maintaining heritage foodways. Accordingly, second- and 1.5-generation immigrants' participation in Canada's multicultural

foodscapes shows that foodways influence the co-construction of culture and identity. The "cultural stuff" that characterizes belonging indeed changes, but the boundaries between second-generation, first-generation, and 'full Canadian' remain (Barth 1969).

Heritage foodways also connect second- and 1.5-generation immigrants to their families through the sensorial, commensal, and ritual nature of food. Participants chose to share dishes that reminded them of home comfort, and the multisensory process of cooking and eating provoked memories of childhood and the people they care about. Further, participants' geographical distance from their parents' home countries amplified the importance of heritage foodways, connecting participants to the "imagined geographies" that held significance to them, but that they otherwise had limited access to.

Finally, participants faced various barriers to having full access to heritage foodways, particularly those related to food production. While distance from parents' homelands emphasized the importance of heritage foods, it simultaneously made it more difficult for participants to make their cuisine. The dissonance between parents' and participants' cooking techniques, along with assimilative pressures, created a disconnect between the desire to strengthen connections to heritage culture and the skills and resources to do so, showing the difficulty of achieving selective acculturation (Portes and Zhou 1993).

The main limitation of this study is that second and 1.5 generation immigrants are combined into one sample, as are people of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Future studies may wish to focus on the second -generation immigrants of one ethnic group, allowing for a deeper dive into group histories, collective memory, and the geopolitical context of immigration. However, including participants with an array of lived experiences allowed me to understand commonalities based on generational status. To gain a more robust understanding of foodways, cultural identity, and cultural transmission, future studies should more critically examine the relationship between second- and 1.5-generation immigrants and their parents. A gendered analysis of domestic food production among second-generation immigrants and how it influences connections to heritage would also offer intersectional nuance to the topic.

By having "feet in both doorways," as Sam put it, the second- and 1.5-generation cultural identities are not defined by a single culture; they are in-between, here and there, and neither nor, all at once. Despite foodways reflecting intergenerational, interpersonal, and internal tensions, food remains a central way for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants to create belonging to the people that hold significance to them.

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