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Cooking Lessons:
Oral Recipe Sharing in the Southern Kitchen

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Communication and Performance
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Professional Communication

by
Alana C. Claxton
May 2019

Dr. Amber Kinser, Chair
Dr. Kelly Dorgan
Dr. Delanna Reed

Keywords: Oral recipe sharing, cooking lessons, recipes, Southern food, food practices

ABSTRACT

Cooking Lessons:

Oral Recipe Sharing in the Southern Kitchen

by

Alana C. Claxton

This study analyzes oral recipe sharing practices as they emerge in Southern cooking. Researcher and participants were immersed in cooking recipes together in a qualitative research method that combined interactive interviewing with sensory ethnography. Findings revealed a category of oral recipe sharing practices that is missing from the literature: cooking lessons. This study identified cooking lessons as a distinct recipe sharing practice and worked to further operationalize and concretize such practices in hopes of spurring further research

DEDICATION

To my grandmother and mother, who taught me how to cook. And to Jake, for being my constant cooking companion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would be nonexistent were it not for Dr. Amber Kinser. Her encouraging words and thoughtful feedback helped me become a better thinker, writer, and researcher. She was truly a miracle advisor. Thank you, also, to Dr. Kelly Dorgan and Dr. Delanna Reed, for serving as two excellent committee members and for being invaluable mentors throughout my graduate experience. Finally, special thanks to the six individuals who shared their homes and their recipes with me. It was an especially delicious adventure for which I am extremely grateful to have been a part of.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

All around us, people are sharing their food. From books, to primetime television, to online streaming websites, to social media and beyond, we are constantly sharing and comparing what and how we eat. Hardly a new trend, reports show the first collection of recipes to be 3,700-year-old clay tablets from ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), demonstrating that people have documented what they eat for many thousands of years (Graber & Twilley, 2018). Fast forward to today and you can see the Mesopotamians were clearly onto something big. Despite the migration over to digital formats and the explosion of online food blogs, printed cookbooks are still in extremely high demand. Defying expectations, cookbook sales were 21 percent higher in 2018 than the previous year with an estimated 17.8 million cookbooks sold in the United States alone (White, 2018).

Food, as a medium for expression, has seemingly endless applications that are rarely confined to one category. Positioned as a central character in countless works of fiction and nonfiction, food often communicates emotions, sets scenes, and incites action. Easily making the transition from print to screen, food frequently takes center stage in plays, television shows, and films. Sometimes, as was the case with Powell's 2005 hit novel *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously*, food can effectively hop from one medium to the next with ease. The success of Powell's novel came from her similarly popular cooking blog where Powell chronicled her journey of cooking through Julia Child's infamous recipe book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961). Following the enormous praise for her blog and novel, Powell's cooking adventures were later adapted into the film *Julie & Julia* (Ephron, 2009), making it the first major motion picture based on a blog (Prigge, 2009).

Clearly, we are enamored with food. We love to make it, eat it, share it, and talk about it. However, our food fascination tends to be somewhat one-sided. Often the focus is placed on written food sharing practices such as food blogs, cookbooks, and food memoirs and little attention, outside of television cooking shows, is paid to oral food sharing practices. This is surprising in that oral food sharing practices permeate day-to-day life. From conversations exchanging notes on last night's dinner to dictated recipes over the phone to a mother's guiding presence in the kitchen, oral food sharing practices are plentiful. Yet somehow, we still seem to overlook them.

Throughout my childhood, I was oblivious to the oral and conversational food practices all around me. During visits to my mammaw's house, I often inexplicably found myself in her kitchen silently hovering around her stove while she cooked. Mesmerized by the flurry of sights, sounds, and smells I would watch as she orchestrated meal after delicious meal without so much as a measuring cup or cookbook in sight. Instructing me to locate a forgotten ingredient or to stir a bubbling pot, my mammaw taught me countless recipes I find myself still talking about and making today.

Though I didn't realize it at the time, by involving me in her cooking routines, my mammaw was engaging in an oral recipe sharing practice. Distinct from written recipe sharing, oral recipe sharing practices exist in the elusive realm of oral tradition and, as such, are easily disregarded momentary encounters. When compared against their written counterparts, oral recipes as a subject of academic inquiry appear unreliable, forgettable, and inconsequential. Often, oral recipes are entirely sidestepped as a communicative food practice and thus, difficult to locate in academic literature.

Though mostly absent from scholarly studies, oral recipe sharing practices are an anecdotal darling. Whether discussing how a celebrity chef made a signature dish or reminiscing about a favorite childhood meal, oral recipes are regularly inserted into casual interactions. As such, oral recipe sharing work to establish, foster, and maintain relational connections across several sociocultural levels. Through oral food practices, family legacies can be preserved, friendships can find common ground, and community bonds can be nurtured. Though seemingly grandiose claims, the oral tradition has a long and rich history of doing just that. As propounded by Fisher (1984) and expanded by scholars like Bochner and Riggs (2014), humans are *Homo narrans* in that:

The human condition is a largely narrative condition. Storytelling is the means by which we represent our experiences to ourselves and to others; it is how we communicate and make sense of our lives; it is how we fill our lives with meaning. To study persons is to study beings existing in narrative and socially constructed by stories. From bedtime stories to life reviews — across the span of our lives — we listen to stories and tell stories of our own. (2014, p. 197)

Thus, as both a food sharing practice and communicative act, oral recipes deserve much more scholarly attention. As such, my project works to position oral recipe sharing practices as a beneficial and appropriate area for research. After situating oral recipe sharing practices within the relevant literature on food and communication, my study focuses on contributing to the conceptualization of oral recipe sharing practices as a scholarly pursuit. I accomplish this by applying a unique methodological approach (discussed in Chapter Two) that allowed me to identify a missing category of oral recipe sharing I refer to as cooking lessons. My findings are presented and further explored in Chapter Three along with an examination of the coding

process. Lastly, Chapter Four offers a subjective exploration of the research process via a presentation of my researcher reflections.

Literature Review

Food is essential. Considered from a biological perspective, food provides the human body with carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals – nutrients necessary for survival. The life-giving quality of food frequently (and paradoxically) relegates food and food practices to the realm of the ordinary, the habitual, and the overlooked. As Goodall (1994) states, “the more ordinary the object, the less likely it will be preserved, and yet, in terms of the culture producing it, the more meaningful it will be” (p. 18). Like oxygen, food is so vital we tend to take it for granted and, as a result, are oblivious to the myriad other ways in which food is significant. Understandably, food, Greene and Cramer (2011) explain, “is much more than just a means of survival. It permeates all other aspects of our lives from the most intimate to the most professional practices” (p. x). Simply put, food sustains life and simultaneously facilitates *living* as “food functions symbolically as a communicative practice by which we create, manage, and share meanings with others” (p. xi).

Although the symbolic weight of food is easily overlooked, communicative food practices abound. As Finn (2004) succinctly notes, “we love to talk about what, why, and when we eat,” a statement further bolstered by the plethora of food blogs, food memoirs, food magazines, cookbooks, television cooking shows, and food podcasts (to name a few), that continue to be produced at an ever-increasing rate (p. 86). It appears we cannot help but speak about food along with “the senses and experiences that surround buying, preparing, eating, and then remembering it” (p. 86). We snap pictures of our plates, we post glowing or glowering restaurant reviews, we compile virtual recipe boards, and we gobble up scores of cookbooks. As

Rousseau (2012) duly notes, “for as long as we have appetite, we will talk food” (p. xvi). Thus, the intersection of food and communication is understandably vast and has been extensively explored. To situate my research within the broader context of food and communication, I first review the extant literature on food practices and identity before zooming in to address recipes as the specific focus of my research.

Identity and food practices

Identity is a well-researched concept that encompasses countless factors. Regarding the impact of food practices on identity, much can be said. In their study on identities and food choice, Bisogni, Connors, Devine, and Sobal (2002) summarize identity as, “generally considered to involve the mental self-images that a person assigns to herself/himself based on everyday interactions with people, groups, and objects. Identities reflect multiple layers of meaning that are cultural, structural, social, and individual in origin” (p. 129). Myriad influences contribute to the construction and maintenance of identities with food practices being widely regarded as a bedrock of identity building and management. After all, food is a universal symbol and, as such, it “reveals a tremendous amount of information about how a society is structured ... from class to race to age ... [about] who we are and who we aspire to be” (Inness, 2001, p. xii). This section examines four primary intersections of food and identity emerging from the literature. Moving from narrow to broad in terms of scope, these intersections cover: self-identity and food; family and food; community identity and food; and culture and food.

Self-identity and food. As the food memoir genre illustrates, the personal and the alimentary are a natural pairing. Food, it seems, is inseparably wound up with personal experiences, memory, and emotion. As Lupton (2005) notes, “food and eating are central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and

through our bodies, which itself is inextricably linked with subjectivity” (p. 317). Moreover, on a biological level “by the act of incorporation and absorption of food, we become what we eat,” thereby making the separation between self and food a difficult task (Lupton, 1994, p. 666; see also Fischler, 1988). As the literature on identity and food intersection shows, food and the practices surrounding its consumption are frequently used for a wide variety of self-identification purposes.

Although Brillat-Savarin’s quote – “Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are” – is excessively used to the point of cliché, the sentiment holds remarkably true. For example, individuals regularly adopt self-labelling strategies based entirely around their consumption habits. In their study on food choice and identity, Bisogni et al. (2002) found that participants willingly identified themselves via a wide assortment of food-related categories including range of foods (i.e., “picky eater”), types of foods (i.e., “junk food junkie,” “meat and potatoes guy”), quantity of food eaten (i.e., “big eater,” “eat like a bird”), and control (i.e., “impulsive eater”). Similarly, Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann (2010) interviewed individuals who “thought of food as a key part of their identity” (p. 598) and accordingly adopted or identified with the label “foodie.” Food, therefore, is not only linked to subjectivity, but is also a way in which individuals deliberately communicate their identity to others (Greene & Cramer, 2011).

In addition to self-labelling, food practices are also used as ways to maintain or establish one’s sexual and/or gender identity. As Jones explains (2007), “many foodstuffs bear the mark of gender, which, in turn greatly influences the behavior of people” (p. 139). Examples of this influence can be found in coding food as either masculine or feminine. For instance, food items such as dairy, fruit, and fish are routinely considered feminine while red meat is consistently

viewed as traditionally masculine for its inferred “strength, power, aggression, and sexuality” (p. 139; see also Buerkle, 2009). The influence of this gender/sex food coding has real-life implications as Deutsch (2005) found male firefighters tend to employ “foul or misogynist language and behaviors” while cooking as a way to “explicitly reinforce their identities as men” (p. 105). Such behaviors, when viewed through the frame of identity management, can be understood as a re-claiming of one’s desired identity (i.e., masculine firefighter) thought to be threatened during the apparently feminine act of cooking and feeding others. Likewise, women have been shown to strategically adopt and resist the socially prescribed feminine identities assigned to the act of feeding oneself and others (e.g., Avakian, 1997; Duruz, 2004; German, 2011; Ferguson, 2012; Tye, 2010). These examples further reinforce the connection between food practices and self-identity as it is not only *what* you eat but also how you talk about, prepare, and share what you eat that influences who you are, who you want to be, and how you want to present yourself.

Additionally, food can be a way to learn about one’s self. As the lives of Julia Child, Elizabeth David, and Nigella Lawson show, food can be an excellent vehicle for self-revelation to be enjoyed on both sides of the cookbook or screen. Referring to the ways in which food writers incorporate their life stories in with their food experiences, Culver (2012) notes that their readers “are encouraged to connect these to their own stories as part of an ongoing ‘selfing’ process” thereby creating “a flexible vehicle for self-identity for writer and readers” (p. 45). The self-reflective potential of food and food practices is also noted by Wharton (2010) as he explains:

My favorite recipe books don’t live in my kitchen. They are on my bedside table. I read them before I sleep; I read them when I wake; they inform me and inspire me; they

enthuse me and energize me; they comfort me. They are, in effect, part of my own personal recipe for happiness. (p. 73)

While food practices contain the potential for personal comfort and inspiration, food practices also stir up questions of self-legacy and impact. Supski (2013) points to the inherently autobiographical nature of cookbooks, especially those passed down within families. Her grandmother's manuscript cookbook is, according to Supski, "an autobiographical and intergenerational record of her [grandmother's] daily life in the kitchen" (p. 42). The legacy of her grandmother's life is preserved in the pages of a treasured family heirloom that continues to impact her family through the years as "the interplay of memory, photographs and recipes elicits readers' own memories of places lived, foods eaten, and lives shared" (p. 43). Understandably, the loss of treasured recipes can be a profoundly devastating occurrence, almost as if a piece of the self has been lost as well (e.g., Sins, 2011; Santlofer, 2011). Additionally, the motivation to preserve the ephemera of everyday life, such as in recipe books constructed during internment in Nazi concentration camps, can be understood as desperate attempts to "reassure sense of self and assist in the struggle to preserve identity" (German, 2011, p. 142).

As this section has shown, food practices allow individuals to provide glimpses into their lived experiences, to share aspects of their personal identities, and to leave parts of themselves behind. Food is a personal subject and as such food experiences can reveal a great deal about who someone is, who they want to be, and how they see themselves. However, food experiences do not exist in a vacuum and are exceedingly social phenomena, perhaps especially where families are concerned. Moreover, as the manuscript cookbook passed down by Supski's (2013) grandmother shows, family can have a great deal of impact on personal food experiences.

Family and food. Ask someone about their favorite food and you will likely hear about a family member, family meal, or family tradition. Beyond creating a space for self-identity construction and negotiation, “food” Avakian notes, “also signifies home” (2014, p. 283; see also Devault, 1991). The association between food and family is such that food frequently “stands as a metonym for the family and marks family roles and relationships in a material form” (Moisio, Arnould, & Price, 2004, p. 362). The impact of family on food practices is well documented and is a necessary component to any discussion on food and identity. Therefore, this section provides an overview on the intersection of food, family, and identity.

Food practices help construct and define family. In a study on food practices inside the home, Valentine noted that “shared meals unify the ‘family’ and produce a ‘familial identity’” (1999, p. 493). This sentiment is echoed by Deutsch (2005) who similarly found that within the firehouse, “cooking, even more than eating, is a family act for the firehouse ‘family’” that marks clear boundaries between the firehouse “family” and guests (p. 99). Whereas firehouse family members take part in the planning and preparation of meals, guests are routinely denied these rights and are instead shepherded out of the kitchen until the food is ready to be eaten. In this way, firehouses are remarkably similar to many standard homes in their establishment and reproduction of a family identity. For whether workplace related or not, families routinely rely on sites of food preparation and consumption, such as the kitchen and dinner table, to help produce and sustain a shared family identity. It is in these food-centric environments that family identity is created, learned, maintained, and, of course, consumed.

Notably, family identity is frequently incited alongside the consumption of foods considered “homemade.” Through their research on the role of homemade food, Moisio et al. (2004) found that despite differences in how homemade food was defined, participants tended to

recount stories of homemade food memories as ways to “narrate understandings of what family is, what the key features of family are, and what a family ought to be like” (p. 366). In recalling homemade food memories, participants also evoked images of love, warmth, comfort, and security, all recurring themes found throughout family and food literature (e.g., Berzok, 2011; Lambert, 1988; Supski, 2013; Tye, 2010). Given the emotionality inherent to homemade food, it comes as no surprise that food cooked by loved ones is frequently considered to be “the best in the world” (Moisio et al., p. 370) and is often regarded as the epitome of nourishing, soul-soothing “comfort food” (Locher, Yoels, Maurer, & Van Ells, 2005). Marketers are aware of the symbolic value of homemade food and, in seeking to capitalize on the emotional pull of the concept, regularly advertise mass-produced food items as “homemade” and “made from scratch” (Moisio et al., 2004). While the participants from the Moisio et al. study largely reported favoring “real” over market-made “homemade” food, the use (and subsequent success) of food brands marketed as “homemade” or “made from scratch” further illustrate the strong connection between home, family and food, even when that connection is manufactured.

Frequently, “homemade” mass-marketed food products strategically adopt feminine names such as Marie Callender, Michelina, and Betty Crocker. These names are meant to conjure up images of maternal figures lovingly creating “homemade” meals and treats. Similarly evoked throughout much of the food literature, these feminine personas show that in addition to aiding in the construction of a family identity, food practices also outline family member roles and, in doing so, enforce specific family norms.

Mothers and wives, in particular, are regularly typecast as the family meal maestro. This role requires women to plan, prepare, and serve a delicious and nutritious “proper meal” that has carefully considered the varying tastes of her husband and/or children, generally at the expense

of her own food preferences (e.g., DeVault, 1991; Kinser, 2017; Moisio et al., 2004; Tye, 2010; Valentine, 1999). Moreover, the energy, effort, and sacrifice involved in producing a successful, smooth family meal typically goes unnoticed. Only when the meal is absent, late, incomplete, or otherwise unsatisfactory is attention paid to the otherwise unseen act of family meal production. Understandably, women engaging in this type of physical and emotional labor are undertaking a form of “invisible work” that is simultaneously tedious, consuming, tiring, and thankless yet viewed as a natural part of being a ‘good’ mother and/or wife (DeVault, 1991). While fathers and/or husbands are not wholly absent from family meal literature, their presence is noticeably sparse in comparison to the overwhelming presence of mothers, wives, and grandmothers. Often, men are positioned at the receiving end of meal production and typically only get involved in food work when viewed from a hobby/leisure perspective (Cairns, Johnson, & Baumann, 2010) or when the work is symbolically coded as masculine (i.e., grilling, smoking, barbeque, etc.) (e.g., Baderoon, 2002; Neuhaus, 1999; Wallendourf & Arnould, 1991).

For families with children, food practices can be teaching tools whereby parents establish food rules “within the family context to mark the boundary between acceptable and non-acceptable behavior” (Lupton, 1994, p. 680). Using food practices, parents can instruct children on the basics of table manners, suitable dinner conversations, the difference between “good” and “bad” food, and myriad other mealtime lessons and rules. Parents may also unintentionally “normalize” children by “creating ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ identities around the dinner table” that can be further exacerbated by the gendered division of labor prevalent in many families (Moisio et al., 2004, p. 364). Lastly, children’s experiences with family meals can have a long-term positive or negative impact on food preferences and behaviors as the child ages. While some family food experiences may only create a taste-aversion for specific food items (Batsell, Brown, Ansfield, &

Paschall, 2002), other experiences may lay the groundwork for more harmful future eating behaviors such as anorexia or bulimia, as much research indicates (e.g., Lupton, 1994; Kinser, 2017).

Beyond establishing familial roles, food practices also serve to create, continue, and preserve family traditions and rituals. The U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, for example, unites families through food-centric, family-specific traditions. As Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) found, while families tend to borrow from the same culturally constructed meal template for U.S. Thanksgiving, each household adds to the holiday meal “in ways that are particular to certain families” (p. 23). Family-specific food items and ingredients (such as Jell-O salads or stuffing with pine nuts) that have “always” been a part of the family tradition are viewed as necessary components to having a “real” Thanksgiving. In this sense, every family is alike in enjoying a traditional holiday meal yet, by including family-specific food practices into the tradition, families necessarily mark themselves as distinct entities. Thus, within each family “tradition and continuity are celebrated” in ways that allow families to “partake of their collective past,” thereby preserving the wider family identity through unique consumption rituals (p.23).

While undoubtedly influential and special, oftentimes family traditions are preserved and enacted through food practices outside of popular holidays or events. In fact, gustatory memories concerning family commonly evoke ordinary, everyday occurrences perceived as remarkable by a specific individual. In addition, the labeling of a food practice or item as traditional depends overwhelmingly on the subjective interpretation of the labeler. As Humphrey (1989) notes, “when we label food traditional, it is usually a mark of approval” and typically includes “some reference or connection to family” (p. 163). Beyond the link to family, Humphrey found no other widespread commonality amongst food labeled as traditional. Ranging from complex recipes

“complete with a family story to explain the origin of the recipe” to a “simple one-line report that a great-grandmother used to put violet leaves in her salads” (p. 164) and including numerous recipes for libations, snacks, dips, and desserts, it is evident that tradition has less to do with the specific food/drink item and more to do with the function of the label itself. As Humphrey aptly explains, “the word and concept of tradition imply power, the power of continuity and stability ... the application of the word ‘traditional’ to a recipe gives that food more power, more status, and more meaning” (p. 168). Of course, regardless of the actual and explicit labeling of specific food items as traditional, within every family there undoubtedly exist value-laden food items and food practices that symbolically preserve family memories, family traditions, and family identity.

Thus, food practices and family identity are closely intertwined. As Moisio et al. rightly noted, “family food consumption socializes moral values, duties, and valued experiences” (2004, p. 364). In summary, food assigns and defines roles within families, influences and impacts the members within that family, and preserves and honors family traditions. Families are, of course, situated within communities and therein reflect the values of that community through their food practices. Moreover, food-centric holidays often straddle the line between establishing and promoting both family and community identity. As illustrated by the emergence of holiday derivations like “Friendsgiving” and “Friendsmas,” food traditions typically relegated to the familial realm can also be used to foster a sense of shared identity amongst members of specific social groups. As such, the next section further addresses how community identity is implicated throughout community member food practices.

Community identity and food. Food practices not only construct and reconstruct individual and familial identities, they also locate those individuals and families within broader community frameworks. As Greene and Cramer note, “we often use food to communicate with

others and as a means of demonstrating personal identity, group affiliation and disassociation, and other social categories” (2011, p. xi). As such, this section covers the many ways in which food practices create and signal community membership and collective identity.

One noticeable example of the intersection between community identity and food is that of the ubiquitous community cookbook. Taken up during the U.S. Civil War era, community cookbooks continue to remain a common occurrence today (Ferguson, 2012). These texts provide a valuable resource for understanding how both historical and contemporary groups of people use food practices to construct a shared sense of membership within a specific community. While contributions to a community cookbook originate from individual taste and experience, “the overall volumes themselves are usually deindividualized, authored or edited by groups, committees, or metonymic churches or leagues” (Ferguson, 2012, p. 699). Thus, individual identity is subsumed into a collective framework that allows for the construction and intensification of endless community identities. Frequently organizing around religious, racial, ethnic, or regional commonalities (e.g., German, 2011; Kelly, 2001; Kelly, 2012; Scott, 1992), community cookbooks are also occasional byproducts of groups sharing the same socioeconomic status, career, employer, or even “wives of men who have careers in common” (Ferguson, 2012, p. 709). Beyond organizing people around shared food practices, these texts also express shared values amongst community members and establish implicit boundaries for each group.

Regardless of the specific experience a group rallies around, through the act of collective formation, the group necessarily defines the inclusion and exclusion criteria for community membership. Food practices are quite often “a central component of the sense of collective belonging ... and, by the same token, of otherness” (Fischler, 1988, p. 278). Community cookbooks, along with various other food practices, serve to demarcate one group from another

through a process of selection and rejection. As German (2011) explains, “as part of the process of identification of ‘us,’ there must necessarily be a ‘them’” (p. 141). For example, vegetarians and vegans resist the cultural narrative of meat consumption by excluding meat and/or animal by-products from their diets. These individuals push back against a larger system of dominance and as a result, they “may feel a common bond with people who have similar eating habits ... and therefore associate with people who have the same interests and/or views about food consumption” (Greene & Cramer, 2011, p. xii). Similarly, groups who preserve and partake of food practices considered kosher food, “soul” food, WASP food, or food pertaining to a specific region (i.e., Cajun food, Southern food, Cincinnati chili, etc.) also establish a community identity with clear boundary markers between themselves and others. While these divisions can reflect unspoken societal hierarchies (Ferguson, 2012) and encourage revulsion towards other social groups (Lupton, 2005), these divisions can also help to protect and preserve marginalized or threatened community identities (e.g., German, 2011).

In addition, the intended audience of community-specific food practices can further highlight ways in which communities negotiate their boundaries. Generally, communities are willing to share food production and consumption knowledge. Yet frequently, the shared information comes in the form of truncated, almost cryptic, recipes that require intimate community knowledge unavailable to most outsiders (e.g., Ferguson, 2012; Kelly, 2001). Though perhaps unintentional, these community cookbooks “assume proficiency on the part of the reader” (Cotter, 1997, p. 69) and, despite their availability to a wider public audience, indicate that the writers do not “expect the cookbook to travel beyond their own culinary community” (Kelly, 2001, p. 33). It should, perhaps, come as no surprise that obscure or secretive recipe sharing practices are often a byproduct of non-dominant communities that are isolated and

vulnerable. From this point of view, recipe ambiguity can be understood as a method of both resistance to dominant foodways and an act of community boundary management. Only those who *deserve* to know are allowed access to more in-depth knowledge of community food practices. Conversely, other communities deliberately share food knowledge in a way that is obviously intended for an outside audience. For example, a Jewish community cookbook distributed in 1963 included “eight pages explaining traditional prayers and holidays,” information clearly meant for the benefit of community outsiders (Kelly, 2012, p. 703). As Kelly (2012) notes, these cookbooks “served to perpetuate a communal identity while also providing a *vade mecum* for assimilation” (p. 705). As such, communities use food practices to strategically exclude or include outsiders according to each community’s shared goals and identity.

Notably, even in desperate circumstances, individuals routinely organize and collectivize around shared food practices. Japanese Americans interned during World War II “reterritorialized their surroundings” using shared food practices “to expand political activity and create collective identities” (Jones, 2007, p. 134; see also Dusselier, 2002). Similarly, starving Jewish women in Theresienstadt concentration camp assembled a community cookbook from memory and worked to facilitate the cookbook’s survival beyond their untimely demises. Reportedly, these women spent hours “cooking” with one another wherein they discussed and debated recipes and cooking techniques (German, 2011, p. 145). The commitment to remembering and preserving community food practices is not unique to Theresienstadt camp with “at least five other extant cookbooks created in the conditions of Nazi concentration camp existence” as well as accounts of “similar efforts to record recipes by male prisoners of war in the Philippines” (German, 2011, p. 145). These practices highlight the symbolic weight of shared food practices recognized by both marginalized peoples and their oppressors. As symbols of community identity and legacy,

dominant groups routinely work to deprive and devalue the food practices of non-dominant groups. These actions effectively strip individuals of their multiple food identities (i.e., individual, familial, community, and cultural), thereby delivering devastating blows to individuals' self-concepts and group members' shared connections. However, in response to such oppressions, food practices also function as rallying points for resistance. For instance, community food practices illustrate the ability of food to "make place" and allow marginalized groups to recreate lost community spaces and reclaim fractured community identities (Dusselier, 2002). Again, through these practices the individual is subsumed into a collective identity that preserves a community legacy and ensures that even "if the individual perishes, the community will endure" (German, 2011, p. 146).

Collectively, groups of people accomplish a sense of communal identity through food that, alone, would be impossible to achieve. Food is a powerful tool for unification that helps create community bonds and works to keep them together. Considered part of the "maintenance work" of community identity (Tye, 2010), individuals routinely enhance a communal sense of belonging through shared food practices with others. However, lest the virtues of food be overly extolled, it must be remembered that food practices, while unifying, are also divisive, domineering, and destructive. In summary, food practices work to establish and negotiate community boundaries, acknowledge and preserve a shared past, and continuously create and recreate a defined sense of place. As illustrated thus far, food works across the individual, familial, and communal level and impacts identity formation and maintenance in both beneficial and harmful ways. In this next section, we will look at how food practices construct and influence identities at the broader, cultural level.

Culture and food. Food is an inescapable part of life. From birth to death individuals “understand their world and develop their identities through the food they eat, the relationship they have with those who feed them, and the circumstances under which they are fed” (Avakian, 2014, p. 280). Importantly, these individuals, families, and communities systematically engage in specific food practices in accordance with their own unique cultural framework. While generally unnoticed by members within a culture, food choices, practices, and experiences are foundationally shaped by implicit cultural guidelines. Thus, food “acts as a conveyor of culture” (Greene & Cramer, 2011, p. xi) and is a unique “cultural site” (Sutton, 2005) from which to understand how cultural identities are learned, transmitted, resisted, and transformed. This section provides an overview of the impact culture has on food practices and, reciprocally, food on culture.

Due to the foundational nature of food and cuisine, there are as many different food practices and customs as there are cultures in the world. Naturally, each cultural group “thinks of itself as special and uses food to show it” by routinely distinguishing between what “we” eat and what “they” eat (Civitello, 2011, p. vii). Unfortunately, cultural distinctions are typically framed using “commonsense architecture of Western thought” that perpetuates a limited Euro-American experience as the “norm” (Holtzman, 2006, p. 364). This inadequate perspective has, understandably, resulted in cultural miscommunications and misconceptions that inevitably decrease cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Furthermore, a lack of awareness regarding different food customs can have unintentionally disastrous effects. As Jones (2007) reminds, the American Food for Peace Program might have avoided the 1972-1973 Botswana riots (which resulted in the intentional destruction of yellow corn sent for drought relief) had they educated themselves on the culturally symbolic difference between yellow and white corn

for the Tswana people. While in the United States, yellow maize is a staple food item, in Botswana “only white maize is fit for human consumption; yellow is fed to animals” (Jones, 2007, p. 133). Remarkably, though there is a seemingly endless array of culturally-specific food customs to navigate, cultures worldwide classify food in remarkably similar ways. As a result of these standard food classifications, the emotionally charged reaction accompanying cross-cultural food misunderstandings seems to be a universal phenomenon. Allow me to explain.

According to Fischler (1988), “cuisine is not so much a matter of ingredients ... as of classifications and rules ordering the world and giving it meaning” (p. 282). The first and “foremost classification” concerns the seemingly arbitrary division between what is classified as food and what is not (p. 282). For western cultures, this means that cows and crabs are clearly food, but foxes and insects are not. Nutritional reasons do little to explain this dichotomy and, outside of a Eurocentric culture, this division may be flipped entirely yet considered similarly sensible. The next level of classification concerns “foodstuff already classified as such” that has been restricted and/or coded as taboo (p. 282). Religious customs have an understandable influence in this classificatory category. For example, a food item understood as edible may be culturally forbidden due to it being symbolically labeled as sacred or unclean. Additionally, this classification impacts how food is presented for consumption as, in western cultures, food is prepared in a way that allows consumers to easily forget they are eating a once-living animal (Cheng, 2011). While the presence of discernible animal parts (such as eyes, mouth, neck, bones, etc.) is generally regarded as taboo from a western perspective, in Taiwanese/Chinese cultures it is the exact opposite with “the presentation of the entire animal regarded as a guarantee of freshness, an opportunity to appreciate the sacrificed animal, and a ritualistic part of the dining experience” (Cheng, 2011, p. 207; see also Lim, 1997).

After food is considered both edible and permissible to eat, the culture then determines when and in what context the foodstuff will be consumed. As Fischler (1988) explains, “no food is appropriate for everyone, at all times, in all circumstances, in any quantity” (p. 282). This classificatory set assigns coffee to breakfast rather than dinner for most Americans and helps to explain why Americans feel compelled to signify the act of eating breakfast food past the “normal” timeframe with labels like “brunch” and “breakfast for dinner,” as opposed to simply “lunch” or “dinner.” Furthermore, the classificatory rules of propriety and context also help determine what is culturally considered a “proper meal,” which, as mentioned earlier are learned and continually reinforced through family and community food practices (DeVault, 1991; Tye, 2010).

Other systems of classification, such as the principles of compatibility/incompatibility and criterion for healthy versus unhealthy food, are similarly found throughout numerous cultures (Fischler, 1988). These collective systems, however, simply illustrate that differing cultural foodways all follow similar systematic food classifications yet have wildly diverse food practices. While this diversity could be a point of cross-cultural connection, it is often used as a divisive mechanism that defines and distinguishes “them” and “us.”

Othering through food practices is neither a new nor a rare phenomenon. Throughout history, groups of people have used food practices to distinguish the nobility from the peasants, the immoral from the righteous, and the exotic from the commonplace (e.g., Freidenreich, 2011; Montanari, 2006). Othering through food practices is both produced by and mutually constitutive of culture and, in and of itself, is not an inherently positive or negative occurrence. Othering is a categorization process that helps distinguish between the familiar and the strange, the known and unknown (Long, 1988). Although not by definition a nefarious act, othering through food

practices is often used to show groups of people as not just different, but as wrong, bad, and/or dangerous in their differences. Because food is such a powerful symbol, deriding an entire group's eating habits can have a profound impact on how that group is perceived and treated. As Cheng (2011) noted, although early Chinese immigrants were initially welcomed in the United States, they quickly became viewed as an economic threat and as different from the rest of society. The press made frequent "derogatory references to their eating habits" (p. 200) with, for example, a particularly insulting 1877 magazine cartoon depicting various immigrants harmoniously enjoying a Thanksgiving dinner. Pictured as the exception to this harmony "who draws horror and disgust from the other diners – is a Chinaman, about to eat a rat" (p. 200). The widespread prejudice against Chinese Americans, helped no doubt by the othering tactics applied to their food practices, eventually resulted in The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which placed heavy restrictions on Chinese immigration and forced the majority of Chinese Americans out of the general labor market (Cheng, 2011). This disturbing historic example illustrates the easy way in which food practices are used to frame specific groups as culturally different. Moreover, there exist numerous embodiments of othering food practices with similarly negative connotations and applications.

Perhaps most commonly used among othering food practices is the act of reducing an entire culture down to a single culinary insult. Considered a type of ethnophaulism, terms such as "*krauts, frogs, limeys, fish heads ... greaser and beaner*" have been used recurrently throughout modern history and serve to "not only denigrate others but also dehumanize the Other" (Jones, 2007, p. 136, italics in original). While the slurs are decidedly unsavory, their usage highlights how culturally defined symbols can "evoke emotions, act upon opinions, and influence actions" (p. 136). As such, fear of being considered an outsider or facing rejection from peers can be a

strong motivator to hide or outwardly reject a previously cherished food item (e.g., Avakian, 2014; Lupton, 1994; Jones, 2007). Additionally, encountering food understood as culturally othered can trigger a whole host of reactions such as “extremely ‘primitive’ behaviors (examining, sniffing, avoidance of touch), ... a deep disgust, [and/or] an undeniable psychological reaction (discomfort, anxiety, possibly nausea)” (Fischler, 1988, p. 281). Moreover, these arbitrary culinary divisions serve as a useful reminder that “encounters with the Other teach us more about ourselves than about the Other” (Long, 1998, p. 186).

Clearly, culinary othering can lead to various negative outcomes. However, there are alternative applications of culinary othering that can result in uniquely positive experiences. Viewed through a lens of culinary tourism, Long (1998) positions experiencing othered food practices as “one of the fullest ways of perceiving the Other” (p. 181). Contrasted to the “sightseeing” experience often applied to tourists, Long suggests that adopting a culinary tourist mindset “engages one’s physical being, not simply as an observer, but as a participant as well” (p. 181). In that sense, one willingly approaches the unknown with a sense of curiosity and open-mindedness, fully expecting to experience the new in hopes of better connecting with the Other. In addition to serving as a bridge between cultures, distinct cultural foodways also offer individuals far from home a chance to engage their cultural identity via consumption and momentarily “assuage homesickness” (Cheng, 2011, p. 196). Furthermore, diasporic communities can use cultural food practices to re-connect and reconstruct lost places, people, and memories thereby “providing a temporary return to a time when their lives were not fragmented” (Holtzman, 2006, p. 367).

For good or for ill, consumption is “an active force in the construction of culture” (Wallendorf & Arould, 1991, p. 13). From what is considered edible, to what pairs together, to

what is taboo, culture influences food and food influences culture. Furthermore, cultural food practices serve to construct shared (and divided) cultural identities. Similar to community food practices, cultural foodways can also simultaneously exclude and include others. Overall, food practices are a direct link to understanding and investigating not only cultural identities but also personal, familial, and community identities as the nuances inherent to any cultural identity are simultaneously constructed, negotiated, and performed across all four levels.

Overall, though this section did not cover every potential aspect of food practices and identity, it accomplished a broad overview of the four areas most relevant to the project at hand. Importantly, while food and identity were explored in personal, familial, communal, and cultural realms, there is significant overlapping and blurring between them. Additionally, there are multiple other realms not discussed that significantly impact food practices and identity, such as popular culture (Newton, 1992) and social media (Rousseau, 2012). Even so, this review has shown the unbreakable link between food practices and identity and has highlighted the myriad ways in which food, for good or for ill, works to establish, preserve, and influence identity.

Clearly, the study of food creation and consumption covers multiple disciplines and spans immense bodies of knowledge. As a social object, food holds tremendous symbolic power and, as such, it provides endless points of entry for researchers across numerous fields. While any number of food areas would be excellent topics of study, I decided to explore a common denominator of communicative food practices that, like food itself, is often taken for granted: the recipe. After all, recipes are deeply interesting. Recipe use and dissemination spans multiple millennia and continues to be a wildly popular personal and commercial practice today (Macrae, 2007; NPD, 2018). Recipes are both unique and taken for granted. They can be at once highly personalized and commercialized, preserved in writing and taken to the grave, acts of both

resistance and conformity. Recipes are overwhelmingly mundane and yet somehow significant. As both material and ephemeral objects, recipes can tell us about ourselves, our family, our community, and our world. Moreover, as discussed below, while the study of recipes is hardly new, there is still much to be learned.

Recipes as Discourse

To begin to understand the practice of recipe-sharing, we must first ask one question – What is a recipe? This seemingly simple question is deceiving in that there exist multiple ways to answer it. As it turns out, defining a recipe is a matter of perspective. From a structural standpoint, recipes fall under the category of procedural discourse wherein recipes are grouped according to “a certain distinctiveness in their syntactic forms (the way sentences are structured) and their semantic realizations (what they mean)” (Cotter, 1997, p. 55). Also referred to as registers (Fischer, 2013), recipes include “directions or instructions on how to make something or set something up” (Wharton, 2010, p. 67). Much like the directions for hooking up a television set, recipes employ the imperative form (i.e., slice the tomato) and lack an overt subject (i.e., serves eight) (e.g., Cotter, 1997; Milică & Guia, 2017; Wharton, 2010). Additionally, procedural discourse is viewed as agency-neutral and time-neutral meaning that for the former “although it is aimed at the person reading the discourse, it does not matter who that person is” and for the latter “if followed properly, the procedure will work at any time” (p. 68).

Under a procedural discourse viewpoint, a recipe is simply a means to an end. As the culinary icon M.F.K Fisher wrote, “a recipe is supposed to be a formula, a means prescribed for producing a desired result ... There can be no frills about it, no ambiguities” (1969, p. 20). Viewed from the strictly procedural discourse perspective, anything outside the recipe formula (described by Fisher to need only consist of name, ingredients, and method) is superfluous and

unhelpful. While Fisher's wish for recipes to conform to a stripped-down, universal pattern is economically understandable, it is not reflective of the complexity of recipes. Therefore, considering recipes as solely procedural discourse prevents achieving a complete understanding of what recipes are. As Wharton (2010) notes, "there is much more to explaining recipes than simply describing the kinds of words used, or the structures involved, or how they look on the page" (p. 71). Put another way, procedural discourse is merely one piece of the recipe pie.

To Leonardi (1989), simply listing "recipe ingredients and the directions for assembling them ... alone is, in fact, surprisingly useless" (p. 340). You can witness Leonardi's sentiment in action by watching *The Great British Baking Show* (2018). During the Technical Challenge portion of the show, contestants are presented with pared-down directions for elaborate, technically-tricky baked goods. After much frustration and confusion, the contestants frequently produce incorrect (sometimes inedible) food items. Aside from the uselessness of such recipe lists, stripping a recipe down to its bare structural bones is antagonistic to the very foundation of what recipes are. As Leonardi explains, "the root of *recipe* – the Latin *recipere* – implies an exchange, a giver and a receiver. Like a story, a recipe needs a recommendation, a context, a point, a reason to be" (p. 340). From this perspective, recipes are better explored through the frame of an embedded rather than procedural discourse. For although "a recipe is rarely intended to be connotative ... [or to] index more than what it describes" it often contains much more than instructions (Tompkins, 2013, p. 442). Understanding recipes, then, means going, as Wharton describes, "beyond the words" and investigating the ways recipes "manage to convey moods, impressions, emotions, and feelings" (2010, p. 71). With this framework, recipes take on a symbolic role that positions food and food practices as major contributors to the "social construction of identity" (German, 2011, p. 139; see also Greene & Cramer, 2011).

From an embedded discourse perspective, recipes are understood as a byproduct of cultural practices situated within lived experiences. Recipes, in this sense, have inherent “epistemological value” (Supski, 2013, p. 30) in that they carry multiple cultural realities, multiple personal experiences, and multiple social identities. Using the framework of embedded discourse, the multitude of knowledges contained in recipes can be more meaningfully and intentionally unpacked. Whereas a strictly procedural viewpoint limits the recipe to a specific formula and structure, embedded discourse considers the many nuances and formats of recipes throughout history. After all, recipes come in many forms. Take for instance, the recipe poems found throughout the nineteenth century. As Tompkins (2013) explains, these poems are certainly recipes in that they “offer a set of instructions that should provide reproducible results” yet they are inherently different from the prescribed formula set forth by procedural discourse. Embedded discourse encourages a closer look into the dual nature of recipes as both a food practice and communicative act, showing that in the case of recipe-poetry “the musicality of lyric ... allows for a cook to memorize the recipe and move away from the book” (Tompkins, 2013, p. 441; see also Longone, 2002). Furthermore, embedded discourse shows how “recipes are never finished: they morph across time as foodways are handed down and changed, as migration, ecology, technology impact and are impacted by human hunting, farming, cooking and eating culture” (p. 440).

Embedded discourse thus allows recipes to be many things at once. For example, and in contrast to procedural discourse, recipes can “move between past, present and future” and are therefore “polytemporal” rather than time-neutral objects (Supski, 2013, p. 31; see also Tompkins, 2013). A recipe also, according to Tompkins (2013), “belongs to everyone” (p. 442) in the sense that only in rare and very specific cases, are recipes protected under copyright law

(Rousseau, 2012). However, despite the publicly accessible nature of recipes, not all recipes are easily reproducible. Consider, for example, recipes belonging to specific individuals and places, as is the case with family recipes like “Aunty Sylvie’s Sponge[cake]” (Bell, 2009) and regional specialties like Cincinnati chili (Lloyd, 1981). Hence, recipes are simultaneously public and private artifacts.

Recipes also indicate membership in a community (e.g., Greene & Cramer, 2011; Norrick, 2011) but at the same time can highlight who is not given membership, who is the “Other” (e.g., Avakian, 2014; Waxman, 2008). Recipes can be symbolic of both empowerment and oppression (e.g., Ferguson, 2012; Neuhaus, 1999), both good memories and bad (e.g., Kohn, 2002; Lupton, 1994). Recipes can preserve traditions (e.g., Humphrey, 1989; Lambert, 1988) or (un)intentionally misremember the past (e.g., Engelhardt, 2015; Ireland, 1981). In essence, recipes are difficult to place into one category, thus the need for an embedded discourse perspective.

Furthermore, recipes as embedded discourse are what we encounter in our day-to-day lives. Rarely do we give, receive, or encounter a recipe in a vacuum. In general, recipes are shared, learned, created, and studied in context (e.g., lived experience or cultural influence) and therefore “tell us much more than just how to cook” (Supski, 2013, p. 30). Leonardi (1989) emphasizes this point in her article “Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie” by embedding “a recipe in a text that meditates on the recipe as embedded discourse” (p. 347). Leonardi employs multiple levels of embeddedness in her article to emphasize her main point but her approach is far from unusual. Often, the sharing of food and food practices is layered in with contextualizing information such that it becomes difficult to ascertain where the recipe truly begins and ends. The enmeshed, interwoven, *embedded* nature of

recipes and recipe-sharing practices are therefore significant in that the embeddedness calls attention to the hidden, assumed, and otherwise taken-for-granted knowledge these practices encompass. As such, this research henceforth employs the framework of embedded discourse in the investigation of recipes and recipe-sharing practices.

Recipes as Narrative Acts

While recipes occur in multiple and varied formats (such as television shows, cookbooks, or blogs), one of the most common mechanisms employed in recipe-sharing practices is narrative. Interestingly, although M.F.K. Fisher called for the recipe to be anatomically sparse, she frequently employed narrativity in her discussion on and sharing of recipes. In fact, Leonardi (1989) refers to Fisher's writing as "elaborately embedded recipe collections, as much essays as cookbooks" (p. 343) and Fisher is widely considered "the founding mother of the American food memoir" (Waxman, 2008, p. 363). Apparently, keeping a just-the-facts approach to recipe-sharing is amazingly difficult, as Fisher is far from alone in combining food practices with narrative. There are, in fact, entire literary genres dedicated to the combination of food practices with narrative, which fall under several different names, including food memoirs, kitchen confessionals, manuscript cookbooks, gastrographies, and recipistolarly writing. Ranging from the lighthearted reminiscences of making sponge cake (Supski, 2013) and pecan rolls (Kohn, 2002) to the compiled recipes of women interned at Theresienstadt camp (German, 2011), recipe texts seldom separate the lived experiences from the recipes.

According to Cotter (1997), "one way to look at a recipe is as a form of narrative" (p. 52). Using narrative frameworks such as Labov's "classic depiction of a narrative and its composition" (p. 59), structural similarities between stories and recipes are apparent. As Cotter explains, "most narratives contain the following structural components: abstract, orientation

clause, actions, evaluations, and coda” (p. 59). Although perhaps not immediately recognizable, recipes and recipe sharing practices can and frequently do incorporate most all the narrative components outlined by Labov. Cotter showed how both commercially- and community-produced recipes for a pie-crust neatly fit into the narrative structure outlined by Labov. Similarly, Norrick (2011) investigated conversational recipe-tellings and found that “tellings can occur as part of a narrative ... may contain narrative portions ... [and] are like stories in their sequential development and listener responses” (p. 2753). Applying Labov’s framework to television cooking shows, Matwick and Matwick (2014) found that show hosts frequently embed recipes within a narrative structure to appear more ordinary, credible, and relatable. And in a contemporary cookbook analysis, Culver (2012) shows how best-selling cookbook authors Nigella Lawson and Elizabeth David employ the “three distinct story-like elements of telling ... sequence, description, and voice” which give the authors significant “narrative power” (p. 35). However, similar to the distinction between procedural and embedded discourse, the significance of narrative in recipe practices is not necessarily found in the identifiable structure or format of narrative but rather in the understanding of the role narrative plays within recipe practices.

Harking back to Brillat-Savarin’s oft-cited quote and with respect to this project, all the literature found regarding recipes and recipe-sharing remarks to one extent or another on the identity-management function related to these specific practices. The literature can be divided into two main groups: (1) texts studying recipe practices of other individuals or communities and (2) texts meditating on recipe practices within the author’s own life. However, the boundaries that might distinguish these groups are blurred given that several texts from the first group incorporate the author’s personal food experiences into the research. Unsurprisingly, the embedded nature of food practices such as recipe-sharing prove incredibly difficult to approach

in a detached, objective manner. In addition, as I address below, the study of recipes is surprisingly limited.

Studying Recipes

While implicit in most studies on food and communication, the recipe as a food practice is rarely invoked as the primary object of study. Moreover, when recipes do occupy the center stage, the research focus is typically concerned with answering a categorical question such as: Are recipes a form of narrative (Cotter, 1997; Norrick, 2011) or their own unique literary genre (Milică & Guia, 2017)? Are community cookbooks important historical artifacts (Kelly, 2012)? Should recipes be viewed as procedural (Fisher, 1969) or embedded discourse (Leonardi, 1989; Scott, 1992)? Or, what is the most useful recipe format (Brunosson, Brante, Sepp, & Sydner, 2014; Lezamo-Solano & Chambers, 2018)?

Aside from a few notable examples (e.g., German, 2011; Norrick, 2011), rarely do studies address the specific function of recipe sharing. Additionally, throughout the vast literature on food practices and recipes, it seems only one study (Norrick, 2011) examines conversational/oral recipe sharing practices, as opposed to recipes written down and/or compiled. In considering the tremendous symbolic weight of food practices in conjunction with the dearth of research concerning recipe sharing practices, I aim to position recipes at the heart of my study by engaging participants in oral recipe sharing. In doing so, my project addresses a gap in the literature as few studies have looked at oral recipe sharing practices, and fewer still have examined how these practices contribute to the sharing of multiple identities (personal, family, community, cultural). As the next chapter illustrates, I use a unique methodological approach to examine the intersection of narrative, identity, and oral recipe sharing practices.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Recipes and recipe practices are situated in and reflective of lived experience. The embedded nature of recipes calls for a methodological approach that embraces complexity. As such, I chose qualitative inquiry as the guiding methodological framework for my project. Qualitative research, as discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2018), “is a set of complex interpretive practices” (p.13) that is interested in “the world of lived experience, for this is where individual belief and action intersect with culture” (p. 9). The field of qualitative research is, however, vast and encompasses a variety of approaches to data collection and analysis. What follows is a discussion on the qualitative approaches that informed this research as well as how my research project was designed, implemented, and analyzed.

Narrative Identity Research and Sensory Ethnography

My primary focus for this research project was to engage individuals in their recipe stories. The literature clearly shows that food practices are inextricably intertwined with how individuals construct and understand their personal, social, and cultural identities. Moreover, the literature also shows that individuals frequently employ stories as a specific strategy in how they present and preserve their intersecting identities. Due to the inherent connection between food, identity, and storytelling, I elected to use narrative identity research as the guiding qualitative framework for this study. As Bochner and Riggs explain (2014), narrative identity research encourages the examination of “small stories,” defined as “stories people tell about themselves ... in mundane, everyday interactions” (p. 202). Too often, small stories, such as those surrounding recipes, go unnoticed. However, by using narrative identity research, this project shined a spotlight on oral recipe practices and illuminated the hidden stories within.

While narrative identity research is an excellent guiding framework for approaching recipe narratives, the story must first be successfully activated and drawn out of an individual. As such, I found sensory ethnography as an appropriate primary methodological tool to encourage and engage participants in the sharing of their recipe narratives. A unique research method, sensory ethnography “takes at its starting point the multisensoriality of experience, perception, knowing and practice” (Pink, 2012, p. 2). Similar to the idea of Gubrium and Holstein’s (2009) “narrative environments” (as cited in Manning & Kunkel, 2014, p. 182), sensory ethnography considers the “contexts within which the work of story construction and storytelling get done” (2009, p. xvii). Not only does sensory ethnography consider the environmental contexts of storytelling, but it also actively works to create sensory-rich environments or approaches that allow for different ways of knowing and sharing in research settings. Furthermore, sensory ethnography proposes a moving beyond the sit-still-and-talk interview and instead invites participant’s “to gather everything they need in order to communicate about their experiences” (Pink, 2012, p. 88). As such, the interviews conducted during this study were designed from a sensory ethnographic standpoint and are, as a result, unconventional.

Cooking Interviews

In her 1988 article “Recipes for Theory Making,” philosopher Lisa Heldke explored cooking as a form of inquiry noting that it, “successfully merges the theoretical and the practical and promotes a self-reflective and interactive model of an inquiry relationship” (p. 15). In a similar vein, my project aimed to marry the theoretical with the practical by way of the sensory ethnographic method employed during the data collection process. Rather than conducting standard conversation-based interviews to solicit recipe stories, instead the interview had me

meet each participant in their homes and make a recipe together. Due to the highly interactive nature of the interview, as well as being informed by the (albeit limited) oral recipe sharing literature (e.g., Norrick, 2011), a strict interview schedule was not needed to facilitate disclosure. However, I did provide various prompts (see Appendix A) in advance of the interviews and used them during the interview if conversation was not flowing or became stalled. This type of interview technique is not easily categorized as one specific format; rather, it is an amalgamation of active interviewing and creative interviewing with an emphasis on researcher-participation as a component of the data collection process. In active interviewing, “the interview is not arbitrary or one-sided ... [It] is viewed as a meaning-making occasion in which the actual circumstance of the meaning construction is important” (Berg, 2009, p. 104). Similarly, creative interviewing deliberately attempts to create “an appropriate climate for informational exchanges and for mutual disclosures” (p. 103). Notably, the goals of active/creative interviewing and the goals of sensory ethnography align nicely. As the following sections show, the unique interviewing approach utilized in my research allowed for recipe stories to be shared in a practical, participatory manner reflective of lived experience.

The kitchen as interview setting. The kitchen is a unique space. As noted by Finn (2004), the kitchen is a polysemous place that “exists at the boundary of private and public” (p. 87). The dichotomous private/public interplay of the kitchen is a widespread phenomenon in television cooking shows wherein the on-screen chef, — whom the audience recognizes as engaging in a performance, — exhibits behavior typically found in more private, unscripted settings (e.g., Culver, 2012; Matwick & Matwick, 2014). From a dramaturgical perspective, the kitchen can therefore simultaneously encourage individuals to engage in both frontstage and backstage behaviors, depending on the situation (Goffman, 1959; see also Meah, 2016). This is

important in that the kitchen, unlike other interview locations, holds the potential for a participant to adopt backstage behaviors whereby the individual might “relax ... drop his [*sic*] front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). As one of the goals (and difficulties) of qualitative research is to “study things in their natural settings ... and make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10), the private/public realm of the kitchen provides an excellent access point for researchers to engage their participants. Thus, by cooking with the participants in their own kitchens, I met the interviewees in the comfort of their own homes thereby encouraging more candid interactions. Moreover, the kitchen is frequently noted as the “heart of the home” (e.g., Duruz, 2004; Floyd, 2004; Meah, 2016) and, as such, is a unique space that can “enable reminiscence, materialize memory, and facilitate the maintenance of embodied and emotional connections with events or people from the past” (Meah, 2016, p. 59). Thus, participant kitchens were deliberately chosen as the interview space due to the inherently evocative nature of the kitchen that would assist participants in their recall of gustatory memories.

Bringing recipes to life. Believing in the untapped, educational power of food, associate English professors Jennifer Cognard-Black and Melissa Goldthwaite, developed parallel “Books that Cook” courses at their separate institutions (2008). In these courses, food is brought into the classroom on both the page and the plate and is used to contextualize, explore, and immerse students in the course material. Alongside reading and discussing various food-related literature, Cognard-Black and Goldthwaite strategically incorporate the consumption of course-relevant food in with their course. By doing so, Cognard-Black and Goldthwaite believe they “create both literal and metaphorical connections among members of our classes, between the books and our analyses of them, [and] between body and minds” (p. 433).

In explaining what prompted the course creation, Cognard-Black recalled reading Nora Ephron's book *Heartburn* (1996) wherein she suddenly "stopped reading, went to the store, and came home to cook up Swiss potatoes, potatoes Anna, and mashed potatoes. And somewhere in the midst of all that peeling, grating, roasting, frying, mashing, and eating, I *became* [the main character] Rachel Samstat" (2008, p. 423). Aptly, Cognard-Black asks, "What better device to create a full, complex character than to have me cook and consume these dishes, thereby 'embodying' Rachel Samstat?" (p. 423). Likewise, others have felt compelled to bring literary characters, scenes, or themes to life by making and consuming dishes found within literature (e.g., Barclay, 2015; Cognard-Black & Goldthwaite, 2014; Gelman & Krupp, 2004; Scrafford, 2005; Wenger & Jensen, 2009), fairytales (e.g., Kozlowski, 2016; Yee & Chan; 2014; Yolen & Stemple, 2009), and movies or television shows (e.g., Babish, 2017; Bucholz, 2010; Sobol & Ball, 2012). Collectively, these works underscore the embedded nature of recipes and how recipes frequently transcend the confines of textuality and manifest as material objects to touch, see, smell, taste, and above all else, savor. After all, "recipes," Tompkins (2013) reminds, "demand to be *done*, to be *experienced*" (p. 442). Consequently, and with the goals of sensory ethnography in mind, I aimed to create an environment that moved beyond a discussion of recipes and recipe practices and instead focused on bringing the recipes to life. Hence, the decision to have both the participant and me make a recipe together was an essential component of the interview process.

Coupled with bringing the recipes to life, the decision to have both of us (myself and the participant) make a recipe together was also implemented to encourage memory recall. Following Lupton's (2005) assertion that "memory is embodied, often recalled via the sensations of taste and smell" (p. 30), the interview attempted to strategically elicit the evocative, sensorial

nature of food memories. In encouraging touch, smell, and taste, the interview tapped into how “the experience of food evokes recollection” (Holtzman, 2006, p. 365, see also Sutton, 2005). After all, as Sutton reminds, “memory often works by synchronous convergence” whereby diverse things that occur simultaneously (such as the smells, tastes, and textures accompanying food preparation or consumption) become associated with one another and connected to episodic (i.e., life-history) memories (2005, p. 310). As such, I attempted to purposely engage the interrelated senses surrounding food production “to trigger memories of previous food events and experiences around food” (Lupton, 2005, p. 320).

Furthermore, by having the participants choose a recipe with which they had prior experience, the power asymmetry prevalent in interview settings was, to some degree, shifted in favor of the participant. In both knowing the recipe and creating it in their own kitchen, the participants had to effectively “teach” me how to navigate both the environment and the recipe. This allowed the participants to step into what Norrick (2011) calls “an expert footing” wherein the participants could display their “specialist knowledge of ingredients, recipes, tools and procedures” (p. 2741). Echoing critical feminist research, the interview thus positions participants as “experts in their own lives” (Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013, p. 122). In this way, the interview can be seen less as an act of gathering data and more a “process of bringing together” (Pink, 2012, p. 89). As Pink aptly notes, “By sitting with another person in their living room, in *their* chair, drinking *their* coffee from one of *their* mugs, one begins in some small way to occupy the world in a way that is similar to them” (p. 89).

Recruitment and Participants

Flyers advertising the study were distributed via Facebook and Instagram and were also posted in strategic locations throughout the local area (e.g., university campus and community

boards). Six individual participants responded to the advertisement and contributed their recipe stories to this project. Of the participants, there were four males and two females with participant ages ranging from 23 to 85 years of age. The table below (Table 1) lists the participant information alongside their corresponding pseudonyms I use throughout my writing. Though not intentional, each participant was Caucasian and reported having primarily lived in the region where the study took place for most of their lives.

Table 1

Participant Name and Ages

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>
Alex	26
Lance	24
Mary	56
Robert	51
Rose	85
Steve	35

As this study was conducted in South Central Appalachia, the participants were asked to choose a “Southern” recipe to make with me. Primarily, the main guidelines for the recipe choice were: (1) the participant needed to consider the recipe “Southern;” (2) the recipe needed to be one the participant had made before; and (3) the recipe needed to be easily retrieved (either from personal memory or from someone the participant knew). From there, a date and time was arranged to make the recipe together in the participants’ home. All recipe ingredients not already owned by the participant were purchased by me prior to the interview and brought to the participants’ homes.

The decision to ask for only “Southern” recipes was primarily born out of the study’s location. This study took place in the Southern Central Appalachian region of Tennessee (ARC, 2009). This region is unique in that it is both Southern and Appalachian, two areas encompassing

myriad food universes. While references to Southern food and Appalachian food are sometimes used interchangeably, they can both mean many different things to many different people. After all, according to the United States Census Bureau (2015), the South as a region is comprised of three separate divisions (South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central) which, in total, includes seventeen states. Therefore, what is considered Southern food in Louisiana might be surprisingly different from what is considered Southern food in say, Kentucky, Texas, or West Virginia. Similarly, the Appalachian Region comprises a “205,000-square-mile-region ... from southern New York to northern Mississippi” (ARC, n.d.) meaning that Appalachian food can also come in many different, contested forms.

Throughout my research recruitment, I tried to avoid inadvertently excluding any potential participants by asking for only Southern Central Appalachian recipes, as the specificity of the regional area might not immediately call to mind cherished food items. Moreover, “as Southerners,” Ferris (2005) explains, “we somehow know Southern food when we see it” (p. 4). Therefore, it was assumed that participants would have encountered food broadly labelled as “Southern” more frequently than food specifically referring to the South Central Appalachian region. Furthermore, my research focus was primarily aimed at soliciting recipe stories in general rather than stories limited to regionally-specific food items. As a result, the general blanket descriptor of “Southern” was used to primarily aid participants in narrowing down their list of potential recipes. In addition, Southern food is widely regarded as a central aspect of Southern identity, both for the region itself and its inhabitants (e.g., Egerton, 1993; Ferris, 2015; Purvis, 2009). As prolific food writer John Egerton notes, “no other region has been more obsessively preoccupied with food throughout its history, and none has made it more a part of its culture and traditions” (1993, p. 39). Thus, in a project focusing on the storytelling aspects

inherent to the sharing of identity-laden food practices, to *not* incorporate the project's unique location into my research in some way felt both uniformed and sacrilegious.

Data analysis. Following each interview, I transcribed the audio recordings verbatim and put the resulting data sets through several rounds of lengthy analysis. Guided by Charmaz's (2006) writing on coding in grounded theory, the analysis went through both initial coding and focused coding. Sticking closely to the data at first, I used initial coding to curb any "tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories *before* [I had] done the necessary analytic work" (p. 48). Hence, I applied initial coding via primarily *in vivo*, line-by-line, and constant comparative coding. After establishing "strong analytic directions" (p. 57), I used focused coding to guide the overall synthesis of my coded categories. This coding phase meant struggling with the data to make thoughtful "decisions about which initial codes [made] the most analytic sense to categorize [my] data incisively and completely" (p. 58). I collapsed, combined, and reconceptualized most of my data during this phase by continually asking myself, as my thesis advisor taught, "What is going on here?" and then "What *else* is going on here?"

Truthfully, I found the coding process to be the most draining and frustrating part of my entire research project. Though guided by Charmaz's (2006) work, I often felt lost and overwhelmed by my data and what to do with it. Constantly, I found myself confronted by a nagging doubt that I was doing everything wrong. I continually sought out various YouTube videos and articles that explained qualitative coding and analysis at the most basic level to quell my anxieties (e.g., Löfgren, 2013; Mod•U, 2016A; Mod•U, 2016B; Mod•U, 2016C). These pared down videos and simplistic tutorials gave me confidence and assured me that I was not alone in feeling overwhelmed and insecure.

Additionally, throughout the process of transcribing and coding, I jotted down various personal insights, emotions, and questions on whatever was easily accessible (i.e., open Word documents, Post-it notes, scrap pieces of paper). These notes helped me further process my thoughts and engage researcher reflexivity. As Charmaz (2006) notes, “coding is an emergent process” (p. 59). Thus, in using personal writing to better understand my data, I applied Richardson and St. Pierre’s (2005) concept of “writing as a method of inquiry” to my analysis process (p. 959). Viewed as a valid “method of knowing,” writing as a method of inquiry reminds the researcher that “there is no such thing as ‘getting it right,’ only ‘getting it’ differently contoured and nuanced” (p. 962). Following this advice, anytime I felt inept or overrun with doubt I simply stopped what I was doing and allowed myself to freely write out my angst and put anything that popped into my head onto paper. This practice, along with a considerable amount of pacing and speaking aloud, helped me better develop my thoughts and worked to resolve many unnecessary obtrusions throughout my research and writing process.

As a result of my coding strategies, I identified a large gap in the conceptualization of oral recipe sharing practices. Presented as an additional category of oral recipe practices that has been traditionally ignored, cooking lessons are explored below using excerpts from the cooking interviews with my participants. To preserve the integrity of my participants’ words and in celebration of regionally distinct speaking styles, I have elected to leave my participants’ phrasing untouched. In what follows, I present my primary findings from my cooking interviews beginning with a discussion on identifying an appropriate analytical framework.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

By highlighting oral recipe sharing practices, this project examines a uniquely overlooked communicative food practice. Although undoubtedly understood as a form of communication, research on recipe practices (particularly *oral* recipe practices) are typically viewed as objects of folkloric or historic research. Though situated at the intersection of communication and food, recipes are curiously absent from both research disciplines, save a few notable exceptions. Combining aspects of narrative, identity practices, written texts, and oral practices, recipe sharing is exceptionally positioned as an excellent (albeit largely untapped) site for communication research.

As such, the following findings serve to address the recipe research gap by examining oral recipe sharing practices within a larger communicative framework. Following a discussion of the struggles I encountered during data analysis, my findings proceed to illustrate how my participants and I engaged in a specific oral recipe sharing interaction that had not been properly addressed in the literature review for this study. Notably, due to the interactive nature of the cooking interviews, many of the interview excerpts are truncated. Unlike most standard qualitative interviews that allow for uninterrupted responses to interviewer questions, the cooking interviews resulted in participants interweaving snippets of conversation into the stirring, chopping, and mixing typically associated with food preparation.

Knowing What I'm Looking At: A Process of Trial and Error

One of the characteristics that set my project apart from other food-centric studies was the element of immersion. Rather than solely speaking to my participants about a recipe or acting as an ostensibly unobtrusive observer to participant cooking practices, I instead opted to make a

recipe with my interviewees. I believed that the interactive, informal nature of the interview would put participants at ease and help the flow of conversation. Further, I believed that my methodological approach more closely mirrored lived experience. Outside of my own recipe sharing practices, various others have written personal accounts about watching and/or helping friends, family, or community members make a variety of food items such as biscuits (Schatz, 2002), short cake (Humphrey, 1989), lefse (Kelly, 2001), and sponge cake (Supski, 2013). This type of recipe sharing practice is distinct in that it is, perhaps, most frequently encountered in daily life, yet seldom mentioned in either quantitative or qualitative research studies. There are, of course, important exceptions to the research gap including studies that look at the recipe sharing practices of television cooking show hosts (Matwick & Matwick, 2014), Norrick's (2011) work on conversational recipe tellings, and Sutton's (2014) observational accounts of daily cooking practices on the Greek island of Kalymnos. However, despite the contributions of these scholars, a definitive name for the specific recipe sharing phenomenon I explored during my interviews eluded me throughout all the critical food studies literature I poured over.

Applying the Wrong Frame

Initially, Norrick's (2011) readily available recipe telling framework seemed to correspond closely to what my data were saying. After reading his study, I briefly considered that my cooking interviews were in fact six distinct conversational recipe tellings. Using Norrick's definition to guide me, I regarded each data set as, "multi-unit turns with characteristic openings and closings ... [that] also routinely issue from narratives and segue into narratives in conversational interactions, requiring tellers to mark off the recipe portion in characteristic ways, including shifts in tense and person (p. 2753)." However, my analysis was foiled when I realized

that a few of my participants had inserted non-related recipe tellings into what I was considering to be larger, overarching recipe tellings. Allow me to explain.

While making salmon patties, Mary shared a brief recipe for pancakes, saying, “when you make your blueberry pancakes add like a teaspoon of sugar and half a teaspoon of vanilla ... and then people will never know that it’s a [boxed] mix.” Similarly, while making country fried steak Robert shared a recipe for home fries by explaining, “you slice [the potatoes] real thin, y’know, almost like a potato chip and they’re the size of it and you put them in an iron skillet and you fry them that way ... with bacon fat, bacon fat or oil.” Interestingly, these recipe tellings concerned food that we were *not* making at the time and were instead embedded within the larger act of preparing an entirely different dish. This, of course, made complete sense when I revisited Norrick’s (2011) work with new eyes and noticed that his participants were not actively making a recipe nor were they engaged in physically showing someone how to make a recipe; they were simply inserting recipe-making knowledge into a conversation. Thus, while my interviews happened to contain sporadic recipe tellings, they were incidental occurrences that did not adequately encapsulate what my participants and I were *actually* doing.

Finding the Right Frame

Unsurprisingly, the lack of scholarship on oral recipe sharing practices means that a definitive name for specific aspects of the phenomenon have yet to be concretized. Despite studying daily cooking practices of numerous individuals and families on the island of Kalymnos, Sutton (2014) never explicitly gives these cooking practices a more specific name or phrase. He does, however, note the similarities between his Kalymnian kitchen observations and the literature on various apprenticeship practices. Beyond this comparison, though, Sutton overall merely refers to what he studies as “cooking.” To me, this term was not only too broad

but also failed to immediately capture the immersive and instructional aspect of my own cooking interviews. Thankfully, after re-reading older articles I came across a personal narrative piece by Sian Supski (2013). In her article, Supski passingly refers to the time spent with her mother learning how to make a specific sponge cake recipe as a “cooking lesson” (p. 34). Finally, I had found my frame. Although, the phrase is generally linked to various workshops aimed at increasing nutritional knowledge and/or quality of life (e.g., Ben-Arye et al., 2016; Whalen, 2014), I believe the term can be expanded to include the more informal, individual perspectives I encountered throughout my research. Consequently, a considerable portion of the findings serve to explore prominent themes identified in the interviews that help to further define and operationalize an expanded definition of cooking lessons.

Defining Cooking Lessons

To Supski (2013), a cooking lesson is a type of learning-by-doing process. As she explains:

we learn to bake by slow apprenticeship. We watch, we learn to break eggs and to separate them, to sift flour, to cream butter and sugar, we stir, we learn to fold, we learn to beat, we learn to use the oven. (p. 35).

In this educational style, teaching, learning, and practice are intertwined. As such, cooking lessons share many similarities with other types of teaching styles, such as the Montessori method which stresses “the education of the senses” (Topping, 2015, p. 223). According to this teaching principle, neglecting to prioritize sensory learning results in a narrow grasp of knowledge wherein an individual may, for example, understand the idea of fresh fish but if “[she] has not been trained to recognize through sight and smell the signs which indicate freshness in the fish, she will not know how to follow the order we have given her” (p. 225). As

the following excerpts illustrate, sensory attentiveness was a teaching point that emerged from each of the cooking interviews.

Feel how it's got a little spring to it? When you push it, it sort of comes back, just a little bit. It's tender. Biscuit dough has to be tender (Mary).

See how it's not shrinking up as much ... See that one? Put that one back on it. See how it's a little, not quite as done? Yeah that one's not close yet (Robert).

Cornbread's done ... golden brown on top (Steve).

Get your shortening all melted up in there with your hands. Right in the middle, keep you a little on the edge. That's the way (Rose).

You know what I would do? This right here. Kind of do like a circle, kind of lift it up. Kind of like that (Alex).

These aren't quite done. They need to be turned because they're done on top but not on the bottom (Lance).

Ranging from visual prompts to tactile sensations, each participant included sensory teaching into their cooking lessons. Notably, being able to tell the “doneness” of cornbread or knowing the correct stirring technique required the deliberate use of specific senses, namely sight and touch. Moreover, these sensory instructions are particularly useful in oral recipe sharing practices as they require instructor and pupil to engage in “co-presence” by seeing, smelling, touching, or tasting the food *together* in real time (West, 2013; as noted in Sutton, 2014, p. 17). While written recipes tend to include visual sensory instructions, such as “cook until brown,” the reader may not know what shade of brown to look for or how springy the dough is meant to feel. Cooking lessons require shared space between instructor and students, hence allowing for a fine-tuning of the senses relative to the food being prepared. In this sense, cooking lessons encourage

self-reliance in students via hands-on exploration and guided self-discovery, a teaching style similar to instruction-in-interaction (Lindwall & Ekström, 2012).

Mostly used for teaching manual skills, instruction-in-interaction methods share many similarities with cooking lessons. Much like it sounds, instruction-in-interaction has a teacher engage in “one-on-one instructions through a series of corrective sequences” and involves “both parties being reciprocally attentive and finely tuned towards each other and the developing skill” (Lindwall & Ekström, 2012, p. 28-29). In teaching her daughter how to make sponge cake, Supski’s (2013) mother intuitively employed instruction-in-interaction techniques. As Supski explains, “the cooking lesson involved my mother telling and showing me how to make the sponge, but importantly, me ‘doing.’ As with all good cooks she knew that I would only learn by doing” (p. 34-35). Sutton (2014) noted similar instructions-in-interactions between Kalyrnian mothers and daughters when, for example, a daughter would be cooking for Sutton’s camera but was consistently peppered with guiding (and sometimes critiquing) culinary remarks from her off-screen mother. As the conversation with Robert below shows, my cooking interviews further illustrate instruction-in-interaction techniques as my participants frequently had me prepare the food item under their careful watch.

Robert: Okay, so all we’re gonna do, I’ll let you do this, is, you can dredge it, you can get tongs if you want, if you don’t want to get it all over your hands. Dip that in the water. Just dip in the water. Just put it in there and cover it really good.

Interviewer: Okay, so like this?

Robert: Yup. You can’t get too much on it. Okay, now when you lay it in there, don’t just drop it in, kind of lay it over and it won’t splash all over you.

Interviewer: Like that?

Robert: Mmhmm.

Importantly, correctly learning the skill or the recipe involves much more than following a set of instructions. Just as with sensory learning, a more nuanced understanding is achieved through an interpersonal interaction rather than a solo experience. After all, much is lost when the instructor is absent. Take, for instance, the following recipe for biscuits (Figure 1):

Biscuits	
Measurements	Ingredients
Unspecified	Self-Rising Flour
2 Big Spoonfuls	Shortening
Some	Buttermilk
Little Bit	Butter Spray
Cooking Info:	
Pour flour in bowl. Put shortening in middle of flour. Put buttermilk in bowl. Starting in the middle of the bowl, melt shortening with your hands in a smooshing motion. Add more flour and buttermilk as needed. Ball up mixture into middle of bowl. Pinch off small portions of dough. Roll into balls and place on pre-greased pan. Flatten out balls. Spray with butter. Place in 500° oven. Bake for 30 minutes or until brown.	

Figure 1. Transcribed biscuit recipe

Taken directly from Rose’s interview transcription, Figure 1 represents only the explicitly verbal recipe instructions mentioned during the cooking process (see Appendix B for complete list of transcribed recipes). As evidenced by the unspecified and subjective measurements combined with the vague cooking information, this recipe neither captures how the biscuits were specifically made nor will it realistically help future biscuit makers successfully recreate Rose’s recipe. Even though Figure 1 technically contains instructions, without the instructor present to translate, very little teaching or learning can occur. Furthermore, by adhering to the standard

graphical/text recipe format (Lezama-Solano & Chambers, 2018) we lose most, if not all the sensory instructions. We do not know how brown the biscuits are supposed to be or what “some” shortening looks like. In many respects, cooking lessons could be viewed as culinary versions of show-and-tell. Only by having the teacher there to explain, guide, and *show* how to make the recipe, will the student be able to know they are making the recipe “right.” As it so happens, cooking lessons are less concerned with learning how to make any recipe, as much they are with learning how to make a specific recipe “right.”

Learning the “Right” Way

While helping Mary make salmon patties, I asked her if she had ever used fresh rather than canned salmon for this recipe. Very quickly, Mary informed me, “That’s not how [my mother] did it. And we’re making her recipe.” Similarly, for the country fried steak recipe Robert insisted on using a cast iron skillet for no other reason than the fact that his grandmother “always used one.” Likewise, Steve made it a point to warm up his seasoned cast iron skillet in the oven prior to pouring in the cornbread mix stating it was the “Golden Rule” of making cornbread with a “crust on the bottom.” The common thread between these cooking rules is that the correct way to make a specific recipe is rarely explained in writing, rather it is implied through various actions, tools, and acknowledgements. Moreover, these tacit cooking styles require someone to repeatedly bear witness to the recipe making in order to pick up on the associated recipe rules.

Unsurprisingly, every participant acknowledged frequently watching a family member make the recipe we were preparing. By constantly noticing that a grandmother always used a cast iron skillet (Steve and Robert), a mother always used a cup to roll out her biscuits (Mary) or a lid to cover pan-fried chicken (Alex), individuals internalize specific components of the recipe making process that are rarely written down or even verbalized. As such, learning-by-watching is

specific to oral recipe sharing practices and is, paradoxically, an easy-to-miss component of cooking lessons. As noted by Bowen and Devine (2011), individuals often do not realize they know how to make a specific family recipe or meal until they are thrust into a situation that requires them to cook unsupervised. In their study, Puerto Rican females reported unexpectedly recalling and using information obtained via seeing family members cook specific dishes over and over again. Thus, it appears that even when cooking lessons are not explicitly framed as such, knowledge is still reflexively gained through repeat recipe making exposure.

Interestingly, the same knowledge transmission is not likely to occur from simply watching television cooking shows. Although popular cooking shows and competitions provide both auditory and visual cooking instructions, the lessons are largely ephemeral and impractical. As Pollan notes,

there are no recipes to follow; the [cooking] contests fly by much too fast for viewers to take in any practical tips; and the kind of cooking practiced in prime time is far more spectacular than anything you would ever try at home. No, for anyone hoping to pick up a few dinnertime tips, the implicit message of today's prime-time cooking shows is, *Don't try this at home.* (2009, italics in original).

Again, we find cooking lessons to be especially effective and enduring ways to facilitate sharing of food knowledge between individuals. Due to the inherently participatory nature of cooking lessons, senses are finetuned and culinary confidence increases. Moreover, individuals learn not only what a finished recipe is supposed to look like but also how to make the recipe “the right way.” These instructional tips tend to be lost when translated onto the page, making cooking lessons an invaluable way to go “beyond the words” of recipes and better examine what else is being taught amongst the measurements, ingredient list, and cooking instructions

(Wharton, 2010). What's more, focusing only on basic recipe components can cause one to overlook the hidden authorities behind the recipe being made.

Attributing Lesson Knowledge

Overwhelmingly, literature concerning food practices consistently notes that women are predominately responsible for managing, preparing, and serving family meals (e.g., Baderoon, 2002; DeVault, 1991; Hardesty, 2003; Kinser, 2017; Longone, 2003; McIntosh & Zey, 1989). What's more, in addition to orchestrating meal production on a regular basis, women are also primarily responsible for preserving family food traditions through recipe writing (e.g., Ferris, 2002; Humphrey, 1989; Jansen, 1993), recipe compiling (e.g., Ferguson, 2012; German, 2011; Kelly, 2012), and, of course, recipe teaching (e.g., Bowen & Devine, 2011; Kelly, 2001; Kohn, 200; Supski, 2013). My interviews did little to refute this gender disparity as every participant not only chose to make a recipe that had previously been made by a maternal figure but also consistently referenced food memories centering around specific maternal figures throughout the recipe making process.

Notably, five of the six participants explicitly stated they were making their mother's (Mary, Alex, and Lance) or grandmother's (Rose and Robert) recipe. Unsurprisingly, the same five participants also mentioned being taught how to make the recipe or being otherwise enlisted in helping make the recipe at the request of their mother or grandmother. For example, when helping his mother make sausage balls, Lance recalled:

getting the ingredients out for [my mother]. Opening the cheese, and giving that to her, or dumping it in if she was busy cooking something else ... or it would be like Crisco-ing the pan. That was something she definitely asked for all the time.

Similarly, Robert remembered cooking country fried steak with his grandmother who would “tell us to slide the skillet off the hot, she called it a hot eye ... because there was hot spots like right over the wood and that’s where she’d fry.” Even Steve, the one participant who did not explicitly state he was making a relative’s recipe, thought his grandma “didn’t really tell me how to do [soup beans and cornbread], I just kind of watched her do it all the time.” Again, we see the impact of in-person observational cooking lessons. Despite whether Steve was actively engaged in learning about what his grandmother was cooking or not, simply being in the same room as her while she was cooking caused him to link his grandmother to a specific dish. As to be expected, female family members were routinely invoked throughout the cooking interviews. Much has been written about the impact women have on preserving and sharing family food practices (e.g., Berzok, 2011; Sutton, 2014) and the findings here only serve to corroborate what has been reported in previous research.

Recipe Acknowledgements

Although Steve did not specifically say we were making his grandmother’s recipe, he did repeatedly acknowledge that his way of making soup beans and cornbread differed from how he knew his grandmother had made them. For instance, Steve mentioned he seasoned his cast iron skillet with coconut oil rather than using the Crisco his grandmother preferred. Additionally, Steve’s choice to leave out buttermilk from the cornbread batter was paired with a reminder that his grandmother often did the exact opposite. Thus, despite not being technically taught how to make the recipe, he instinctively knew the “right” way to make his grandmother’s cornbread and soup beans. Interestingly, Steve mostly explained his cornbread and soup beans recipe *by way* of noting how his recipe deviated from his grandmother’s. Naturally, Steve was not alone in calling attention to instances of recipe deviation. In fact, most of the participants found it necessary to

highlight when they were altering their family member's recipe, even if the alteration was slight. Lance, for example, explained a small difference in ingredient measurements by saying:

Normally, I think you would probably use about a tablespoon [of Worcestershire sauce] but because my mom also uses hot sauce in her recipe and that has a lot of sodium content in it, I don't want to add too much. And it's funny because this is something I know my mom doesn't measure.

Likewise, while "pinching" out varying sizes of dough for Rose's biscuits, Rose noted that when her mother made biscuits "every biscuit that she pinched out looked exactly the same, the same size." And during the process of making mashed potatoes Mary noted, "I always leave some of the peel on the mashed potatoes. When I was growing up, my mother never left the peel on." As these deviation alerts show, cooking lessons work to infuse the instructor into the recipe. This helps to explain why the instructor's name (or relation) was often attached to the recipe at hand and why the deviation alerts were so common throughout the cooking process. In many ways the recipe belongs to the original teacher (i.e., grandmother and/or mother) not the student, and the verbalized recipe deviations serve to highlight these recipe teachers. As a form of recipe acknowledgements, recipe deviations merely provided one way for participants to indirectly allude to prior cooking lesson(s) taught by specific individuals.

Mary, for example, used her personal recipe for homemade biscuits but, as the below excerpts illustrate, Mary's personal recipe was heavily intertwined with knowledge of her mother's biscuit making practices. For purposes of illustration, I have included several excerpts from when Mary and I made biscuits to show how the recipe deviations extended throughout the recipe making process.

So, [butter] is my twist on it. My mama only used shortening, but again it was a cost issue. Shortening is much cheaper than butter.... So, part of our prep work is we're going to put some shortening on this baking dish. Mama always did this, she always used Crisco. There are generics, they are not the same, regardless of what they say.... [My mother] was like you never ever buy cheap shortening. And I was like, "All right, I don't want to do it wrong." So, we're going to give it a little bump, just to make it rise a little bit more. So, we're gonna put a teaspoon of baking soda in there, even though it says self-rising, ok? Mama never used self-rising flour, it was blasphemy.... Plain flour was cheaper.... Now, what I do is I add half of the half-n-half and half buttermilk, because I think it makes a more tender biscuit. So, this is my recipe.... So my mother always used a true cutting board – so if it's all together you can stop mixing – so she always used a cutting board, but I have found that by using wax paper, you can just throw it away and you don't have to wash it.... My mother always took a flat glass and she would roll it out. Even though she had a rolling pin.... So, if you use a glass you never want to twist it, you just want to push straight down because twisting it supposedly keeps it from rising.... When I do them, I just pull some off, then I just shape it ... To me, that's quicker. But maybe not.

As the above excerpts show, even when Mary was consciously making her own biscuit recipe, she was continuously reminded of how her version differed from that of her mother's. This is in line with Leonardi's (1989) assertion of recipes as embedded discourse. Given that Mary "watched Mama make biscuits all the time," her recipe deviations highlight the importance of context within recipe sharing practices. For the student is not simply learning how to make *a* recipe, they are learning how to make *someone else's* recipe. Along with learning the correct

ingredients and measurements, the student picks up the instructor's recipe habits, their movements, and their eccentricities. By watching, imitating, and learning to make a recipe from a specific person, the student receives the embodied knowledge of their instructor that, like riding a bike, can be difficult if not impossible to unlearn.

It is worth noting that none of the interview instructions asked for family recipes, only recipes that the participant had made before, knew well, and considered Southern. As most of my participants made a recipe inspired by or learned from a mother or grandmother, we can assume that (1) there is a connection between participant recipe choice and family food (discussed later) and (2) that female family members were consistently relegated to the role of cooking instructor in my participants' families. Whether the women referenced by my participants actively chose to be placed in their instructor roles is unclear. And whether they enjoyed their position or not, is even fuzzier. Many external forces exert themselves upon women that make being in the kitchen feel perfectly natural. Several of my participants hinted at this apparent natural order regarding female cooking practices:

My mother always cooked and we was always out in the fields (Rose).

A million memories are based off of or are centered around sausage balls and all of them involve my mom, you know, she was always making them (Lance).

My mother handled the cooking, typically (Alex).

My mother made this regularly. If we didn't have fried chicken on Sunday, we had salmon patties ... When I was growing up and my mom made it, she always said this was from her childhood because her mother made it (Mary).

My grandmother cooked up until her mid-80s. She cooked full meals for us at lunch and supper every day (Robert).

My grandma did all the cooking and [soup beans and cornbread] is relatively easy compared to a lot of the other stuff they used to do (Steve).

The above excerpts were casually interjected in between recipe instructions and preparations, suggesting that there was nothing unusual or even particularly noteworthy about a female family member's permanent fixture in the kitchen. And why would it be? As various scholars have suggested, cooking has been considered a domestic (i.e., feminine) act for generations (e.g., Craik; 1989; DeVault, 1991; McIntosh & Zey, 1989; Neuhaus, 1999). Steve succinctly summed up this implicit cultural norm when he asked, "Who doesn't think about their grandma or their mammaw when thinking about food?" To be expected, my participants placed female family members at the center of family meal production. What's more, this female-centric placement appeared to be unconsciously reinforced by the participants' families and by the ways mothers and grandmothers actively involved younger family members in the kitchen.

Gendered Cooking Lessons

Participants reported a gender discrepancy between how cooking lessons were taught to females versus males. Much like Supski's (2013) cooking lessons with her mother, my female participants reported being shown how to make a variety of family recipes and then passing that same knowledge onto their female children and grandchildren. For example, Mary noted the collaborative nature of making salmon patties with her mother:

My mother always cleaned the salmon because she was afraid I would not see the bones. So, my job was to chop the bell pepper and to assemble the other ingredients, which was cornflakes and canned cream, and an egg.

For Mary, being in the kitchen meant helping to put together and execute a meal whereas for Alex, his kitchen instructions were considerably looser. As he explained:

Me and my dad would always watch shows or movies while [my mother] was cooking. So, if it was a really good show or movie that was on, I'd be like, "Okay, I'll help you with this and then I'm running back into the living room with Dad."

Looser still, were the cooking instructions given to Steve who noted that helping his grandmother in the kitchen generally meant:

We were just trash talking somebody else, typically. Talking about how weird other people are, honestly... Now, I would help grab Grandma stuff, like, go into the pantry and get some canned green beans or something but, I mean you just hang out and talk or if I did anything it was just kind of cleaning or something.

Illustrating the potentially generational nature of female cooking practices, Rose noted that, "My daughter has always been in the kitchen with me. Always. My son, no." When asked if she had ever requested her son to be in the kitchen with her, she responded with a simple, "No." Robert spoke of a similarly gender-segregated childhood kitchen, as he remarked:

I only got to help [in the kitchen] when it was bad days with the weather or, you know, I was locked inside. Because coming from where I was raised and all? Men did very little cooking other than maybe cooking around the grill or butchering. We did all of the preparing and the butchering, but men didn't cook.

Out of the four male participants interviewed, Lance was the only male whose childhood cooking experiences approximated female accounts. However, he equated his experience with helping in the kitchen to that of a sous chef. As he explained, "It was never, you know, 'Lance, let's come cook together.' It would be more like, 'Lance come help me in the kitchen.' And it was more task-oriented than anything else. It definitely wasn't instructional." These accounts reveal that much like the rules around dinner tables where children learn the difference between

“acceptable and non-acceptable behavior” (Lupton, 1994, p. 680), cooking lessons may also act as a method of enculturation into a society where the women “always” cook and the men rarely, if ever, do.

Thus, cooking lessons are unique learning-by-doing food practices that especially impact women and girls. As the primary teachers of cooking lessons, female family members are intrinsically linked to the food they prepare. Additionally, female cooking lesson instructors often deliberately enlist their female (rather than male) family members as their cooking apprentices. Thus, cooking lessons help to highlight how gendered food-centric roles are unconsciously learned and reinforced throughout a family by way of generational food rituals. Beyond the role-setting capabilities of cooking lessons, these recipe sharing practices also function as a means for individuals to recall past places and faces.

Cooking Lesson Functions: Transportation & Recognition

As noted previously, the participants were asked to select a recipe that we could both make together. The only stipulations placed on the recipe choice were that the recipe needed to be one the participant had made before, knew well, and that the participant considered to be Southern. The selection criteria were strategic in that participants *could have* chosen recipes from many different life experiences and for any number of reasons. However, despite the wide range of recipe possibilities available to them, participants overwhelmingly chose to specifically make family recipes. Rather than selecting a recipe they learned from a friend, Pinterest, or a television cooking show, each participant chose a recipe connected to a female family member. As noted above, these female family members were more than just food preparers; they were also the recipe teachers. Thus, in the cooking interviews, participants made recipes with me that had, in one way or another, been taught or shown to them via a family cooking lesson. This is significant

in that it suggests the types of food items that are made during cooking lessons are symbolically different from food that is made alone. Participants' voiced additional reasonings behind their recipe choices throughout the cooking interview process which I identified as comprising two thematic categories, transportation and recognition. These themes help to further illuminate the symbolic importance of cooking lessons and help explain why individuals engage in this type of recipe sharing practice.

Sensory Transportation: Layering the Past onto the Present

Throughout the cooking interviews, participants often recounted specific memories they had concerning the food that was being prepared. For instance, while making Southern fried chicken Alex told the following story:

Almost always we watched *Seinfeld* because that was when dinner was served, just around that time. And I remember I would have a glass of Coke, because I drank a lot of soda as a kid, and I remember having my glass of Coke, my fried chicken, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and just being in heaven and watching *Seinfeld*. Because I grew up with *Seinfeld* and I've seen every episode over and over again. And when I think of fried chicken and the sides, I think of that show.

Similarly, Lance recounted a specific memory associated with the sausage balls we were making:

I most remember the leftover sausage balls, because that's what you really eat all the time. You know, no one has, you rarely have fresh sausage balls unless I was creeping around the kitchen while my mom was cooking for a big event and stealing them. But I can remember waking up and going to like watch TV or something on a Saturday and just like getting a big plate of sausage balls. Like, way too many to eat in one sitting or at least that someone should eat in one sitting. And I would just eat, you know, 12 or 15 of

them on a big plate. I'd heat them up in the microwave and go sit on the couch and eat sausage balls. Hell, sometimes I didn't even microwave them.

These two stories highlight the ability of food to transport individuals back to a specific time and place in their lives. Aligning with the literature on sensory memory, both Lance and Alex recalled particular memories brought about by “the sensuousness of food” (Holtzman, 2006). Much like the intense reveries Proust (1913/1934) experienced upon tasting the infamous madeleine cake, my participants were similarly transported to the past via the sensorial (i.e., smell, sight, touch, taste) nature of food preparation. Discussed as a type of layering of the past onto the present, these sensory memories are often “available but unconscious” (Korsemeyer & Sutton, 2011, p. 473) and are only dislodged or recalled by a sensory (or multisensory) catalyst. Lupton (2005) notes that this unconscious connection between memory and food is well-known and utilized by perfume manufacturers with “taste notes” such as vanilla and chocolate frequently found in the most successful perfumes due to their ability to evoke “memories of childhood and simple pleasures like home-cooked cakes” (p. 321). Likewise, the stories told by my participants greatly centered around comforting childhood experiences, with most of the participants explicitly noting a link between food and childhood memories:

When you think back on your childhood and all, you think of those memories. Food. The

smell of food, seeing the food, you think of your childhood. (Robert)

[This food] is 100% nostalgic. Simpler times. Thinking of, you know, the childhood meal

that you always had. (Alex)

[Biscuits] makes me think of being back home. Back years ago, during the Depression

almost. (Rose)

When I'm making this, I think of my childhood. [Mary]

So, when I think of [sausage balls] or I smell them, it makes me feel like, I don't know. I don't want to say it makes me feel like I'm a kid again, but it definitely brings back those memories in a way. Like if I were to make some and go sit on the couch, I would definitely feel almost like displaced, temporally. [Lance]

As these excerpts show, my participants strongly connected the food we were preparing to their childhood. Understandably, the childhood associations were primarily positive in nature with the participants speaking of the food being made and the memories it invoked with warm regard. Some scholars argue that fond reminiscences such as these are problematic in that they further exemplify a “food-centered analysis that feeds on Western epicurean sensibilities” which primarily feature “popular culture notions concerning how foods serve as markers for immigrant communities, the nostalgia that wafts from home-cooked broths, and the (supposedly) enduring connections forged between mothers and daughters through food” (Holtzman, 2006, p. 364; see also Holtzman, 2010 & Wallach, 2016). While these critiques are important to keep in mind for the food studies realm in general, taking issue with nostalgic reminiscences during cooking lessons feels counterproductive in achieving a better understanding of what cooking lessons are and why they occur. This is not to suggest that the sharing of food between people is always a happy and pleasant occurrence, as Kinser (2017) and Wilk (2010) have noted. Rather, it suggests that individuals who would voluntarily participate in a study focusing on and engaged with cooking from recipes may be those who have positive associations with the subject matter. For the participants in my study, cooking lessons were accompanied by warm feelings of nostalgia, tradition, and a nod to what some would consider “simpler times.” In calling forth warm childhood memories, my participants exemplified Lupton's (2005) notion that “an appetite is an emotionally flavored hunger” (p. 318). These cooking lesson reminiscences suggest that maybe

what my participants were craving was a feeling of comfort, nurturing, and safety that could only be experienced via sensory transportation.

Furthermore, as Lance aptly noted, being surrounded by the smells, sights, and feel of these childhood food items can create a kind of temporal displacement whereby the present moment is strongly informed by past experiences. Sutton (2011) argues that this phenomenon encourages a reconceptualization of “memory itself as a sense,” as prior experiences effectively flavor the food or meal at hand by influencing an individual’s cognitive or perceptual framework (p. 470). What’s more, these trips down memory lane were shared. That is, they were spoken out loud amidst the stirring, chopping, mixing, flipping, and baking. These conversational stories help illuminate one of the purposes behind cooking lessons in general: to share.

Cooking lessons are, by nature, a shared experience. More than that though, cooking lessons involve the deliberate preparing and sharing of *specific* food items with *specific* histories and contexts. The participants all chose to make family recipes each with warm memories attached, suggesting that the key ingredient in making a sensory memory might be other people, as evidenced by Lance’s remark below:

All of the recipes, even the ones that I don’t have much to say about, that I’ve only made once or twice before, if I can remember it, it’s because I made it for or with somebody. Because I know I’ve made, in the past calendar year, probably like 10 or 12 things I’ve never made before and I can only remember the ones that have someone else associated with them.

As Korsemeier and Sutton note (2010), “remembering itself is often a collective process” (p. 471). In consideration of the inherently social nature of cooking lessons and sensory memories, it appears cooking lessons may serve as a way to revisit, remember, and recreate

personal memories *with and for others*. This is, according to Korsemeier and Sutton, one of the advantages in “thinking of memory as a sense” as it would “highlight not only the role of analogy, but how those analogies create channels of communication *between* past and present moments” (p. 472). Simply put, maybe a recipe without a story behind it never gets taught and maybe a stroll down sensory memory lane is always better with someone else there.

Recognizing Faces and Places

Beyond acting as a vehicle for sharing past sensory memories, cooking lessons also serve to give special recognition to specific individuals. As mentioned previously, the recipes chosen by the participants were all taught or shown to them by a female family member. The most obvious nod of recognition was in how participants referred to the food being made. Rather than being “Alex’s Southern Fried Chicken” or “Mary’s Salmon Cakes,” recipe titles bore the names of mothers and grandmothers. For example, Mary informed me right from the beginning of the interview that we were making her mother’s salmon cakes. Likewise, Lance referred to the sausage balls we were making as “my mother’s recipe.” And although Steve did not explicitly say we were making his grandmother’s soup beans and cornbread, it became apparent throughout the interview that he had learned how to make the meal by seeing her prepare the same dish repeatedly throughout his childhood.

My participants were not alone in invoking past recipe makers and teachers in their recipe sharing practices. In fact, it is an extremely common occurrence. Flip open any cookbook or turn on any television cooking show and you will be sure to find recipes such as “Momma’s Rich Beef Stew” (Angelou, 2004, p. 28), “Verna Prine’s Hash” (Lundy, 1991, p. 59), and “Mark Feuerstein’s Grandma’s Spaghetti” (Feuerstein, 2018). Even recipes like Steve’s soup beans and cornbread, that forgo giving a specific person credit in the recipe title, tend to be accompanied by

a backstory clearly spotlighting an individual behind the dish. Furthermore, recipes that are casually dropped into conversations are also typically accompanied by a person's name or relation. For example, during my cooking interviews, several participants passingly referred to other recipes that were linked to a specific person:

My dad's famous for his fried chicken ... That's kind of his thing. He just always cooked it. We had a great big electric skillet and he cooked it slow. He cooked it with seasoned flour and fried it in grease and it was just really good. (Robert)

If I had that [cake] recipe, that's what it would always be. If my family wrote it down, it would say "Mammaw's Chocolate Cake," or actually, "Mammaw's Mayonnaise Cake." (Lance)

I had an aunt that made prune cake and I haven't had prune cake like she'd made it since. (Steve)

I think Rachel gave me that recipe for Yum Yum Cake. That yum yum's her recipe. (Rose)

I was taught how to make fried chicken from my mother and then [my boyfriend] taught me how to make waffles. (Alex)

Recipes, it seems, demand background information. This is in accordance with the positioning of recipes as embedded discourse, giving further credence to Leonardi's belief that "like a story, a recipe needs a recommendation, a context, a point, a reason to be" (1989, p. 340). By acknowledging past recipe makers and teachers, the participants were supplying important background information they considered necessary for recipe sharing. Regardless of who is making the recipe or at what point in time, recognition of past recipe influencers ensures some measure of narrative stability and continuity. A recipe is, after all, a "form of narrative" (Cotter,

1997, p. 52) thus making the title of the recipe narratively significant. When broken down into its narrative components, a recipe title is, “in effect what Labov would call the “abstract” of the narrative, affording the reader a summary of what follows and the proposition that what follows will lead to what is promised in the title” (p. 59). Hence, a recipe title like “Mom’s Sausage Balls” not only sets up how to make sausage balls but also allows for (or necessitates) further contextualizing information concerning how, why, or where “Mom” made these sausage balls before. As noted earlier, recipe deviations were frequently mentioned throughout the cooking interviews. This makes narrative sense when we view cooking lessons from a storytelling perspective as the recipe title, recipe deviations, and associated sensory memories all fit together to create a larger narrative about a past person, place, or time period from the participant’s life.

Beyond narrative succinctness, what else would compel participants to acknowledge the mothers and grandmothers behind the recipes being made? As Steve’s recollections below indicate, one function of recipe recognition was to commemorate and honor certain people and/or places:

So, all this kind of stuff was cooked in my grandmother’s kitchen, which was a 200-year old house sitting on a 40-acre farm that they no longer have or live in and I miss that kitchen. I miss the ‘60s linoleum floor. I miss the dining room set ... that was from a Furniture Factory in the ‘50s. I miss the older oven my grandmother had that she cooked on. I miss the wood siding in the kitchen. I miss the cat that used to sit on the windowsill and look in. I miss the, I guess, my Grandad coming in. You would hear him come in, there was an entryway out the back of the house. It was basically a mudroom, where he would come in and eat and then if I was with him, that’s where we would come in. But off that backroom, too, was where they kept all their canning supplies. (Steve)

Steve's poignant reminiscence shows how cooking lessons can grant individuals a space to acknowledge the impact and importance of previous people and places. Although frequently labeled as nostalgia, various scholars have, in their own way, similarly acknowledged the commemorative aspect of cooking and recipe sharing (e.g., Berzok, 2011; Supski, 2013; Tye, 2010). While my participants' acknowledgements were generally sentimental, an unmistakable theme of respect and honor also ran through several of my participants' musings. Referencing the significance of using a loved ones' recipe, Mary noted that, "you pay homage to that person by doing it just as they would have done it." Likewise, Lance expressed similar sentiments regarding respecting the person behind the recipe:

A recipe that you get from somebody is, you know, once they're gone that's a memory of them. Especially like with my mammaw, like her cake, her hotcakes, like those are so mammaw. They are like so ingrained in my memory of her that I think it would be disrespectful to say that I'm making mammaw's, you know, hot cakes or what have you, but then just do my own thing. It's like you have to keep it that way because that's how she did it. And if you're going to tell someone that's how she did it, it should be how she did it.

Again, food studies literature tends to focus on the nostalgic qualities of preparing and/or eating loved ones' food but, as a concept, nostalgia fails to adequately capture how my participants used cooking lessons to memorialize past places and show respect for cherished individuals. Rather, the reverential aspect of cooking lessons aligns more with research concerning "traditional" food practices. For example, by having students bring in foods they considered "traditional" at a potluck, Humphrey (1989) found the food typically had,

some reference or connection to family ... [with] student comments placing much weight on the fact that a recipe or a way of preparing a dish had been handed down in the family or that only one certain member of the family ever fixed the dish. (p. 163)

Additionally, foods labeled as “traditional” often conjure images of holiday meals for which certain foods are always prepared that work to mark the occasion as connected to prior family holiday meals. In fact, as Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) found in their study on Thanksgiving meals in the U.S., some families define a “real” Thanksgiving according to whether a “traditional” family-specific dish will be served or not. Thus, “traditional” foods and cooking lessons overlap in that they both commemorate past periods of time, honor specific family members, and connect present moments to past events. Furthermore, cooking lessons can be viewed as a type of food ritual in that the prepared “recipes become almost sacred totems, a powerful way of passing on esoteric information” (Humphrey, 1989, p. 168). This, again, helps explain why participants chose family recipes for the cooking interviews rather than, say, a *Southern Living* recipe they had made a few times before. As an oral recipe sharing practice, cooking lessons by nature involves sharing much more than ingredient lists and measurements. Amidst the stirring, chopping, and mixing cooking lessons impart implicit family values, relay family histories, and perpetuate family traditions.

In summary, cooking lessons were found to be highly effective ways for individuals to recreate and commemorate past experiences. Naturally, these findings are not meant to be widely applicable, but rather are situated within a particular region with its own distinct culture of food sharing practices. As such, a brief foray into the impact regionality had on the cooking interviews is warranted.

Locating Cooking Lessons

As noted previously, my study took place in South Central Appalachia. Due to the research location, one of the stipulations placed on the choice of recipe was that it had to be considered “Southern” by the participants. Overall, I made this stipulation to encourage uniformity in recipe selections. I also assumed that recipes considered Southern would have more of a background story or explanation as opposed to a random recipe seen online or in a cooking show. My assumption that Southern recipes would garner more context mostly came from personal experience. As a Southerner living in South Central Appalachia, I have been exposed to Southern food throughout my entire life and most, if not all, of that food has a story behind it. My assumptions were further bolstered by various Southern food writers, such as the legendary John Egerton who noted that, “For as long as there has been a South, and people who think of themselves as Southerners, food has been central to the region’s image, its personality, and its character” (1993, p. 2). Simply put, regionality impacts food practices. As such, this chapter examines the ways in which Southern culture impacts cooking lessons.

The Southern Meal

One example of the regional influence noticed throughout the cooking interviews was the tendency for most participants to make a full meal rather than a single recipe. Apart from Lance, who made only sausage balls, every other participant chose to serve their selected recipe in meal form alongside other Southern food items. Connecting the need to prepare a meal with the Southern region, Alex explained:

In my opinion, Southern food was always having mashed potatoes and macaroni and cheese with fried chicken ... Or a meat and a veggie or meat and three. So, it’d be like

mashed potatoes, broccoli and cheese, fried chicken or pork chops and then maybe one more side if my Mom had time.

Similarly, Steve explained that his choice of making soup beans, greens, and cornbread stemmed from the food pairings being born out of the “Southern tradition” where “you can talk to anybody like older than the age of 40 and they all have some sort of version of soup beans and cornbread.” Thus, my participants considered Southern recipes to generally come in the form of meals rather than a single Southern food item. This is a taken for granted norm of Southern culture that, even as a Southerner myself, I had completely overlooked. Asking my participants to prepare a Southern *recipe* was instinctively translated to preparing a Southern *meal*. This phenomenon can be understood as a regional food pattern that, like most cultural patterns, is unconsciously learned and reinforced throughout a specific cultural milieu. In preparing an entire meal, rather than just one recipe, my participants enacted implicit cultural norms that highlighted what they understood Southern food to be. Shortridge (2005) documented a similar trend in her study on regional foods wherein individuals from different parts of Appalachia were asked to “plan a meal for out-of-state guests that is representative of your part of the state” (p. 65). Although each state reported slight differences in specific dishes, Shortridge found the overall Appalachian composite meal to mainly consist of chicken, potatoes, cooked beans, pie, and tea. Thus, regionality influences both what Southern recipes are and what Southern meals are supposed to look like.

Southern Food and Family

In addition to preparing Southern meals, regionality also influenced the way participants defined Southern food. Interestingly, family was found to be the most prominent deciding factor

for whether a recipe or food item was considered properly Southern. As the following excerpts show, when asked what made their recipes Southern, most of the participants responded in kind:

Well, you know, if you're from the South and if [the recipe] was something that was made when you were a kid, it's always gonna be tied to Southern culture in your mind. (Steve)

It's all Southern. I mean, my grandmother was born in the mountains of Virginia. She lived there her whole 96 years. She raised 8 kids and 76 grandkids, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She cooked up until her mid-80s, she cooked full meals for us at lunch and supper every day. So, I mean it's just Southern. It's all Southern. (Robert)

[It's Southern] because it's something my mother had growing up when they first moved to Kentucky and then to Elizabethton. (Mary)

I guess, and I'm just now realizing that as I'm saying it, but if it wasn't made by my mom or grandmother previously then I don't consider it to be part of like the family tradition. Which is, in my mind, what makes things Southern. (Lance)

Clearly, Southern food and family are so inextricably intertwined for my participants that they have become practically synonymous. Regionality, thus, is especially useful in understanding why my participants all chose to make family recipes in the cooking interviews. At least where my participants are concerned, Southern recipes *are* family recipes and vice versa. Here, regional and familial influences have overlapped to create a hyper-symbolic association that, as Lance noted, individuals may not be entirely aware of. Perhaps the connection between Southern food and family helps explain Ferris' (2015) observation that, "as Southerners, we somehow know Southern food when we see it" (p. 3). Maybe, we simply know Southern food in

the same way that we know the members of our family. After all, as Steve smartly noted, “It’s all Southern.”

As this chapter shows, regionality informs food practices in many ways. For cooking lessons, the South was found to influence the type of the food being made and also influenced what that food symbolized. Naturally, these were not the only regional influences identified throughout the cooking interviews, they were just the most prominent. Other honorable mentions include references to how simple Southern food is, the oft-cited cast iron skillet, and sweet reminiscences of bygone biscuits. These remarks, along with the overarching regional influences noted above, serve to suggest that cooking lesson experiences differ depending on their cultural and/or geographical location. Far from being generalizable, the insights gained from my cooking interviews and subsequent cooking lesson analyses are specific to a certain region. As such, cooking lessons likely look very different outside of the South Central Appalachian area and thus offer exciting possibilities for future research on differently located cooking lessons.

Conclusion

Until this study, oral recipe sharing practices were mostly confined to the category of conversational recipe tellings. As a result of my research, an additional category has happily joined the ranks of oral recipe sharing practices in the form of cooking lessons. Although restricted to the South Central Appalachian region, my study successfully contributed to the operationalization of cooking lessons as a food studies and communication studies concept. Prior to my work, cooking lessons were passingly referenced throughout some scholarly literature but never seriously studied or consistently conceptualized. One reason for this absence of research could be attributed to the fact that, even as a common experience shared by most individuals, the act of showing someone how to make a recipe is such a normalized interaction it has been

entirely overlooked outside of a professional culinary setting. Due to this oversight, in conjunction with the inherently ephemeral nature of oral recipe sharing, cooking lessons were a familiar yet unnamed communicative phenomena.

As Wood (2004) notes, “symbols allow us to name experiences, which is a primary way we give meaning to our lives” (p. 23). Thus, by identifying and labeling a distinct oral recipe sharing practice seemingly absent from current literature, I was able to concretize a previously abstract and fleeting symbolic practice. Once labeled, an exploration into what cooking lessons look like, who they impact, and why they occur was attainable. This is but one step forward in further unpacking the meaning of cooking lessons. Additional research across a variety of contexts and cultures promises exciting (and hopefully delicious) possibilities in further understanding the complex intersection of food and communication.

Future Directions

In examining the oral recipe sharing practice of cooking lessons, this research studied a heretofore overlooked phenomenon. As such, much remains to still be discovered concerning cooking lessons. Firstly, as my participants demonstrated, showing someone how to make a recipe is often accompanied by recipe deviation alerts. These vocalized acknowledgements appear to be an involuntary yet necessary aspect of cooking lessons that would make for fascinating future research. Secondly, sensory memory investigation appears uniquely served by sensory ethnographic methodologies. Thus, further research examining other approaches to sensory memory engagement would be beneficial. For example, various unorthodox interview settings such as restaurants, grocery stores, or cafeterias could be excellent arenas for better understanding the connection between sensory memory and food.

Another direction for future research mentioned in the previous chapter could consist of examining cross-cultural differences and similarities between cooking lessons throughout varying regions. For a researcher inclined to further study the Southern U.S. states, one particularly promising food item to consider would be the biscuit. Referenced by several of my participants as being quintessentially Southern and connected to specific family members recipes, biscuits would be an excellent avenue for future cooking lesson research in the South. Additionally, rather than the immersive cooking interviews I employed for this study, cooking lessons could also be studied using unobtrusive ethnographic methods. For instance, to better understand how generational cooking roles are preserved or challenged, research could include observing intergenerational cooking lessons occurring at routine family meals or holiday meals.

Although not specific to cooking lessons, future research could also investigate the differences between oral recipe sharing and written recipe sharing practices. After my cooking interviews, I wondered how much information would have been left out or added had I asked my participants to write down the recipe we had made together. Future research could look at how altering the recipe sharing format changes how food knowledge is conveyed.

In summary, my research examined one small area within a vast field of research directions and possibilities. As the various research suggestions above show, the intersection of food and communication can be endlessly explored and re-explored using a variety of approaches and frameworks.

Limitations

While this research contributed to a better understanding of cooking lessons as an oral recipe sharing practice, the study was not without its limitations. First, in using an audio recording device during the cooking interviews my technology restricted me from fully capturing

the cooking lesson experience. Aside from the difficulty in transcribing the audio due to various noisy kitchen sounds, much of the cooking interviews unsurprisingly involved participants physically showing me how to do something rather than addressing it out loud. As a result, transcripts were peppered with instructions to “do it like this” that proved problematic during analysis. One way to avoid this problem would be to use video recording technology rather than (or alongside) audio recording devices to capture both nonverbal and verbal communication used during cooking interviews.

Surprisingly, another limitation of my study was the food making process itself. Though beneficial in engaging my participants’ senses in an interactive, nontraditional interview setting, the recipe making process tended to take priority over conversational exchanges. Participants’ sometimes stopped mid-sentence to check the oven or add a forgotten ingredient and would rarely return to their previous line of thought. Although perhaps true to lived experience, the conversational interruptions resulted in choppy, hard to follow transcripts that required repeatedly relistening to the audio files throughout the transcribing, coding, *and* writing process to ensure I was best understanding the context of a participant’s quotation. This limitation is, perhaps, joined with my own limitations as a researcher and interviewer. Had I been more experienced, I might have thought to re-ask a query left unanswered or felt more comfortable suggesting the participant finish their interrupted thought.

Outside of the interview process, my recruitment strategies were limited in securing racially diverse participants. Despite having six participants across a wide age range, all the members of my study were Caucasian. In hindsight, I needed to take a more proactive and deliberate approach to recruitment to secure diverse standpoints. Given that I secured most of my participants via social media, I overlooked how only individuals who were following me or had

similar interests as me would see the study flyer. To avoid this mistake, future research should consider posting (digital and physical) flyers in targeted areas such as historic African American churches, local Islamic centers, and internationally focused university organizations. The lack of racial diversity in my study limits my findings as they represent a limited view of cooking lessons. Furthermore, I fear that in not being more proactive or attentive in my recruiting strategies I unintentionally produced a white-centric Southern food account that further perpetuates a dominant narrative that is harmful in its restricted representation. Given the history of racial oppression in the Southern United States, ensuring that marginalized voices are represented in future research on oral recipe research is imperative to constructing a more inclusive and complete portrayal of Southern food experiences.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

As I reach the end of my writing, I am struck by how much ground has been covered. What began as an innocent fascination with recipes, morphed into an all-out obsession with anything remotely related to food and communication. I have consumed (both literally and metaphorically) mounds and mounds of recipe research and now, at the end of my project, I feel far from satiated. As the title of this chapter suggests, what follows is a personal account of what I learned, missed, and reflected upon throughout my study. This section is important in that it, as my advisor says, lets the reader know that behind the research there is a person with thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and struggles.

Epistemological Doubts

Despite what the multitude of pages above suggest, most of my energy during the research process did not go to writing but rather, to doubting. As a graduate student, I occupy a weird space. No longer considered as helpless or as in need of guidance as my undergraduate self, I was given ample room to design, conduct, and pursue my thesis project on my own. Though an exhilarating prospect, I often found myself wishing I had more answers, more experience, and more insight. Attempting to stymie this self-doubt, I buried myself in scholarly articles, books, opinion pieces, and online videos all in the delusion that more input translated to better output. Of course, any big research project entails lots of reading and synthesizing but for me, my literature consumption bordered on the obsessive and did little to alleviate self-doubt. Often, rather than helping me in my own writing, I instead found myself staring at a blank document wishing I could write like that one author or be as discerning as that other writer. I

convinced myself that I didn't know enough and what I did know, wasn't the right kind of knowledge.

These doubts pervaded my research and writing process. It took me several months longer than it should have to finally feel "ready" to do the cooking interviews. And of course, once completed, I felt like I could have done a better job. Qualitative research is torturous in that way. Not being able to go back in time and adjust my interview style, I had to constantly confront my perceived ineptitude every time I looked at my interview transcripts or re-listened to interview recordings. I told myself if I had been more prepared, I would have done a better job. But in looking back I can see that I was just trying to avoid being responsible for my own interviews, my own analysis, and my own write-up. Maybe I was hoping I would stumble across a magical text that would spell it all out for me, tell me everything to do and confirm my suspicion that I had no business being left unsupervised.

That didn't happen.

Instead, I carried on, self-doubt and all. I did the interviews, the transcribing, the coding, the analyzing and eventually, the writing. And all throughout, I wondered if I was doing it right. Perhaps my biggest paranoia outside of my skills as a researcher, was my chosen research subject. As noted throughout my project, very little research has been conducted on oral recipe sharing practices. To me, that seemed suspicious. I mean, how can this have been missed? Naturally, I doubted myself first. I assumed I had missed something along the way. Maybe I had overlooked a scholarly journal, used the wrong keywords, or misunderstood most of what I previously read. I scoured and re-scoured the Internet, read and re-read the literature, and obsessed to the point of mania until I finally arrived at the conclusion that there just wasn't that much research on oral recipe sharing. Though to be honest, I'm still afraid I missed something.

From start to finish, I have had one epistemological crisis after another and am left wondering if that feeling of doubt will dissipate once this research leaves my hands or if the slow burn of my qualitative research will continue to impact me long after I'm "through" with it. Speaking of burning, due to the nature of my cooking interviews, I was sometimes put in an awkward position. Let me explain.

Who Burned the Biscuits?

One of the quandaries qualitative interviewers face is when (or if) to speak up, correct, interrupt, or otherwise address participant remarks. Remaining impartial and receptive to any and all participant responses is a foundational tenet of successful qualitative interviews but can, understandably, be difficult to accomplish sometimes. In my case, I found it hard to blindly follow participants' recipe instructions when I considered it incorrect.

For instance, although I don't consider myself an expert in baking or cooking, I often internally questioned some of my participants' cooking times, temperatures, and instructions. Not wanting to unduly influence my participants though, I decided to not offer any suggestions for improving or changing their recipe. This resulted in participant recipes not always turning out as planned. One particular biscuit recipe wound up producing rather burnt biscuits and a subsequent "What did you do?" posed to me. Although asked largely in jest, the question of what *I* did struck me as odd. If I was simply following someone else's instructions, who then really burned the biscuits? Should I have said something while the biscuits were being made? Or when they were in the oven? Would it have still been someone else's recipe if I intervened in the production of it?

Unfortunately, I don't have any concrete answers to these questions. Rather my intention was to address the unusual position researchers occupy during interviews and observational settings. My cooking interviews taught me that while qualitative research attempts to capture a

fuller, richer snapshot of lived experiences, it can inspire as many questions as it addresses. After all, I'm still not really sure who burned those biscuits.

On (Finally) Completing It

Out of the self-doubt and burnt biscuits, the weirdest thing of all is to be done. Today, I began to clear off my desk and file away papers that had been strategically left out for months *just in case* I needed to quickly glance at an article or transcript. Like a tattered comfort blanket, the messiness and stress that accompanied my research project has been a constant part of my life and now the dust is finally starting to settle. And it feels *weird*.

I assumed that after spending so long thinking, reading, and writing about food, the topic would be forever spoiled for me. Happily, I find that I still love consuming food literature and media. If anything, this project has made me appreciate food even more and I look forward to reading the long list of gastronomic literature I compiled during my research. Funnily, it seems my appetite has only grown as a result of my research. I look forward, hungrily, to what lies ahead.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Prompts

- 1) How do you know this recipe so well?
- 2) Who, if anyone, taught you this recipe?
- 3) What, if anything, is different about this recipe we are making right now and the original recipe?
- 4) Tell me about the first time you had this food item cooked for you.
- 5) Have you shared this recipe with anyone else? If so, how? If not, why?
- 6) Who else in your life (besides the person who taught you this recipe) knows how to make this recipe? How do they know how to make it?
- 7) When was the last time you made this recipe?
- 8) What are some of the memories this recipe stirs up for you?
- 9) Would you say this recipe is important to you? If so, in what way? If not, what does the recipe mean to you?
- 10) What makes this food item Southern to you?
- 11) What sort of family recipes do you *wish* or *want* to know? Why?
- 12) What are sometimes you have made recipes with others? What was that story?

Appendix B

Transcribed Recipes

Sausage Ball	
Measurements	Ingredients
2 cups	Cheddar Cheese
1 pound	Sausage
1 ½ cups	Bisquik
½ tbs.	Worcestershire
1 full tbs.	Hot Sauce
Unspecified	Salt
Unspecified	Black Pepper
Little more than	Onion Powder
Mother's Recipe	
Unspecified	Garlic Salt
Little bit	Cumin
Cooking Info:	
<p>Measure out some of the ingredients prior to beginning. Grab mixing bowl. Put ingredients into mixing bowl. Add forgotten ingredients. Place balls onto rack. Bake. Check at 12. Give balls up to 8 minutes more. Turn to ensure sausage balls are done on top and bottom.</p>	

Mashed Potatoes	
Measurements	Ingredients
Unspecified	Potatoes
Cooking Info:	
<p>Wash potatoes. Peel potatoes and put into strainer. Leave some of the peel on potatoes. Wash potatoes again. Cut potatoes. Boil potatoes until done. Pour into strainer. Mash roughly.</p>	

Homemade Biscuits	
Measurements	Ingredients
2 cups	Self-rising flour (+ a little bit more)
About 1/3 stick	Butter
About 2 tbs.	Butter
About 1 tsp.	Crisco
Some	Baking Soda
Eyeball	Half & Half
Some	Buttermilk (room temperature)
Pinch	Salt
Cooking Info:	
<p>Loosely scoop flour out. Cut cold butter into tiny little cubes. Add shortening. Take a fork and mix shortening and butter into the flour (until there are pea-sized pellets). Get out big lumps by pressing it against the side. Add baking soda. Stir. Shake buttermilk, put into mixture. Add half & half. Stir together gently. Put little bit of flour down on wax paper. Turn out your dough. Life and fold dough until incorporated. Form into biscuits. Place biscuits on pan (make sure biscuits are touching each other). Bake at 425 until bottoms are brown. Once bottoms are brown, turn broiler on high. Broil until tops of biscuits are brown. Set timer for two minutes.</p>	

Appendix B (cont.)

Transcribed Recipes

Southern Fried Chicken & Waffles			
Waffles		Fried Chicken	
Measurements	Ingredients	Measurements	Ingredients
2	Eggs	Package of strips	Chicken
1 cup	Milk	2	Eggs
1 cup	All-Purpose Flour	Doesn't matter	Flour
2 tbs.	Sugar	Some	Olive Oil
1 tsp.	Baking Powder		
¼ tsp.	Salt		
4 tbs.	Unsalted Butter		
Cooking Info:		Cooking Info:	
Crack eggs into bowl. Pour milk in. Put baking powder and sugar in bowl. Mix with KitchenAid mixer. Stop mixer, add flour and butter. Spray waffle maker with cooking spray. Pour batter into waffle maker. Cook until light is green for 2 minutes, maybe 3.		Crack eggs. Put flour into bowl. Mix eggs. Roll chicken strips in eggs. Roll chicken in flour. Put olive oil in pan. Lay chicken strips in pan. Cover pan. Flip strips. Cook until golden brown on both sides.	

Pinto Beans	
Measurements	Ingredients
Unspecified	Pinto Beans
Unspecified	Fatback
Cooking Info:	
Fry fatback a little bit. Add to beans.	

Greens	
Measurements	Ingredients
1	Kale
Unspecified	Aminos
Little Bit	Lemon Juice
Cooking Info:	
Remove kale off the stem. Steam a while.	

Appendix B (cont.)

Transcribed Recipes

Salmon Patties	
Measurements	Ingredients
2	Cans Salmon (drained & bones picked out)
1	Green Pepper (chopped)
Four handfuls	Cornflakes (crushed)
Enough	Canned Cream
1	Egg
Some	Garlic powder
Some	Pepper
Scant amount	Oil
Cooking Info:	
Add all ingredients (except oil) together in bowl. Taste mixture to ensure the seasoning is right. Form into patties. Put oil in frying pan. Put patties into pan. Let cook. Turn over after a few minutes (avoid getting them too brown).	

Southern Fried Country Steak	
Measurements	Ingredients
However much	Steaks (not the choice cuts)
Enough	Big Stone Mill Seasoned Flour
Little bit	Water
Little bit	Milk
Unspecified	Shortening
Cooking Info:	
Tenderize/pound out steaks. Put flour in bowl. Put water in separate bowl. Put shortening in cast iron skillet. Dip steaks in water, then dredge in flour. Place in skillet. Cook steaks to well done and remove from skillet. Place back in skillet. Add water to skillet. Add leftover dredging flour to skillet. Add a touch more flour. Cover skillet. Let sit there and cook until gravy is thick, and meat is fork tender. Add milk.	

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