Ah Mm's little flat was perpetually filled with this distinctive amalgamation of smells of fried lard, peeled onions, garlic, fried chilli paste and other food she was in the process of preparing. I will never forget that huge wok of lard frying on the stove, so fragrant yet a bit cloying at the same time... Ah Mm also learned to cook curry chicken (page 52)... Hers was delicious in its simplicity — an unforgettable taste of my childhood... As I think about my childhood, especially the year I lived with my grandparents and ate so many meals cooked by Ah Mm, I am filled with warm memories of the simple, yet delicious food we enjoyed as a family (Seow 2009: 44-45).

INTRODUCTION

Identities of self, families, and social groups are contingent on and expressed through memories and embodied recollections of the past. Remembering the past through food experiences imply that food serves as an intermediary that reproduces the social ties which anchor individual and collective membership. Seow's (2009) vivid recollection of her childhood days—mediated by a plethora of sensory qualities of Ah Mm's food preparation and cooking processes—evidence the significance of taste and other sensory responses toward triggering one's recollection of childhood days in relation to familial and neighbourly
ties. The act of "tasting memories" therefore establishes cultural connections between the then and now. How is the past remembered through food as a vehicle? How is such remembering reflective of memories and heritage that are embodied by and mediated through sensory experiences? What do these sensorial aspects of gastronomic nostalgia mean for social actors?

In the domain of food studies, Sutton (2010) traces the inauguration of food and the senses to anthropologists Levi-Strauss and Douglas. Both discuss the senses and foodways based on structuralist approaches. Where Levi-Strauss (1969) refers to the senses as "operators" in connection with such structural binaries as "silence and noise" and "life and death", Douglas notes how contrasting sensations of sweet and savoury link up with the structural ordering of a meal and its courses (see Douglas and Gross 1981). These structural dimensions were later followed by others who delved deeper into the social salience of the senses, seen for instance in Stoller's (1989: 8) work on the Songhay in Niger where his senses of taste, hearing and sight were essential in his ethnographic research and writing in order to both transcend the "Eurocentric mistake" of emphasizing sight as the privileged sense and to offer "[v]ivid descriptions of the senses of ethnographic situations". Such situations include the important relationship between taste, sauces and social proximity among the Songhay. Seremetakis's (1994) account of her childhood and eating peaches is another case in point. Recalling with vivid fondness the aroma and taste of the peach, she argues for how the senses are "entangled with history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2). By examining sensory aspects of history, she has worked toward building an anthropology of the senses. Such a field, when interpellated, and silence" (1994: 2).
warrtime (Wong 2009) or in the prosaic activities found in day-to-day routines. As Chen (2014) also reminds us, cookbook writers often register their opinions and sentiments of individual experiences, as well as various social and political events and contexts. In the case of Singapore, these include, among others, the Japanese Occupation of 1942–1945 (Wong 2009) and the Hock Lee bus strike of 1955 (Seow 2009). Paying attention to these varying contexts will further add to a more nuanced comprehension of what foodways and familial ties represent in different environments.

How does gastronomic nostalgia work? Three strands of making sense of food heritage form my central preoccupation in conceptualising the visceral and socio-cultural connections between food, identity and nostalgia. The first locates sensory nostalgia as a way to comprehend how food, the senses, and memory recall work in intersectional ways to shed light on both familial and ethnic identity. The second has to do with what I term sensory discomfort, where social actors' recollections of the past are not uniformly couched in positive, nostalgic terms. Instead, sensory disarray and discomfort also constitute a part of the larger scheme of food heritage production. The final deals with the notion of sensory imagination. This is where the past — be it actually experienced by writers of culinary texts, or imagined on behalf of the readers — is analysed vis-à-vis Appadurai's (1996) idea of 'armchair nostalgia'.

In explicated these conceptual trajectories, I examine nostalgia in its plural and complex forms (Sutton 2001: 155), as opposed to nostalgia as a singular notion. Analysing nostalgia at polyvalent draws attention to how social actors engage with the past in differentiated ways. As a corollary, different facets of culinary nostalgia, as the three strands will elucidate, shed light on varying domains of social life, for instance, food and migratory contexts, food and the experience of place, food and communal practices in the family, and food and the transmission of sensory-cultural know-hows. In turn, these domains suggest a wider shared sense of commensality and belonging that are inscribed within particular socio-cultural practices, where shared tastes contribute to a shared identity (Walker 2012).

COOKING AND SENSING HERITAGE

As a complex field of inquiry, the politics of heritage is imbued with the construction of social identities (Bussière 2013) to be deployed as a resource. Heritage is a discourse drawn from history, encompassing a set of values and socio-cultural practices, material and immaterial components, that together possess crucial socio-political functions (Grahame 2002; Smith 2006). Such practices can include foodways, which as iterated above, are modes and experiences intimately tied to collective memory and heritage. Theorizations of collective memory suggest that remembering is not merely the act of an individual, but what and how we remember transpire in relation to our membership within particular mnemonic communities, including families, organisations and nations (Lupton 1994; Zerubavel 1996). In this respect, comprehending the process of remembering as being socially enmeshed (Prager 1998) means that claims to a "common heritage presuppose a shared memory" (Chronis 2006: 268). As a resource for the present, heritage forms the bridge between the past and the present, where a sense of continuity is projected. What then is food heritage? Why is food heritage important? What does it do for social actors and nations? I first suggest the following components that form different aspects of food heritage in Singapore. Foodways that comprise a range of dietary habits, food preparation processes, cooking techniques, cooking spaces, eating places, social groups and their varied episodes of commensality, institutional structures of food consumption, regulatory agencies and food industries, among many others. In short, food heritage stands for all that traverses domestic and public realms of gustatory experience. While actors can all relate to food in emotionally connected ways in these realms, they do so in manifold ways that are germane to their own subjectivities.

Foodways passed down as "heirlooms" through the generations imply continuity and familiarity and reinforce the role of food in the family. The perceived loss of culinary tradition as a heritage project for people appears to be a perennial concern, thereby constantly emphasising the importance of handing down cooking techniques and recipes for posterity. Seow (2009: 10) explains this in her recollection of home-cooked dishes that have been "consigned to history"; since these dishes would never be found in public eating venues but have been confined to her family for generations, she takes it upon herself as a custodian to bridge "the generation of [her] children" with the generations before them. A further step, Seow (2009: 10) notes, is to carry out the following:

I decided that I had to do more than just pass on our family recipes. I had to write of the times my grandparents and their children lived in, and when I was a little girl. So, I have written about food that evokes such powerful memories of the past, of intriguing sights, smells and tastes that can, in an instant, transport me to another time, to another place.
paramount given that he perceives Hawking not only as a form of livelihood but "a piece of art" emanating from "artisan hawkers". Furthermore, hawker (Ibid.).

"vibrant atmosphere adds to the senses and flavours of the eating experience" for Sale: Singapore, Remaining Heritage Street Food Vendors. The sustenance of food heritage, according to state directives, begins with the family unit, for "[j]ust like charity, food heritage begins at home" (Tully and Tan 2010: 18). Such heritage that may be found in the home comprises the various processes of helping out during the day-to-day or special occasion meal preparation, where "one would have had the chance to learn the art of choosing and handling ingredients, [as well as] how to manipulate textures and flavours" (Ibid.).

Apart from such commemorative books or culinary memoirs (see also, Seow 2009; Tan 2012), programmes targeted at continuing the hawker trade and skills transfer are also in place, such as the Hawker Master Trainer Pilot Program jointly launched by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and the National Environment Agency in 2013 (Xue 2013). These different forms of food heritage reflect Bessière's (2013: 277) contention regarding the mechanisms and instrumentalities of heritage, where heritage and tradition operate together in providing "constant order amidst continual change". Food heritage is therefore pertinent, not only in providing a foundation from which identities are formed and sustained through the lens of food reminiscences, but it offers a cloak of stability in the face of social change in Singapore. As a resource, food heritage thus serves both as a social bond for actors, as well as a political-ideological tool for the state in instilling a sense of collective identity as a part of nation-building processes.

The authors then go on to offer a list of 21 suggestions as to how food heritage at home and family traditions, "which is also the country's heritage", may be procedurally honoured. Some of them include both learning how to make and appreciate "heirloom recipes" from senior family members, imparting such culinary knowledge to one's children including the "stories behind the food", continuing food practices by inventing new family food traditions but without losing sight of traditional cooking techniques, "bless[ing] your favourite hawkers with verbal and monetary encouragement", supporting local food businesses as well as efforts to save food heritage, and finally, "guard[ing] your own wellsprings of culinary meaning" by writing your own book (Tully and Tan 2010: 18–19). What this list reflects are complexes of generational ties, culinary skills transfer, community efforts, and the institutionalisation of food heritage. Moreover, given the Singaporean state's approach to national history which has to do with "intertwining the personal with the nation" (Târulevici 2013: 114), this thereby illustrates how heritage...
should be performed through the aforementioned list of suggestions. In order to flesh out these elements that together illustrate what food heritage entails as a system of relationships (Tschofen 2008) and what it does at the symbolic level, the senses are potent arbiters in processes of remembering the past and cooking in the present, including how ethnicity is reproduced in state projects of cooking identities through ethnic food/actor categorisation. The discussion should be comprehended in interrelated ways in terms of the use of history and narration for contextualisation, and the focus on posterity and identity-formation at different levels.

The notion of sensory heritage has largely been debated in tourism studies and how cultures and the past are imbued through one’s sensory experiences, or through embodied encounters of history with sensory re-enactments at tourist sites or museum exhibits. Extant scholarship on the senses in connection with heritage has touched upon the areas of materiality and tangible objects (Chronis 2006), senses and the experiencing of places, cities and modernity (Howes 2011; Kong 2013), and the emotional character of heritage and homelands drawn upon vis-à-vis sensory encounters with objects and places (Kearney 2009). I develop further the notion of sensory heritage to locate foodways as a medium that similarly articulates poignant moments of the past that are meaningful for social actors. Extending from my earlier work on senses, heritage and military history and on identity work (Low 2010; 2013), the senses enable social actors to connect more intimately to the past. For the past is rendered more meaningfully contextualised when mediated by and recalled through sensory moments shared in familial, culinary settings. In this manner, our links to the past are embodied where not only the mind comes into contact with history, but that such links are crucially attached to the physical world and therefore should not be regarded as separated from the body (Merleau-Ponty 1968). Multi-sensory markers found in culinary texts enrich and actualise a “tasting” of the past that create embodied and emotive bonds across past and present times.

DELICIOUS MEMORIES: REMEMBERING THROUGH THE SENSES

While the processes of cooking and eating are highly sensory and embodied activities (Lupton 1996), I move beyond the biological sense — consumption of foods — to locate the socio-cultural meanings that are associated with these evocative processes. They convey familiarity, intimacy, and nostalgic memories which together form the basis for familial if not national recollection and identity formation. Because the sensuousness of food serves as a pivotal vehicle of memory (Holtzman 2006). By embarking on an embodied and sensory reading of the different sets of materials considered herein, I demonstrate the importance of the senses in crafting selves and others, serving as memory stimuli that add to the sensibilities of heritage. Following Korsmeyer and Sutton (2017), such analytical attention devoted to sensory memories broadens the ambit of interrogating identity and selfhood, collective memory and group identity.

If memory is regarded as a social act, then this means that it takes place in a specific milieu in which social actors re-experience food and commensality through the senses. Instead of interpreting sensory memory recollection and emotions as more accident, one ought to critically examine these as “connectors between actors and social structures” (Tschofen 2008: 48). Abdullah (2010; 172) articulates this point:

[S]ensory experiences of food contain within them both personal and collective memories, emotions, histories, space and moments in time, providing referential points between them and now, and here and there.

Emotional recollections of the past — specifically about family relationships — is both mediated and enriched by the senses in interrelated ways. There is thus an emotional, sensorial and familial connection that is made and experienced through foodways, documented and enlivened through sensory associations in culinary texts. Poly-sensory moments which are emotionally intense and poignant — not unlike the Proustian moment of a tea-soaked madeleine — are thus idiomatic of how one accesses and engages with the past with the senses as mnemonic agents. These moments, comprising at first physiological experiences of smelling and tasting, translate into how commensality and convivium come with “communicative-socialising functions” (Tschofen 2008) pertaining to foodways. In Sammugam’s (2011: 9–16) depiction of her Amma’s (mother) cooking skills, which were learnt from Aatha (her grandmother), her account explicates the significance of commensality, gender roles and the family, as well as communal food sharing as a typical way of life:

Having learned to cook from Aatha, Amma was almost obsessed with it and she took great joy in serving her food to family members. The aromas of her cooking would fill the air and our neighbours could hardly wait.
to be offered some of her food. Those smells permeated our entire home and lingered within the fabric of the cotton sari that Amma wore. As a child, I used to wrap myself around her legs and breathe in those delicious perfumes.

Sanmugam’s childhood memories of food thus provide glimpses into how cooking responsibilities fell upon women and how the pleasant smells of her mother’s cooking provided a safe blanket of comfort. These represent emotional themes of duty, security and happiness (cf. Lupton 1994). Furthermore, such remembrances demonstrate a strong link to familial ties, where culinary skills are inherited across the generations.

Having written her book as a tribute to the “special people” in her life, Seow (2009: 10) recalls with fondness, cooking memories of her grandmother and father:

[My grandmother, my Hua Mama, was there right beside me, grinding glutinous rice into a smooth paste, or my father standing by the sink, fastidiously shaking off any excess water from the chye sim he had just washed. I have invoked for you my past that is part of my sons’ inheritance.

The author’s memory-choreography that is textured with familial ties and sensory elements of hand movements and accompanying sounds, is interestingly not just meant for her sons. By invoking the past for “you” (us), the reader, Seow’s work exemplifies what Appadurai (1996) notes as a type of “armchair nostalgia” or nostalgia sans lived experience; the case here is not so much about re-experiencing a past culinary moment, but an invitation to experience vicariously, someone else’s past as an outlet of a sense of shared food heritage despite the absence of any first-hand experience, the reader’s ability to savor and linger within the worlds of others—Amma’s and Amma’s generation’s in this instance. In other words, there is still a sense of shared food heritage despite the absence of any first-hand experience, where the underlying sentiment of a shared sensory affinity (drawing from Anderson’s (1983) mental affinity of imagined communities is key towards rendering such heritage accessible and resonant.

Apart from culinary memories that intersect with family life, another aspect of such sensory nostalgia also touches upon ethnic heritage of food practices. In this instance, the different dialect groups that together make up the Chinese segment of Singapore’s population are first traced to the country’s migrant past:

Singapore is a country built by migrants. After the Malays — who were the original inhabitants of this sleepy little island — some of Singapore’s earliest arrivals were the Chinese, who came by the hundreds from Malacca… Others from China followed, arriving by junk along the shores of Telok Ayer, landing among its many sheltered bays (Tan 2012: 6).

Tan (2012: 7) goes on to describe the various occupations that these different migrant groups took up and thereafter proceeded to outline how Chinese migrants connected to their hometowns through food:

It was the simple tastes of home that nourished the bodies and fed the souls of Singapore’s early Chinese diaspora. For the Cantonese, it was comforting double-boiled soups and roasted meats; for the Teochews, watery porridge with large, fluffy grains of rice eaten with condiments like preserved vegetables and salted eggs. The Hokkiens craved braised pork — robust, flavou­some and a reminder of home; and the Hakkas favoured stuffed bean curd and dishes spiked with homemade rice wine.

Ostensibly, the varied “tastes of home” Tan alludes to represent the ways through which food serves as a medium that delineates different identity-relevances; these are based on the contrasting culinary cultures of the aforementioned dialect groups. Dishes and how they are eaten — watery, fluffy, robust and flavourousome — all conjure taste sensations that supposedly signify each dialect group’s distinct gastronomic way of life. Correspondingly, Walker (2012) proposes that the associations between food, identity and memory more often than not focus on specific forms of cooked food, as well as the ways of eating them. Additionally, the links between food, place and ethnic significance are also depicted in Tan’s book. She notes that while the Chinatown of today has changed dramatically from its yesteryears, there still exists a “common thread that continues to bind the history of Chinatown to its people today”, which are “hard work and good food” (Tan 2012: 8). Similar to my earlier discussion
on the lamentations of an impending lost, good past, Tan points out that "many of Chinatown's eateries today teeter on the brink of extinction", since the next generation prefer their pay cheques that come with "less gruelling work". Dividing her book into three categories, Tan speaks of Chinatown in its changing historical contexts ("The Place"), people who have lived their lives and established their businesses ("The Memories"), and a collection of recipes contributed by some of the author's interviewees that "literally offer a taste of Singapore's Chinatown in the comfort of our own homes" ("The Food"; Tan 2012: 9).

One could argue that both social actors and the state employ food as a way to maintain ethnic identities that are historically validated (Holtzman 2006), thereby accounting for the use of historical narratives of ethnic groups in culinary texts. The contradictions of bounded and multi-ethnic culinary heritage is also observed in how culinary writers both operate within ethnic categories in their gustatory narratives and yet simultaneously acknowledge the cross-ethnic influences that have come to bear in the different foodways which they describe. In their work on Indian Heritage Cooking, which comes under a series on "Singapore Heritage Cookbooks" supported by the National Heritage Board, authors Sanmugam and Kasinathan (2011: 14) point out distinctions between North and South Indian cuisine, where they also indicate multi-ethnic influences in the cooking of Indian cuisine:

The early Indian immigrants in Singapore incorporated local ingredients and cooking styles into their traditional cuisines or spiced up Malay and Chinese dishes with an Indian touch, creating dishes unique to Singapore.

Serving up "Indian versions of Malay and Chinese dishes" (ibid.), multi-ethnic cooking and eating are perceived through such dishes as the Indian rojak (rojak is a Malay word that means "mixture"; the authors note that it could be a variation of a Chinese fruit and vegetable salad), mee goreng (which the authors suppose may have been adapted from char kuay teow, a Chinese fried rice noodle dish), and sop kambing (where its recipe provided later in the book points toward some Chinese culinary links — "The soup is also served with a sprinkling of fried shallots and chopped spring onions, clearly a Chinese influence" [Sanmugam and Kasinathan 2011: 28]), among others.

As another example, Hyman (1993: 121) waxes lyrical over how there exists an intermingling of the "ethnic foods of the three races". In the process however, she ends up reinforcing if not reifying ethnic culinary proclivities, despite the hybridisation (see Tarulevicz 2013) of such food habits: "The ethnic food of the three races have also intermingled to produce a cuisine incredibly rich in variety and innovation. Singaporean Malays eat noodles doused with curry sauce, Indians perfume their curries with star anise and lemongrass, and the Chinese happily consume quantities of Malay satays." (ibid.). A similar contention is submitted by Chua and Rajah (2001) who talk about how social actors are the ones who essentialise ethnic identities vis-à-vis foodways and consumption styles, resonating "typifications of food-and-ethnicity" (2001: 190). If so, then multi-ethnic families are equally conscious about how their multiple backgrounds present a mixture of different heritage, as the next passage from Singapore Family Favourites (2010: 2) suggests:

Here's French background and my Chinese heritage make for some wonderful fusion recipes. We want our children to better understand and experience both of our cultures and traditions, not only through sight but also through taste as well...We like to infuse new textures and tastes [in]to our cooking while still maintaining a balanced diet for our growing boys.

Another multi-ethnic family featured in the book similarly demonstrates a concurrent awareness of ethnic differences and ethnic overlaps (2010: 16):

Our team is thus named because we are a multi-racial family, with a Chinese mother, Indian-Chinese daughter, Indian cousin and Malay son-in-law. We are a true representation of Singaporean society...As you can imagine, our multicultural background is strongly represented in our cooking, and we draw from all these influences to create recipes that are often quirky, always original, and never boring!

The above passages indicate that culinary boundaries are more porous than ethnic boundaries (Tarulevicz 2013), where individuals think of identity in ethnically bounded terms and simultaneously cook in hybridised ways. Overall, sensory nostalgia as an aspect of food heritage conjoins social relations, group membership, as well as experiences of place that together illuminate how foodways connect us to the past. Culinary stereotypes are manufactured through state orchestration of the different categories of ethnic cuisines that seem to sideline the reality of more fluid boundaries of ethnic food practices; these may and have arisen in the context of inter-ethnic unions among other factors that alter the family unit from singular to multiple ethnic composites.
Beyond the context of wartimes, the lack of proper hygiene in eating places also point to the idea of sensory transgression and disgust. Tan’s (2012: 96) write-up on Maxwell Road Food Centre in Chinatown clearly demonstrates how sugar cane as a common beverage in Singapore is portrayed in unappealing ways of hygienic-sensory violations. At the same time, different groups of people hold divergent memories of the food centre; where hawkers recalled having enjoyed congregating with fellow stallholders at the common washing area and communicating by “shouting across the stalls”, diners “remember it differently”. The unsanitary context brings forth an unsavoury recollection:

Set smack along the main thoroughfare where people ate, the common washing area collected stacks and stacks of dirty dishes that piled up high during peak hours — not a particularly appetising sight. When the crowds ebbed, the hawkers would perch themselves on tiny stools and do their washing up. The oily dishwater ran into clogged drains, which in turn spilled over onto the floors. Poles of sugar cane sat nearby, their porous flesh soaking up the polluted water before heading for the crusher to yield sweet (though terrifyingly unhygienic) sugar cane juice.

Unappealing and distasteful in all of their senses, the textures, tastes, and smells of varying rice grain types depict a negative discourse of disgust and repulsion, denoting hardships in the form of sensory transgressions in otherwise “normal” circumstances. Such sensory discomfort is also evident in the case of sugar cane juice mentioned above. Sensory nostalgia has in this case, translated into sensory discomfort as an alternate theme, revealing how the senses operate both in establishing social order as well as embodied disarray through sensory displacement. Attention paid to sensory discomfort and disgust in food memories acts as a response to Holtzman’s (2006) call for moving beyond “pleasant smells and tastes of good food” that remain consonant with Western epicurean views, extending the diverse significance of sensory modalities.

Sensuous ways of recollecting the past through culinary episodes are ineluctably not only about nostalgic, delicious memories. Indeed, a whole platter of pleasant and unsettling remembrances of these episodes are evident, and both types of food heritage structure how we revive if not connect to the past, and how these links are made relevant as important aspects of changing culinary landscapes across the different decades of Singapore in wartime and post-war situations. These various gastro-sensory moments are also to be read within the broader structural milieus that contextualise how they are recalled.
and registered (cf. Farquhar 2002) — for instance, how wartime food habits were greatly constrained if not altered by such practices of food rationing, the scarcity of food and food services, and how food cultivation was promoted to bring about self-sufficiency, resulting in a farming culture where farming practices took priority over work schedules and were also inserted into the school curriculum (Wong 2009: 21). Similarly, learning about food heritage in the context of Chinatown also comes along with a cursory look into Singapore’s migrant past and dialect proclivities, signalling the relationship between foodways and group identity. Culinary texts therefore contextualize provide nuggets of socio-historical information that carry tales of how people lived in times past and how these have bearings on comprehending the contemporary context.

Briefly, a final point I raise here has to with embodying cooking skills and techniques. Bodily memories not only remember how foods tasted, smelled and looked like, but such embodied reminiscences are also crucial in the preparation of food. Sensory know-hows are therefore important skills in food practices that are stressed upon. In the commemorative publication on Not for Sale (Tee et al. 2013), respective references are made by two hawkers pertaining to the seaves in terms of the preparatory process for chicken curry noodle and ikanos (fried doughsticks):

Hawkers don’t work from recipes, even if I tell you everything, you may not be able to get the same taste. You must experience cooking hands-on, use your eyes to see, your sense of smell and ears to listen in order to master our skills (Tee et al. 2013: 65).

My hands are how I measure the weight, texture and doneness of my dough (Tee et al. 2013: 263).

Culinary skills need to be actualised through the conscious use of one’s different senses as a skiller (Abdullah 2010). In learning how to cook berkedil (potato croquettes), Ali (2013: 75) narrates her job of “mixing and kneading the potatoes thoroughly”, where her mother also demonstrated “how to shape the potato croquettes into a perfect, desirable size” by placing the potato mixture onto her palm and forming it into a round ball, only to lightly flatten it thereafter. Ali conclusively declares: “The only way to learn how to cook is from experience, to be completely involved in the cooking process, especially the preparation” (Ali 2013: 75), this included putting up with earfuls of scolding and going through many rounds of practice and correction. On a separate occasion, Ali (2013: 78) offers a sensorial recollection of cooking Malay desserts such as kueh kacau, a sweet potato base accompanied by coconut milk, eggs and gula melaka:

One day before Hari Raya, my aunt was stirring the batter of kueh kacau and asked me to take over the wooden paddle. I was in short sleeves and unprepared for the splattering batter. I got scolded with batter that flew onto my face. From then I realised I had to wear long sleeves and on top of that cover both my hands with cloth to avoid being hurt by hot batter. I also had to shield myself with the lid of the aluminum pot. To stir the batter, a long wooden paddle was used in consistent strokes, allowing the batter to thicken slowly. Once thickened, the kueh kacau became a beautiful golden dark yellowish brown, and spread its sweet, beautiful aroma all over the badminton court area.

Clearly, this kueh kacau episode brings forth embodied recollections of both sensory dangers (being splattered with the hot batter) and sensory pleasures (remembering the texture of the thickened batter, the enticing hue of yellowish brown and the wonderful and pungent smell).

Embodied skills and sensory expertise also relate to ethnic identity. As Hyman (1993: 120–121) notes: “Nonya cooks are very proud of their skill when it comes to pounding spices. It is said that an experienced cook can tell from listening to the rhythm of the pounding, whether the person is a good cook or not, and from the sound made by the pestle which spice is [being] pulverised.” Together, these examples of embodied cooking throw light upon Sazana’s (2001: 135) notion of “embodied apprenticeship”, where one remembers not only a set of cooking techniques, but other avenues of “images, taste, smells and experience” that likewise mediate culinary entailment and intimate gastronomic memories.

CONCLUSION — THE POLITICS OF EDIBLE HERITAGE

Given the social and emotive characteristics of foodways, cookbooks and other culinary texts form anchoring points that convey and sustain the connections between food practices, propinquity, group identity and heritage. Memorable both as sensory and social experiences, the acts of cooking and of communality are intimately tied to nostalgic remembering and heritage formation. The
appetite for memories and heritage is found in social actors who wish to remember different facets of their lives and family members, as well as states that drive heritage-making projects for ideological purposes. In combination, both forms of remembering add to the construction and maintenance of identity in familial, generational and ethnic manners although the ways of doing so may converge or differ in their content and process. Together, foodways as instruction and as experience “bind individuals together, define the limits of the group’s identity, serve as a medium of communication, celebrate cultural cohesion, and provide a context for ritual performance” (Nussel 2006: 958).

Food heritage as culinary patrimony is about time past, present relevance, and imaginations of the future, where it connects inextricably to both group membership and kinship (cf. Lupton 1994).

This chapter has considered how culinary texts serve as apropos sources through which the heritage and memories of a nation are captured and storied concurrently as collective identities and individual biographies. Cookbooks and other materials form culinary repertoires of family life, historical events and heritage. In order to make heritage digestible and delicious, families have thus been asked to story their own gastronomic nostalgia by penning culinary writings. In other words, they bring to the plate, their own appetites and remembrances that are relevant and significant for themselves. These writings therefore serve as a locus from which an interplay of family life, the senses and heritage-making within the broader social and cultural contexts of Singapore in different time periods has been identified and analysed. In sum, culinary texts merge or reflect upon both private familial memories and collective narratives that in conjunction shed light on identity politics.

Sensory and ethnic embodiment of heritage lends further credence to consider how these different forms of engagement with the past are important in various dimensions of social life. Through these forms, foodways, as captured in the texts that I have examined, wield significant cultural heritage import. Culinary narratives found in these texts, informed by sensory attention and by ethnic dimensions, connect people to their familial ties and to their ethnic identity. This chapter thus shores up interesting questions pertaining to whether and how analyses of foodways may intersect with heritage and sensory studies towards realising the importance of different social ties and how the past is made relevant in embodied and sensorial gustatory ways.

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Chapter 4

Placing Pig Farming in Post-Independence Singapore: Community, Development and Landscapes of Rurality

Harvey Neo

INTRODUCTION

The pace and depth of restructuring in an array of agro-food industries have been remarkable in the past decades. The drivers behind such transformation, which are fundamentally aimed at increasing profit, are nonetheless fuelled by the interplay of changing economies/technologies and shifting consumer demands. The latter is especially underpinned by changing social norms and expectations. Regulatory institutions also play important roles in managing and guiding the direction of these complex changes. The interplay of economy, regulation and culture must thus be recognised in understanding the geographies of food production and consumption.

In this chapter, the role of regulation in shaping and mediating the economies and cultures of food production in the first three decades of Singapore's independence is examined. The focus is on the pig farming industry, which was completely eradicated in Singapore by the late 1980s. Drawing largely from archival materials, I trace the tumultuous years from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s where policies pertaining to the development and future of the pig farming sector in Singapore proved to be unstable and prone to
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FOOD, FOODWAYS
AND FOODSCAPES
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in Post-Colonial Singapore

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