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**Eating as a Cultural Performance in Early 21st Century New Zealand:
An Exploration of the Relationships between Food and Place**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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Abstract

During New Zealand's comparatively short history as a nation, its cuisine has undergone great development. The culinary traditions brought by the early settlers, from both Eastern Polynesia and then Britain, offered a relatively limited variety, however, since the late 20th century New Zealand's foodways have undergone a revolution; today a smorgasbord of international cuisines awaits our selection. This gastronomic range is the result of a number of factors which include the influx of diverse immigrants, increased air travel by New Zealanders, the return of military personnel from overseas and globalisation.

To conduct this investigation of the relationships between people, identity, food and place I approach the topic from three perspectives. Firstly, I examine how exotic foods are used to link immigrants to New Zealand with loved ones in their homelands, and also how the same foods act as a bridge between those immigrants and other New Zealanders. Secondly, I look at how exotic foods serve to connect New Zealanders with, generally, far-away places, as through its evocative powers food has the ability to transport ordinary people to places where they may rather be. Lastly, I explore how some New Zealanders are making exotic foods 'ours' by combining them with the abundance of fresh local produce. Appropriating the exotic and combining it with the indigenous to make it ours is the story of New Zealand; our society has developed through the arrival of many people and cultures, and food is a lens through which to observe this process today.

This work differs from many ethnographic accounts in that it does not focus on a coherent group of people, but rather is based around the theme of food and eating in the New Zealand context. The thesis is the culmination of approximately twelve months of data gathering for which a multi-method approach was used. This process included: a review of both academic and popular literature; visits to food-related places such as cultural festivals, wine and food festivals, Agricultural and Pastoral Shows, Home Shows, community markets, farmers' markets, various Auckland supermarkets, ethnic food stores, specialty food shops; mainstream and ethnic cafés and restaurants, shopping centre food courts and various other miscellaneous places; attending different ethnic cooking courses and a series of semi-structured interviews. The interview process used different interviewee configurations: individuals, married couples and pairs, in an attempt to generate various perspectives and so enhance the data.

The thesis concludes that, firstly, exotic foods represent a means by which immigrants are able to connect with both loved ones remaining in the old home, and also to form new relationships with other New Zealanders in their new home. Secondly, exotic foods, through either their consumption or through people's memories of consumption, provide a bridge between New Zealanders and other places. Lastly, New Zealanders are increasingly taking exotic foods, combining them with the nation's abundant local and unique indigenous foodstuffs and making it ours.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis considers eating as a cultural performance in the early 21st century in New Zealand, by exploring New Zealanders' relationships with the plethora of exotic foods now available to them, the meanings ascribed to these foods and the ideas, memories, intentions and values attached to them and the places from which they have come. The range of exotic foods now available in New Zealand frequently offers healthy, tasty and easy-to-prepare choices, however by selecting such foods we do not simply fulfil various dietary requirements, but rather we also convey our knowledge or interest of another culture, that is, we display a certain level of cultural capital. Similar to economic or social capital, for example, cultural capital engenders a degree of prestige, as we are judged by others on our performance of consumption.

New Zealand, as a group of islands deep in the South Pacific, is geographically relatively isolated from other places, thus our exotic food consumption may symbolise something else, something more romantic and less concrete than mere nutritional accomplishment. Whilst New Zealanders are unable to physically visit most exotic places as simply as the inhabitants of many other countries might, we can nonetheless enjoy the embodied experience of eating the foods of such places at home, in brief, we take a 'gastronomic journey' instead. Perhaps our desire for distant places is so great that we unconsciously (or consciously) link palate with place, in other words, the exotic food equates to travel by proxy, or travel through the taste buds. This phenomenon may emerge when a

New Zealand traveller eats a certain exotic food that was eaten in a far-off place, and on return to New Zealand subsequent consumption of that food evokes a memory of that distant place, so imaginatively transporting the individual. New Zealanders may also ‘recall’ places of which they have no lived experience, places they are only familiar with through the stories of others or via the media. Nowadays food and travel are frequently connected, for instance, on television or in magazine articles which recommend (often) distant holiday destinations and incorporate enticing images of the local exotic edibles that suggest, ‘eat this food and experience this location’. Alternatively, perhaps we desire to escape the culture of thinness that pervades our society today, to embrace and prioritise the pleasure of eating and just enjoy food along with the social relationships that are created and maintained, as in the cultures of some other places, for example, France, Italy and Greece.

New Zealanders are not unique in the way that they are participating in the contemporary globalisation of cuisines. Of course people in many other countries are also experimenting with and enjoying food from around the world. This is a global phenomenon. However, I am interested in this as a particular local expression of a global phenomenon.

In order to conduct this exploration some clear definitions are required. The word ‘exotic’ is used in this work in accordance with the definition offered by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, which is, “Alien; introduced from abroad, not indigenous....Drawn from outside....Foreign” (Onions 1973:704). The use of ‘immigrant’ in this thesis signifies a person who was not born in New Zealand and is not Maori or Pakeha¹/European.

¹ Pakeha is an indigenous expression to describe people and influences derived originally from Europe, but which are no longer European. It is derived from the Maori word ‘pakepakeha’ meaning fair-skinned folk (King 1999:10).

According to the late New Zealand historian, Michael King, New Zealand's legacy of do-it-yourself, handed down from the early British settlers, still resonates throughout our contemporary society (2004:509). Appropriating the exotic and combining it with the indigenous to make it ours is the story of New Zealand; our society has developed through the arrival of many people and cultures, and food is a lens through which to observe this process today. Although Maori possess a history of valuing the culinary wealth of our natural resources, for example, kina, paua and muttonbirds, such foods were generally disregarded by early Pakeha, and they considered shellfish such as pipi and tuatua to be novelty foods, for instance, eaten at the beach for fun (Burton 2003:15). Thus, New Zealand's earlier 'cuisine' consumed by the majority of Pakeha consisted of an English derived and rather narrow range of 'meat and three veg'. In contrast though, as New Zealand's culture comes of age and our national identity shifts from that of a British outpost to an independent South Pacific nation, not only are the foods offered by our land and sea being appreciated by a cross-section of our diverse population today, including Pakeha, but a vast smorgasbord of cuisines awaits our selection: French, Italian, Greek, Middle Eastern, Turkish, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, Thai and so forth. This modern variety of international cuisines is visible in the burgeoning number of ethnic cafés and restaurants, food festivals, markets, delicatessens, food magazines, the media and diverse retail outlets including the local supermarket.

As a consequence of this vast array of cuisines currently before us, New Zealanders are presented with a greater gastronomic choice than ever. Numerous exotic foods offer us dietary choices and many represent alternatives to be eaten in place of time-honoured bastions of our nutritional institutions. For example, the many varieties of Switzerland's muesli available to consumers today challenge New Zealand's Weetbix, while Japanese sushi and Turkish kebabs frequently replace our meat pies and sausage rolls, and Italian pasta and

Asian rice offer exotic substitutes for both potatoes and kumara. Additionally, New Zealand's customary Cheddar cheese is often overlooked when Greek feta or French Camembert are preferred, sweet chilli sauce from Thailand regularly replaces tomato sauce, assorted European-style breads commonly replace Tip Top white sliced loaves, meanwhile butter is abandoned in favour of Spanish olive oil and its spread.

This trend is the combined result of globalisation, the democratisation of jet travel, the influence of the media, immigration and New Zealanders' exceptional record as foreign travellers. New Zealanders, like people in a great many other countries, now have increased access to cuisines from distant places and people from far off lands are bringing their foods to this country. Whenever a substantial immigrant population establishes itself in a community, their restaurants, food shops, and so forth become physical cultural markers (Wood 2006:23), for example, numerous Chinatowns exist throughout the world as symbolic centres of expatriate Chinese communities (Christiansen 2003:67). In New Zealand this operates too, though on a smaller scale when compared with such cultural enclaves overseas, for instance, the Otara Market in South Auckland and the Franklin Market near Hamilton which both operate each Saturday morning. I have noticed during my visits how these markets are not purely about Polynesian cultural foods and eating, but are also sites where other aspects of culture are performed, such as art, crafts, singing and dancing, and this activity subsequently links with the food experience of that culture, for example, food outlets are often situated in such a way as to allow audiences to be entertained while eating.

To conduct this investigation of the relationships between people, identity, food and place I will approach the topic from three perspectives. Firstly, I examine how exotic foods are used to link immigrants to New Zealand with their homelands, and also how the same foods act as a bridge between those immigrants and other New Zealanders. Leaving one's home and loved ones to live in a foreign land represents not only a significant physical

disruption, but also a unique and profound psychological stressor. Mahalingam explains that such displacement awakens immigrants to a deeper understanding of their cultural identity (2006:2). For instance, the immigrants' traditional food, a major contributor to their cultural identity, acquires a greater importance. So how do immigrants cope when special ingredients are not available or when the flavours of their traditional foods in their new homeland fail to match the authentic and remembered ones at home? Will their customary foods help them to cross cultural boundaries to make friends in their new environment? Secondly, I look at how exotic foods act as a bridge between New Zealanders and, generally, far-away places. Through its evocative powers, food has the ability to transport ordinary people to places where they may rather be, for example, the memory of a moist fresh fig eaten on a Greek roadside might be recalled as that same food is consumed on a wet and windy Auckland day in March, in brief, food can be a mnemonic. Lastly, I explore how certain New Zealanders are making these exotic foods 'ours' by combining them with the abundance of New Zealand fresh produce, such as our stone-fruits, native herbs, seafood or game.

Aims of the Thesis

The aims of this work are, firstly, to study exotic foods and their consumption from the angles described above, and to assess the findings in the light of the literature on various food-related topics, which include social class, commensalism and sociability, identity and memory. Secondly, as I have been disappointed at the sparse amount of New Zealand specific research, I wish to contribute to the body of knowledge from a New Zealand perspective. The noticeable shifts currently taking place in New Zealanders' eating patterns are highly significant and interesting to examine; more changes have occurred in the last few decades than in the prior century (Veart 2008:295).

Choice of Topic

I chose to study this topic for several reasons. Firstly, I have been fascinated for a number of years by the vast and continuously growing array of exotic foodstuffs available in New Zealand compared with the limited selection of food available four decades ago, when I, as an immigrant, arrived in this country from England. Secondly, I have had a love of both food and cooking from a young age; some of my earliest memories are of hours spent baking and decorating fairy cakes with an assortment of coloured icings and embellishments on Sunday afternoons ready for tea-time. Sunday tea was only ever a light repast in my home as the traditional roast lunch, replete with stodgy pudding and custard, was usually still making its presence felt. When we arrived in New Zealand my mother had to enter the paid workforce and so the preparation and cooking of the weekday evening meals became my responsibility. One particular dinner remains memorable because family members made a number of comments regarding its exotic status; by the addition of a tin of pineapple to a familiar minced beef concoction it was deemed to have transcended the everyday! Now I find great pleasure and relaxation indulging in the modern gastronomic delights, whether by growing, cooking, sharing, eating, or merely observing by frequenting today's great diversity of food outlets in New Zealand. Likewise, when I visit overseas I prioritise visits to food destinations whether to consume or observe. So it seemed logical, if not pure indulgence, to spend quality time enquiring formally into the more academic features of the exotic foods in our midst today. Thirdly, I recall and have chosen to follow the advice of Joseph Campbell, a comparative mythologist, whose video-tapes were shown during my undergraduate studies, which was to 'follow your bliss'.

Methods

This work is different from many ethnographic accounts in that it is not based on a coherent group of people, but rather it is a theme-based ethnography; the theme being food and eating in the New Zealand context. Therefore data collection consisted of a multi-method approach which included a review of the academic and popular literature, including various New Zealand magazines – for instance, *Cuisine, Dish, Taste, North & South* and *Metro* – and semi-structured interviews with different people. I attended several ethnic cooking courses and visited diverse places where I spoke informally with relevant people, for example, artisans or stallholders, took photographs, ate food and generally observed food and eating in as many environments as possible. Additionally, I kept a field notebook throughout the time of the research in which I made notes, for example, I recorded information gathered during informal conversations, wrote detailed observations and logged thoughts and ideas for future use. Whilst the bulk of the fieldwork was conducted within the Auckland region, from Matakana in the north to Otara in the south, and Waimauku in the west to Kohimarama in the east, several other centres, for example, Hamilton, Wellington, Queenstown, Hawke's Bay, Waipu and London, were included as I visited them for personal reasons during the period of this study.

As I was planning to explore the role of exotic foodstuffs from three different perspectives in this study I believed that each angle would require the collaboration of a separate group of people as interviewees. Therefore, I initially sought a group of immigrant interviewees in the hope that they might enlighten me as to the meanings their traditional foods held for them, particularly concerning, firstly, whether the foods presented links with their homelands and secondly, whether the foods have served to create any connections between them and other New Zealanders. The next angle I wished to examine was whether exotic foods act as a bridge between New Zealanders and other places, so I purposely chose

ordinary New Zealanders who explicitly appreciate this kind of eating. I refer to this group as my 'general New Zealand interviewees' in order to differentiate them from the third group of interviewees, whom I call my 'food industry interviewees'. Those who represent the New Zealand food industry in this study include a cross-section of people, who in a professional capacity provide the public with food which includes those of the exotic category, for example, an importer of exotic foods, an artisanal pasta maker, a manager of a self-preparation meal outlet and three chefs who work in different areas of the industry. I hoped this group would explain, from their specialised viewpoints, why countless New Zealanders are adopting and adapting numerous exotic foods and dishes, often by combining them with New Zealand's excellent fresh produce, to make the exotic ours.

I initially hoped to gain approximately eight interviewees per category in order to obtain a variety of narratives including, for example, people of different ages, genders and ethnicities. I also wished to access sufficient interviewees to allow for the formation of different interview configurations, for instance, individual interviewees, pairs and couples, as I hoped the introduction of various dynamics to the interview process might generate different perspectives and therefore enhance the data. Some minor snowballing occurred during the interview process as certain interviewees proposed further potential interviewees. My immigrant interviewees included three fellow post-graduate anthropology students: Vema from Indonesia; Rosa from Argentina; and Antonio from Chile who suggested his wife Elsa also act as an interviewee; Celine, a French undergraduate anthropology student and her Irish fiancé Michael (whose curiosity saw him become an impromptu interviewee whilst I was interviewing Celine in their home); Angelina from Malta, who at the end of her interview suggested I meet with her friend Mia from Iraq; Leo from Venezuela, a friend of Antonio's; Lara from Thailand, whose Thai cooking classes I attended and Veeba from India,

who taught the Indian cooking course that I attended. This group of eleven interviewees ranged in age from 30 to 50 years.

My general New Zealand interviewees consisted of a group of people who are all passionate about cooking and eating and who have embraced global cuisines. I met several of this group at the various ethnic cooking courses that I attended as part of my fieldwork for this research. For instance, Diane and her daughter Gemma, and house-husbands John and Frank all attended the “Vegetarian Delights from Around the World” cooking course, and Louise and Christine were fellow attendees at an Italian cooking course. While visiting a farmers’ market in August, I had a serendipitous meeting with Sally. After a fairly lengthy conversation centred on food, which included her use of cumin, how food became a therapy for her disabled son who today is a successful chef, and the ingredients of her Mulligatawny soup, I introduced my research and invited her to participate. Sonya is an acquaintance of Dutch descent who was raised on both European and Indonesian food and as I was aware of her interest in food I felt she would make an excellent interviewee. Anna, and husband and wife, Paul and Helen, are old friends who have always enjoyed cooking and eating, and with whom I have shared many food events. In fact, Paul and Helen introduced me to Italian food several decades ago in a tiny Italian restaurant in Auckland (possibly the only one at that time). With the exception of Gemma who is 24 years old, all of the interviewees in this group are between 35 and 71 years old.

The third group of interviewees consisted of, firstly, three chefs. Pam my neighbour, has worked as a chef in various areas of the industry both in New Zealand and overseas, and presently operates her own catering business. Simon is chef and part-owner of a multi award winning Auckland restaurant, while Karl is the executive chef for a prominent Auckland catering company and an artisanal baker. Maddie is not only an artisanal pasta maker and farmers’ market stall holder, but also operates the Italian cooking school that I attended. Liz,

with her husband, owns a well-known food importing business in central Auckland which supplies exotic commodities to restaurants, retail outlets and the public. Jill manages a kitchen/shop in which the public assemble their selected meals from a range of pre-prepared ingredients, many of which are exotic, thus freeing them from chores, such as shopping, chopping and cleaning up. The meals are taken home to freeze and use as required. I approached Jill on John's advice as he thought her new business concept would be pertinent to this research. I also approached celebrity chef and writer Peta Mathias during my visit to the Food Show in Auckland in August 2008 regarding a possible interview. While her busy schedule precluded her participation, she did agree to answer several questions via email.

The majority of interviews were carried out with a sole interviewee while the pairs consisted of mother and daughter Diane and Gemma, house-husbands John and Frank, and three couples: Celine and Michael, Antonio and Elsa, and Paul and Helen. According to Waldegrave, multiple configurations allow participants to "discuss issues and reflect on problems...to prompt as well as to 'bounce' ideas off one another" (2003:251). I found that such interactions occurred in each of the interviews that consisted of two interviewees. Michael, for instance, who has embraced Celine's leisurely French eating habits in favour of his own speedy ways, offered a more objective view of French food and eating and described several instances that Celine, through familiarity, overlooked, such as her father's ritualised carving of the entire turkey on special occasions. I found when interviewing each of these pairs, that apart from seeking clarification occasionally, much of my questioning became redundant as they discussed matters, sometimes at length and seemingly oblivious to me, between themselves.

I approached the majority of my potential interviewees in person and nine were contacted by telephone or email when I explained my research and my need for participants. All those people approached agreed to participate. I offered to go to the interviewee's home

or place of business (when more convenient to my industry interviewees) to conduct the interviews and this was accepted. At this time I handed or posted each interviewee an Information Sheet (see Appendix A). Additionally, I explained the nature of the semi-structured interviews and that I would be asking a number of questions related to my research, but that ultimately I wished to hear their food stories as they preferred to tell them. Following each interview I sent a 'thank-you' note in the post or an email message. I also told interviewees that I would contact them when I had completed my report as without their generosity it would not have been possible.

Prior to beginning the research I consulted the Massey University website regarding the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants, and completed the 'Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure'. Details of this research were peer reviewed in the Anthropology programme of Massey University's School of Social and Cultural Studies and considered to comply with the Low Risk Notification Guidelines of the University's Human Ethics Committee. The application process was completed and forwarded to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee which recorded it on the Low Risk Database on 29 July 2008. When each of my potential interviewees agreed to participate in this study, I supplied them with an Information Sheet which explained the research, my relevant details, and their rights as research participants. Interviewees' consent was recorded at the beginning of the taped interviews.

The Field Context

I had assumed this research project would represent one aspect of my life, that is, the academic part, but it has gradually encroached into increasing areas of my life. This is not a complaint, but merely an observation of how this study has become part of my everyday life,

much as participant observation characteristically does. For example, as the project has progressed, so the habit to venture to other places to shop has become the norm, whereas prior to its commencement such a practice merely offered a novelty factor. Accordingly, I have purchased my groceries from a wide variety of both ethnic and mainstream supermarkets, food shops, markets and so forth, in a range of locations in an attempt to compare the food differences in the various areas around Auckland, as opposed to habitually returning to the same place as in the past. This added range of destinations has introduced a pleasurable dimension to my shopping experience, a task that can, at times, represent a mundane necessity of life.

Before beginning this research I visited a number of food related shows and festivals as an exercise of familiarisation. During these visits I took photographs and participated in casual conversations with various people, such as exhibitors and stallholders. The sites visited included the Kumeu Wine and Beer Show, a small rural event held annually at which a number of local boutique breweries, wineries, food outlets both mainstream and ethnic present their wares, for example, Thai, Indian, and Chinese cuisines, barbequed venison, and the iconic 'Kiwi' takeaway caravan selling such food as fish and chips and hamburgers. At the Helensville Agricultural and Pastoral Show (A & P Show) the usual local as well as exotic takeaway foods were available, for example, deep-fried options or kebabs. In accord with this cultural institution, much home-produced food was exhibited in the time-honoured and indispensable competitions. The competition halls housed a comprehensive array of home-produced food in various forms, for instance, home-baking, preserving and home-



Figure 1: Preserves competition at the Helensville A & P Show (February 2008)

grown produce. The Chinese Lantern Festival represents part of the Chinese community's New Year celebrations and besides the display of lanterns throughout Auckland's Albert Park, the many food stalls represent a highlight offering, for example, food from various regions of China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia along with New Zealand deep-fried food. The evening that I visited was very warm, humid and still, and this atmosphere combined with the aromas emanating from the cooking, the food I ate, the noise and the preponderance of Asian revellers served as a portal to transport me to the markets of Hong Kong.

I was drawn to attend the Autumn Home Show in Auckland as I discovered food was being featured and that the producers would be selling their foodstuffs. As I visited during a quiet period I took the opportunity to speak with several exotic food producers, for example, a local salami maker explained how he is now making salami from New Zealand venison as a healthier option than the conventional beef variety, and that its popularity has caused him to

abandon his former traditional butchery to concentrate on this venture. The Auckland Food and Wine Show was an opportunity to sample or buy an assortment of New Zealand wines and locally produced foods, mainly of Mediterranean origin, for instance, olives, olive oils, salamis, meats, cheeses, breads and antipasto.

As the official research period progressed it became evident that Auckland has a wide



Figure 2: Exotic and local vegetables at Franklin Market (January 2009)

and growing assortment of ethnic markets, supermarkets and food shops throughout the region. Generally the different markets cater for their specific local ethnic communities, for example, the Otara Market, similar to the Franklin Market, tends to provide both food items and general goods to its Maori, Pacific Island and increasing Asian communities. While numerous aspects of the Takapuna Market continue to reflect the predominantly local Pakeha middle-class population, simultaneously, various stallholders, shoppers, food and

commodities for sale all mirror the North Shore's growing immigrant groups, for instance, in the assortment of clothes and trinkets from Asia and the Asian and European-type foods for sale. French music sets the scene at *La Cigale*, the French inspired market in Parnell which caters to the area's affluent mostly Pakeha majority and proffers a wide selection of French and gourmet foods, wines, clothing, antiques and household equipment. The Avondale Market appears to possess a broad cross-cultural focus, and a noticeable feature at this particularly crowded market was that shoppers bought larger quantities of food compared with those at other markets; possibly their laden trolleys represented their household's weekly provisions.



Figure 3: A shopper with a laden trolley at Avondale Market (October 2008)

Auckland's cosmopolitanism is also evidenced in the continually rising number of ethnic supermarkets and food shops throughout the region; exploring many of these offered

me the chance to discover the exotic without leaving home. Included in my visits was a Japanese supermarket in the central city that stocks an excellent range of Japanese food and household goods, which is supported by both the Japanese community and also by many Europeans. I also visited an Arabic supermarket, recommended to me by Mia, which was stocked with a myriad of Middle Eastern and North African essentials, for example, jelly (containing halal beef gelatine), sacks of basmati rice, ornate smoking pipes, magazines, cooking utensils and bulk bins of dried fruits, herbs and spices. The pungent smells of the spices reminded me of an Indian food and spice shop I had recently visited and where I had wondered what the aromas evoked amongst members of the Indian diaspora who shopped there. In contrast to the Arabic and Indian music respectively providing a quiet background in these shops, the Asian music played in many of the diverse Asian supermarkets and food shops I visited was loud; this added cultural feature enhanced the ambiance of the different ethnic food sites. I also visited a variety of South African, European and British food shops. Ethnic stores in the diaspora, Mankekar (2002:81) points out, are frequently visited by people of different cultures therefore they perform different functions, for example, for Mia the Arabic supermarket represented a pathway to normality, but it allowed me a glimpse into the food world of the Other, and allowed me to make several exotic food purchases.

Through shopping at various supermarkets my excursions evolved from essential provisioning to ethnographic experiences because apart from buying my food, I was taking note of diverse characteristics in the different supermarkets in order to appreciate what was available in various areas of Auckland. A study conducted in the Netherlands suggests that individuals situated in lower socio-economic positions make dietary choices that regularly have low fruit and vegetable intake, but high animal fat consumption (Giskes, Van Lenthe, Brug & MacKenback 2004:81). So with this in mind I conducted my supermarket shopping in Papatoetoe, a South Auckland suburb which has a high proportion of Maori and Pacific

Island peoples and a growing population of immigrants from different parts of Asia. I noticed an extremely limited choice of Asian and Pacific Island fruit and vegetables considering the cultural composition of the area; it is very possible however, that such produce might be bought at one of the nearby weekend markets. The majority of meat displayed tended to have much fat and bone, often with little lean flesh. A number of the leaner, 'healthier' cuts of meat were reduced in price as their sell-by date was either reached or approaching, and I assumed their lack of popularity resulted from their comparatively high cost and their unattractiveness in terms of local residents' preferences. The cheese selection, both gourmet and everyday, was limited and similarly the delicatessen, while the in-house bakery offered no European-type breads. I did notice the extensive shelf space dedicated to canned corned beef, which was reminiscent of the supermarkets I experienced whilst living in Fiji some years ago.

This shopping experience was in direct contrast with that of a supermarket in Newmarket, one of the more affluent suburbs in Auckland. Expansive areas were devoted to luxury and exotic foods, there was an extensive delicatessen, spacious chillers of various cheeses, a large in-house bakery offering diverse exotic-type goods, the butchery displayed only lean meats, and I assumed turn-over to be high as very little was offered at reduced prices. A wide selection of fruit and vegetables included packs of pre-sliced items, for example, parsnips, carrots, celery and mushrooms; such convenience was reflected in the higher prices. This scenario was repeated some weeks later when I shopped in a supermarket in Ponsonby, a fairly recently gentrified inner-city suburb. These two establishments resembled hybrid supermarket/gourmet food emporiums stocking vast ranges of imported, luxury and local artisanal foods, for instance, meat rubs, vinegars and quail eggs. A large supermarket in West Auckland offered a wide range of everyday New Zealand groceries and meat. Only the fresh produce department drew my attention as there was a moderate variety

of exotic produce from the Pacific Islands, for example, coconuts, taro, and cassava which reflected the area's large Polynesian population, and possibly the fact that unlike the South Auckland suburbs that I visited, this particular place did not have a weekly food market.

In addition to sampling supermarkets in various locations, I also frequented a number of delicatessens and specialty food shops as vast numbers of these elite food outlets have appeared around New Zealand specialising in exclusive and imported food items, for example, gourmet meats, cheeses, fruit and vegetables (often organic), as well as extensive selections of wine and non-perishable foods from around the world, such as sauces, pastas, and tinned foods. Besides these establishments in and around Auckland, I also discovered them in other centres around the country, for instance, in Wellington, Queenstown and Hawke's Bay. The emphasis in these food places is generally on the exclusivity and 'excellence' of the food, and although these shops, in the Auckland context, are not necessarily situated within the more affluent suburbs, it seemed the customers were mostly middle-class judging by my observations of shoppers' grooming, clothing and jewellery, traits that Bourdieu refers to as "self-presentation" (1984:202-208), that is, individuals embody their social class and express it in their demeanour.

Spending time at a number of farmers' markets in different centres around New Zealand impressed upon me the significance of the relationship between certain foods and specific places from a New Zealand perspective. I visited markets from Matakana in the north, where much of the produce bore a Mediterranean quality, to Cromwell in the south, where a stallholder told me her venison had been "shot in the bush by a guy hanging out of a helicopter", to Napier in the east, where I found saffron for sale, and various places in between. At the Cromwell Farmers' Market the jams, pickles and preserves highlighted the region's pip and stone fruit production. In contrast, those offered at farmers' markets in both Auckland and Hawke's Bay tended to contain sub-tropical produce, for example, kiwifruit,

fig, guava, citrus, or passion-fruit. This awareness of connections between food and a very specific place was echoed when I considered the difference in cheeses available in these places. At the Cromwell Farmers' Market the majority of cheeses were made from either goat or sheep's milk, whereas those in the Auckland region and Hawke's Bay were mainly cow's milk varieties. I was conscious of the numerous fields of sheep and goats during my stay in Central Otago, but the prominence of their cheeses alerted me to the fact that I had only seen one paddock of cows. These noticeable regional differences in food production stressed how New Zealand's diverse weather patterns influence the various agricultural and horticultural practices and results throughout the country.

The various cultural festivals held around Auckland each year present opportunities for different ethnic groups to both showcase their traditional foods to the rest of the population, and through preparing and eating of their own food, enact a performance of cultural identity amid a specific cultural carnival atmosphere. For example, at the North Shore Pasefika Festival 08 held in November 2008 and Pasifika² in March 2009 traditional *umu*³ food proved to be an extremely popular choice with festival attendees. Although much of this food was pre-cooked and kept in polystyrene boxes, the Samoan community at Pasifika 2009 conducted *umu* cooking on-site. The uncovering of the cooked food attracted a great deal of interest as the number of onlookers swelled to witness this particular phase of a food-based performance of Samoan identity. The food stalls at the Diwali⁴ festival in October 2008 were chaotic, in fact, the entire food area was bustling and noisy with the sound of stall-holders calling out their menus to encourage patronage over their competitors, *masalas*⁵, *bargees*⁶

² To clarify, although North Shore Pasefika Festival 08 and Pasifika are both Pacific Island cultural festivals they are separate events (and spell their names differently).

³ *Umu* – an underground oven, similar to the Maori *hangi* or *lovo* in Fiji.

⁴ Diwali – 'Festival of Lights' - A major religious festival in India. The name is derived from the Sanskrit term *dīpāvali*, or row of lights (Goetz 1987:134).

⁵ *Masalas* – specific mixes of various spices that give individual Indian dishes their flavour, colour, heat and aroma (Wickramasinghe & Rajah 2005:6).

⁶ *Bargees* – crispy vegetables snacks (Wickramasinghe & Rajah 2005:9).

and *samosas*⁷ were among the most popular dishes available along with a selection of Indian



Figure 4: Eating was extremely popular at Auckland’s Diwali Festival (October 2008)

sweets. Eating was a very popular part of Diwali for all ages, genders, and ethnicities and seating around the entertainment stage was particularly sought after.

It had been 40 years since I had attended the Highland Games in Waipu, and although my last visit was accidental this visit was intentional, specifically to observe food and eating. Besides the familiar lunch offerings of pies, sandwiches, filled rolls, fish and chips and hamburgers, I was delighted to find haggis, tatties and neaps⁸ on the lunch menu so along with many others, I indulged in this traditional Scottish New Year dish on New Year’s Day 2009, in New Zealand, and to maintain the Scottish essence, shortbread followed. Although explicit attention was drawn in both the festival programme and over the public address

⁷ Samosas – deep-fried savoury snacks (Wickramasinghe & Rajah 2005:44).

⁸ Tatties and neaps are the Scottish colloquial names given to mashed potatoes and a combination of mashed carrots and swedes respectively.

system to the athletic prowess of certain male athletes completing in customary events, such as the Caber Toss, and to competitors in the various Highland dance competitions and the piping and drumming competitions, as they all performed ‘traditional’ activities of their Scottish heritage, the eating of these customary foods from Scotland provided a further opportunity for many festival-goes to perform their cultural identity.



Figure 5: A menu of Scottish and New Zealand fare at the Waipu Highland Games (January 2009)

I also made a number of miscellaneous visits to relevant places in connection with this study to both satisfy my curiosity and hopefully enhance my research. For example, I went to the Museum of Transport and Technology in the hope that examples of kitchens, homes, or food-based technology from the settlers’ era might be exhibited, in order to gain a greater appreciation of the conditions they experienced. I took several photographs, for instance, of

recreated kitchens and dining rooms, but unfortunately no early cooking facilities, such as coal-ranges were displayed. In January 2009, prior to the lavender harvest, I visited a farm in rural Auckland which has been converted into a 'miniature Tuscany'. During a casual conversation with the owner I learned she had been passionate about Italy for many years and when the opportunity arose to create her dream she seized it. Consequently, she now farms lavender, not only for its essential oil, some of which is used in the production of further commodities, such as linen spray, but also encourages people to include the dried flowers in cooking, for instance in cakes. She also has lemon groves, the lemons from which are used in the production of lemonade, lemon curd and a lemon liqueur. In addition, she grows sufficient rosemary to press and extract its essential oil, and similarly olives, which eventually become olive oil. She explained that she sells her products through various farmers' markets. Besides the more pragmatic reasons for selling her 'Italian' home-made produce through farmers' markets in Auckland, I wonder whether she also envisages herself at local markets in the Tuscan countryside trading her wares with surrounding villagers or tourists.

To indulge my own cultural heritage and to celebrate my birthday in September 2008, I took 'high tea' in an inner city hotel, as O'Connor states the practice of such lavish afternoon teas has been a Pakeha custom since the early 20th century (1995:58). It was evident this was now not only a Pakeha custom, but it was clearly still mainly a female occasion as only three Asian women and several males proved the cultural and gender exceptions. I asked a waiter about the imbalances and he confirmed the present ratios were typical. When considering the delicacy of the food served, for instance, fine sandwiches, small cakes and scones, chocolate dipped strawberries and tiny Japanese green tea tarts, I recalled Bourdieu's claim that only women and children eat 'tit-bits'; men eat "Meat, the nourishing food par excellence, strong and strong-making" (1984:192).

I also attended a number of ethnic cooking courses, which included Indian, Thai, Italian and an exotic vegetarian course during August, September and October 2008. I believed



Figure 6: Ingredients to prepare Chicken Panang Curry and Thai Fish Cakes at a Thai cooking class (September 2008)

these would present an interesting and useful fieldwork experience as I would come into contact with people interested in exotic foods with whom I might have conversations. I found that these cooking classes were not only opportunities to learn how to prepare the foods of exotic places, but also represented a setting of cultural performance. At the beginning of each lesson, for example, the Indian cooking teacher would introduce the session's ingredients with explanations as to their health benefits as this is an aspect of traditional importance in Indian culture (Appadurai 1988:5), such as how green cardamom regulates the sugar in the body. Furthermore, as India is a large country in which numerous different cultures live she always linked the lesson's food with geographical places in India, for instance, which type of Indian bread was consumed by whom in various parts of the sub-

continent. Consequently, we gained a clearer understanding of the associations between particular Indian foods and the places from which they originated, and also the people and the cultures that identified with them.

Interviews

The aim of my research questions (see Appendices B to F) was to act as a guide to elicit responses “closer to a friendly conversation than the stimulus response model of [those] found in a survey research interview” (Neuman 1997:372). Hence, the questions would allow my interviewees to tell their stories in their own style, but would simultaneously guide those narratives within the themes that my work was attempting to address. My interview guides were divided into three parts: firstly, an introductory question to relax participants, for example, I asked my immigrant interviewees to describe their first impressions of food in New Zealand; secondly, a list of themes that represented the research’s interests; and lastly, a set of prompts for use by the interviewer when further details were required. This method allows the use of a single page of questions rather than multiple pages, “thus restricting the researcher more to listening than to asking questions” (Davidson & Tolich 2003:148). Because I was approaching this work from different angles it became clear that more than one interview guide would be required, accordingly, I tailored the questions to suit the specific interviewees. For instance, one interview guide was used for all immigrant interviewees (see Appendix B), a second guide was relevant for the general New Zealand interviewees (see Appendix C), but the guides for my food industry interviewees were customised in accordance with each interviewee’s specific area of the industry (see Appendix D for Chefs; Appendix E for Specialty Food Outlet, Farmers’ Market and Self-Service Meal Preparation; and Appendix F for Epicurean Delight). As the interviews took a

narrative/conversational format, the order of the questions became unimportant because stories regularly encompassed several topics.

I composed the interview questions based on a number of criteria, firstly I needed to address the three perspectives pertaining to the relationships between food and place as noted above. Secondly, I adhered to the advice above from Davidson and Tolich. Thirdly, as I initially embarked upon this research with few preconceived ideas, I allowed the literature to largely guide my framing of interview questions. Underlying my enquiry also, was the fact that as an immigrant I feel I empathise with other immigrants, but as I came from Britain, which has a similar culture to New Zealand's, my empathy is limited. I have often pondered the experience, for example, of an Asian or South American person leaving the familiar to come to this alien land, and consequently, how it feels to have New Zealanders appropriate one's traditional food, a key element of one's culture.

Although my original plan was to interview three distinct groups of interviewees to gain data exclusively for each of the three different perspectives of the investigation, during the analysis phase it became evident that certain data would be better utilised by a more liberal approach. Thus, my analysis was driven by the data as opposed to the predetermined analytical framework that I had intended to base this report on; as a consequence, a degree of information is present in Chapters Four and Five from both groups of New Zealand interviewees. This modification however, does not disrupt the original discussion chapter plan.

During the initial interviews with my New Zealand interviewees it became evident that through common usage countless exotic foods have become everyday items, accordingly, I found a number of my interviewees had deexoticised them. I realised I must define more clearly the types of food I included within the category of exotic, hence I produced an Exotic

Food Sheet (see Appendix G). This list became a useful resource as subsequent interviewees made similar comments, for example, that they used most of the ingredients regularly as everyday ingredients and did not consider them exotic. This clearly demonstrated that through regular exposure to certain exotic foods people had re-categorised them to the ordinary in a comparatively short space of time.

Prior to the beginning of each interview I enquired whether my interviewees had any questions regarding the Information Sheet or their rights as an interviewee and all confirmed their full understanding. Although consent for each interview was audio-taped prior to the commencement of each interview, as Michael had participated in the interview process unexpectedly, I emailed him afterwards to gain his consent as I wished to include aspects of his story; I asked him to read the Information Sheet and particularly his ethical rights as an interviewee prior to granting his consent. I received his consent by return email. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour, were semi-structured, and fully transcribed.

Significance of Research

Whilst food is central to the formation and maintenance of social relations – for example, the shaping of community, personality and family – food simultaneously acts as a mirror to reflect the organisation, composition and values of a society. Food can be used as a means to demonstrate the power assumed by one social class over another, as in Western society where svelteness generally indicates control and wealth (Counihan 1999:9). In the context of gender and sex, food may be manipulated by one gender over the other to reproduce women's subordination in relation to male power, for instance, an unsatisfactory meal may result in domestic violence (Devault 1997:184). Food also possesses the ability to express

the ethnic composition of a community through the availability of certain foodstuffs. In all cultures foodways embody a language as it “is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviours” (Barthes 1975:49-50). In short, as Counihan and Van Esterick state, “Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food” (1997:1).

Mintz and Du Bois consider that studies of food systems stress the extensive role of food in human life, and besides breathing, eating and drinking probably represent the most vital of our activities. Mintz and Du Bois reiterate the significance of the entwining of consuming and social life, accordingly, they express the hope that more anthropologists will allow food the importance in their work that it holds in human life (2002:4). Consequently, I have attempted to consider New Zealand’s changing food and eating habits as they are happening now from the widest perspective possible whilst allowing for the constraints of a one-year study. Therefore, understanding more about the relationships between people, food and place is of particular value to the discipline of anthropology.

Rejecting the initial obviousness that arises in regard to the question, “What is food?” Holtzman assures us this is not a stupid question. He advises us to take into account the extent to which the “anthropological enterprise has aimed to destabilize categories drawn from the commonsense architecture of Western thought” (2006:365). Food, he asserts, must be viewed similarly to family, gender or religion, that is, as a cultural construct. Conscious of the multi-ethnic composition of my interviewees, I have made every effort to respect their cultural viewpoints and reflect them sensitively by, for example, quoting them as directly as possible. The quotations thus retain much of the quality of spoken language and individuals’ unique voices. With the exception of Michael, all of my immigrant interviewees were telling

their stories in their second or third language, and besides Veeba's unhappiness about being in New Zealand, no difficulties arose.

During the 1980s some feminist anthropologists accused traditional anthropological writing of distancing authors from their participants. At this time, women of colour were challenged to write about their own culture as conventional anthropology was accused of various discriminations, for instance, racism or homophobia (Behar & Gordon 1995:7). It became more acceptable to conduct research within one's own culture. Reasons such as these partially account for this study's specific cultural perspective; although I have crossed a number of ethnic boundaries in the course of this work, the study is ultimately one of New Zealand and its inhabitants. However I acknowledge that this study has limits and constraints. The particular focus and limited scope have meant I have not been able to address the enormous variety of eating patterns in New Zealand. In this exploration I am explicitly focusing on New Zealanders with a declared passion for exotic foods and cooking.

I found the exercise of interviewing to be a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Although I was aware that besides eating, 'foodies' enjoy talking about food, I was astonished at the generosity and candour of all of my interviewees regarding the information they offered me, some of which was of an intimate nature. For this reason I assured all interviewees that I would alter their names in an effort to ensure their anonymity. My interviewees were extremely hospitable. There were often refreshments served while we socialised prior to the interviews, and on different occasions I was shown recipe books, for example, after her interview Vema guided me through an Indonesian cookbook, written in English, pointing out the dishes she had spoken of. On my arrival, Sally showed me the dilapidated, but precious remnants of a notebook that she had used as a recipe book as a young girl which was given to her by a neighbour; she explained that her family was too poor to have writing paper in the house. When I arrived in Angelina's lounge a Maltese cookbook, published in English, was

on the coffee table. Angelina used this as a mnemonic, her story meandered with the various recipes and aspects were clarified so that few questions needed to be asked. She said she was glad she had thought to show me this as it was helping her to remember, for instance, the food her mother had made, and her food memories as a little girl. At the end of our meeting she suggested I take the book home and look at it at my leisure and return it later, which I accepted gratefully. This sharing of recipes signified acts of great generosity as many women guard their recipes, for instance, for reasons of power (McLeod 2008:76), however, in these instances the recipes represented precious cargo brought from the women's homelands (Daish 1999:5), or an equally precious part of their personal history (especially in the case of Sally). Celine also spoke of her French cookbook, one of the first things she packed when she was leaving France, which she turns to when she is homesick, "I've got my little Bible here, my French cookbook that I brought over. My mother had the same, and I've got my copy here". Appadurai claims, "cookbooks appear to belong to the literature of exile, of nostalgia and loss" (1988:18), and these varied examples of my interviewees' cookbooks offered insights that led to a more comprehensive understanding of the place of their particular food in their lives.

Before each interview began I handed every interviewee a copy of their particular interview guide in an effort to help them feel more comfortable and hopefully reduce the divide between interviewer and interviewee. With their guide before them, I found that most interviewees conformed to a fairly predictable pattern, for example, I would raise a subject and they would talk about it and generally veer onto another subject and possibly more, thus questioning became minimal. Talking about food sometimes became an opening to talk about one's most intimate memories and feelings. At an early stage of Veeba's interview, I learned of her overwhelming homesickness and of the family's plans to return to India. Being an interviewee became an opportunity for her to vent her unhappiness in New Zealand;

she complained throughout our meeting that nothing in New Zealand was to her satisfaction: our public transport, the school system, and, not least of all, Indian food in New Zealand did not taste authentic, for example, the onions were not sweet enough, but the potatoes were too sweet. Veeba was using food as a metaphor to express her misery in this country. I could empathise with her, to a degree, as I can still recall my own homesickness. My industry interviewees all took time out of their busy professional schedules to speak to me and were extremely knowledgeable and generous with their information. I found the variety of storytelling styles quite fascinating and it added an interesting dimension to the interview process. I came away from each interview feeling extremely positive as each person had expressed their pleasure at the completion of the interview and thanked me for including them.

Eating as a cultural performance presents an interesting concept for scholarly examination as while eating is an activity that might represent an intimate act, when compared with many of our other personal activities, eating may also be enacted comfortably within the public realm. In addition to the actual act of consumption, the cultural performance centred on eating takes various forms, for example, when an immigrant prepares a traditional dish it not only represents a tangible taste of home, but simultaneously serves to express their cultural identity, for example, that of a Thai woman. Similarly, it is a cultural performance when an immigrant visits their own ethnic food shop to purchase traditional foodstuffs rather than buy them (where available) from a larger, and often cheaper, mainstream supermarket because their ethnic food shops “produce a sense of familiarity” (Mankekar 2002:81).

Eating also symbolises a cultural performance when outsiders consume another culture’s food. A Japanese person eating sushi embodies a performance of their own Japanese culture, while a New Zealand Pakeha eating sushi may be performing their social class through their knowledge of or interest in Japanese culture. Through my fieldwork I

discovered much about the evocative qualities of food, for instance, that eating is a powerful means through which people recall other places, perhaps through lived experiences or maybe as fictive memories gained from the accounts of friends, family or even a magazine article. Celine (from France) encapsulated the concept of eating as a cultural performance and the relationship between food and place when she told me, quite poignantly, that when one is far from home sometimes all one has is one's food from home.

A review of the literature relevant to the important themes in the thesis is presented in the following chapter. It appears in two sections to assist clarity, firstly, a general review of the literature is offered, followed by a review of material specific to New Zealand. The successive three chapters comprise the discussion component of this thesis. Chapter Three focuses on how exotic foods allow immigrants to form connections with home, and then how those same foods allow the immigrants to forge links with other New Zealanders. Issues relating to how exotic foods enable New Zealanders to relate to other places are discussed in Chapter Four. In this context the exotic foods might be viewed as a mechanism to trigger memories of other places. Chapter Five addresses the various means through which New Zealanders today make the exotic ours.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Part One: General

Human beings, we are assured, possess three basic needs: food, security and love. Each of these necessities is utterly entwined with each of the others, rendering it impossible to consider any one in isolation (Fisher 1943:353). While I have chosen to discuss just the first of these, food, I believe that aspects of both security and love will automatically present themselves, if only implicitly, with me as I write this account, and with you as you read it. As Counihan and Van Esterik maintain, food influences everything: it underpins economies, the political strategies of states and households revolve around it, and food denotes countless boundaries and bonds, whilst the act of eating signifies the evolution of gender, family and social relationships (1997:1).

Yet, the study of food is often considered by scholars to be too trivial to pursue (Barthes 1997:20). Exploring this scholarly prejudice, anthropologist David Sutton explains how he conferred with colleagues regarding the legitimacy of food studies and whether such work was deemed to be “scholarship-lite” (2001:3). He maintains that though some aspects of the subject may initially appear unimportant, food studies ultimately offer enlightenment about a culture. Nevertheless the study of food and eating may be judged by some as unsuitable, as it involves the “baser senses, instincts and bodily functions, not suited for scholarly or ‘mental’ pursuits” (Sutton 2001:4). This notion concerning the senses is the

subject of an anthropological debate regarding how societies separate the work of the senses in order to understand the world, and so creates a hierarchy of senses. The argument rates vision to be the superior sense and ascribes it to the more 'evolved' cultures, whereas taste and smell, the hypothetically inferior senses, are assigned to more 'primitive' societies. Thus, perhaps the enjoyment of eating and the appreciation of food indicate a potential triumph by our 'primitive' nature.

However, anthropological enquiries based on food are justified by Mintz because

For some time now anthropology has been struggling uncomfortably with the recognition that so-called primitive society is not what it used to be—if indeed, it ever was...that there is a much more mundane modernity equally in need of study, some of it reposing on supermarket shelves.... Studies of the everyday in modern life, of the changing character of such humble matters as food...might be one way to try to renovate a discipline now dangerously close to losing its purpose (1997:368).

As humankind's most important concern, food should be of crucial importance to anthropologists since it affects all human beings and their relationships and activities, so for those reasons "no aspect of the subject of food can be overlooked" (Arnott 1975:xi).

Scholarly support for this anthropological subfield, which began in the 19th century with works by Garrick Mallery and William Robertson Smith, is evidenced from both an anthropological perspective and that of associated disciplines, such as history and sociology. One needs only to peruse, for example, a review such as Mintz and Du Bois' "The Anthropology of Food and Eating" to obtain insight into anthropology's history through landmark studies prior to the 1980s, and to also gain knowledge of a catalogue of recent works which includes, for instance, classic food ethnographies, eating and ritual, food and social change, and food insecurities (2002:99). Interestingly though, no mention is made of

any type of food study specific to New Zealand. Therefore, I surmise a gap exists in the literature for which my study may offer a contribution.

Much current academic thought with regard to food concerns its role in identity creation, for instance, ethnic, class or gender-based identity (Sutton 2001:4). As a species human beings are omnivorous, however, they remain unable to consume all edible foods available in their environment because of socio-cultural factors. In fact, the majority of the world's population eat a restricted diet which predominantly consists of locally produced staples, for example, rice or wheat, and "by the inertia of dietary tradition" (Atkins & Bowler 2001:255), a consequence of the constraints brought about by their subsistence lifestyles. This limitation may be the result of a society's particular selection of food available from the local environment, as other edible items may engender distaste, such as various insects or contamination through, for instance, contact with death (Counihan 1999:7). The idiosyncratic food habits central to each culture represent one of the most deeply embedded forms of human behaviour (Atkins & Bowler 2001:296). In short, taste is culturally constructed. Through people's need for social acceptance via their eating habits, for example, members of societies create specific food preferences. Hence, some truth exists in the cliché, 'You are what you eat', as the taste humans exhibit, whether in regard to food or other commodities, contributes to the formation of their identity which includes their particular ethnicity, religion, age, sex, income and social class (Bourdieu 1984:100).

Food and Social Class

According to Bourdieu, through a combination of their social origins and level of education, individuals develop 'taste' which functions as a marker of their social class (1984:1). The individual's taste is subsequently reflected in the choices they make with regard to, for

example, food, drinks, cars and films. So one's taste is ultimately manifest in the adoption of a particular lifestyle (Featherstone 1993:114). Differences in tastes are relational: taste can only be understood when related to the tastes of others within a specific society. Bourdieu's 'pure taste' of 'high culture', for instance, which encompasses the appreciation of certain types of theatre, music and gourmet cooking, all of which involve much investment of economic and cultural capital, can only be understood when compared with the 'vulgarity' of the music and eating of the working class (1984:57).

Throughout *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, which is based on French society during the 1970s, Bourdieu (1984) discusses aspects of 'habitus', that is, a set of distinctive preferences and systems of classification adopted by individuals as dictated by their social class. In other words, individuals of a particular class unconsciously assimilate and naturalise their specific taste, and simultaneously develop an antipathy towards what they perceive to be the peculiar tastes of other classes. Thus, habitus is responsible for the natural propensity of human beings to categorize and judge the behaviour of others. Habitus not only influences the individual's choices of, for instance, art, food, drink and sport, but it is also embodied and is discerned through such personal attributes as one's posture, demeanour or one's style of eating, drinking or speaking.

History shows that a practice of the bourgeois classes has been to consume greater quantities of higher quality foodstuffs rather than increase their intake of basic staples (Atkins & Bowler 2001:261). Hence, the larger male frame of the higher classes traditionally symbolised their success, however the rate of obesity amongst these classes today is greatly reduced (Mennell 1997:330-32). Nowadays as one ascends the social hierarchy, heavy, fatty and cheap foods are replaced in the diet by leaner, lighter, more expensive foods. Presumably this shift is tied to such people's contemporary notions about healthy foods and desirably thinner bodies. Eating a diversity of foods has now become a signifier of an

individual's persona. Furthermore, such exclusive consumption also displays an individual's interest or knowledge of another culture or cuisine. Numerous people today regularly demonstrate this idea by choosing to eat in ethnic restaurants or cook such styles of food in their own homes in preference to the 'meat and three veg' customarily passed down to many of us in New Zealand in the past. Atkins and Bowler refer to this idea as "status currency" (2001:285).

The consumption of certain foods and drinks can encompass a diversity of significant meanings. The rise of micro-brewed beer in the United States, for example, is an indicator of the shifting American economic and class structures. In the past beer has exemplified one of the most democratising beverages in America, possessing a reputation for being relatively cheap, ubiquitous and homogenous; more recently though, beer has undergone a change to become a social marker. It no longer distinguishes the lower socio-economic population, "as urban professionals sip beer from wine glasses (the change in glassware is itself a symbol of the transformation in the status of beer; it used to be necessary to switch from beer to wine to mark your class distinction)" (Sutton 2001:3).

The association between consumption and social class is by no means restricted to Western cultures as, for instance, the Indian subcontinent can testify to, through the emergence of a new middle class reasonably recently. A crucial aspect of this development is that food is materialising as a more independent entity "freed of its moral and medical constraints" (Appadurai 1988:5), which had been entrenched in traditional Indian cooking for millennia. A consequence of this phenomenon has been an abundance of Indian cookbooks, published in English. The women who use these cookbooks represent the upper social and professional echelons of India's urban centres, and are described as being multiethnic, multicasite, polyglot and as possessing Westernised tastes, while their ideology and

consumption style are said to disregard older ethnic, regional and caste boundaries (Appadurai 1988:6).

Tastes in food are dependent on beliefs held by various social ranks regarding the body, and about the effects of food on the body, for instance, on its strength, health or beauty. According to Bourdieu, the working class, for example, bearers of the ‘taste for necessity’⁹, emphasises the importance of the strength of the male body over its shape. The middle-class, at a comfortable distance from necessity, is more health conscious. Therefore, the former when selecting food gravitates to quantity in preference to quality, while the latter favours healthier, more costly foods, such as lean meats, fish, fruit and vegetables. Bourdieu claims that members of the nouveau riche choose to consume food that is both rich in cost and calories while those in the professional classes, possessors of the ‘taste of luxury’ through a combination of economic capital and a sense of social conformity, which dictates slimness over portliness, indulge in the luxury of calorie light, expensive foods, fruit and vegetables. Individuals whose wealth resides in cultural capital, for example, teachers, Bourdieu says, possess an inclination toward economical, exotic and peasant dishes, for example, Chinese and Italian foods (1984:180-90). Food choices, though, represent a dynamic area, and similar to many other goods and practices in a hierarchical society which were originally the exclusive domain of the privileged classes, become popularised over time and percolate down through the social strata. Therefore, bourgeois class members purposely and continuously seek out further novelties to re-establish the social distance (Featherstone 1993:131).

It is this dynamism of food choices and the meanings placed on the foods by both immigrants to New Zealand and by New Zealanders that I explore in this study. It would

⁹ Taste for necessity – The taste of the working class. Necessity includes for [the working class] all that is usually meant by the word, that is, an inescapable deprivation of necessary goods (Bourdieu 1984:372).

appear that a number of foods, maybe items initially appealing solely to individuals who possessed Bourdieu's 'taste of luxury', have indeed filtered down to become everyday foods consumed by ordinary, contemporary New Zealanders. Equally, many other foodstuffs are now commonly enjoyed here as a result of the diversity of immigrants now resident here.

Whilst social separation is constructed through the differing consumption habits of social classes, practices such as etiquette also maintain social distinctions. All through the Victorian era, for example, the display of correct table manners by a woman was considered vital as such conduct served as an indicator of her social persona and her true social origins (Jacobs Brumberg 1997:169). Vestiges of such social propriety are still observed today by members of certain social classes. Douglas claims that unnecessary movements, for instance, are avoided at the table and the seating order is strictly observed, also alternative activities are strictly forbidden throughout the meal, for instance, knitting, or the reading of newspapers (1997:41). No doubt links between social hierarchy and various foods remain, but I believe that many New Zealanders nowadays may enjoy a wide range of exotic foods for numerous reasons besides the influences of social class, for example, they have experienced and enjoyed such foods during overseas holidays or when sharing meals with neighbours or at community functions.

Food and Gender

Gender is inextricably enmeshed with food and eating for a whole raft of reasons throughout time and across cultures. Counihan claims that, "An examination of foodways – behaviours and beliefs surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food – reveals much about power relations and conceptions of sex and gender, for every coherent social group has its own unique foodways" (1999:6).

In all types of cultures, from foraging societies to industrial cities, women have always been held primarily responsible for food preparation and serving. This remains particularly pertinent today in preindustrial societies where women are usually solely responsible for the production, processing and distribution of food. This cultural universal has provided an important component in the construction of women's identity (Counihan 1999:46), especially in reference to the power food frequently affords women. Women have possessed power through their traditional knowledge and skill concerning food and have passed this down through the ages from mother to daughter (Atkins & Bowler 2001:311). Often a key source of women's power in various cultures, for example in Greece, is based around the control over food and therefore eating (Sutton 2001:25). The connection between food preparation and women was so deeply ingrained in most societies throughout history that it remained essentially unchallenged before the 20th century (Atkins & Bowler 2001:311). However, in the later 20th century in various societies men increasingly became involved in the cooking of food, and came to be seen as 'experts', witnessed, for example, in the number of television celebrity chefs who are male.

Female authority in relation to food is especially relevant within the family, for instance, women commonly decide when, what, and how much each family member will eat. Women regularly enhance familial bonds, for example, amongst extended kin through gifts of food at family gatherings or during times of sickness or crises (Counihan 1999:49). Women also employ the sharing of food as a suitable means to establish social networks amongst other women, for example, they may offer food as a gift to a new family in the neighbourhood. Such a contribution may be interpreted as being specifically from one woman to another, and assumes greater salience when the food signifies empathy of one woman's plight by another (Herda & Banwell 1988:54). At times such as these the food will

often take the form of a practical offering, for example, a homemade dish to relieve the woman from the responsibility of preparing a meal.

Apart from the power that women are alleged to gain through their relationship with food, it is also believed that food contributes to other aspects of the sense-of-self for countless women. For instance, women actually are food; initially they feed from the breast and then from the stove (Counihan 1999:49), and these feats are claimed to satisfy a basic need in numerous women. Feeding a family is a skill through which many women gain satisfaction and in which they take pride (Devault 1997:196). Research implies that even when men cook a meal, they rarely accept full responsibility, for example, they rely on a woman for the planning and purchasing of ingredients. Furthermore, Devault's work found that while women generally take meal planning for granted, men usually consider it to be a burden (1997:189).

An investigation in the late 20th century in New Zealand noted that while women generally identify themselves with food, this is particularly so with Pakeha women (Herda & Banwell 1988:52). The reasons are multifaceted, but include cultural expectations regarding women as nurturers, carers and feeders. Herda and Banwell acknowledge cultural constructs which denoted the successful New Zealand Pakeha woman at that time, as one who maintained a well-stocked larder and tins filled with home-baking. Such a portrayal echoes ideology rooted in our Anglo-Saxon heritage. Numerous women were found to have defined themselves through their ability to produce appropriate food, particularly baked goods. This self-identity was, and may still be, displayed personally by certain women's protection of their recipes, and as a cultural expression in baking competitions, for example, at agricultural and pastoral shows (Herda & Banwell 1988:53). Although a couple of decades have elapsed since this research was conducted, the New Zealand institution of agricultural and pastoral

shows, along with their baking competitions, remains strong, and these competitions remain extremely popular as a venue in which to exhibit one's home-baking skills. This popularity is evidenced in the countless baking categories listed in the *Helensville A & P Show 2008 Schedule*, and was confirmed to me verbally when I attended the Show by an elderly official who informed me that entries had remained fairly consistent throughout her long memory of the Show.

Because of the place of food in women's identity it is also relevant to consider women's feelings when through inability caused, for example, by ageing or disability, women find themselves unable to fulfil the role of nurturer. When they can no longer meet the expectations of their role, women may experience feelings of anxiety, incompetence and frustration (Herda & Banwell 1988:55). Although this negative experience can be felt by women cross-culturally, it seems especially intense amongst Pakeha women as their cultural ideology links food more intimately with their identity (Herda & Banwell 1988:83).

Many societies have expectations concerning eating according to socially constructed gender roles. To illustrate such societal norms, firstly, research in the United States suggests that men and women eat differently. In an investigation conducted by Counihan (1999:124), for example, men were found to eat heartily and abundantly, while women ate daintily and sparingly. It was proposed that if women were to eat large quantities of food in front of men, the men considered their behaviour to be masculine (Counihan 1999:124). Moreover, food beliefs and practices can be construed to signify women's subordination to men, for example, most societies consider certain foods to be either heavy and masculine or light and feminine. A steak, for example, is considered by many societies to be a masculine food while a salad has feminine connotations (Atkins & Bowler 2001:263).

The link between food, eating and women's subservience is not a modern phenomenon. Doctors during the Victorian era recommended that women should consume light, soft and liquid foods, as they insisted that women possessed sensitive digestive systems so were naturally susceptible to gastric disorders (Jacobs Brumberg 1997:163). During this period the appetite was regarded as a measure of one's sexuality, so females were constantly vigilant to limit their eating. Meat, in particular, created great moral anxiety for women and girls, as it was believed to be heat-producing, stimulate blood production, fat, passion, sexual development and activity. Conversely, by restricting the consumption of meat, premature or uninhibited sexuality and menstrual flow were controlled. A detrimental outcome of such views was that many females sustained iron deficiency (Jacobs Brumberg 1997:166).

Today a great many Pakeha women possess an awareness of the relationship between the food they consume and their weight (Herda & Banwell 1988:29). This knowledge, over recent decades, has evolved into an obsession with thinness for countless women and is linked with a modern Western cultural ideology surrounding notions of femininity. This ideal contrasts with that of the 1950s when the voluptuous female body represented the perfect woman. Evidence shows how such cultural pressure can put women's mental health (as well as physical health) at risk, as a lack of conforming can induce feelings of inadequacy or overt social ostracism (Herda & Banwell 1988:32). Indeed it seems that social class is directly related to one's girth, and principally that of women. Obese or even overweight individuals in Western societies are judged as having lost control regarding eating, whereas the thin are deemed in control, or even of wielding power through "self-righteousness and moral rectitude" (Counihan 1999:123). Our society's obsession with thinness, particularly for women, which is considered misogynistic in origin, contrasts greatly with those cultures that embrace plumpness, reflecting fertility, stamina, nurturance and love (Counihan 1999:11).

Western society's cultural construction of women as domestic cooks has been highlighted by work conducted by Herda and Banwell which proposed that men were reluctant to cook. The study explored the reasons why men attended cooking classes that were designed specifically for them, and found that the majority attended because they lacked a female to perform the role of a key kitchen person¹⁰ for them, and therefore attended through necessity to eat rather than a desire to learn to cook (Herda & Banwell 1988:24). An interesting aspect regarding the sexual division of labour surrounding food preparation and cooking also emerged from Herda and Banwell's study. The results suggested that although women are generally associated with these activities in the domestic domain, in which everyday food is consumed by the family, high cuisine, which is generally consumed by the higher classes, is commonly prepared and served by men (Herda & Banwell 1988:24). Besides, in many cultures men often assume the dominant role during special occasions, for example, in church when (generally) male priests offer communion or when fathers carve the turkey on Christmas Day (Counihan 1999:48). Atkins and Bowler's investigation, carried out in Britain, also provides evidence of the persistence of a gendered division of labour in relation to food, with the exceptions of "home beer-making and the notoriously testosterone-laden task of supervising barbecues" (2001:313).

Food and Memory

Whilst history might be said to be reflective of empiricism, objectivity and even the truth, memory in comparison, appears to be somewhat problematic. The difficulties associated with memory derive from its inherent subjectivity, hence it is prone to subvert the past through various processes, for instance, an individual's ambivalence concerning a matter can

¹⁰ Key kitchen person – the person with primary responsibility for food preparation in the home (Douglas 1984:17).

render the past fuzzy or even totally inaccurate (Holtzman 2006:363). Fundamental to memory is its relation to experience or meaning relative to the past, for example, events that individuals recall or emotionally re-experience, the unconscious (perhaps embodied) memories of subjects, and nostalgia for a real or imagined past (Holtzman 2006:364). A powerful and complex connection exists between memory and food. The experience of food-based recollections is not manifested merely as cognitive remembrances, but also as emotional and physical responses (Holtzman 2006:366). The foremost reason for these reactions is that through the act of eating, individuals receive powerful mnemonic cues, primarily of a sensory nature, for instance, through the food's taste and smell (Holtzman 2006:376). In brief, the power of food in constructing memory is intrinsically tied to the sensuality of the food.

Memories generated through consumption are not restricted to eating during special or ritualised food events, but rather include everyday eating, as memory and food combine routinely. To explain this notion, during his fieldwork, Sutton was instructed by his Greek friends to eat during both festivals and daily meals, "so that it remains unforgettable" (2001:31). When he was also told to eat to remember the town of Kalymnos, his participants were not referring specifically to their more luxurious foods, such as octopus or sea urchins, they were also including his everyday meals because, "In telling me to use the transitory and repetitive act of eating as a medium for the more enduring act of remembering, they were in fact, telling me to act like a Kalymnian" (Sutton 2001:2). Thus, they were implicitly connecting food and eating with identity. During Sutton's time in Greece, he found that his participants relied heavily on memories of eating both luxurious and ordinary foods to recall their countless stories. Furthermore, he found they drew on wider everyday food-based cues, for example, those centred on the agricultural cycle, or the religious calendar in Greece, in order to recollect specific events.

Food frequently arouses recollections of earlier aspects of one's life, for instance, memories connected with food evidently have the power to return an individual to their childhood and family (Holtzman 2006:369). This specific type of memory, nostalgia, is defined in the *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus* as "sentimental yearning for the past, [or] homesickness" (Anderson 2006:575). Though this lay definition presents a rather simplistic explanation, various scholars (Holtzman 2006, Sutton 2001, Appadurai 1996) claim nostalgia actually represents a form of memory which humans may experience in a variety of ways, for instance, embodied nostalgia or "armchair" nostalgia, both generally and in regards to food.

The connection between food and nostalgia is particularly strong for certain groups of people; women represent one such group. According to Christensen, kitchens and the food related activities undertaken within them regularly prompt reminiscences amongst women (2001:26). He describes how an example of this type of remembrance arose when, through the readying of garlic during the preparation of a meal, his mother was transported to being "a daughter again, to re-enter the female world of her childhood" (Christensen 2001:26). Food-based nostalgia is also a persistent theme amongst diasporic or expatriate populations. The emphasis for such diffused groupings is generally based around the experience of displacement. Sutton emphasises the longing evoked amongst diasporic individuals by the smells and tastes of their lost homeland, the memories of which offer them a fleeting escape into the past when their lives were not fragmented (2001:75-87). Such notions were highly relevant to my research as I wanted to learn from immigrants the significance, not only of what their traditional foods meant to them in a foreign land, but also what part food-based memories play in their lives now, if and how they provided a link between them and their distant families and homelands.

In contrast to nostalgia as a re-living of actual emotional pasts, another form of nostalgia may represent a desire for experiences and places that one has never known, perhaps only heard about through a friend or the media. Appadurai refers to this as “armchair” nostalgia, when he suggests that in today’s capitalist, consumerist society marketers provide the catalyst for nostalgia while the consumer “need only bring the faculty of nostalgia to an image that will supply the memory of a loss he or she has never suffered” (1996:78). This type of re-living, via a sense of imagined experience, is utilised, for example, in magazines in which an article about food and/or a recipe may be explicitly linked with an appropriate geographical destination as a means of enticement to the reader to not only visit that (typically far-off) place, but to also “relive” the fictitious past experience of eating its exotic epicurean delights. This is a link between palate and place; a romantic concept that allows the audience to transcend the here and now and to exist for a moment in an exotic place where they may rather be.

Food can also furnish the creation of “*prospective memories*” (Sutton 2001:28 emphasis in original), that is, in orienting people toward future memories that will be created by the consumption of food. In other words, people create future memories through the “pragmatic and the ritualized aspects of everyday [consumption]” (Sutton 2001:28). This idea becomes clearer when the interdependence of the various Kalymnian calendars, for instance, the agricultural, religious and fishing calendars, are considered. Kalymnians know, for example, that figs ripen just before St Anne’s day. Thus, religion, ritual and everyday life are entirely entangled for the members of this community, hence Sutton states, “equally important is the linking of past, present and future in such practices, in what I am calling prospective memory” (2001:29). So, the production and consumption of food not only structure time via their repetition through past years, but future food-related events are anticipated from the perspective of past experience (Sutton 2001:31).

As referred to above, food-based memories are not limited to the psychological and emotional domains, but rather through food's sensual properties it is deemed to be an important medium for the construction of intense physical memories (Holtzman 2006:366). Such embodied memories may be unconscious recollections that are deeply entrenched, both historically and culturally, within the core of the individual. For example, Sutton interpreted the extreme cravings of an expatriate Kalymnian man for a specific Greek seafood as both "psychic pain" and "uncontrollable desire" (2001:79). This intense longing for particular foods of the homeland, commonly experienced by displaced people, is described as a "burning of the lips" by Kapella (1981, quoted in Sutton 2001:79). Such "burning desire" is satisfied through consumption of the desired food, which consequently evokes feelings of completeness. Sutton believes such wholeness also encompasses notions of an imagined community, "in the embodied knowledge that others are eating the same food" (2001:84).

In direct counterpoint to the association between food and memory is the linkage between memory and the lack of food, that is, memories of hunger, for example, from the immigrants' point of view during the 19th and early 20th centuries en route to recently discovered lands. While aspirations of better and more food prompted migration, memories of hunger structured the immigrant experience, not only that of the early immigrants to New Zealand (detailed below), but also the experience of countless immigrants en route to other destinations. Diner describes how the memory of hunger shaped the lives of early immigrants to the United States when they faced sufficiency, but could not forget their past scarcity, "as hungry people found food within their reach, they partook of it in ways which resonate with their earlier deprivation. How they remembered those hungers allows us to see how they had once lived them and how they then understood themselves in their new home without them" (2002:220-21). Thus, the sensuality of food, from the everyday to the luxurious, manifests in

a number of potent and multifaceted ways to generate diverse memories of a lived or imagined past, or indeed, those in the future.

Food, Commensalism and Sociability

As Barthes points out, we need to transcend the obviousness of our own food in order to study it (1997:20), because apart from food's ability to sustain life, provide pleasure and even assist in relieving stress, it possesses an extraordinary ability to convey meaning. Throughout history, the purpose of food and eating in traditional societies has extended beyond mere sustenance to include complex value systems and ideologies, for instance, religious beliefs, rituals, etiquette, social organisation and group unity. Food is typically produced and distributed on a communal basis in agreement with customary obligations. The accumulation of food for a feast or a ritual can represent a means to acquire status within a community, while its subsequent serving at a function further reflects the prestige of the host as the gesture of hospitality is extremely significant. Food is commonly offered to the gods and to dead ancestors in order to ensure wishes are granted and as a means of protection against illness or other adversities (Powdermaker 1997:204). In contrast with traditional societies, for example, the Bagwa of Cameroon (Schultz & Lavenda 2001:503), where the same food is consumed by all members of the group, the food in stratified societies is symbolic of relative prestige. The type of food, its quality, the manner in which it is served, all transmit important information. The affluent may regularly eat rich foods in abundance, or the consumption of certain items included in the variety of foods available to many people today indicates an individual's character and taste (Powdermaker 1997:207).

As a result, food can be understood as a means of communication. Communication is achieved through an assortment of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviours.

Individual food items, the methods used in their preparation, and habits regarding serving and eating, all intermingle as part of a “system of differences in signification” (Barthes 1997:22), which creates food-based communication. Thus, food is a symbolic indicator among the members of a particular culture; it offers a key to understanding a culture (Counihan & Van Esterik 1997:2). Accordingly, food represents a language, the messages of which are transmitted in the social relations being conveyed, for instance, levels of hierarchy, inclusion or exclusion, boundaries and transactions across various boundaries (Douglas 1997:36). For example, in certain circumstances drinks can be considered appropriate among strangers, acquaintances, workmen and family, however, concepts of intimacy elevate meals as appropriate only among family, close friends and selected guests (Douglas 1997:41).

Commensalism, that is, the sharing of food “establishes communion and connection in all cultures” (Counihan 1999:96), while a refusal to eat with others is universally symbolic of a serious rupture in this connection. During her anthropological fieldwork in both Sardinia and Florence, Counihan described how the local people produced delicious food, how they enjoyed eating it and how their shared consumption continually maintained social relationships. They taught her to “enjoy food and to prioritize the pleasure of eating over the image of thinness” (Counihan 1999:1). Similarly in Greece, food and eating constitute a metaphor of social well-being because Greek people generally consider the miserly to be more concerned with saving money than with enjoying the pleasures of eating. In short, parsimonious people are said to lack the enjoyment that a social life offers (Sutton 2001:27).

Eating is at the centre of most of our social relations. Mealtimes provide opportunities to strengthen family ties and friendships through the sharing of both our food and ourselves. Festivals and celebrations offer chances to extend this practice, for example, with work colleagues and acquaintances. Eating is considered to be a pathway to experiencing a type of

euphoria; hence feasts and meals are ideal occasions at which to foster social relations (Counihan 1999:6). Furthermore, festivals and celebrations can be justifications for eating as the ritualistic nature of such events condones indulgent behaviour that would ordinarily be condemned (Counihan 1999:119).

Despite various accounts that describe early New Zealand settlers' food as dull, 19th century social life in this country was based around food and eating at all levels of society (Simpson 1999:121). Food would be abundant at all types of social occasions, for example, birthday parties, weddings, and even to celebrate the opening of a mine. It was common during this era for more food than necessary to be cooked, for example, the customary adage "one for the pot" frequently referred to the inclusion of extra potatoes to cater for unexpected visitors at the dining table (Herda & Banwell 1988:51). This widespread preparation of extra food was a combination of early New Zealanders' anticipation of casual visitors, and a consequence of the 1930s Depression when a welcome and generosity were extended to both friends and strangers in need of sustenance (Herda & Banwell 1988:51). A shift has occurred though in relatively recent times which has seen the abandonment of the pioneer ideology of extending food-based hospitality to unexpected visitors.

However, food continues to be used in New Zealand, during both private and public occasions, in culturally specific ways in order to establish and maintain a variety of social ties. Pakeha may hold dinner parties, barbeques, morning or afternoon teas, or picnics in order to extend and preserve their social bonds. Maori and Pacific Island peoples too consider a large meal appropriate for most gatherings (Herda & Banwell 1988:48). Simpson describes how the traditional Maori custom of using food and feasting to distribute economic surplus, to create patterns of reciprocity, and for recognising both personal and communal events of significance, for example, a tattooing, a tangi, or a crop planting or harvesting, has

been perpetuated to the present (1999:89-90). Additionally, public events which embrace food, for instance, the plethora of wine and food festivals held throughout the country nowadays, generally attract large crowds who revel in the communal consumption and atmosphere. And as our population grows and the diverse ethnicities maintain their cultural heritages, this popularity and festive ambience is increasingly mirrored during the numerous cultural festivals featuring today in New Zealand in which ethnic food plays a central role. The International Cultural Festival, for example, held annually in Auckland since 1992 is a celebration of the cultural diversity of people from more than forty nations who have arrived here as either refugees or migrants, and the event appears to attract an increasingly larger cross-cultural gathering each year, along with numerous indigenous New Zealanders.



**Figure 7: Eritrean coffee ceremony at Auckland’s International Cultural Festival
(March 2009)**

Part Two: New Zealand Literature

New Zealand Culture

Bawden defines culture as an overarching system of living that is established by a group of human beings, which is passed from one generation to the next (1999:6). Culture therefore incorporates many customs, practices and ways of thinking including religion, art, rituals, science, law, sport, language, politics and the eating habits of a particular group of humans. What is more, all cultures are affected and altered by the proximity and influence of other cultures (Bawden 1999:6). The majority group in a settler society, such as Pakeha in New Zealand, say Fleras and Spoonley, frequently perceive that they do not possess a culture in the same sense that they deem others to, for example, Maori or Chinese. The dominant group generally believe they live their lives according to universally held systems and values, which they consider to be natural and normal. They think, “Others are guided by culture; they are not” (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:81). In short, the omnipresence of the mainstream group’s culture tends to render its members oblivious to it.

Maori, New Zealand’s first inhabitants, brought their culture from Eastern Polynesia approximately one millennium ago (O’Connor 1995:6), which subsequently developed, adapted and became unique with differences according to the various tribes. About eight hundred years later the first European settlers began to introduce their colonial culture, which included a different language, values, technology, religion, worldview and so forth, of their homelands. Over a period of time, a distinctive New Zealand culture began to develop which is evidenced through, for example, literature, art, music, and arguably, the development of a New Zealand cuisine (O’Connor 1995:6). Contemporary New Zealand, with the arrival of numerous immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds, has now evolved into a multicultural

nation, and this current status is reflected in the country's many different ethnicities, religions, cultural values, languages and eating habits (Bawden 1999:6).

Our belief that we reside in Seddon's "God's own", King asserts, lives on today (2004:509). Isolation is central to the culture of New Zealand, both the Polynesian and the European settlers established their communities with minimal external assistance. Perhaps this pioneering heritage of self-sufficiency is the rationale behind many New Zealanders' perception of themselves as strong and independent, members of an open and fair society in which resources are distributed comparatively fairly, living in relative harmony in an increasingly multicultural environment and being able to fix practically anything with a length of number eight wire (Guile 2002:4). King maintains all these traits can be historically traced to the attitudes and values that were developed during New Zealand's formative years (2004:509). As a consequence, we can reflect now on our past and appreciate the "pattern woven by our developing culture in the story of the land and its inhabitants: it has always been complex, new threads have been introduced from outside, and at times tangled: eventually in time it all becomes part of the fabric" (O'Connor 1995:8).

Origins of New Zealand's Food Traditions

Whether or not it is correct to speak of the existence of a New Zealand cuisine has been contested for some years now. New Zealander David Burton, a sociologist, food writer and chef, offers further food for thought on the subject stating, "Whether we could speak of 'New Zealand cuisine' or merely of New Zealand's (apostrophe) cuisine, I surmised, didn't really matter: we undeniably had a collection of national dishes, a unique Maori-Pakeha culinary crossover, and some mighty interesting indigenous foodstuffs" (2003:52). So, regardless of how we refer to our nation's cuisine, its genesis rests with New Zealand's first settlers,

migrants from central Eastern Polynesia some time between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

Maori Food and Cookery

According to Maori legend, the original foods consumed by humans represented sacred gifts from the sons of Ranginui the Sky Father and Papatuanuku the Earth Mother; Tane was responsible for the game birds of the forest, Tangaroa presented seafood and fish, Haumia provided wild edible plants and Rongo offered cultivated vegetables (Burton 1982:1).

The original settlers brought horticultural material for transplanting, an echo of the agricultural tradition stemming from their Lapita heritage. On arrival the settlers employed their customary gardening methods, for example, irrigated beds and the enclosure of gardens to protect the crops from animals, and planted such vegetables as kumara, yam, taro, and bottle gourds (Simpson 1999:81). Some plants failed to survive the voyage, and the different climatic conditions experienced in New Zealand from those of their homeland caused the demise of further plant-life, though kumara thrived to become a valuable crop as it matured in a relatively short period of time (Burton 1982:3). As a result of the great loss of plant-stock, the Polynesian settlers resorted to consuming wild plants, for instance, fern root, hinau, puha, fungus and seaweed.

The early Polynesian settlers in this country practised three cooking techniques. Firstly, the steaming of food in a subterranean oven, hangi, was the preferred method when catering for a large number of people. Secondly, meat was grilled by placing it on sticks over hot embers, or alternatively by placing shellfish directly into hot ashes. The third option, boiling, was the least popular method because Maori were not potters, therefore the sole method to boil was to immerse hot stones into a wooden bowl of liquid. Both the steaming and grilling methods remain in use today (Burton 1982:1).

Archaeological evidence of early middens suggests that a wide variety of food was eaten during the initial period of habitation in New Zealand, for instance, native birds, rats, dogs, insects and fish (Wright-St Clair 1980:36). Numerous species were hunted to extinction several hundred years ago (for example, the moa), consequently more recent rubbish dumps reveal that a monotonous diet, comprised almost entirely of fish and shellfish, had become the norm (Simpson 1999:83). In 1769 Captain Cook commented on the limitations of the diet consumed by Maori by stating that, “In the article of food the people have no great variety. Firn roots, Dogs, fish and wild fowl is the chief diet, for Cocos, Yamms and Sweet Potatoes is not cultivated every where”¹¹ (cited in Wright-St Clair 1980:35).

The produce brought to New Zealand by Cook and other early European explorers greatly transformed the lifestyle of the Maori population. By the 19th century Maori were producing large quantities of European crops, for instance, potatoes which proved to be most successful as they grew abundantly in areas unsuitable for other root crops, they required little attention in comparison to taro and kumara, and were easily stored. The majority of this produce during the early 1800s was not eaten by Maori, but reserved as a means of trading with early European mariners for items such as wheat flour, muskets and gun-powder (Leach 1999:131). By the middle of the 19th century potatoes represented a lucrative commodity for their producers with the arrival of the early European population (Wright-St Clair 1980:42). The settlers were greatly dependent on Maori during their arrival period in New Zealand. Lacking local knowledge, they relied on Maori for both the supply of food, and on Maori expertise regarding its cultivation (O’Connor 1995:58).

In addition to supplying others, Maori increasingly adopted the European foods, including potatoes, into their own diet. Leach explains the unlikelihood of a crop being

¹¹ Errors in Cook’s original

introduced into a society as a staple. Initially it is merely an additional product and transformation to the status of a staple is frequently brought about by an environmental and/or a social phenomenon, for example favourable climatic conditions or movements of people (Leach 1999:137). Thus, after approximately 40 to 70 years the potato eventually replaced the fern root as a preferred staple food for Maori, and also partially replaced the kumara in warmer northern areas whilst providing an equivalent in the cooler southern regions where kumara had not been able to grow. Other European vegetables such as watercress and wild turnip became staples in the Maori diet and presented alternative vegetables to puha (Bailey & Earle 1999:9).

Maori made some adaptations to various introduced vegetables in order to improve their palatability, corn was one such example. The corn cobs were placed into kits which were then submerged in rivers for a length of time to allow the corn to rot. The perished result was then fashioned into cakes or a gruel-type dish (Simpson 1999:86). The pig soon became a favoured food in the Maori diet as they were impressed with the quantity of meat it offered. Accordingly, new recipes were created by Maori to include pork, for example, pork and puha which remains a popular dish today (Burton 1982:13). Such replacement foods heralded the passing of historical foraging for forest foods in order for Maori to survive (Bailey & Earle 1999:9). The early adoption of European foods by Maori has been maintained over the years with the result that the food served today on marae is often a combination of traditional Maori kai and imported foods (Bawden 1999:13).

Although cannibalism was practised by the original New Zealanders prior to the settlement of Europeans in this country, it is believed to have reached its peak during the early 19th century with the arrival of the European sealers, whalers and traders for various reasons. Feuding, for example, over the unequal acquisition of firearms from the Europeans, is believed to have reached its height at this time. Some defeated enemies were occasionally

retained as slaves to be eaten subsequently during special functions. As women were generally forbidden from eating human flesh it has been suggested that cannibalism in this country was linked with notions of mana and was not to alleviate hunger (Burton 1982:12). However, this concept has recently been the centre of debate and a variety of opinions exist. For instance, Paul Moon, professor of history at the Auckland University of Technology, released a somewhat controversial book in August 2008 entitled *This Horrid Practice*, which explores traditional Maori cannibalism. In “Racism Claim Over Cannibal Book” (New Zealand Herald, 27 August 2008), reporter Yvonne Tahana explains how Moon refutes the rationale concerning mana, claiming that cannibalism was based on “rage and humiliation”.

Early European Settlers’ Food and Cooking

The origins of New Zealand’s food traditions also possess a lengthy history in Europe, especially in England and Scotland, from where immigrants brought their food customs and attempted to recreate them here (Simpson 1999:13). An example of such culinary heritage stems from the early Arab influences, which included dried fruit in meat dishes and heavy spicing techniques. Such approaches were discovered during the crusades and were taken back and influenced British cooking for centuries. Although such traditions were virtually abandoned by the 18th century, some traces survived and continue to contribute to New Zealand cooking, especially through their inclusion in traditional Christmas fare, for instance, the quintessential nuts and dried fruits used in Christmas cakes, puddings and mince pies (Simpson 1999:22).

By the 18th century a distinctive English diet had developed based on bread, meat and dairy products and was supplemented by a variety of fruits and vegetables (Simpson 1999:29). This uniformity was an outcome both of Britain’s early industrialisation, as the population embraced manufactured food, and also of globalisation as imported foodstuffs

entered Britain from its colonies. Moreover, these principles ultimately brought about the demise of Britain's regional culinary differences (Atkins & Bowler 2001:283). Thus, the blandness of New Zealand's European-derived food traditions has its roots in the homogeneity of the early British diet.

However, 19th century Britain mirrored the rest of Europe by exhibiting a "food culture of contrasts" (Simpson 1999:42). The affluent minority consumed a well-developed diet, while the majority of the populations of Europe and Britain continually endured starvation, endemic illnesses and consequently premature death. The working class therefore either tolerated the deprivation or emigrated. Thus, many immigrants sailed to New Zealand: "Hunger, in one form or another, drove our European ancestors out of Britain. That hunger has had a significant effect on the development of our national eating habits cannot be doubted" (Simpson 1999:43). A determination to avoid starvation in their new home was to radically influence the diet that the immigrants adopted.

The majority of immigrants to New Zealand travelled in steerage class, in which they endured poor conditions with meagre and monotonous rations. They were, though, aware of the contrasting feasts enjoyed by the first class passengers throughout the voyage (Simpson 1999:65). Such excesses echoed memories of the consumption by their superiors in England, often experienced personally at a 'harvest home'¹² or a 'farmers ordinary'¹³ (Simpson 1999:61). Hence, a major objective of the early settlers' improved lifestyle in New Zealand was the regular consumption of meat which was inexpensive at that time. They generally refused to eat fish and seafood as such commodities were synonymous with the poverty of their previous lives in Britain (Burton 2003:15).

¹² Harvest home – rural people were permitted by their social superiors to eat meat at this time only (Simpson 1999:60).

¹³ Farmers' Ordinary – a feast held at an inn after a market day. Traditionally the farmer was expected to treat his farm labourers to their meals, however this often did not happen and the labourers merely received leftover food at the door (Simpson 1999:61).

A widespread practice existed amongst the early urban settlers in New Zealand of keeping a variety of livestock, for instance, chickens, a pig, and a cow, and of growing their own fruit and vegetables on their quarter acre sections. During the 19th century, agitation highlighted the necessity of a half day holiday on Saturdays for gardening, thereby reserving Sundays for worship. The cultural significance of this garden-based self-sufficiency was exposed when in 1892 the Department of Labour produced survey findings. The results revealed that no expenditure existed, for example, for vegetables, bacon and jams as such foods were produced in the immigrants' homes (Simpson 1999:70).

While New Zealand owes much to its colonial past in relation to its food traditions, it must also acknowledge the part that the early farming settlers played. Burton speaks of the rural culinary self-sufficiency as a “tradition of settler food, of home vegetable gardens and orchards, home-killing and bacon curing and butter making,[that] has now virtually died, surviving only in isolated pockets throughout New Zealand” (2003:12).

The early pioneers in New Zealand were continually confronted with hardships. The reversal of the seasons presented one such challenge as the settlers were prevented from celebrating Michaelmas with the traditional goose. As a consequence the ‘colonial goose’, a boned and stuffed leg of mutton (Edmonds Cookery Book 1985:90), was invented to fill this celebratory culinary void. Over time festival feasts gradually declined, not only as a result of the reversal of the seasons and the secularisation of society that evolved, but rather because the settlers were now able to eat heartily on a daily basis; they no longer relied on celebrations to eat well (Simpson 1999:75). A further hardship experienced by some was the lack of domestic servants which significantly influenced the development of New Zealand’s cuisine. As many middle-class women were obliged to perform their own household and cooking chores they were forced, through lack of time, to simplify their cooking in comparison to that carried out by their peers in Britain (Simpson 1999:128-9). Therefore, the

egalitarian ethos, on which New Zealand society was based, developed a rather homogenous style of cooking across the social strata (Simpson 1999:130).

In response to their memories of the eating habits of the bourgeoisie, both in Britain and during their voyage to New Zealand, the working class settlers chose to emulate their superiors once sufficient food became available: “The result was an extraordinary cuisine which persisted, particularly in our rural districts, for over a century, and which found its apotheosis in the daily culinary round of established farmers” (Simpson 1999:75). A culture was created based on the preparation and consumption of food which eventually evolved into a tradition of social cooking that bore no equivalent in Britain, in fact, it was exclusive to the colonial societies of New Zealand and Australia. With an emphasis on basic home-cooked meals along with baking, this colonial custom of extending hospitality to strangers continued for many years (Simpson 1999:130). Women were also frequently requested to ‘bring a plate’ to teas, suppers and community events, for which home-baked specialties were obligatory for a shared repast (Johnston 2008:7). Although regular home baking for visitors is now considered a rare practice, the tradition of hospitality and baking is deeply entrenched in this country’s heritage and certainly “exists in contemporary memory” (Simpson 1999:136).

The custom of devoting an entire day to baking, or automatically cooking extra food, survived longer in rural areas than in the towns (Simpson 1999:137). This type of domestic behaviour was abandoned in urban areas because the townsfolk soon had commercial access to most of their requirements. However, those in the more remote parts of the country “made do, in many cases developing, out of necessity, the cookery that has come to be seen as distinctly New Zealand” (O’Connor 1995:58). In other words, it was relatively isolated Pakeha women who developed the New Zealand tradition of baking.

Although the settlers' food traditions are rapidly vanishing they are vitally important to contemporary New Zealanders, because to understand one's culture today, one must know one's cultural history (Simpson 1999:160). The responsibility for the disappearance of the settlers' food customs in just two generations is placed on technology and the internationalisation of food. Both of these features were crucial to the origins of New Zealand's food customs (Simpson 1999:161), so it appears somewhat ironic that they became accountable for its decline.

Changes in Food Traditions in New Zealand

Over the years a New Zealand tradition developed around the family evening meal or the Sunday roast lunch, which was usually served at the dining table. This setting represented a family meeting place: "the family dinner table is synonymous with the evening family meal which has come to symbolise the existence and continuity of the family group for Pakeha New Zealand culture" (Herda & Banwell 1988:45). King, for example, recalls how on Sundays his family sat down to a ritualised midday roast dinner of lamb, pork or beef (1985:50).

For several decades now an integrated style of New Zealand food has been developing. The nation's food habits still retain many aspects of their gastronomic roots, but simultaneously reflect a wide acceptance of influences from various ethnic cultures (Bailey & Earle 1999:275). The first exotic influences from continental European cuisines arrived in New Zealand during the late 1930s when European Jewish refugees were admitted into this country. To ensure their access to their familiar fare they founded various food outlets, for example, European bakeries and shops and the nation's first delicatessens. Through their diverse culinary businesses these European settlers introduced their various native foods to

the New Zealand public, for example risotto, borscht, Hungarian goulash, beef stroganoff and apple strudel (Burton 2003:17).

Likewise, during World War II the numerous United States servicemen based in New Zealand introduced diverse novelties to the nation's diet, for instance, hamburgers, fried chicken and raw or lightly cooked vegetables, instead of what is often described today as overcooked vegetables. Examples of such changes included not only food items, but also beverages, for example, fruit juice was introduced and also coffee as an alternative to tea (Bailey & Earle 1999:273). These servicemen also initiated the erosion of cultural barriers in this country when they began to frequent Chinese restaurants, and New Zealanders followed their example. Prior to this, only Chinese had patronised such establishments (O'Connor 1995:59). When New Zealand soldiers returned home after World War II they brought a taste for Mediterranean food and wine which they had acquired during visits to restaurants and bars in countries such as Egypt and Italy (Burton 2003:24). New Zealand troops also furthered the acceptance of Asian food in this country as they developed a palate for various Asian cuisines, such as Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese during their service in the Asian region (Bailey & Earle 1999:273).

International fast-food chains began to arrive in New Zealand in the 1970s (Bailey & Earle 1999:265). These American-style outlets added a variety of novel foods to the country's culinary repertoire. Kentucky Fried Chicken, which arrived in 1970-71, offered a variety of ready-to-eat options based on fried chicken that was coated in a concoction of herbs and spices. Pizza Hut introduced the nation to speedy pizza-based meals in 1975, while 1979 witnessed the arrival of McDonalds' array of hamburgers, fries, and accompaniments.

During the mid 20th century, awareness grew concerning the health of the nation. It was recognised that our customary diet of British stodgy foods, for example, fatty chops and steamed puddings, was detrimental to our well-being. Accordingly, national campaigns were instigated to promote diets that contained less fat, and more fruit and vegetables. By the 1990s this initiative had proved beneficial towards improving the nation's health (O'Connor 1995:60).

An ever-increasing availability of foodstuffs in New Zealand exists today. With regard to this proliferation Burton claims that a revolution is underway: "New fruits and vegetables have appeared; winemakers, bakers, cheese makers and artisanal food producers generally have flourished; and the growth in the hospitality industry has been explosive" (2003:55). This dramatic culinary expansion is the outcome of a collection of relatively recent events which include: the removal of trade barriers and therefore increased imports into the country; the internationalisation of food; the impact of the information age which, for example, televises celebrity cooking shows; and cooking and food magazines and books to a growing middle class "determined to acquire the trappings of culture in its broader sense of gardens, architecture, wine and cross-cultural food" (Burton 2003:56). But Burton is adamant that the greatest thrust was the "democratising effect of air travel" (2003:56).

Changes in people's food conventions frequently reflect a society's social development (Atkins & Bowler 2001:297), and New Zealand's traditional food practices and meal patterns are under threat from a variety of outcomes of today's lifestyle. The modern chaotic pace of life frequently leaves little time for the preparation of complex meals or for the enjoyment of leisurely cooking. Moreover, a decline in the practice of traditional family meals is further exacerbated by changes in family structure and an increase of single person households. An investigation undertaken a couple of decades ago, for instance, acknowledged that the

sacrosanct Sunday roast was already on the wane at that time (Herda & Banwell 1988:47). This shift in our eating patterns is not peculiar to New Zealand, but mirrors those of other nations. Indeed, in 1980 the changes taking place in customary eating habits were described as ‘gastro-anomy’, that is, Durkheim’s term ‘anomie’, meaning normlessness, underwent revision (Fischler 1980:948).

The increased consumption of convenience foods which has taken place in the diets of people in the developed world serves as an indicator of further ‘gastro-anomy’. A connection is made between this trend in consumption and the growing number of women, the traditional food preparers, employed in the paid workforce, who now lack the time to prepare labour intensive meals (Atkins & Bowler 2001:267). However, it appears that the link between convenience food and women’s employment may not be a contemporary phenomenon. Regarding a Glasgow nutritionist’s lament in the early 20th century about the deterioration in the diets of families as a result of housewives taking paid employment, Mintz declares, “people have certainly been eating what is now fashionably called ‘junk food’ for a very long time” (1997:365).

Rise of Restaurants in New Zealand

When New Zealander Tony Simpson, a social historian, returned home in 1980 after several years in Europe, he described the country as a “nation of diners-out” (1999:8). His portrayal of our dining behaviour contrasted with that prior to his sojourn away when the country exemplified a “virtually restaurant-less food wilderness” (Simpson 1999:8). Until comparatively recently, ordinary New Zealanders ate out very occasionally; apart from lunch, meals were eaten in the home. Changes to this practice were to signal something of a revolution vis-à-vis the nation’s food habits. Preceding the 1960s, restaurants in New

Zealand were not only rare, but they were always unlicensed. Although licensed hotel dining rooms served formal four-course meals to the travelling public and the affluent, the food generally resembled home-cooking rather than professionally prepared dishes (Bailey & Earle 1999:263).

Since the 1970s New Zealand has experienced a huge growth in the number of restaurants, both local and ethnic. Accordingly, the number of people dining out has risen greatly, and this practice is no longer the preserve of the traveller or the rich (Bailey & Earle 1999:267). A vehicle for the upsurge of restaurants at this time was the return of New Zealanders from overseas with newly acquired epicurean educations (O'Connor 1995:59). Reminiscent of the earlier gastronomic enlightenment experienced by New Zealand servicemen abroad, some of these travellers also arrived home with a desire to relive their overseas culinary experiences. In direct contrast to the number of travellers at this time though, were many other New Zealanders who had never left the country. Therefore, a meal in an ethnic restaurant for them in the mid 20th century may well have represented their introduction to non-British food (Bailey & Earle 1999:265).

The 1980s was initially a period of conspicuous consumption which fostered the growing restaurant trade. And although the stock market crash of 1987 reduced most people's disposable income, it could not "deter tastes already created, and the skills brought to bear on food preparation here. Variety is here to stay in New Zealand food: the country still has an abundance of fresh food on offer, and now a wonderful repertoire of ways to prepare and present it" (O'Connor 1995:60).

Drinks and Beverages

Any account about food and eating, I believe, would not be complete were drinks to be omitted, and this is particularly pertinent when considering this subject from the New Zealand perspective as certain beverages have risen to prominence at various times during our short history. Food and drink are closely linked in a cognitive sense in many English-speaking cultures, and this association was acknowledged in 1923 when Malinowski stated that, “Food and drink are accepted together as vital means of satisfying basic biological needs, appetite and thirst” (cited in Pollock 2001:36). Pollock points out that a distinction is widely made in the literature between the terms alcoholic ‘drinks’ and non-alcoholic ‘beverages’ (2001:36), however in this brief passage I will use the terms drinks and beverages interchangeably.

From the time of the Age of Discovery, when Asia, Africa, and the New World came within the sphere of European exploration, countless new items, including foodstuffs, for instance, potatoes, tomatoes, maize and chocolate, reached Europe. In addition, two other new commodities, tea and coffee, which have infiltrated the Western world since the 17th century, have come to represent extremely important economic and cultural phenomena in modern times. The significance of tea and coffee exists as they were the first edible luxuries to be converted, by the late 1800s, to everyday consumables of the working classes. Moreover, their distinction is also upheld as they were the first luxury items to transform into necessities to the masses who had had no part in their production (Mintz 1997:359).

As part of the tradition of hospitality that emerged in New Zealand during the 19th century, tea or beer were offered to unexpected visitors (Simpson 1999:159). Coffee at this time, however, had not gained popularity in this country, but with the passage of time New Zealanders have undergone a transformation in their drinking habits. The consumption of

coffee has recently experienced significant growth as certain factions of society acknowledge its prior luxury status, leaving the more traditional drinking of tea in its wake (Pollock 2001:45).

In fact, an entire 'café culture' based largely on the consumption of coffee has evolved and is flourishing throughout the land. A range of coffee creations awaits even the most discerning contemporary connoisseur, from a minute but potent espresso shot, to the New Zealand original 'flat white', to a soy milk latte to cater for vegan or dairy-intolerant caffeine addicts (O'Connor 1995:59). According to William Watson, who initiated the creation of "*Café Culture New Zealand*", producing a good coffee equates to 'an art form' and the well-trained barista (coffee maker) will consistently brew the perfect coffee, full of flavour and with a smooth after-taste (n.d.:3). To complement the coffee (or alternative beverage) of one's choice the customer-focused café offers an array of edible treats, from breakfast, brunch or lunch fare to a mere sweet morsel, and a tasteful selection of newspapers and magazines. Additionally, cafés frequently afford a location from which to 'people-watch'. Watson explains how "These vibrant and eclectic meeting places have become our everyday locations for business, leisure and refuelling. Cafés have helped to integrate and unite a melting pot of cultures and socio-economic groups under one roof, promoting that feeling of comfort and harmony with each other. This social medium is now well established in New Zealand, and continues to grow and become an increasingly integral part of our lives and lifestyle" (n.d.:1).

Other alterations in the nation's drinking habits were occurring during the 1980s and 1990s when our consumption of mass-produced beer decreased noticeably, while that of boutique beers, both local and imported, and of wine, particularly those produced here, grew markedly (O'Connor 1995:60). New Zealand has recently emerged as a producer of world-class wines (Thomson 2004:7). In comparison, thirty years ago the nation's wine industry

barely existed while the export of New Zealand wines was non-existent. Nowadays New Zealand wines compete favourably in restaurants, retail outlets and in competitions internationally. The quality and scale of the country's wine industry have grown rapidly, and the country now boasts over 460 wineries (Thomson 2004:10). Susan Buchanan, editor of *Cuisine Wine Country 2009*, claims that wine has become "as much a part of our national being as whitebait and pavlova" (2008:7). Whilst the most popular variety of grape planted is *sauvignon blanc*, New Zealand winemakers have diversified by adding numerous other varieties, which include, *pinot noir*, *viognier* and *merlot*.

Echoing the sentiments of the Eastern European refugees, whose desire to eat their familiar foods resulted in their establishing New Zealand's first delicatessens, European bakeries, and so forth, a group of European settlers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries established the foundations for our wine industry by planting grapes in Auckland, "mainly in order to have some to drink [themselves]" (Thomson 2004:24). The short film, *Chasing Perfection*, made by Otago University in conjunction with Natural History New Zealand Limited (2004), points out that the first vines to be planted in this country were by a Frenchman, Jean Desire Feraud, in 1862, who was enticed to Central Otago during the gold-rush. The region's rocky soils reminded Feraud of his home in Burgundy, consequently he planted hundreds of vines, but they withered when he left this country.



Figure 8: Vines growing in Central Otago (November 2008)

Certain regions of New Zealand lack ideal climatic conditions for establishing, and indeed maintaining vineyards, yet numerous viticulturists persist with the challenge. In the Auckland region, for instance, the rainfall and level of humidity rise as the region progresses northwards, which subsequently increases threats to the crops such as mildew (Thomson 2004:23). Similarly, the extremes in weather experienced in Central Otago, which is presently the country's fastest growing wine region, mean that entire crops, both of the present year and of the following year, may be lost by a severe frost. Favourable microclimates found in Hawke's Bay and Marlborough represent conditions more suitable to the pursuit of viticulture (Thomson 2004:23).

New Zealand Immigration

Today New Zealand is one of several countries worldwide to be recognised as an immigrant society. Other countries which share this status include Australia, Canada, and the USA (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:164). King declared that New Zealanders were all ultimately immigrants to this country, whether Maori, Pakeha, or those of another culture who uphold New Zealand as their home. He pointed out that our various ancestors merely arrived by different means, for example, by waka, by ship, or by aeroplane (King 1999:11). So, although our origins are diverse, our destinies made us New Zealanders. Hence, international immigration has always played a major role in New Zealand's history

Beginning in the 19th century and continuing for some decades, New Zealand's source of immigration was almost exclusively from Britain and Ireland. However, a small number of Chinese gold miners admitted into the country in the mid 1800s represented the exception to this rule. This type of entry was curtailed after a short time through a process of political expediency coupled with a stance of anti-Asian racism exhibited by the general population. Thus, the stage was set for a 'White New Zealand' policy that persisted into the 1980s (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:154). Until that time New Zealand was unequivocal in its intentions to remain a European country, and explicitly expressed its discouragement towards Asian immigration (Li 2006:3). To ensure the nation's 'purity', financial assistance and incentives were offered to British immigrants during the early 20th century. These initiatives were then extended, post World War II, to citizens of the Netherlands. The result of this selective approach to immigration was that in 1945 New Zealand's non-Maori population was 96 per cent of British heritage and 0.5 per cent of Asian extraction (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:154).

A series of political and economic conditions have caused fluctuations in the patterns of New Zealand's immigration over the years. For instance, throughout the 1960s and 1970s,

the country's expanding economy resulted in the importing of unskilled and semi-skilled labour from the Pacific Islands (Zogekar 1997:320). This sizeable wave of people represented the first significant experience of non-European immigration into New Zealand. Further flux in immigration figures resulted from the economic recession experienced during 1968-69 when an acute decrease occurred in the number of immigrants entering the country. The early 1970s then witnessed a heavy gain of immigrants (Zogekar 1997:320), however a downturn in immigration numbers mirrored the slump in the national economy from the mid 1970s through to the early 1990s.

For a number of years the four immigrant receiving countries mentioned above maintained similar restrictive immigration policies. The outcomes of these strategies were evidenced by, for example, a severe limitation of the number of Asian immigrants and the subsequent discrimination on the part of the mainstream societies, which often forced Asian immigrants to retreat into ghettos¹⁴. In some instances this racial intolerance led to the establishment of Chinatowns in various locations (Li 2006:5). However, between the 1960s and the 1980s all four countries undertook to dismantle their discriminatory immigration measures. The reasons behind this common process of liberalisation included global decolonisation and increasing independence of third-world countries since the 1960s (Li 2006:5). Accordingly, New Zealand's *1986 Immigration Policy Review* stated:

The old notion of assimilation is no longer seen as the desirable outcome of immigration to New Zealand. Our society now sees a positive value in diversity and the retention by ethnic minorities of their cultural heritage. Active celebration of the many different ethnic heritages which contribute to modern New Zealand is now a noticeable and welcome feature of festivals or public occasions and daily life and culture. That vitality and stimulation and infusion of new elements to New Zealand life has been of immense value in the development of this country to date and will, as a result of this government's review of immigration policy, become even more important in the future (Burke 1986:48).

¹⁴ Ghetto – an urban residential district which is almost exclusively the preserve of one ethnic or cultural group ... where ethnic concentration results from discrimination (Li 2006:11).

Similar to Australia, Canada and the USA, New Zealand's immigration rearrangement, shifted away from

(racially) preferred source countries in order to attract the skilled migrants, entrepreneurs and business migrants needed for New Zealand's economic restructuring and development as it embraced the principles of free market economics and globalisation (Gendall, Spoonley & Trlin 2007:9).

As a result of this alteration in policy, immigrants from diverse countries, including an unprecedented number of Asian immigrants arrived in the country from the late 1980s onwards. This freeing-up in policy subsequently produced marked ethnic heterogeneity in New Zealand's previously relatively homogenous population, principally in that of Auckland, as this has been the primary destination for immigrants (Ho & Bedford 2006:201).

Fleras and Spoonley describe how we have failed to embrace the contemporary Asian immigrants, and how this echoes our earlier racism towards the original Asian and Pacific Island immigrants of the 1960s and 1970s. Again our behaviour has "exposed a flaw in New Zealand's ability to encompass and welcome diversity" (Fleras & Spoonley 1999:152). Successful integration is explained as representing a two-way process which requires the participation and cooperation of both the host society and the immigrants. Firstly, members of the host society require a positive attitude towards immigration and immigrants while demonstrating tolerance for cultural differences. Secondly, immigrants need to contribute to the host society's social and economic development while retaining their cultural identity (Ho & Bedford 2006:229). Based on ideas such as these, Ho and Bedford insist that a challenge exists amongst many New Zealanders to increase their tolerance and respect for cultural differences (2006:229). In "Immigration: What Have We Got to Fear?" (*North and South*,

June 1996), Nicola Legat had earlier posed the question, “Have we already forgotten when New Zealand was essentially white and Anglo-Saxon that it was also a very dull place?”

Today’s (im)migrants often differ from most of their predecessors as they are generally middle-class, well-educated and in professional occupations (Li 2006:48). Certain personality characteristics, such as being work-oriented, high-achieving, adventurous, risk-taking, energetic and enterprising are said to contribute to an individual’s desire to emigrate (Glazer 1990, quoted in Boneva & Frieze 2001:482). On arrival in their adopted country various immigrants may experience their resettlement in terms of improved economic well-being, the availability of better opportunities, or political freedom (Ogbu 1990, quoted in Boneva & Frieze 2001:487). However, numerous other factors are likely to affect the experience of adaptation to a new country which include one’s gender, age and the generation of immigration, for example, whether one belongs to the first or second generation (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder 2001:504). Despite such considerations, it is recognised that immigrants undergo complex psychological processes of adjustment during their resettlement which frequently result in varying levels of anxiety.

It is believed that through the support of certain criteria most immigrants will achieve a successful transition. Such conditions include a host country’s policy of multiculturalism, as immigrants usually prefer to integrate into their new society whilst retaining their culture of origin (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder 2001:505). Modern technological advances in communication, for example, jet travel, facsimiles, electronic mail and Internet videos, have also enhanced this period of readjustment for immigrants by allowing them to maintain a more frequent and closer link with home (Pedraza 2006:33). Cultural ties and support via other immigrants through organised cultural and social activities, for instance, outings, clubs, churches and concerts, often facilitate settlement through empathetic assistance (Murphy 2006:83).

Food too plays an important role vis-à-vis successful integration for immigrants for a variety of reasons. Food serves as a means of commemoration as it allows people, everyday, to re-enact their history and their future through their methods of food preparation and cooking which have been accumulated and passed down through generations (Barthes 1997:224). The persistence of a specific immigrant food item symbolises an expression of identity, either for an individual, or for an ethnic, a religious, or class group. However, research carried out in England amongst immigrants from the Caribbean suggests that immigrants do not always retain their traditional eating habits long term (Atkins & Bowler 2001:265). The first generation immigrants will typically persevere with their food traditions despite difficulties which may be encountered when seeking certain ingredients, as they believe them to be part of their identity. The second and third generations, though, do not consider such foods so vital to their identity. The later generations also often consider the preparation of traditional foods to be overly time consuming, nevertheless they will frequently retain specific dishes as a link with their cultural home (Atkins & Bowler 2001:273). Additionally, second and third generation immigrants will often experiment and adopt the dishes of other cultures, adapting them to suit their own palates.

Food is important to one's sense of identity "which is at the core of human autonomy" (Simpson 1999:12). Therefore, when immigrants adapt their traditional food habits, as necessitated by the circumstances of their new home, they also modify their cultural identity. In the United States it has been found that this adaptation can occur as certain ethnic foods induce feelings of shame as well as pride amongst particular immigrant groups, because they often link particular foods with poverty in their homeland (Atkins & Bowler 2001:274). This notion of association between specific foods and poverty echoes the link between fish and poverty made by the early British settlers in New Zealand (mentioned above). It is argued that humans cannot live without culture, accordingly, if they are denied their culture, people

will re-invent it, and this is what frequently happens amongst immigrant groups (Simpson 1999:160). In the example above, the specific meanings that had been attached to certain immigrant foods had essentially become redundant, therefore new meanings were created. An example of this phenomenon was originally witnessed in the 1960s when a revival of culinary roots took place in the USA as people celebrated the nation's cultural diversity (Atkins & Bowler 2001:274). This subsequently led to an unprecedented growth of ethnic restaurants, both in the USA and numerous other countries throughout the world, many of which base their repertoires on peasant-type foods. The 'Italian' food, for example, that is popularly consumed internationally today is based on '*la cucina povera*' or peasant cuisine (Bardi 2001:75). The following three chapters form the discussion content of this thesis. The first discussion chapter looks at food as a means through which immigrants to New Zealand connect with others, both loved-ones left at home and various people in their new life.

Chapter Three

Food as a Bridge between Immigrants and Home

In this and the following two chapters themes from the Literature Review will be considered and developed in conjunction with the information acquired during my fieldwork and interviews. This chapter discusses the potential of food to act as a bridge for immigrants in this country by providing them with links to both their old life and their new one. Firstly, food is considered as a medium to connect immigrants, in various ways, with family and friends remaining at home, and secondly, as a practical and tangible cultural object by which immigrants can initiate and maintain social connections with other New Zealanders. The following chapter examines how these same ‘exotic’ foods also provide opportunities for New Zealanders to connect with other places, and then Chapter Five explores how New Zealanders are combining these relatively new foods to our shores with New Zealand foodstuffs and subsequently making the exotic ours.

As immigrants cross geographical borders to become members of a new society, they simultaneously cross emotional and behavioural boundaries. Their lives, roles and identities change dramatically as immigration represents a significantly transformative process (Espín 2006:241). As culture and history greatly influence an individual’s sense of self and life story the abrupt disruption of immigration engenders a rescripting of one’s narrative, because the immigrant ceases to experience life in a familiar manner as social and psychological events invade and change their life plan (Espín 2006:246). The requirement to adopt a new language, for instance, signifies a profound impact on the immigrant’s self identity for a

number of reasons. For example, despite an immigrant's ability to converse in the host society's language, they are frequently placed in a less privileged position within that community's power relations because they talk with a foreign accent (Espín 2006:247).

From a positive perspective though, contemporary immigrants are no longer entirely separated from their former lives. Through the communication opportunities available to them by virtue of modern technology, today's immigrants are now able to remain in closer and more frequent contact with friends and family in the homeland, whether by jet travel, telephone, Internet, or another medium. In brief, they are now in a position to live multiple lives at once. This enhanced linkage with their old home represents an important and necessary pathway for today's immigrants to establish emotional and economic well-being in their new lives (Pedraza 2006:47).

In regard to the trans-global communication advantages enjoyed by today's immigrants, a number of my immigrant interviewees, for instance, Celine, Rosa, Lara, Vema and Leo, referred to the pleasure they anticipate concerning their regular visits home to France, Argentina, Thailand, Indonesia and Venezuela respectively. Whilst the majority exhibited a level of flexibility concerning the foods they miss, one of the most popular comments made regarding such visits was that while they were at home they would eat the foods that they were unable to obtain and miss in New Zealand. Celine professed: "I just eat as much as I can of them when I go home!" One of the French foods that she misses is *foie gras*, which I suggested she might find in a specialty shop; however she informed me that in such places the cost is prohibitive as the imported varieties are "very expensive brands, it's very exclusive". I have to agree, as after speaking with Celine I visited one such shop on Auckland's North Shore and took note of the extremely high price of a very small container of *foie gras*.



Figure 9: Exotic foods, such as olives, sun-dried tomatoes and capers in a Queenstown specialty shop (November 2008)

A further advantage for immigrants now with regard to today's frequent and rapid jet-travel is that friends and family are able to travel to New Zealand to visit those in the diaspora. My immigrant interviewees told me how these welcome guests often arrived bearing edible gifts from home. Mia explained that when:

My mother-in-law came to visit us [from Iraq] there wasn't much okra back ten years. She brought dried okra with her and when she came to the airport we didn't know, and she's not that good in English and she didn't say that she had food. The [Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' detector] dog just went chasing for the smell of the okra and then we knew.... I remember there were different spices she brought cos it was grounded so it's OK, it's not like a seed.

Fortunately for all concerned, the okra and the spices were allowed into the country as they did not contravene our strict bio-security regulations, and brought a great deal of pleasure to Mia and her family by providing them with a taste of Iraq.

Antonio and Elsa related how a similar consignment was brought to them from Chile by Elsa's parents during their visit here. Antonio explained that they both crave a particular Chilean liqueur that cannot be purchased here:

The only thing that from time to time say, I would love to have, it's not probably food, but it's an appetiser and it's a very popular appetiser so it's heavily linked to food.... When Elsa's parents came here the one thing they brought was two bottles and then we had to manage with that.

Not only was their joint craving temporarily satisfied, but I also discovered that they shared the liqueur by introducing it to their new "Kiwi friends...and even Eastern European [friends]...the only very sophisticated thing that we've done here," Antonio said. Such was their love of the liqueur, plus what it symbolised with regard to their cultural pride, that they wished to share it cross-culturally, because food is the easiest bridge across ethnic boundaries (Van den Berghe (1984:393). Hence, the Chilean liqueur acted to reinforce their newly formed international friendships.

According to Diner, the difference at the beginning of the 21st century is not so much the diverse countries of origin of today's immigrants, but that the advances in transportation and technology have made it infinitely easier to send people, information and ingredients from place to place than ever before. Thus, immigrants are reunited not only with family members from home, but also with foodstuffs frequently unavailable in their new home and generally greatly missed (Diner 2002:227). When an immigrant consumes foodstuffs from home they conduct a process of integrating their past with their present to recall the old way of life (Fernandez 1982:9). Mia related how when she first arrived in New Zealand she needed to eat her familiar Arabic food:

When I came here couldn't change immediately to other culture's food so I cooked similar what I know and what I got from my Grandma and Mother

recipes. Even, I used to rang my Mum to ask her about few recipes that I'm not sure about, so I make sure it's the proper tasting.

In the midst of an interesting account about Hinduism, food, charity and sacred cows in India, Veeba said she would like to tell me about her pregnancy. She assured me that the New Zealand midwives she had were very good, but she rejected their dietary advice because they ate totally different diets from hers. She found herself in a dilemma because she craved oranges, but also suffered from acidity, hence: "I had to call my sister, she's a doctor, 'if I have nausea what should I eat?' She told me to have mint chutney for nausea". For an immigrant in a strange country, without an extended kin group for support, this form of immediate connection with a loved one remaining behind represents a pathway to emotional and psychological well-being. This type of support was even more salient for Veeba as her pregnancy was unplanned and she was experiencing conflicting emotions. These continued affective, emotional links constitute a type of transnationalism as the immigrant is conducting lives in multiple countries (Pedraza 2006:47). By phoning her sister, Veeba received double comfort from home: she affirmed her connection with her sister and with the appropriate food for her condition. Likewise, Mia was able to connect immediately with family at home to seek guidance about her traditional food preparation.

Preparation of Traditional Foods in Modern Times

According to Counihan, "Certain foods can become emblematic...symbols of the past that are no longer regularly consumed because [they are] too difficult to prepare or no longer palatable or customary" (2004:26). Atkins and Bowler claim that various immigrants, especially those of the second and third generations, often consider the preparation of their traditional dishes to be too time-consuming to create on a daily basis, despite the importance

of such foods to their ethnic identity (2001:273). A number of my immigrant interviewees, for example, Angelina, Mia, Antonio, Elsa, Leo and Lara, described their traditional foods as involving a great deal of time to prepare, and most of them do not make such food on a regular basis. For the majority, such food represents special occasions, for example, national days, weddings, anniversaries, or religious festivals. Occasions such as these represent times which make an individual's ethnicity explicit, and consequently provide a chance to connect with and perform their own cultural identity. Because, food is symbolic of ethnic identity, so eating the food of one's ethnicity represents embodying one's identity on that special day. This reconnects the immigrant with an imagined community at home, the members of which will be eating the same traditional foods and celebrating the same festivity. Hence, the common consumption of these celebratory foods by the immigrants here and their loved ones elsewhere fashions an imaginary bridge between geographically separated friends and family. Antonio explained that since arriving in New Zealand they have not really cooked what they consider to be authentic Chilean food because of the difficulties and time involved: "There's skills that you need, and there's I wouldn't say the materials, but sort of the ingredients, but to be able to make a good *empanada* it's quite hard...lots of practise". Elsa added that they were, in fact, extremely involved and that special knowledge was required. When I enquired whether their mothers prepared this type of food, they stated that neither mother was 'into' Chilean cuisine, though Antonio's grandmother, who had been raised in a rural area, prepared such food. He also recalled how she would begin the preparation of a traditional Sunday lunch on the prior Saturday with the help of Maria, a "very old maid", who had been in her employ for many years.

Similar sentiments relating to the time-consuming and labour-intensive preparation of many traditional dishes were echoed by Mia with regard to her Arabic cuisine:

I don't cook [complex dishes]. I cook the simplest recipes. I don't cook like my grandmother used to spend hours and hours in her kitchen preparing one meal and all the children and grandchildren comes to her house and celebrate, but for me it's hard to prepare all that.... I remember when my mother-in-law came [to visit New Zealand] and she did *heaps* of the yummy stuff we used to love cos she didn't have anything just cooking. She likes to spend hours in the kitchen to prepare the similar food.

Mia continued by explaining that she is employed in the paid workforce and also has two children, so little time exists for such culinary pursuits.

I noticed a pattern emerging vis-à-vis the amount of time and energy required to produce many traditional foods originating from my immigrants' homelands, and how in a number of instances it was perpetuated by the women of the older generation. Their traditional labour-intensive cooking was normal for them at home and they continued it when they relocated here. Mia's mother-in-law, for instance, eventually joined them in New Zealand and continues her love of traditional food preparation: "She does all whatever we used to cook back home. She still cooks it in her proper way". The acceptance by older immigrant women of the role of maintaining traditional cooking for the family is reiterated by Reid in *Lift the Lid of the Cumin Jar*, in which refugee and immigrant women to New Zealand from various nations talk about their lives and food. One of the immigrants that she spoke with explained how her elderly mother, who now lives here, cooks certain Assyrian dishes which are complex and require time and energy to produce. This particular woman cooks substantial amounts of food and then distributes it to family members (Reid 1999:52). Thus, through the medium of older women's food preparation work, family relationships are reinforced (through the distribution and sharing processes) and the connections between ethnicity and key 'ethnic foods' are reproduced. This food production translates to social reproduction.

It would appear, though, that such traditional dishes, requiring much time, knowledge, and physical effort, may, in particular circumstances, be on the wane today in their lands of origin. Antonio, Elsa and Lara described how time-saving measures regarding food-preparation are proving extremely popular with contemporary cooks in Chile and Thailand. Elsa and Antonio said that the Maggi range of pre-prepared foods, which are produced by the multinational company Nestlé, are ubiquitous in Chile. Elsa insisted: “We wouldn’t be able to survive without Nestlé! I remember once when our local supermarket had an argument with Nestlé and there was nothing in the supermarket after that”. Antonio added: “We rely a lot nowadays, because of course modern times, and how much time do you have at home to cook and all these things. I would say that the regular urban family in Chile would rely a lot on these kinds of preparations of foods”.

Lara pointed out that if people wish to cook a curry today in Thailand they use a commercially prepared paste and added: “I’m thinking back in my house in Thailand long time ago, because now I’m fifty, when I was kid everything you can do like from scratch...because at the old time we not rush”. So a lack of time for the leisurely preparation of a meal is by no means peculiar to the Western world. For my participants, the pace of life is not necessarily faster in New Zealand, it is also increasing in their countries of origin. It seems that as this increased tempo continues, people of various ethnicities adopt survival mechanisms, such as short cuts to meal-making, irrespective of where they live. Yet, these replacements may be to the detriment of their cultural heritage, because the reduced allocation of time to food preparation activities seems to decrease the importance of traditional food preparation as an expression of one’s cultural identity.

The introduction of modern ready-made preparations for inclusion in customary Tuscan food is referred to by Counihan in regard to her participants in *Around the Tuscan Table*. She elucidates how they perceive the cooking and eating of traditional Tuscan food

as a powerful means to maintain memories, and to enact social class and cultural identity. Accordingly, the increasing substitution of their food with commercially processed, time-saving alternatives indicates a transformation of their link with their history, their traditional social life and their memories (Counihan 2004:27). The preservation of customary food habits, which Atkins and Bowler claim are usually maintained by first generation immigrants in their new homeland (2001:273), may be diminishing. The first generation immigrant nowadays often juggles family commitments, paid employment responsibilities and so forth, possibly resulting in a modified cultural performance regarding their food. I am left to ponder whether a number of dishes that fall into the category discussed here will, in a short period of time, become merely symbolic memories of the cultures that have nurtured them through generations, or will they be resurrected, perhaps as a modified, quicker to prepare version, by another generation when it realises the incalculable value of their ethnic foodways to their heritage?

Various scholars (Veart 2008, Valentine 1999, Reid 1999, Appadurai 1988) have noted how traditional recipes were passed by word of mouth from mother to daughter through generations of women, and how cooking was not formally taught, but rather learned by girls by watching and practising. This method remains in existence to varying degrees amongst different cultures, for example, in *Lift the Lid of the Cumin Jar*, food writer Lois Daish, explains that for many of the recipes featured in the book, this is the first time that they have been published. They are not only examples of women's knowledge acquired through working alongside other women, but also represent part of each contributor's cultural identity and symbolise "a precious cargo brought to a new home in New Zealand from diverse nations" (Daish 1999:5).

Antonio and Elsa told me a fascinating story about Maria, the elderly maid mentioned above, and this customary relaying of women's knowledge. They both explained that she is

barely literate and is now the repository of her family's cooking heritage as the recipes, having been passed down through generations of her family from mother to daughter, are now stored in her head. At the realisation that this valuable history would be lost when she died, Antonio and his brother decided to make a video-recording of her at work. Antonio described how in order to record all of Maria's processes, he and his brother would arrive at his Grandmother's house at six o'clock in the morning as Maria was beginning her work: "You could see the very complex things like asking, 'Maria what are you doing now?' 'I am putting some salt'. 'How much salt?' 'This'. And she shows the tip of her finger. Absolutely procedural knowledge". We all agreed on the completion of this story that this was quite an anthropological undertaking by Antonio and his brother.

Lara also described how during her childhood in Thailand she used to go to the kitchen to help the kitchen staff, and she too learned to cook as they had, not from cookbooks, but by observation and practice: "Sometimes I'm helping them in the kitchen because just cutting, cutting, have fun...we got like a lot of servant and sometimes I'm just a kid so I'm just helping them so I just have fun together, talking and learn from experience". Through such immersion, cultural information is absorbed and one's cultural identity takes shape. These early lessons have endured over time and continue their influence over Lara's cultural identity today.

Similarly, it is common, whilst eating their meals, for Florentines to debate the correct method of cooking what is before them. They recognise that their cuisine is unique and duly establish their cultural identity through their attachment to it (Counihan 1999:7). During a discussion of the French foods that Celine is unable to acquire here and what this means to her, she declared that: "Eating is part of your culture; that's how you identify yourself". Because of her inability to consume these foods in New Zealand, and in particular, the

specific tastes that she misses and identifies with, Celine seems to feel that her identity is compromised. Somers explains how

people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that 'experience' is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives (1994:614).

Valentine too believes that food habits, both symbolic and material, have the power to place a person within certain narratives regarding their identity, and they then utilise food as a means to locate themselves within further narratives of family, community, culture and so forth (1999:496).

An example of the food habits that Valentine mentions emerged during my conversation with Elsa and Antonio. Elsa mentioned her need to eat bread at every meal. The bread, however, was not served on a plate: "We have bread with every single meal, and have to have a little basket. We couldn't find a little basket here.... My Mum she had to send me this, with this piece of cloth, that is absolutely imperative". When I enquired about the significance of the basket, she replied: "I'm not able to tell you why, but the plate is just not enough". Elsa continued to physically demonstrate how the cotton doily, decorated with blue embroidered flowers, was placed inside the basket; the bread was then wrapped in this, on occasion warmed and then served. So not only was bread as a material food eaten habitually at mealtimes, according to her cultural narrative, but the ritual regarding the symbolic bread basket was also enacted faithfully to enforce her storyline of self which encompasses positioning herself within the family, home and culture. Hence, individuals' identities are both expressed through and formed by eating habits.

Based on the discussion above, food clearly contributes to one's cultural identity. Alternatively though, in certain circumstances one's traditional food can become an instrument of dissension and divergence. Veeba voiced her despair regarding her children's apathy toward Indian foods and consequently her distress concerning the ramifications of how such attitudes are impacting on their cultural identities:

My kids even, they're not attached to those things which we are. They don't understand. They are not growing like it's part of them.... When we are [visiting] India and have Indian food, when we show it to our kids, 'And this is what we used to have when we were a little girl and boy', and it's so true, we have tried to show them, but they are not interested or they don't have the interest we have.

The tale continued as Veeba told me that her children now prefer cereal for breakfast instead of Indian food, and that her disapproval has intensified recently since she learned through the media that the specific cereal they favour is not particularly nutritious. Consequently, when I talked with her she was in the midst of trying to engineer a reversion to Indian breakfasts for the children:

The kids like to eat cereal for breakfast now...I thought I'll change the breakfast because back home we like to have stuffed *parathas* with yoghurt...I've tried to give it to my kids, but they don't like it. They want to have Nutella with bread or Coco Pops things like that. I think if I could change their diet, but all the kids compare. When they talk to each other also they say, 'OK, do you eat Coco Pops?' She says, 'Yes, I like Coco Pops'.

Having lived in New Zealand for seven years, and as the youngest child was born here, Veeba's children do not seem to consider Indian food crucial to their cultural identity. They have been exposed, at an impressionable age, to a different culture and its food, and Veeba makes little concession for the cross-cultural experiences that are their lives. In direct contrast, and never having left India prior to coming here, Veeba is fiercely proud of her Indian heritage, and of Indian food – the ingredients, method of preparation and consumption – which provides her with an important link with home and communicates her cultural

identity as a Sikh woman. She believes her children are becoming alienated from their culture, and wishes, through the eating of Indian food, that they will embrace their Indian identity and recognise that the family roots are in India.

According to Valentine, the home represents a site of both individual and shared consumption where the meanings and uses of particular foodstuffs are “negotiated, and sometimes contested, between household members” (1999:492). Through the eating of Western foods, Veeba’s children are articulating their desire to not only feel and appear a part of their peer group, but also to integrate into the wider social setting and culture, and this may simultaneously be construed as an act of independence from the familial culture. In short, each child is constructing its individual cultural identity through its own agency.

The routine incorporation of negotiated and contested foods into people’s everyday lives can reveal aspects relevant to identity creation and identity crises of both individual family members and of the collective household, as food is also a significant ingredient in the production of the family’s shared identity (Valentine 1999:492). Veeba outlined the details surrounding one such crisis which was instigated by the public consumption of Indian food by her daughter. The background of this story began sometime prior when her son was born. Veeba had returned to India for five months and as she had taken her other son and daughter with her, she placed them in an Indian school for the duration of their stay:

When my daughter opened her tiffin, everybody had the same food and she was surprised. If she used to talk to anyone, ‘I have stuffed *paratha*’, ‘Oh yeah, even I have’. Here she feels so ashamed of herself if I give her something which everybody won’t have, so she doesn’t take Indian food.... They ask my daughter ‘What kind of poo are you bringing to school in your tiffin?’

The story progressed with the child not wishing to attend school because of the conflict and shame that the Indian food had created. In an effort to placate her daughter, Veeba agreed to

make a sandwich as this was consistent with the other children's lunches. In sacrificing her Indian food in favour of the dominant, acceptable sandwich, Veeba felt forced to surrender an important part of her cultural identity.

The connection with India through food that Veeba has worked so hard to encourage was basically destroyed by her daughter's classmates' offensive questioning. Their traditional food, which Veeba had earlier described to me in sacred terms, was not only being degraded, but was being exploited as a vehicle of overt racism by another. Thus, the situation represented both an individual crisis for Veeba's daughter and also a household crisis, as although the food in contention was her personal lunch, as Indian food it also symbolised their family's collective ethnic diet that was being redefined literally as excrement.

The type of shame expressed by Veeba's daughter at having to consume Indian food in a public place resonates throughout a passage in *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*. Italian memoirists recount their experiences of their food as immigrants in America in a bygone era, and whilst they admit to enjoying their Italian food greatly, it was on the proviso that it was eaten in the privacy of their parents' homes. Various immigrants recall their dread of, for example, the arrival of summer when their families would "consume as Italians in public places" (Diner 2002:81), or because of humiliation from their peers they rarely took their home-prepared lunches to school as they were different from those taken by American children; either situation, they believed, had the potential to create a bad impression on Americans. In short, they suffered from a "sense of inferiority, [a] rejection of the parental home" (Tait 1942:49).

Veeba's daughter's unpleasant experience contrasts with an anecdote I heard a few years ago when I attended, along with a number of university students studying racism and

ethnicity, a forum for immigrants in Auckland. We were each placed with a different group of immigrants to observe and participate in discussions regarding the problems experienced by immigrants. Towards the end of a fairly emotionally charged day, an elderly Indian woman immigrant spoke of her hope for New Zealand's inter-ethnic cooperation in the future. She related a story concerning her grandson who wished to reciprocate the hospitality that had been extended to him by bringing his new 'Kiwi' friends home after school. When she asked her grandson what would be suitable food to serve, he told her to merely offer them the usual afternoon snack that he eats. Subsequently, she expressed her surprise that the local boys not only enjoyed her Indian food, but actually requested more. Based on that experience, her suggestion to the 'experts' present was to allow the children to sort out the inter-cultural problems that we, the adults, have made.

The collective preparation and consumption of food strengthens social bonds within various groups of people, in fact, the literal definition of companion is "one with whom bread is shared" (Diner 2002:4). In this sense, a community may be described as a group of people who eat together. All through history food has been generally associated with sociability, and within families it has provided an expression of love and affection, for instance, the sharing of family celebrations and community feasts marked sacred times such as funerals, military victories, birthdays and weddings. These food events created and maintained community and family cohesion (Diner 2002:5).

Throughout the interview process each of my immigrant interviewees mentioned the importance that the sharing of food with their families and friends holds for them. Leo nonchalantly uttered: "It's always like a, not an excuse, but a good way of getting the family together". Besides this feeling being articulated casually as they reminisced about shared repasts, they also spoke of their new social lives in New Zealand and the role that food plays within them. Rosa, for example, said:

It has a connotation about it for me. It has social connotation of gatherings, of family gatherings of sharing in family atmosphere in all those components of family—family and friends. And yet you know, here I have shared many barbeques with friends, enjoyed a lot, associated in a particular way with affections and friends because I don't have family, here it's just friends, and the barbeques are different, however, I enjoy it as much, you could say, as I enjoy it over there.

It became apparent that those immigrant interviewees who lacked kin members in this country had formed surrogate families through strong bonds of friendship with other individuals and families and food also strengthened ties within these substitute families. Whilst these bonds are not blood ties, they do represent significant affective relationships amongst their members. These affiliations embody what Weston labels “families of choice” (1991:113); she discusses the possibility of new kin ties forming over time through the demonstration of commitment between friends and lovers. Contemporary Western society increasingly reflects Weston's tenet concerning the wide variety of types of ‘family’ that exist nowadays. The nuclear family possibly no longer represents the societal norm, at least in practice, with today's assorted combinations of families, for instance, blended families created as marriages dissolve and new partnerships form, into which prior offspring are taken, or the increasing number of single person households (Bailey & Earle 1999:269).

Food and Memory

Besides food's ability to engender friendship, warmth and love amongst people during a social gathering, it can also serve to focus the individual during more testing times, for example, when one is homesick or nostalgic. Nostalgia is described by Naficy, a scholar of diaspora, as being a desire to return to one's homeland (1993:148). Mankekar though believes inconsistencies arise from such a definition, claiming that in the context of

immigrants some people will and others will not wish to return home, but all may experience nostalgia (2002:85). Reid relates an immigrant's story of nostalgia, one that she had been told numerous times before, but in different ways, in which the food that had sustained an immigrant in her original war-torn home could also offer sustenance of a deeper and more profound kind in New Zealand. Reid states that the food could almost become a medicine or remedy here (1999:25).

My participants also told me stories of how food evoked emotional responses and nostalgic connections with home. Celine spoke of certain cravings that she had for food from France and when I asked her to elaborate she told me how:

It's all about the feelings because you feel a bit down and you remember the food you used to have when you were a child or when you were younger or if you were home, which was the comfort zone. And if you were feeling like this you'd have this type of food, or if the weather is bad you want some very comforting food, hot food. It's very important; it's just as much about how the food would make me feel as it is the food itself.

When I suggested that she may be considering the food to be a remedy for her sadness, she agreed that this was precisely how she perceived it. Celine was imbuing agency to the food by constructing herself as the passive player in the situation while elevating the status of the food, thus allowing it to actively make her feel better. Sutton speaks of the food of immigrants as representing "cultural sites", whereby for the immigrant experiencing displacement and fragmentation in a foreign land the traditional food presents an opportunity to reconstruct wholeness (2001:75). Similarly, food is described as symbolising comfort and love, and the eating of specific foods as a crutch is permissible in times of distress, as during such events it provides therapeutic value (Counihan 1999:120).

In relation to immigrants' memories of food, Sutton explains the phenomenon of embodied memory drawing on Connerton's claim that such an occurrence resides

“sedimented in the body” (1989, quoted in Sutton 2001:12). Sutton explains that the immigrant may have travelled to a foreign land or merely left the countryside to live in a town, but that a lack of wholeness within the individual exists as they experience sensory deprivation. On consumption of a certain food, though, a “soothing fullness” is restored. He suggests “such moments give the migrants the strength to carry on with their *xenitia*¹⁵” (Sutton 2001:82). This type of embodied memory came to mind during Vema’s narrative when she explained how on her initial arrival in New Zealand, and prior to finding independent accommodation, she had stayed in university lodgings. Her family was in the habit of eating rice three times a day but:

I didn’t eat rice for the whole week and my husband when I called him [in Indonesia] and he said, ‘What’s wrong with you? You seem so drowsy’, and I said, ‘Oh, I haven’t eaten rice for a whole week’, and he said, ‘You have to go somewhere and find rice to eat; you’ll be alright after that.

I thought it strange that she had not received rice at her lodgings over the course of a week, however, Vema clarified that whilst there was rice on the menu it was not cooked correctly: “For me that kind of rice was wrong”. We then discussed how her body was physically craving the correct kind of rice to alleviate the drowsiness that her husband had detected, and equally to restore her wholeness as an Indonesian woman who needs rice cooked in a particular style frequently. Counihan too suggests that as the consumption of food creates physical sensations, for instance, often pleasure, but sometimes repugnance, meals create memories which become lodged in both our minds and bodies (2004:25).

Vema’s story reminded me of a request I received several years ago from a Japanese student who came to live with my family for one year. Although rice is consumed approximately three times a week in my household, Yukako pointed out a few weeks after her

¹⁵ *Xenitia* – The experience of absence from one’s home is culturally elaborated in Greece under the concept of *xenitia* (Sutton: 2001:77).

arrival that she actually needed rice far more often. I did not appreciate at that time the importance of a bowl of rice with regard to assuaging her lack of wholeness; in my ignorance I assumed her need to be one of homesickness. Yet, rice is deemed to be ‘real’ food by the inhabitants of the various South-East Asian societies, just as taro is to the people of Fiji. While a variety of other foods are consumed by the people of these regions, such foods lack the satisfaction that is gained from eating ‘real’ food (Pollock 2001:37). Similarly, “bread is THE food in all regions of the Mediterranean and has been considered thus for centuries” (Balfet 1975:310 emphasis in original).

Sutton also speaks of the notion of prospective memories and the importance of food for their creation, as referred to in Chapter Two. He points out how his participants in Greece anticipate their immediate lives through their memories of the seasonality of food. In brief, plans are made in the present to remember food events in the future, based on food memories of the past (Sutton 2001:28). Celine’s narrative echoed this notion as she told me of her present wish for future food events to replicate the extended leisurely meals that she and her friends enjoyed on occasions during her earlier life in France. She explained how people would arrive at eleven o’clock in the morning and they would talk, share the food preparation and consumption, and drink for approximately twelve hours. She stated:

It’s all about the food and it’s about spending time with each other—we don’t really know anyone here, we’re starting slowly to get to know people—but that’s really the part that I’m missing. It’s not to go out and socialising, it’s to be at home and have friends coming over for a dinner. That’s what I’m aiming for eventually when we have friends. It’s not just about the food; it’s whatever happens around it. It’s a way to bring people together.

Celine expressed her passion for food and her love of friends, and is obviously longing to fulfil her desire to create prospective memories. Her lack of friends at present is accentuating the fact that her food-based wish cannot be realised immediately. The absence of the

camaraderie and the ritualised preparation and consumption of food, and the sociability that that combination produces in her life is troublesome for Celine. So, although a void exists in her life at the moment, the solution of future significant food events is under construction via her present plans to recreate her French food events from the past.

Immigrants' Special Occasion Food

Whether we consider the regularly occurring festivals such as those of the religious calendar, or occasional celebrations or events, for example, weddings or funerals, the focus is commonly placed upon food. Special occasions usually dictate the presentation of extraordinary food; foods that may contain rich ingredients, foods requiring complex preparation, foods of superior quality and food which will generally be offered in generous proportions. Atkins and Bowler maintain that although the occasion may only occur annually, such as a British Christmas celebration complete with its turkey, cake, pudding and mince pies, people are well aware of the significance of the event and its essential food, and this knowledge is also shared amongst people residing in “outposts of British culture” (2001:297).

Based on such directives concerning festive food from my own culture, I was interested to learn how food served at special occasions by my immigrant interviewees differed from their daily food. I found the range of responses most interesting as they represented a continuum that began with Lara explaining how there is no difference between everyday and celebratory food in Thailand: “For Thai we always eat for dinner a lot of dishes, that the way we eat every day. So birthday or everyday for us is same”. Angelina’s food tale, as she progressed through the pages of her Maltese cookbook, included a comprehensive description not only of the foods pertaining to the more secular side of Maltese life, but also included the

gastronomic delights of the various events pertaining to the religious calendar which are commonly celebrated in Malta. She detailed, for instance, how Maltese enjoy the pre-Lent sweets, *kwareżimal*, and then generally fast through Lent, to then celebrate again at Easter with numerous sweet treats, such as *figoli*. Angelina showed me a photograph in the book explaining:

These are Easter sweets, *figoli*. It's like pastry with an almond filling in between, and then you have these shape cutters, and then you decorate them with icing. Traditional shapes...this one is a mermaid, there is a picture [on part of the *figoli* illustrating the mermaid's upper body] and the rest is the tail. The lamb, the shape of a lamb is very common, but you find other shapes like butterflies.

Angelina's narration reminded me of Bardi's claim that in Italy food is a central part of life, it is not only associated with family meals and celebrations, but also with village feasts, festivities for patron saints, harvest feasts and diverse religious celebrations. Every occasion has its own special dish or menu (Bardi 2001:10). Sammut describes Malta in terms of food, not as an individual country, but as a small part of a larger country, the Mediterranean. As it has been ruled by numerous other nations throughout history, its food today reflects the different influences, for example, Sicilian, Spanish, Greek, Arab and British (Sammut 2003:3).

Sweets are frequently associated with festive occasions in my participants' home countries. Veeba told me:

We have different foods for special occasions. Diwali is coming so we like to have lots sweets. When there are special occasions we always like to cook sweet things first. It's written in the holy book, God has sweet tooth.... Sweets are very good; they make your relationships stronger. We never like to exchange anything that is salty, it is always sweet.... And people, whenever they go to someone's house they take a box of sweets, it's never salty.

The popularity of Indian sweets amongst the Indian community is visible, for instance, at the Diwali festival in Auckland which I have attended over the years. Some stalls are dedicated to selling only sweets and present an attractive and festive scene as the sweets range in bright colours of pink, green, orange and so forth, while other stalls also sell savoury foods. Veeba told me that through the exchange of sweets amongst friends and family at this time one's dining room table can be literally covered in boxes of sweets. She also stressed the priority of the preparation of sweet foods before any savoury dishes are made. The giving of sweets clearly reflects significant symbolism, considering their perceived influence over relationships. The sweets are evidently being used to literally sweeten associations, as more than purely a metaphor in this context. Presumably, salty offerings, which are never given, could be interpreted as having the opposite effect.



**Figure 10: A food stall at Auckland's Diwali Festival (sweets displayed on right)
(October 2008)**

The binary framework of food categories adhered to by Indian cuisine mentioned here is reminiscent of the categorisation of food and cooking discussed by Lévi-Strauss, though his is based on a triangular configuration for differentiation, the points of which represent the raw, the cooked, and the rotted. He maintains the raw characterises the unmarked pole, while the cooked is a cultural transformation and the rotted a natural transformation. Similarly, methods of cooking are classified by placing boiled within the realm of culture, as this method requires not only water, but also a receptacle, that is a cultural artefact, to guard the food from the fire, while roasted is aligned with nature as this method offers no protection to the food (Lévi-Strauss 1997:29). He further categorises the roasted and boiled, for example, by dictating which type of cooking is appropriate for whom, and in what circumstances. Lévi-Strauss' idea could also be applied to aspects of food practices from further cultures, for instance, in Malta where strict categorisation determines which foods may be eaten before and during Lent, and subsequently Easter.¹⁶

Vema introduced the subject of special occasion food during the initial stage of our discussion by explaining that her traditional foods meant 'home' to her, and that in Indonesia certain foods symbolise particular occasions. Yellow rice, for instance, is prepared as a celebratory food instead of white rice. However, I was intrigued when Vema continued her explanation:

In Indonesia my Mum never cooks yellow rice if it's not a celebration, someone's birthday or a wedding or an anniversary or something like that, but myself, I don't apply that rule; if I want to make yellow rice I just make it.... When we have guests and I serve yellow rice, one of my friends say, 'Someone's birthday?' Then [I answer] 'No, I just want to cook yellow rice for you'.

Vema's liberal attitude towards her cultural tradition surrounding the preparation and eating of yellow rice presented an interesting contrast to her strict adherence to other cultural food

¹⁶ As Lévi-Strauss' idea is not the focus of this study only limited coverage is included in this document. However, it would be interesting to investigate the effectiveness of such food categorization at a later date.

restrictions, as at the time of our meeting she was observing the fast for Ramadan. Based on further revelations concerning her family's food habits throughout Ramadan, Vema evidently abides by the requirements of her faith, but conversely feels comfortable to exercise flexibility regarding certain Indonesian secular customs concerning food.

Increasing Availability of Exotic Foods in New Zealand

Whether provisions were required for everyday meals or festive occasions, their acquisition in New Zealand, up until fairly recently, was accomplished on a largely monocultural basis.

Recalling the New Zealand society of his early years in *Being Pakeha*, King states that:

Unless you were Maori, it was possible and forgivable in the forties to view New Zealand as a single-culture society.... Most New Zealanders accepted this...without question, and new immigrants, such as displaced continental Europeans, were expected to conform to it. So were Maori when they moved out of their rural enclaves into the nation's towns (King 1985:9).

This is basically the New Zealand that I remember as a new immigrant in January 1968. As described in Chapter Two, the country practised, until 1986, a selective policy of immigration; accordingly the nation's food outlets catered for the Pakeha majority.

The lack of ethnic foods and restaurants until the latter part of last century is well documented in *New Zealanders by Choice*, a publication marking the 50th anniversary of the British Nationality and New Zealand Citizenship Act, passed on 6 September 1948. Megan Hutching recorded the biographies of a number of immigrants from various countries who arrived in New Zealand in the 1950s to start their new lives, which began with the experience of the hardships of displacement at that particular time. Most admitted life gradually became easier and eventually New Zealand was considered home. An Indian immigrant, for instance, lamented the lack of both Indian foods and Indian cooking utensils on her arrival. She

managed to improvise with various devices, but regarding eating, she stated that while food in India was never plentiful, at least they ate a variety of familiar vegetables (Hutching 1998:17). An immigrant from China also explained how, in the 1950s, only a few Chinese families resided in Wellington and there were only one or two Chinese restaurants, and described how she endured homesickness (Hutching 1998:25). Romanian Jewish immigrants also told not only of how they missed their familiar foods, but also in a society lacking cafés, they missed their lifestyle of sitting outside these establishments and drinking coffee (Hutching 1998:57).

New Zealand's food habits experienced a transformation as a series of diverse sociological factors radically altered the gastronomy of these islands in the late 20th century (this topic is discussed more fully in Chapter Four). Bailey and Earle regard the alteration of our original British diet of the 1890s to the New Zealand diet of today as being basically the result of three issues: firstly, since 1945 over 85% of New Zealanders have been born here; secondly, our formal ties with Great Britain are essentially severed; and thirdly, there has been a growth of New Zealanders travelling to non-British countries (1999:276). Accordingly, an ever-increasing range of exotic foods, which for many immigrants represent everyday ingredients, are readily available and often reside nowadays on supermarket shelves throughout this country (Reid 1999:43). Additionally, increased immigration, particularly of people from the Asian region, has not only led to a multitude of moderately priced eating establishments, for example, Chinese, Malaysian, Indonesian, Thai, and Japanese, but has also resulted in an unprecedented growth in ethnic grocery stores and increased market gardens specifically producing Asian vegetables, which were initially distributed to Asian shops, but subsequently also to mainstream shops (Burton 2003:59).

Our extensive selection of ethnic foods and outlets today was commented on by a number of my immigrant interviewees, for instance, Celine, Michael, Antonio, Rosa, Mia,

Vema, Lara, and Leo. Antonio, for instance, stated that Chile lacked “sizeable communities from Asia. You wouldn’t find things that you find here quite so easily”. Lara was pleasantly surprised to find such a wide range of Thai foods available in such a small country: “I was little bit surprised that I can find a lot of ingredients from Thailand...New Zealand a small country should be difficulty to get this kind of thing, but a lot”. Rosa was particularly “fascinated because of the variety of ethnic food here, Asian, Indian, Thai.... Everything was fascinating, Turkish food”. As Rosa had lived in Buenos Aires prior to coming to New Zealand, I questioned her about the availability of ethnic food in such a large metropolis. She described how:

There is availability, but perhaps we have more quarters, and when I say we have more quarters there’ll be more Indian or Arabic food [in separate locations] and in another quarter you find the Chinese food. Here you find more of a mix, and again I’m talking about the City [Auckland] which is my first point of contact. So in the City I got always this variety, the display of different kind of foods in a small place. That was the main difference.

Lara had a definite view regarding the variety of ethnic restaurants here: “Kiwis are very open-minded to try new foods, that why many international restaurant can be open, survive, because people want to try”. A number of other conversations I had with my interviewees, both immigrants and New Zealanders, also made this point. The willingness of New Zealanders to try new foods is also noted by Burton, who states that we are “remarkably receptive to being experimented upon” (2003:58).

The refugees and immigrants interviewed by Reid (1999) continually expressed the relative ease of producing their traditional cooking in this country as most of their cuisines relied on basic raw ingredients, for instance, fresh meat, fish, vegetables and fruit, all of which are generally available now. The majority of my immigrant interviewees reiterated



Figure 11: Fresh produce and spices, such as Asian greens and various exotic mushrooms at Avondale Market (October 2008)

this point, though various problems arose amongst both Reid’s group and mine resulting in substitution or omission of items when unusual goods were required, for example, ingredients that were not imported into New Zealand perhaps because demand was minimal. Lara summed this situation up rather succinctly: “The thing they sell in the grocery is the general ingredients, but I may need some particular thing that I want to buy, but they don’t import because that only needed once in a while. It’s not like the thing that people buy a lot”. When I asked her whether she used a substitute or did she buy the unusual ingredients during her frequent visits home, she assured me she would just use something similar. She also emphasised that: “Because I know here it’s very strict bio-security, so I never buy the food from Thailand”.

Migrants in new places, regardless of how long they intend to stay, attempt to recreate their familiar foods, through a variety of ways, “Their stores, bakeries, boarding houses,

cafés, and restaurants all bear witness to the desire of the newcomers to relive the foodways of places left behind” (Diner 2002:9). Numerous entrepreneurial immigrants have ensured their compatriots away from their country of origin have access to their traditional necessities in diverse ways. Early Italian migrants to the United States, for instance, replicated the small vegetable gardens of home by growing, for example, tomatoes, artichokes, zucchini and herbs. Over time this evolved into a nationwide Italian agricultural system. Subsequently, Italian stores opened to sell Italian foodstuffs to Italian immigrants, “Wherever Italians settled, some went into business to provision others” (Diner 2002:62-4). Similarly today, certain immigrants in the United States who possess ‘economic autonomy’ establish businesses through which they import commodities from their homelands. Local immigrants create a market for such goods and services; consequently the immigrant community is better able to fulfil their wishes to maintain their traditional customs (Murphy 2006:83).

The establishment of migrant shops and restaurants throughout the world to ensure the continuance of immigrants’ accessibility to their own food has become particularly evident since the end of World War II (Mennell, Murcott & Van Otterloo 1994:79). Such ethnic businesses are becoming an established part of the New Zealand commercial landscape, particularly in Auckland, the “primary destination for immigrants” (Gendall, Spoonley and Trlin 2007:10). I was astonished during my interview with Mia to learn that Auckland has approximately a dozen Arabic grocery shops: “I came here thirteen years ago, more than thirteen now. There wasn’t any Arabic shops at all, but now we’ve got about ten or twelve Arabic shops around Auckland which makes our life very similar to back home”. The opportunity to eat one’s own familiar food is a crucial factor when attempting to regain normality in a foreign land, and the relief was noticeable in Mia’s voice as she shared this fact with me.

Specialised ethnic food stores are essential establishments for immigrants as mainstream supermarkets do not stock all the requirements for the various diasporic communities. Mankekar's study of Indian grocery stores in San Francisco suggests that these types of ethnic shops in the diaspora are considered to form "*crucial node [s]* in the transnational circulation of texts, images, and commodities between [home] and the diaspora" (2002:76 emphasis in original). Although such shops help immigrants maintain their culture by making cooking easier and more enjoyable, Mankekar clarifies that immigrants do not merely visit the Indian stores to purchase their groceries, but for the "whole package. They come for India[n] shopping" (Mankekar 2002:80). The stores provide a sense of familiarity for customers by stocking not only foodstuffs, but also a selection of "objects, artefacts, images, and discourses for consumption" (Mankekar 2002:81).

When I visited Mia's preferred Arabic shop, I noticed that it was located behind a halal butchery and that they seemed to be the only two retail outlets in an area otherwise dedicated to light industry. This is in direct contrast to the nearby Northcote Shopping Centre on Auckland's North Shore, which over a period of approximately a decade has transformed from a mainstream shopping centre to essentially a hub of retail and service based businesses tailored almost exclusively to the relatively new Asian communities that have become established in that vicinity. In multicultural suburbs created by an influx of immigrants from various lands, the most visible ethnic markers for many immigrant communities are groups of retail outlets (Wood 2006:23). These complexes help immigrant communities to create a sense of place for themselves, they represent a refuge, a place where, for instance, Asian immigrants can be Asian, socialising, talking and eating together. In addition, the Northcote Shopping Centre has an area akin to a village square in which public entertainment takes place. When I visited during the 2008 Olympic Games an outdoor theatre was being well

patronised by community members viewing the competitions, and again prior to Christmas 2008 a local orchestra was playing Christmas music to shoppers.

Regardless of the level of availability of ethnic food items, immigrants commonly adopt various foods that they discover in the host country. Dietary acculturation, or the assimilation by immigrants of the food habits of the host country, varies amongst individuals as they tend to maintain certain foods from home to which they add new foods from their new environment. Burns believes that this adaptation is influenced by two determinants: firstly, the level of necessity to adapt to the local foods, for example, the availability of an immigrant's customary foods, and secondly, the strength of the ethnicity of the immigrant, for instance, the immigrant's religious convictions with regard to diet (2004:227).

Food and Identity

As humans are omnivorous they possess the ability to adjust to shifts from one environment to another (Fischler 1980:937), and as food is vital to our sense of identity, an immigrant's identity subsequently adapts as a result of their altered dietary habits in their new homes. The consumption of their traditional food benefits immigrants in several ways: firstly, they experience a tangible connection with their past; secondly, the food helps to alleviate their culture shock on entering the new environment; and thirdly, familiar food acts to maintain their cultural identity. Though specific food practices remain unchanged, immigrants commonly adjust various foods, which may include substitution, addition, or modification from other ethnicities within the milieu (Pan, Dixon, Himburg & Huffman 1999:55). This investigation by Pan et al., conducted in the United States, also suggests that while the foods eaten at breakfast and lunch can often vary from the traditional cuisine, dinner usually remains unchanged in immigrant households. A number of Reid's New Zealand participants

also reported preserving their dietary traditions particularly at dinnertime, while experimenting with and adopting a variety of new foods they had discovered since arriving here, for example, avocados, kumara and leeks (1999). The retention of their ethnic food traditions at dinnertime perhaps occurs because this is when the family members come together as a group of immigrants, so it is important to eat their traditional dishes together as an affirmation of their shared family and cultural identity. This serves as another link between sociality and food as a concrete method to remind them of being part of a larger ethnic group.

It became apparent that my immigrant interviewees had each maintained their earlier eating behaviours, but through the incorporation of substitute ingredients, additional items, and modifications the level of maintenance varied between immigrants. Elsa, Antonio, and Leo, for instance, had all retained their South American habit of eating dinner later in the evening than is common in New Zealand, at approximately ten o'clock. In contrast, Mia and Lara now eat their evening meals much earlier than they did in Iraq and Thailand respectively, between five and six o'clock. All of the interviewees, with the exception of Veeba, had eaten the foods of other cultures whilst still in their homelands and had included dishes from additional ethnicities to their gastronomic repertoires since arriving in New Zealand. Mia, for example, has discovered sushi making and Mexican food and now experiments with them regularly. But Leo's story caused me to consider an issue related to my research that I had not taken into account:

I really like [meat] pies and fish and chips which is something we don't really have...and being exposed to lots of different kinds of Asian foods that I've never had back home. Now it's just like a normal thing. It's become a normal thing now just all the Asian foods, go to the restaurants or get takeaways.

The initial part of his statement I found understandable, as pies and fish and chips are often favoured foods for young single men such as Leo. However, I had to ponder his claim that Asian food, which is reasonably new to his diet, is now perceived by him to be normal. In the short space of three years this food, for him, has progressed from the unknown to the mundane. This raises the issue of how quickly similar exotic foods have been assimilated into non-immigrant New Zealanders' diets rendering them 'ordinary', that is, deexoticised. This subject will be investigated further in the following chapter.

Research concerning mealtime conventions conducted in 1988 in the North East of England by Charles and Kerr revealed that 'proper meals' were not only considered by participants to consist of 'good foods', in other words, cooked fresh with natural ingredients rather than heated convenience foods, but that 'proper meals' were deemed to be eaten in a specific social context, together as a family (1988:17). This view is reiterated by Devault who claims that part of the purpose of a meal is to create a sense of home and family (1991:79). When I asked Angelina to describe any changes that had taken place regarding meals since her family's arrival in New Zealand, she told me:

The changes I would say for the better because now we're all eating as a family more than we used to before. My husband used to work late and so I used to feed the children and then I'd eat at some time and I'd serve him when he comes. Now we wait for him and as soon as he arrives from work we'll eat together every day cos at home we were only able to do that on Saturday and Sunday. But now it's quite nice to do it together.

Angelina possesses similar values concerning the eating of family meals to those of Charles and Kerr's participants. She was not comfortable with the family's prior disjointed eating arrangements, but felt that they had little choice as the children at that time were too young to eat later in the evening. The pleasure she gains from their shared eating of 'proper meals' now is clear. In the context of the immigrant family, such unity being enacted on a daily

basis both generates and maintains a family bond as they struggle to adjust to an alien environment, with possibly no family support, and where perhaps little represents the familiar. A sense of resilience is enhanced by family members sharing cultural practices, exchanging news and so forth around the table.

It is clear that today's immigrants are no longer isolated from their homelands and former lives as others were in earlier times. Through modern communication technology contemporary immigrants are able to be reunited with family and friends almost instantly, while distance no longer separates people from their customary food. Traditional food remains a crux of a person's identity embodying family, love and warmth, while a culture's history, traditional social life and memories are built on them. In short, food means home and home means food. However, transformation seems to be afoot regarding the preparation of such food in this modern age, as pressures of limited time give rise to labour and time-saving solutions. But as Vema said, if compromise will preserve such dishes then "it works for me!"

Food as a Bridge between Immigrants and Other New Zealanders

Immigrants arrive in their host country with diverse attitudes and opinions concerning the retention of their culture of origin and integrating into the new society. Subsequently, the stance of the immigrants interacts with the acceptance, both actual and perceived, of members of the receiving community, the power of which can then act to influence the immigrants' transition to becoming part of the new community (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder 2001:494). The immigrants' wishes for inclusion, for example, will be thwarted if they encounter discrimination and rejection, but conversely, through acceptance the newcomers can progress through their adaptation to their new home. Integration is considered to represent an important goal for most immigrants as this accomplishment is

believed to contribute to their future achievement and well-being, and also to the economic and social interests of their new country (Esses, Dietz & Bhardwaj 2006:113).

In relation to the notion of integration, I wished to determine the extent to which food had allowed cross-cultural connections to be shaped between my immigrant interviewees and their fellow New Zealanders. I decided to approach this matter from two different angles. Firstly, I initiated a dialogue by asking their feelings regarding today's ever-present practice of New Zealanders cooking and eating their (the immigrants') time-honoured foods. I felt this would allow me to gain an idea of their level of tolerance towards people of other cultures not only appropriating their food, but probably altering it too. Secondly, I hoped to discover any initiatives they had implemented with the aid of food to create inter-ethnic links, therefore I asked them to share any ways in which they had introduced their traditional fare to others in New Zealand. With regard to New Zealanders cooking and eating the immigrants' foods, I received a wide range of answers, from explicit horror at New Zealanders' attempts to recreate French cuisine, to nonchalance, and finally to total joy that through compromise particular dishes would hopefully avoid extinction.

Celine and Michael approached the topic of New Zealanders commandeering French food when they considered a number of negative aspects pertaining to their new lives in New Zealand. Michael introduced it as an aside to their discontent regarding our cafés: "We went to a very nice restaurant in High Street...it was atrocious food.... They tried to be nouveau French cuisine and just over-did everything. Everything was so over the top". Celine interjected by saying: "The sauces they used were very rich and very thick. That's the problem we find in New Zealand, they try to mix too many flavours together and it ends up tasting almost bland because you don't identify anything". Michael added: "They try to copy French cuisine, but people forget French cuisine is simplicity. They take the simplistic approach". Then Celine protested: "I don't really see it as French cuisine what they try to do

in restaurants, because when I go home I will never eat those things. It is something much more simple and traditional; simple ingredients, just tasting the different things”. A little while later Celine qualified this last statement by claiming: “I’ve tried to have French food in supposedly French restaurants in different countries abroad, but I’m always disappointed”.

Celine is extremely proud of her French heritage and culture, and the correct taste and texture of her French food is critical to her. At the beginning of the interview we were discussing her choice of French mustard when she added: “It’s very ethnocentric, it just tastes right, it’s the way it should be and the way I remember it”. The French have a long-standing history of haute cuisine on which their national identity is partially based. As a result of the establishment of court life in France during the 17th and 18th centuries, food became a means of competition and a symbol of prestige amongst the nobility. After the French Revolution such epicurean elitism diffused through the French social hierarchy, and by the 19th century regional specialities had not only become recognized, but were also protected by import tariffs, thus preserving the continuance of location-specific dishes. In comparison, the British destroyed their culinary regional differences through the fostering of industrialised and imported foods, so rely on criteria other than food, for example, accent, education, or location of residence to establish social difference (Atkins & Bowler 2001:282).

In contrast with Celine’s position, and in spite of their explicit pride at being Chilean citizens, Elsa and Antonio unequivocally denied any ownership of Chilean cuisine, by explaining about the number of culinary influences existing in Chile as a consequence of Chile’s numerous colonisations by various nations. Antonio said: “Because we don’t have a very specific thing, a very specific cuisine, I would say that we don’t tend to have that experience [of New Zealanders cooking and eating Chilean food]”. Even when I questioned

Antonio about the food of his Italian heritage¹⁷, of which he is particularly fond, and how he felt about us cooking and eating that, he maintained that whilst our version may be different from his ideal, he also experiences differences in Chile and so claimed: “I think it’s not the same case as French or real Italian or Japanese or whatever”. At this point Elsa offered: “Or Mexican. Mexicans, they can be very proud about their food and they hate it that the rest of the world think they can cook the Mexican food”. Antonio and Elsa had made it quite clear from the beginning that while they do enjoy traditional Chilean food, because of its complexity to prepare they only eat it occasionally, for example, when there is a family gathering.

Veeba expressed surprise at New Zealanders’ obvious liking for Indian food: “I’ve been like wow! I’m surprised. First I used to think like our food was normal, but here they are *crazy* about Indian food”. She also considered it totally acceptable that we should alter the flavour to suit our palate as:

Indian food, our food, we can do many variations. It is not only you, but in our own country when we have old parents staying with us, like grandmother and grandfather, they don’t like to have spicy foods so we like to cook according to their choice also.

Lara also exhibited pleasure that so many people of diverse cultures enjoy Thai food, even if few New Zealand restaurants reproduce Thai food authentically. She said that for financial reasons restaurants need to encourage the patronage of the majority population here:

If you eat the Thai food here in restaurant sometimes they not make the authentic taste like a real Thai, only some particular restaurant they tend to keep the authentic one. Because they want to do business, I understand, so they try to make things a little bit Westernised.

¹⁷ Antonio identifies strongly with his Italian roots which originate from his maternal great-grandparents who were Italian immigrants to Chile. His maternal grandmother, who was raised in a rural Italian community in Chile, has greatly influenced this aspect of his heritage through her Italian cooking which he holds in high regard.

Both Veeba and Lara are extremely patriotic toward their respective cultures and consider food to be an integral part of their cultural identity. Veeba stressed several times how: “Food is the most important thing for us. All over India food is a very serious thing and we consider it as a gift of God”. So not only did Indian food symbolise Veeba’s culture to her, but the sacred characteristics it embodied engendered an intertwining of elements rendering her food, her culture and her religion inseparable. Lara was equally passionate about her food and her country, but from the perspective of the profane: “So it’s good when people like Thai food, if they never [been] to Thailand they may want to go to Thailand, so you’re marketing your country. That what I feel, I love my country”.

Vema’s response to the question regarding her attitude towards New Zealanders cooking and eating her traditional food was profound: “I think it’s very nice.... I think food is the way people connect to different ethnic groups. Sometimes it’s difficult to get to know someone from a different country or different cultures. I think food is one of the ways to get familiar”. She recalled how the Indonesian food she eats here is frequently different from that in Indonesia, but rationalised that such a compromise in taste was necessary to cater for New Zealanders’ preference of milder flavours:

But I think that’s good because sometimes I get concerned actually about certain dishes that die because they are never cooked nowadays, because maybe when we lived on an island there’s a very nice fish dish, but to make that even in Jakarta is rather impossible because there’s certain ingredients like leaves that you can use in that dish that’s not available in Jakarta. So sometimes if a food dies, like this type of food can die if nobody can cook it anymore, I think it has to be preserved because there are so many types of different food in Indonesia that I think have to be preserved, but I think to be preserved sometimes make an adjustment to the taste of young people or different ethnic groups or different nationalities.

We continued our discussion by comparing the possible demise of traditional dishes with the continuous extinction of languages, and the immense loss this represents to humankind. Based on their dynamism, food and language are similar as both are

continuously in a state of flux, neither is static. As each generation takes stewardship of their culture's language they mould and modify it to their current needs and wants, and so too with food. Indeed, to take this comparison further, as other cultures then appropriate a language they too alter and adjust it: witness the many variations in the way English is spoken. Likewise, with food, as each new trend appears on the food scene it is subsequently adapted to suit the local palate and eating habits. The foods we eat today and the current languages we speak are the mode of a particular time and place. A number of foods and dishes exist around the globe today that may have originated from a traditional recipe and a specific geographical location, but with time have evolved into generic foodstuffs, for example, Yorkshire pudding, Cheddar cheese and Black Forest gâteau. Such food items are universally known and produced without reference to their places of origin other than in their name. This type of token connection is growing as consumers choose to eat exotic foods, the recipes of which are frequently adapted to suit local palates (Atkins & Bowler 2001: 275).

Use of Traditional Foods in the Construction of Inter-Ethnic Links

The readjustment phase experienced when beginning life in a new country presents a major stress factor for immigrants, including constant anxiety and worries associated with the need to achieve a secure lifestyle in the new home, and possibly depression as a result of unrealised expectations in the past. However, immigrants generally develop a range of strategies which serve to boost their resilience amid the difficult circumstances in which they frequently find themselves, particularly during the initial period after arrival. They usually, for instance, establish and maintain informal networks of friends and family which studies suggest ensures "instrumental and emotional security" (Foner 2001, quoted in Murphy

2006:81) for new immigrants, for example, they may organise social gatherings or shared meals.

Douglas asserts that whilst food is a metaphor of communication, a meal is also a physical event, and although food may be symbolic, it is also practical with regard to nourishment. Gifts of food possess the power to generate the settings for social life, “More effective than flags or red carpets which merely say welcome, food actually delivers good fellowship” (Douglas 1984:12). Therese O’Connell, Co-ordinator of the Wellington ESOL Home Tutor Service (Inc), echoes Douglas, saying that food can bridge gaps created by distance, conflict or loss by enabling members of a culture to re-establish links with places and circumstances. And while food represents hospitality to guests both as a gift and an obligation, it also acts as a language being simultaneously offered and shared, and has the ability to form an initial link when a common spoken language does not exist because “When food is shared and friendships made, trust begins to grow” (O’Connell 1999:6).

I hoped to learn about any schemes my immigrant interviewees had initiated with the assistance of their customary foods to craft links with other New Zealanders. With the exception of Leo, all had attempted to bridge the cultural gap by offering their ethnic food to others. The contents of the assorted discussions on this topic were as varied as the people themselves. They told of a range of endeavours, from sharing their favourite meals with a few honoured guests in their homes to more widely distributing food amongst visitors at their cultural clubs, from offering baking amongst groups of university students, to neighbourly and community-based demonstrations of food sharing. It seemed likely that Leo did not use his traditional food to establish friendships with other New Zealanders because of his age and gender. Numerous scholars (Atkins & Bowler 2001, Bailey & Earle 1999, Counihan & Van Esterik 1997) note the historical and cross-cultural connection between women and food. Herda and Banwell, for example, emphasise both women’s role as nurturers and the

importance of food in their construction of networks (1988:54), while conversely, Devault speaks about the difficulties and anxieties frequently experienced by men when placed in the position of food provider (1997:190). Interestingly, my only other male immigrant employed his culture's alcoholic beverage to establish inter-ethnic links.

Vema has not only moved countries, but during her earlier life in Indonesia her family moved internally on a number of occasions as her husband's job dictated. Thus, she has developed something of a food-based ritual which she enacts as a means of introducing her family to their new neighbours. Vema recounted how:

When we are moving to a new house, for example, that's what I did when we moved here; we give food to our new neighbours. So it's just like a token to let them know that we are your new neighbours and that we are very glad that we are here to join your neighbourhood. So we usually give the food, just like small dishes or cookies from Indonesia.... I used to have an Indian neighbour, but now they've moved to the United States, and we knew that they didn't eat meat so what I made was something that didn't contain meat. So we asked around, let's see who our neighbours are, whether they eat meat or not, so I make it accordingly.

The practice of distributing gifts of Indonesian food to new neighbours is vitally important to Vema's self-image. Through her giving not only does she wish to build neighbourhood friendships by introducing her family to those living close by, but she simultaneously wants to cross ethnic boundaries by introducing her culture to them, and her traditional food is possibly the easiest, most practical and enjoyable way to achieve this.

Food and eating are intimately entwined with cultural notions of the self: "Food as object and eating as act resonate with attitudes and emotions related to the individual's understandings and feelings about self and other and the relationship between" (Meigs 1997:103). The Hua, a group of people of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, believe that food contains both the self and the feelings of its producer. To eat food produced

by another person is to experience that person, both physiologically and emotionally (Meigs 1997:103). Similarly, Vema's neighbours literally embodied her culture by eating the Indonesian food that she had prepared. Vema displays cultural sensitivity when planning her gifts of food; this awareness may stem from her Indonesian background, living amongst disparate communities. She explained that she had to consciously employ different customs depending on which part of Indonesia she was in, for example, whether to empty the contents when drinking or leave some liquid in the cup.

In an effort to extend New Zealanders' knowledge of their foods, both Veeba and Lara have taught their traditional cooking for some time as part of a North Shore high school's community education programme. I attended both of their courses during the third term of 2008, and both classes were not only full, but each had been operating waiting-lists for subsequent terms. Veeba explained how her teaching position had occurred. Her husband's boss had expressed a hatred of Indian food so she invited him to supper with the intention of changing his attitude by altering the spiciness of the food to suit his palate. He was so impressed with her Indian cooking that he suggested she should teach her skills to others: "He was the one who gave me the idea to start the cooking class". Not only did Veeba help a New Zealander to overcome his dislike of Indian food, but she also enlightened him, and subsequently numerous others through her classes, regarding the Punjabi component of the broad spectrum of regional cuisines that Indian cooking encompasses.

When I approached the subject of how Mia had introduced Arabic food to New Zealanders, she recounted a list of her successful achievements of crossing cultural barriers with food. She has fed a number of colleagues at work on several occasions, has prepared and served dinners in her home which New Zealand born neighbours and immigrant friends from various countries have attended, and her daughter's school recently held a function:

Sasha had in her school food festival and she liked to present some of our food and I took the ingredients and cooked it with the children and it was really fun for the kids and for me. I cooked something in front of them and everybody helped me stirring.... They said yummy, some of them, some of them didn't like it.

Mia has made many efforts to bridge the cultural divide across various ethnicities and age groups. By introducing the school children to a cuisine that may well have been unfamiliar to many of them, she has not only helped to broaden their palates, and this is ideally accomplished while children are young, but she may well have enhanced their tolerance of difference by stimulating their cultural understanding through food.

Regardless of the details of the individual gestures to initiate cross-cultural friendships, each of my immigrant interviewees displayed great courage. As immigrants are frequently marginalised in their new country, they each placed themselves in a position of potential vulnerability, because rejection by any of the people they were approaching with their gifts of traditional food could have been detrimental to their sense of self and to their cultural identity. In *The Gift* Marcel Mauss focuses on how reciprocal gift giving unifies societies as an obligation is created to repay the prior gift, because each gift is thought to possess a part of the giver, "To give something is to give a part of oneself.... In this system of ideas one gives away what is in reality a part of one's nature and substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone's spiritual essence" (1967:10). Douglas states that as hospitality represents part of the system of reciprocal exchanges the giving of food unilaterally produces a relationship which lacks balance, and as a result the recipient is placed in a position of disadvantage (1984:10). Liza Dalby, an anthropologist specialising in Japanese culture, explains how gift-giving in Japan is similarly a "complicated social event with drawn out ramifications" (2007:10), as again a situation of inequity is experienced by the receiver until reciprocation occurs. Hence, she clarifies the significance of the Japanese word for 'thank you', *arigatō*, which literally translates to 'it is a difficult thing', that is

somewhat akin to the old-fashioned English 'much obliged'. The gifts of food offered by my immigrant interviewees were presented in the anticipation that equilibrium would become established via the creation of various inter-cultural friendships and connections between diverse peoples. By using food to bridge gaps between themselves and their neighbours and communities, these immigrants offered part of themselves and their cultural heritage, in many cases initiating cross-cultural understanding.

Chapter Four

Food as a Bridge between New Zealanders and Other Places

Shift in Eating Patterns in New Zealand

Food plays a significant role in the lives of human beings in many ways. Although its most basic function is arguably to sustain life, a great many people find pleasure in its shared consumption with others. Eating provides structure and routine to our day-to-day existence, while certain food choices provide a method by which others may judge us (Conner & Armitage 2002:1). Judgements may be based, for instance, on one's selection of grocery brands at the supermarket, that is, whether one chooses an economical 'in-house' brand or a more expensive brand conveys certain social information. Three major influences are believed to determine individual food choices, they represent factors related to, firstly, the food itself, for example its appearance, texture and taste, secondly, the social and cultural environment, for example, one's religion may dictate one's dietary habits, and thirdly, aspects located within the individual, for example, food intolerances, level of education, or different life experiences. Yet food choice is not a constant phenomenon, certain selections may seem appropriate at particular times, while attitudes toward specific foods may in fact change over time, for instance, the perceived health properties or the value for money of the food. In addition, social aspects, for instance, age, sex, class and degree of urbanisation all sway individual food consumption (Conner & Armitage 2002:8).

When considering the multiplicity of symbolic and cultural norms and rules associated with and influencing human food selection, Fischler professes that he struggles to locate any biological rationale behind the decisions. Borrowing from Douglas, he explains how a specific culture's cosmology ascribes an ordering of all things, animals and humans, and how that same cultural cosmology determines purity and pollution, and consequently the close proximity between the edible and inedible. In short, if a plant or animal is consistent with the underpinning cultural criteria then it will be deemed pure and safe to eat. Fischler goes on to explain how such food habits are extraordinarily resistant to change (1980:940). However, the contents of this chapter, I believe, will give testament to diverse adoptions and adaptations of food choices made by individuals in this country relatively recently.

As we have seen in prior chapters, New Zealand's foodways were greatly influenced by the huge wave of British settlers during the 19th century, however modifications to that Anglo-Saxon emphasis have been taking place virtually ever since, through the influences of later immigrants and numerous other travellers who have progressively introduced us to a diversity of foodstuffs. Burton asserts that no country has exclusive ownership of a cuisine, and based on the fact that New Zealand's food and cooking stem from its immigrant population, beginning with Maori and continuing to the present day's great diversity of ethnicities resident here, New Zealand owes a great deal to other cuisines (1982:xii). Burton claims that a coherent New Zealand cuisine was more easily identifiable in the 1950s, as our more recent food patterns have become blurred through countless influences and experimentation. This contemporary cosmopolitanism, he says, has added interest to New Zealand's food (1982:xiii).

It is claimed that anthropologists, with regard to food, have usually identified "peoples on the move—migrants, refugees, and colonizers—as agents of change" (Mintz & Du Bois 2002:106). In light of the sources responsible for New Zealand's culinary expansion to date,

I feel this claim requires amendment. The addition of overseas travellers, for instance, on business, military manoeuvres, holiday or young ‘Kiwis’ on their overseas experience, appears relevant as countless travellers have brought back varying degrees of culinary knowledge from foreign parts, thus inspiring dietary shifts in New Zealand that continue today. Therefore, it is not only those who enter the country who prompt changes, it is also those who leave the country and return.

Holtzman states, “Dietary change marks epochal social transformations in a wide range of contexts, serving as a lens both to characterize the past and to read the present through the past” (2006:373). This process can involve memories of past eating habits which evoke a better past when compared with the present, or alternatively an inferior past to an enlightened present. As an ice-breaker at the beginning of interviews, the first request I made of my general interviewees was to describe the food of their childhoods and compare it with what they eat today. There were several references, for example, from John, Frank and Diane to the high fat content of food in years gone by. Most reported a basic evening meal of ‘meat and three veg’ while Christine described how, “The veggies were boiled so they’re actually squishy, and salted really heavily”. There was widespread agreement that the food of their childhoods, whilst probably fairly nutritious and wholesome, was substandard when compared with their diets today. In brief, these interviewees were reminded of, what they regarded as, an inferior past based on their earlier dietary practices.

Burton claims that traditional New Zealand cooking is frequently maligned, even by New Zealanders themselves, as “shamefully dull and incompetent” (1982:xii). Likewise, Simpson explains how the cooking techniques that came to New Zealand with the 19th century immigrants from Britain reflected the stove technology of baking, roasting and “slow but thorough cooking” (1999:121), and that this method, replete with both overcooked meat and vegetables, persisted well into the 20th century. In contrast to the other interviewees’

comments, Anna recalled the food of her childhood more favourably than that of her present by stating, “The food of our childhood was markedly better than what we eat today. When I reflect back we had cereals for breakfast—porridge, Weetbix, cornflakes—less complicated cereals than available today, less processed.... Lunches were straight forward, sandwiches and fruit...so compared to today, the food’s more elaborate [now]”. Anna is using ‘elaborate’ in a disparaging context as she perceives today’s food as overly processed and of less nutritional value; her food memories remind her of a simpler, yet superior dietary past. However, the attachment of many New Zealanders to the food introduced to this country by the British settlers is questionable; it does not appear to have been particularly strong for a number of years now, perhaps many New Zealanders have never really felt ownership towards it. It has been recognised for several decades that Mediterranean-type foods or Asian ingredients “have a greater affinity to the New Zealand climate and way of life than the heavy dishes of foggy old Home” (Veart 2008:139).

Burton assures us that every country, regardless of its length of human habitation, possesses a cuisine, but whether or not that cuisine is valued, he maintains, is the crux of the matter (2008:124). He laments that many New Zealanders have rejoiced at the decline of our traditional “meat and three veg’, and questions why we feel shame concerning dishes that were produced from ‘scratch’ usually with fresh vegetables from the back garden, and states, “however much sophisticates may nowadays disown “Kwisine Kiwiana”, its vestiges surround us still” (Burton 2008:124), for example, fish and chips and meat pies. Until approximately forty years ago, New Zealand could have been mistaken as a monocultural society (as noted by King in Chapter Three) and we ate in a homogenous manner. Journalist Rosemary McLeod describes in *Home Made: Stories and Recipes from New Zealand Stove Tops* how, “We ate what our neighbours and family ate: roast dinners...; cold leftovers...shepherd’s pie or curries made with the remaining leftovers; stews; fried lamb

chops; tough rump steak with fried onions; boiled mince...corned beef” (2008:20). According to Burton, we consider this food legacy “to be merely imitative, a poor cousin of British cookery” (1982:xii).

The culinary transformation of various New Zealanders involves their distancing from the often stodgy dishes that our forbears brought to these isles and perpetuated in an effort to fulfil an objective of their migration, to eat better; to emulate the consumption of the British upper classes. Today we too are conscious of what is being eaten in other places, and we are maintaining the settlers’ tradition of dietary improvement through the appropriation of the Others’ food, by means of diverse methods of acquisition, as on occasion we too travel half way around the world and access exotic foods, but progressively more we manufacture, grow and import these foods. We no longer consider ourselves isolated or bounded by geographical borders; jet travel, the media and modern communications all allow us to partake in today’s global gastronomic phenomenon alongside the rest of the world.

Unlike numerous other societies, New Zealand lacks the millennia or even centuries of robust tradition building; there was insufficient time to develop a deep-rooted indigenous tradition prior to the influence of globalisation. As a ‘new’ nation we are not defined by age-old customs that are entwined with a specific cuisine, we have no culinary constraints and so we have chosen to bring the world to us as we currently construct a distinctive New Zealand cuisine, as Paul says we are “at the bottom of the world [and] able to pick and choose what we want to eat”. Whilst there may be remnants of our customary food that we wish to retain, as Burton (1982:viii) pointed out, we also want to add the variety offered from far-away places to our culinary repertoire. We wish to be recognised as knowledgeable regarding the culinary opportunities of other places, as we shed our rustic, pioneer image. The future beckons and as a nation we are beginning to embrace the refinement and sophistication experienced when visiting more established societies in, for example, Europe.

Trying New Foods

Humans display both interest and reluctance with regard to trying new foods. The reluctance to try unfamiliar foods or the dislike for the flavour of a novel food is referred to by Pelchat and Pliner as food neophobia (1995:153). It is suggested that a correlation exists between tasting or ingesting a particular food with humans accepting and liking it, however it is not clear what factors initially motivate humans to try unfamiliar foods (Pelchat & Pliner 1995:154). Pelchat and Pliner's study suggests that taste information regarding the new food, for example, "It tastes good" or "It tastes like chicken" assists willingness to try unknown food as this type of knowledge provides safety information. In brief, somebody else has tried it and survived (1995:163). Perceived physical danger may be responsible for the rejection of novel foods if encountered in a place in which our culture fails to guide us, for instance, food found in the wild¹⁸ (Pelchat & Pliner 1995:154). The taste, smell and texture of food can trigger memories of previously consumed items, and memory can assist in extending food preferences and choices based on experience (Lupton 1994:668). Diane expressed keenness with regard to trying new foods on the basis of past experience when she explained, "I would try new things because I know that trying new things brings me to nice things. I just think I'm more game to try different things just because I know the chances are I'll like them". Diane is generally interested in food and feels confident about trying new foods based on pleasant experiences of sampling in the past. This experience has provided her with information and taught her that a lot of enjoyable foods are waiting to be discovered, and that fear of the unknown in safe places will only spoil her gastronomic adventures. Her daughter, Gemma added:

We're probably not afraid to try things [overseas] because we've had similar here. If I tried something here, and say I went to Thailand, I'd be quite happy to try the

¹⁸ Pelchat and Pliner consider locations such as homes and cafeterias to be settings in which our culture has specified that substances that are called foods are safe to eat (1995:154).

food there because I would have had what I think Thai is like here already. So it wouldn't be something terribly new really would it? I'd have an idea, slightly.

By eating a novel food in New Zealand, a perceived safe place to Gemma, and having survived, she is claiming that safety information and memories of agreeable foods previously encountered will serve as enticement to eat similar food in another country. In other words, exotic food in this local context acts as a bridge between Gemma and other places.

The dislike of novel foods may be caused by the taste, odour, texture or appearance of the food. Young children have a higher tendency to refuse a novel food, though adults may also be reluctant to try unfamiliar food if it originates outside the realm of their socially constructed taste. The social context of our taste is extremely complex and has historical origins dating back thousands of years. Atkins and Bowler draw on diverse attitudes towards cattle, beef and milk to illustrate this point, dating back to Neolithic cultures, resident from the Mediterranean to India. They explain how our taste has been “primed for the consumption of meat by an ancient respect for cattle” (Atkins & Bowler 2001:302). Trying new foods and their introduction into our diets is not a new phenomenon. Simpson documents the British reluctance to eat vegetables, and how during the 17th century, writer and founding member of the Royal Society, John Evelyn, attempted to popularise the eating of various vegetables and salads to no avail. The discovery, arrival and gradual acceptance, during the 18th century, of the potato and tomato from the New World, helped overcome the English aversion to vegetables (Simpson 1999:28). Besides these two items, maize, pulse beans, avocados, chilli peppers and capsicums also arrived in Europe at the same time, but have only recently been adopted into the everyday diet of the British.

The country of origin of imported goods is of importance to the consumer as they tend to construct an opinion about the quality of a specific product based on such criteria as the

exporting country's image, its level of economic development or perceived similarities between cultures or belief systems (Juric & Worsley 1998:433). While such broad generalisations are not necessarily appropriate, it is thought that country of origin may be useful when evaluating novel food products as taste cannot usually be assessed until the product has been purchased and consumed. However, when I visited Liz at her gourmet food importing business I was immediately impressed by the wide selection of samples, approximately thirty to forty in total, placed around the showroom, for example, olive oils and assorted vinegars with pieces of bread for dipping, and prior to Christmas samples for tasting included the numerous types of *Panettone* and Italian nougat in store. When I commented on the generous number of samples offered, Liz justified the practice by claiming:



Figure 12: Exotic Christmas foods (including *Panettone* and Italian nougat) in Liz's showroom (December 2008)

I always thought you can spend a lot on print advertising, but why not just put your money where your mouth is, because we're not ashamed of what we sell.... We always get positive feedback in the showroom. People like the fact that they can come in and try things. They like the fact that you might put an oil and vinegar on a plate and [they] try that and it's a surprise to them really.

All of the foods imported by Liz are from affluent countries, so she does not experience country of origin problems, also her business has a reputation for quality imported commodities within the community. In addition, the food samples available in her establishment would not only allow her customers to make an informed decision about their potential purchases, but because her products are frequently novel items to this country the tastings could generate additional sales by removing the fear of the unknown. Thus, Liz's food samples suggest a link between her customers and other places. With regard to Juric and Worsley's claim about the importance of the country of origin's status in swaying the consumers' opinion concerning a potential purchase, perhaps it might be more appropriate to question a country's expertise concerning a specific product, for example, Thailand and fish sauce. As an essential ingredient in many Thai recipes, Thailand has possessed the expertise to produce this product for many years.

The consumer's level of ethnocentrism significantly influences their evaluation of imported products, while their interest in other cultures increases the acceptability of products from culturally different countries (Juric & Worsley 1998:444). Likewise, various socio-demographic characteristics also influence attitudes towards imported products, for instance, younger people with higher levels of income and education generally possess more positive attitudes towards imported food products than older, poorer and less educated individuals. These positive attitudes are based on a number of factors which include the

ability to travel overseas and educational opportunities which broaden one's worldview, cultural interests, tolerance and therefore acceptance of the Other.

A recent fund-raising event entitled "Epicurean Delight: A Smorgasbord of Tastings" was organised by my local Lions Club and held in the community in which I live. Besides being a social occasion in which to raise money for charity, and an opportunity for local artisans to promote their products, which included olive oils, European-style breads, terrines, relishes and pâtés, wines, macadamia nuts and imported foods such as Israeli couscous and chocolate-covered candied figs, it seems to have been an unconscious attempt to assist people to overcome negative or wary attitudes regarding both foods from other places and new foods. Karl, a chef, artisan baker and the event organiser explained how the idea for the evening materialised and described the outcome:

There was a whole group of us who all love food, so we thought it would be a nice idea to show our wares and to get people to come in and see in their local community what foods are available.... We had a lot of local people come in. It was of great interest and a good night because a lot of people got together and chatted and had a few glasses of wine. Basically everyone sold a lot and people tried a lot of things they'd never tried before.... There was a good mix [of people] to be honest. I think it was interesting because it was something that was local and that brought a lot of the locals in who wouldn't perhaps normally bother.

The event proved to be a resounding success from the perspectives of the Lions' fund-raising objective, the artisans successfully selling their products and the attendees trying and buying new foods. The opportunity for a diverse group of people, some of whom would not normally venture amongst such commodities, to sample a range of novel foods within the safety of their own community possibly assisted in adjusting certain ethnocentric beliefs concerning imported foods. Amid convivial, social surroundings, the attendees felt at ease amongst family, friends and neighbours and were encouraged to try the unknown, because the physical presence of others has the ability to influence our food intake (Conner & Armitage

2002:115). Although the presence of others can inhibit complex, less well learned behaviours, their presence can also encourage simple behaviours, such as eating. Conner and Armitage point out that an individual's food consumption increases when dining with others, and when dining with close friends, people tend to eat more dessert as they are more relaxed than when dining amongst strangers (2002:115).

It has been suggested that women are more willing to try new foods than men¹⁹ (Wilson 1989:179), and the same study found that women often wish to change aspects of their family's diet, but various constraints often prevent this. Those living within a strict budget, for example, would not buy food items that were unfamiliar to family members as they could not afford to experiment with foodstuffs and risk its rejection and the subsequent waste of money. As a part of my fieldwork I conversed with a number of food demonstrators in the different supermarkets I visited. On one particular occasion I spoke with a woman who was promoting a company's European-style breads. I enquired whether a correlation existed between those who sampled the wares with those who purchased the product from her stall. She explained that whilst the "pizza bases sell themselves" as they are moderately priced, people prefer to try more costly items prior to purchasing, for example, the garlic bread produced by the company she was representing, as shoppers base their decisions on whether they like the product and that the food, and their money, will not be wasted. The garlic bread was priced at \$3:20 per pack of two small loaves, and as she pointed out, people could buy a substantial amount of budget type bread for that amount of money.

The propensity of people to try novel foods clearly enhances their eating experiences by allowing them to consume from a wider range of foods. Furthermore, the opportunities offered by the food industry which allow the public to try unknown food items prior to

¹⁹ Based on her professional experience as a chef Pam also explained that, "Men don't like challenging food". If she is serving something different, unusual or new she will introduce it to a gathering of women who know each other as she has found that they represent the group most willing to try new foods.

purchase has positive implications for both parties, as experienced by Karl's artisans and the attendees at the 'Epicurean Delight'. Presenting shoppers with a chance to sample foods from other places not only offers the opportunity to adjust cultural prejudices, but also allows more expensive foods to be evaluated prior to purchase, and this is particularly advantageous to those adhering to a budget. By trying new foods and extending our exotic dietary repertoires, we acquire increased links to other places.

Food and Social Class

Social class is a vehicle by which the elite allocate a society's resources, and food is its most precious stock. The perpetuation of such apportioning is ensured by the established class structure, that is, those with the most get the best and conversely, those of the lower social strata are expected to accept the inevitability of the inequities, that is, class differences divide a society's foodways. The differences are witnessed in various guises, for instance, ingredients, methods of preparation, styles of consumption and basic ideas about food. The differences in diet across the social class spectrum have been acknowledged in most places and throughout time (Diner 2002:6).

An investigation carried out in three European cities by Hupkens, Knibbe and Drop adopted the level of education as the marker of social class, as it offers a better predictor of food consumption, and is a more consistent and reliable variable than, for example, income or occupation (2000:109). Their findings imply that middle-class women consume fewer foods that contain fat and more foods that supply fibre; however, they consumed more cheese and fewer potatoes than lower-class women. It was assumed that cheese replaced meat while more grain, for instance, rice, provided a replacement for potatoes (Hupkens, Knibbe & Drop 2000:111). Additionally, they found working-class women generally retained the eating

habits of their formative years (Van Otterloo & Van Ogtrop 1989, quoted in Hupkens, Knibbe & Drop 2000:112). Similar work conducted in the Netherlands by Giskes, Van Lenthe, Brug and MacKenbach, also using people's level of education similarly proposes that the socio-economic status of the individual has greater influence on their diet than the socio-economic position of the area in which the individual lives. This differentiation has rarely been considered in previous studies (Giskes, Van Lenthe, Brug & MacKenbach 2004:875), and suggestions are consistent with those of an Australian enquiry carried out by Turrel, Blakely, Patterson and Oldenburg earlier in 2004. The current findings suggest that dietary differences stem from determinants such as a lack of individual or household resources concerning nutrition knowledge, food preparation skills and finances.

Whilst I am aware of the benefits of eating a healthful diet, for example, a 'Mediterranean' type diet or adopting the stir-fry method of cooking, because to quote Sonya it is, "going to be way better for you than cooking the hell out of something, boiling it in a pot till it's dead and then pour all the goodies down the sink", I had failed to take the issue of health into account when formulating my interview questions. Although matters relating food with health are ubiquitous in the literature, I considered this aspect of food to represent an entirely separate academic investigation so purposely omitted it. I was therefore, somewhat taken aback when several of my food industry interviewees, Jill, Liz, Maddie and Karl raised the topic of health in conjunction with their business ethos, and the majority of my general interviewees, John, Frank, Diane, Sally, Louise, Gemma, Sonya and Christine also offered reasons regarding a more healthy eating regime as a motivating factor for their consumption of exotic foods. Frank, for example, explained that besides the variety that exotic foods added to his diet, there were also:

health benefits. The Western diet's not very healthy. You know, the vegies all cooked to death, no nutrients left in them, whereas, fresh Mediterranean salads or

Chinese which is stir-fried very quickly and then served, is still crunchy rather than boiled. So I think health-wise I eat different foods from different places.

Frank is explicitly stating that his current preference for foods and preparation methods from afar are prompted by health concerns. Hence, his food habits nowadays provide a connection between him and other places.

Liz claims her food importing business is aimed at “people who make eating a priority”, and also that, “A lot of our food is very close to the raw ingredients so there’s a health angle for it, and we do have some people who come, not because we’re organic, but because they source that level of food”. Jill explained that her business’s aims to assist families were because:

Mum is maybe working as well as dad and still wanting to provide good healthy family food, but finding time...perhaps other things are more important than slaving at home making the meals, but they don’t want to resort to takeaways and unhealthy food.

Within industrialised nations the consumption of food is connected with social class, age and gender. Those belonging to higher socio-economic groups generally consume a wider range of foods that are more likely to meet the criteria of contemporary nutritional guidelines than those of lower groups. During the 1980s, dietary guidelines suggesting a reduction in the intake of salt, sugar and saturated fat, and an increase in the consumption of dietary fibre prompted a much greater adoption by higher socio-economic groups of food items such as, skimmed milk, fruit, vegetables and wholegrain bread, while diets with higher amounts of animal fat were more likely to be found amongst lower socio-economic groups (Mennell, Murcott & Van Otterloo 1994:54). Accordingly, it seems that the health messages issued by various governments during the 1980s in response to an international increase in obesity (Björntorp 1999:47) are being received and acted upon mainly by a certain portion of society. Viswanath and Bond explain the association between the socio-economic status of the

individual and consumption habits by emphasising that an individual's higher level of education determines access to communication services, use of different media and attention to health advice in the media. Furthermore, education supports cognition with regard to information about healthy eating (Viswanath & Bond 2007:21).

Conner and Armitage maintain that food is not a socially inert object, as firstly, it offers a means for people to make judgements of others based on what they are either observed to be eating or thought to have consumed, and secondly, people frequently select certain foods as a means to communicate information about themselves (2002:124). Aware of the power of food to transmit messages about them, individuals sometimes use this knowledge to modify the social signals they transmit. At the most elementary level, food is used to communicate notions of social status, for instance, the contents of a supermarket trolley convey much about the shopper, consequently people judge the status of others on the food or brands they select (Conner & Armitage 2002:127). While foods fulfil both utilitarian and social identity functions, Conner and Armitage explain that they simultaneously emphasise one or the other. In other words, the former reflects the extent to which a foodstuff fulfils its purpose, while the latter is based on the potential of the product to communicate a value, identity or other information about the consumer, for instance, a can of baked beans is likely to convey different social information than a can of sheep's eyeballs (Conner & Armitage 2002:128).

Similarly, Greene proposes that through the combination of food and its associated commodities of production and consumption, people nowadays convey 'social styles' through which they transmit who they are, who they want to become, and how they wish to be perceived. This is achieved as they "construct rhetorical performances of self that are dependent upon the social situation in which they find themselves" (Greene 2008:32). Social style comprises: firstly, a performance in which particular behaviours are used rhetorically to

influence others; secondly, both verbal and non-verbal languages are used rhetorically that reflect the various groups to which they belong, for example, occupation or level of education; thirdly, commodities are used, for example, cars and clothing, or perhaps more accurately, the meanings that such commodities convey, for instance, wealth; and lastly, aesthetics which imbue the other dimensions, as the choice to use them is often an aesthetic one (Greene 2008:33). Accordingly, Greene claims that food is a conveyor of social styles, acting as a nonverbal communicator in association with verbal aspects of dining and various contexts of eating, for instance, the preparation and consumption of food, such as the pots, stoves or dishes used, the atmosphere for eating and whether in a kitchen or dining room (2008:34).

As the link between food and social class appeared frequently in the literature I felt it would be relevant to seek the opinions of my New Zealand interviewees, both the general and the industry interviewees, on this matter, though specifically with regard to the consumption of exotic foods and social class. Although several – Helen, Christine, Louise and Sally – did eventually concede that social class may, in fact, play a part in one's eating practices, the majority of interviewees explicitly denied the notion, pointing out such attributes as: the greater health benefits a diet based on such foods offers; the variety added to their diets by the exotic foods, flavours and methods of cooking now available; and the simplicity of preparation and cooking of many of these foods. However, industry interviewees, Pam, Maddie and Karl believed eating patterns which include exotic foods were definitely consistent with characteristics of social class, as Maddie stated:

It's area driven. You're not going to see people in South Auckland, lower-socio, going out to buy—or Islanders or whatever, going out to buy—olives and take them home for the evening meal. Not at all, but you're going to see those in Remuera do it.

By allowing my interviewees to voice their thoughts, sometimes at length and without interruption, they often arrived at the realisation that social class was influential. I am left wondering whether aspects of subjectivity prevented their earlier detection of social class connections or their willingness to invoke them because they did not want to be seen as classist. Perhaps they did not question their own behaviour as they considered their familiar consumption normal and natural, in a similar way that the majority group of a country is oblivious to its culture when it compares it with the cultures of others, as noted in Chapter Two. Although my interviewees articulated varying degrees of explicit acceptance of the concept of social class as an influence in the consumption of exotic foods, their range of comments regarding how exotic foods now allow them to eat a healthier diet and their appreciation of the variety that exotic foods have introduced to their diets are markers of them belonging to the middle levels of the social hierarchy as referred to above by various experts, for example, Viswanth and Bond (2007); Giskes, Van Lenthe, Brug and MacKenbach (2004); and Mennell, Murcott and Van Otterloo (1994).

Sutton believes that something as obvious and taken-for-granted as food can be extremely deceptive, stating that food can “hide powerful meanings and structures under the cloak of the mundane and the quotidian” (2001:3). He elucidates how the common pastime of drinking coffee reveals a shift in economic and class values in the United States, comparing how coffee has gained elevation from a once democratising beverage based on its “cheapness, ubiquity, and homogeneity, [and has] been transformed into [a badge] of class distinction” (Sutton 2001:3). He maintains the power of the commodity in this instance is to disguise the associated connotations of social class behind a facade of personal preference or taste. According to Gronow, consumers no longer make individual choices about what to eat and drink in our modern changing world, instead fashion currently assumes a role akin to traditional norms, or standards of good taste, in guiding contemporary eaters’ selection of

proper meals and socially acceptable foods and drinks. Similar to clothing fashion, consumption guidelines are not rigid, but constantly changing (Gronow 1997:129). As people seek to distinguish themselves, and are distinguished through the choices they make, the selection of food made by the individual is significant. Those belonging to lower classes generally select large quantities of filling, economical foods, whereas those of upper classes prefer quality and emphasise fine methods of presentation, serving, eating and so forth (Bourdieu 1984:6). Such eating behaviour ultimately reflects upon the individual's entire lifestyle (Bourdieu 1984:185). This is the message that Simon, a chef and restaurateur, conveyed about the standard of food and service his restaurant strives to achieve:

We've come a long way; we want the new flavours. Simple is better, quality is better than quantity. The days of quantity, "Well let's go out, we want a feed", people these days much rather have quality than quantity. And if you're dining out, what we're trying to do is sell people 'the experience', so the starter, the main, and the dessert and possibly some cheese. And if you have a drink of wine with each course that's adequate, you don't need any more.

While Simon's restaurant is not a silver service establishment it does cater to a particular standard which is reflected by the numerous food industry awards they have received for many consecutive years. He described his typical diner as "pretty well-heeled...more the mature sort of person", thus the quality and presentation of his food and the service are designed to reflect a specific level of taste.

As I progressed through the literature I discovered Tuchman and Levine's account concerning the children and grandchildren of Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe to New York City in the mid 1900s, and I have chosen to include it briefly as I interpreted it as having interesting social class connotations. On arrival and subsequently, this group has embraced Chinese restaurant food and incorporated it into their new culture and identity as New York Jews. I became interested in the meanings the group projected on to Chinese food

and wondered whether any similarities existed between this Jewish community and various contemporary New Zealanders in regard to their relatively recent wholehearted acceptance of exotic foods. Tuchman and Levine state that sociologists and historians have recognised for many years that ethnic culture and identity, especially in the United States, has been created rather than inherited, and that successive generations have continually reconstructed their ethnic cultures and identities (1993:382).

Therefore, I question whether a certain section of the New Zealand population is undergoing a similar process of (re)constructing their culture and identity partially through their consumption of exotic foods and the connections such foods offer with the world. The New York Jews considered the Chinese restaurant food a “flexible open-ended symbol, a kind of blank screen” (Tuchman & Levine 1993:385), and linked it with various cultural issues, firstly, although the food was not kosher, the methods of preparation and serving it rendered it less threatening and more attractive than other non-Jewish foods. Secondly, the low position of Chinese in the United States allowed the Jews to feel at ease in Chinese restaurants. Thirdly, they construed the food as cosmopolitan, urbane and sophisticated, so by eating in Chinese restaurants they were able to renounce parochial Eastern European Jewish affiliations, hence eating Chinese food became a modern New York Jewish custom and characteristic of group identity (Tuchman & Levine 1993:385).

Based on the Jewish interpretation of Chinese food as being cosmopolitan, urbane and sophisticated, I sought my interviewees’ opinions similarly with regard to certain New Zealanders’ consumption of exotic foods. Again such ideas were rejected initially, but when I asked Diane and her daughter Gemma whether they wished to add anything before we finished the interview Diane announced:

You’ve triggered me with some of those last questions. I do remember, probably in the days when I had more money and was doing dinner parties, and I would go

out and buy more expensive produce. I'd go and buy Italian cheese or something. (Gemma reminded her that she would also go to the butcher). Yeah, that's often because I'd want a specific cut, like I'd want a turkey boned or something. So yes, I think I definitely was more of a food snob then than I am now. Now I think I'm much more low key. So there probably was, as these products became 'in', I think we probably were, if you had the money, you were going out and buying the more expensive products. And some of those dinner parties were like, who could cook the best, it was always a competitive thing.

Sonya also disagreed with such ideas at first, but at the end of a lengthy monologue regarding the matter she concluded with:

I suppose sophistication does come into it because people who perhaps are eating the normal diet, well they're living in times gone by. It is that if you have an interest in food, you're travelled perhaps, you're more well-travelled, educated and you're interested in trying a new diet.

According to Diane and Sonya, culture, elegance and refinement are displayed through New Zealanders' consumption of exotic foods. Diane was clearly attempting to convey such cultivation some years ago when she held dinner parties, she explained that this was while she was married, because by serving 'in' foods to her guests, Diane would have been regarded as worldly and received kudos as a hostess and cook. Local anthropologist, David Veart, describes how "New Zealand cookery prior to the 1980s was for most people a dimly remembered world of badly cooked meat and vegetables" (2008:7). This type of 'normal' diet, as Sonya refers to it, was and remains bereft of sophistication in some New Zealanders' view.

Similar to many other nations around the world, and partially as a result of globalisation, New Zealanders began experimenting with exotic foods late last century. Burton claims this impacted adversely on our attitudes regarding our British dishes, and also echoed the negativity that surrounded New Zealand theatre and film in earlier years. Foreign products were judged superior to local goods simply because they were imported (1982:xiii).

However, this perception of superiority concerning overseas goods appears to be waning as New Zealand comes of age and takes pride in its status as a South Pacific nation rather than a British outpost. In “Goodwill and Good People” (*North & South*, July 2008), Owen Marshall reports that New Zealanders’ ‘rugby, racing and beer’ image is losing relevance in the wake of our maturing artistic culture which encompasses art, literature, dance, film, craft and music, and I would add food and cooking. He explains that we now celebrate and support our national culture to a greater level than ever before, for instance, at festivals, exhibitions and via patronage.

In addition to many New Zealanders embracing the global gastronomic phenomenon, there is also evidence of their growing consciousness of and pride in local and indigenous foodstuffs to replace what Burton alludes to as our “cultural inferiority complex” (1982:xii). We now want and have access to the best of both worlds, as we recognise the value of unique New Zealand commodities and incorporate them with the abundance of influences from places overseas now present. In his book and television series *Kiwi Kitchen*, local chef Richard Till visits the homes of everyday New Zealanders throughout the country and presents their personal recipes, for instance, “Ray’s Kumara and Tuatua Fritters” (2008:48). Apart from the recipe’s obvious local ingredients are those of the exotic which include garlic, coriander, cumin, olive oil, chilli and soy sauce. Till points out that regional food is not the preserve of the French and Italians, that it is a feature of New Zealand cooking also, so as tuatua (shellfish found in the Far North) are not readily available to the majority of the nation, our indigenous green-lipped mussels may be substituted, thus retaining the recipe’s unique New Zealand essence whilst emphasising the relationship between certain foods and specific places.

Consequently similarities are witnessed between the New York Jews’ adoption of Chinese restaurant food and some New Zealanders’ recent appropriation of exotic foods and

the increasing recognition of our indigenous bounty, in preference to the earlier traditional foods, as both communities have and are using the foods in their processes of cultural and identity reconstruction, as noted by Tuchman and Levine (1993:382). Similar to the New York Jews, New Zealanders too wish to eat foods from other places, as we now want to be considered sophisticated, urbane and cosmopolitan. In contrast to the various constraints which influenced the New York Jews' choice of exotic food, however, we have had complete freedom to select food at our own discretion; therefore we passionately embrace not just the exotic, but also the local which no longer produces shame, but is now considered a virtue.

Food and Gender

Various sociological factors traditionally preserved women's role as food preparers in the New Zealand home, for instance, in the early 1900s Truby King attempted to prevent women from obtaining academic education suggesting the domestic arena was their rightful place. More recent social dynamics have contributed to deemphasising the role of women as feeders, for example, intermediate schools introduced cooking lessons for boys during the 1970s (Bailey & Earle 1999:270). Another feature to reinforce this gendered norm was that until the late 1970s food recipes and articles in the printed media were written for women, by women, and appeared in 'women's pages', thus men ignored them (Bailey & Earle 1999:268). Later, food sections were placed more generally for all to read, and men also began to contribute, for example, Martin Bosley, chef and restaurateur, currently writes a weekly food column for the *New Zealand Listener* and Simon Wilson provides various food-related articles regularly for *Metro*. Likewise, earlier cookbooks were the domain of women, but since the 1960s an increasing number have been written by New Zealand men (for example, chefs Paul Tobin, Peter Gordon and Simon Gault). This change represents a link

with the rising popularity of male celebrity chefs worldwide (Bailey & Earle 1999:271). The number of women employed in the paid workforce has increased considerably; accordingly women are not necessarily a family's key kitchen person, and it is now more acceptable for men to cook and shop for food (Bailey & Earle 1999:275). Karl, a professional chef, was intrigued with the greater acceptability of men in the domestic kitchen today:

Everywhere I go now and I tell people I'm a chef they've got their recipe or something they've done. They love cooking, and it's not just the ladies anymore, it's the guys! They go out and build houses all day and then come home and they just want to cook. Bizarre!

Atkins and Bowler refer to research conducted by Calnan and Cant (1990) in England which suggests that middle-class husbands take a greater role in compiling food shopping lists, though did not necessarily actively shop or cook (2001:261). (This may well have changed in the 20 years since the research was conducted.) In New Zealand many men are now involved in all these processes. Maddie, who sells her hand-made pasta at several farmers' markets, stated that:

The males are more interested in the food these days and they come along too. I have a lot of men coming with their wives and buying the food. It's a big turnaround; men are very interested in the food they eat now.... It's down to social status, food magazines, being in touch with the rest of the world out there. It's amazing!

During my numerous fieldwork visits to different markets I have taken note of those present, both the stall-holders and the shoppers, and in many instances couples were shopping together at farmers' markets, and numerous families also frequent markets. This was not unexpected as besides the range of fresh produce, both traditional and exotic, farmers' markets provide a pleasant ambiance and facilities suitable for different family members, for instance, good quality food and drinks, including mobile espresso bars, along with al fresco dining facilities, sun umbrellas and entertainment which can range from children's pony rides in rural settings,

to barbershop choirs or solo musicians. In short, a friendly atmosphere for all age groups is usually apparent.



Figure 13: Shopping and relaxing at Hawke's Bay Farmers' Market (January 2009)

Most of my general interviewees were responsible for the majority of food shopping and cooking in their homes, the exception was Gemma, who shares the responsibility with her brother and father. While attending the night school cooking course, 'Vegetarian Delights from Around the World', I learned that John and Frank were both house-husbands and both take responsibility for their families' meals and food shopping, however, there does appear to be a degree of reciprocity between them and their spouses. The two men proved to be enthusiastic and confident cooks over the time I spent with them at night school, and towards the end of the course, wishing to demonstrate their improved culinary knowledge,

they held a dinner party to which they invited several friends. When I asked them about the evening John said:

It was a degustation menu. It was great! There were eight of us. It was really, really good. In fact, it was excellent! It took quite a long time. We took about four and a half hours. It was fantastic! Everybody really, really loved it. We picked things we could prepare in advance, but I made pastry for the first time. I'd never made pastry before, in two dishes. It was fabulous! It was really, really good fun! And because we had breaks between the courses everybody was talking. It was just a really social thing. It was good. It was good fun. We're going to get the girls to do it for us now cos they said, 'Oh well [we] set the table and did the flowers', so we said, "We'll do that next time".

John and Frank explained that at present both of their wives' jobs are more lucrative than their own, so they have reversed the socially accepted gender roles. John and Frank now fulfil the domestic and nurturing requirements, while their wives are engaged in the public arena of paid employment, traditionally associated with men. Although this type of arrangement is not unheard of in urban Western society, it is still fairly rare. The men voiced their satisfaction with the present arrangements, and Frank qualified his role as family cook by adding that, "A big influence on me, Jamie Oliver, was the first person that made it cool for men to cook".

Thus within their homes, and particularly their kitchens, members of my group of general interviewees both resist and reproduce gender roles and relations. A number of the women – Diane, Sally, Anna, Louise and Christine – are their households' sole cooks; accordingly they reproduce society's traditional expectations on a regular basis. Although Helen and Sonya spoke of the male members of their households occasionally accepting cooking responsibilities, their arrangements were less formal than those in Gemma's home. Nonetheless, these three women could allocate cooking duties to the men should they need or wish. Therefore, an opportunity exists for these women to resist social norms and contribute a little to transforming them. Moreover, they retain the power to delegate to the men or

choose to cook themselves, thus they challenge unequal gendered power divisions traditionally experienced in Western society. John, Frank and Paul are contributing to a redefinition of traditional gender roles on various occasions. Examples of the men's reinforcement of society's norms materialise when their wives prepare the meals. Conversely, their examples of redefinition of their gendered roles appear by shopping for the family groceries, and cooking and serving their family meals. Furthermore, through their family food choices, they continue to form connections with other places as they prepare and consume, for instance, a lasagne, tortillas or a green Thai curry.

Food and Memory

Memory functions on several levels, for example, personal memory of either lived experiences or of things not experienced, such as reports in the media or through discussions with others; social or collective memory, such as the death of Princess Diana; or formalised, academic memory (Nerone 1989, quoted in Lupton 1994:667). According to Lupton, events, feelings, emotions, places and people remain as memories as they are in some way significant; they may represent, for example, immense pleasure, anger, unhappiness, frustration or fear. Memories allow individuals to consider everyday events which they have retained for their importance; accordingly memories are central to the construction of self (Lupton 1994:669). During her fieldwork in Tuscany, Counihan was told by a participant that eating was a "remembering, a calling back, and an attraction", because eating caused physical sensations, generally of great pleasure (2004:25). Such recollections occur firstly, because food is structured into dishes, meals, and daily and annual rhythms, and their consumption is ordered which assists remembering, and secondly, as the multiple sensory

properties of food – sight, smell, texture and taste – provide numerous ways of conveying meanings and memories (Counihan 2004:25).

Based on Louise's story about food, it seems she intends her life to represent a series of food memoirs; she loves to eat, and admits that she is a "foodie from way back". Louise spent five years in England during the 1990s on her overseas experience during which time she made frequent visits to continental Europe. On her final visit she was accompanied by her future husband on what she refers to as a "food and wine appreciation extravaganza". Rather than stay in hotels, they chose "places where you could eat with the family...I liked seeing what they did with the food and then experimenting when we got home". When Louise and her fiancé returned to New Zealand to be married they wanted to replicate:

the wine and food experience that we'd enjoyed so much travelling through Europe.... We had a lot of people come down from England and so we wanted it for them, and for us. We made it a whole food experience, getting married was just a side-line! So we organised this fantastic dinner the night before the wedding. The caterers did a kind of a posh version of a traditional 'Kiwi' barbeque, but more international with the exotic salads and stuff. We tried to recreate our gastro experiences.

In recreating her European food memories at her wedding Louise was reliving her lived experiences; she was creating a nostalgic episode. Moreover, as the original memories allowed her such pleasure she wanted to strengthen them by not only attempting to recreate them, but also by sharing them with the important people in her life, those whom she felt would enjoy such pleasures too. This later recreation would ultimately enhance her original nostalgic recollection. However, Louise was not simply connecting nostalgically with places known to her; she also wanted her memory of her food experiences to be transported into others' fictive memories. Moreover, she was seeking not merely to replicate the European gustatory experience for herself and her guests, but also wished to recreate the ambience in order for them to connect with another time and another place.

Christine claims that she rarely cooks traditional New Zealand food anymore: “More often than not, I tend to make things up as I go, like I have steak and I usually marinate it, or do a sauce for it. I don’t actually like the taste of a plain steak. I pretty much always at least have a sauce for it, definitely”. However, she also spoke fondly of the nostalgia surrounding the eating of comfort foods:

I still quite like going back to having a stodgy meal in the middle of winter, we might have bangers and mash, or go and stay with Mum and Dad and she’ll do corned beef with mustard sauce and boiled cabbage, something I’d never cook myself, but it’s good comfort food.

Christine is returning to a remembered era of simple food and cooking, evoking another place and time. This type of cuisine is conjuring up a fond memory of a lost past which includes her childhood, so she is seeking comfort and reassurance through familial cooking. The tastes of food introduced to an infant are “the lessons which longest withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain nostalgia for it” (Bourdieu 1984:79). Thus, the sensuousness of food is central to understanding its power as a pathway for memory.

While the two examples above explore food-related nostalgia, Appadurai (1996:78) speaks of ‘armchair’ nostalgia, which refers to another form of nostalgia in which the individual has no lived experience of the event, but nevertheless possesses a desire to ‘relive’ that unfamiliar experience or place, the knowledge of which they have gained perhaps through a friend, a relative or the media. An example of armchair nostalgia arose when Sally was sharing her thoughts as to why New Zealanders had adopted exotic foods. She casually mentioned two uncles who had served in Egypt and India, and on their return spoke of foods eaten while away: “and so those tastes were adapted very quickly”:

They were ordinary New Zealanders, a great-uncle in India, an ordinary uncle in Egypt, with the forces. They were gregarious people and everybody in the family always cooked well, I thought well, grandly, wonderful! And they would talk about the food they'd had, "Oh yes", said Herbert Arthur Wentworth, my great-uncle from India, "A haunch of goat, nothing like it!" And that sparked imagination with somebody else in the family and they'd say, "We must try this". It was their talking about an adventure that included food and somebody would adapt it. It was just people talking about things.

The tales of the uncles' culinary exploits on foreign soil have clearly left an indelible mark in Sally's memory, because she was recalling memories from her early childhood and is now over seventy years old. Her food-based memory not only entailed cognitive recollections, but as Holtzman (2006:366) claims, also emotional and physical responses, as evidenced during her animated story-telling. She was clearly aware of the symbolic importance of food from a young age and this has remained with her. Obviously, in her early years, when money was scarce and personal adventure for her was not feasible, Sally relied on the food and travel stories of others to bridge the gap between her and exotic places. Food has played an important role throughout Sally's life, and although they survived on meagre rations in her early years, she was exposed to a great variety of foods by her grandmother and also by affluent relatives, which no doubt spawned her passion for food today.

Sutton suggests that ritual is a prime location for the marrying of food and memory as during such times sensory and emotional experiences become embedded within the body via a relatively rigid sequence of actions (2001:19). Sally told me about a food ritual she participates in monthly with a group of women friends. She visits the particular farmers' market where we serendipitously met, which is held on the first Saturday of every month, and takes \$50 to buy whatever appeals to her on the day, for example, artisan breads, cheese, smoked salmon, olives and seasonal fruits. Later that day her friends arrive at her home to lunch on her purchases. She pointed out the benefits, both nutritional and social, of the monthly lunches, for instance, as various women are appointed to bring wine each month a

level of reciprocity exists, and from Sally's point of view, she is able to enjoy entertaining with minimum stress, and through the regularity of the event the women constantly have a healthy and social food event to anticipate. As well as reaffirming the unity of the group through sharing the meal, the women vicariously connect with other places through their consumption of, for example, French wine, Greek olives, Turkish bread, Italian pastrami, and Spanish chorizo.

Food memories of the everyday also emerged via the fact that all of my general interviewees had travelled overseas for diverse reasons, for instance, on holidays, on their overseas experiences or on business. Most are members of the cohort referred to as baby boomers²⁰. This generation is described as the most highly educated and the most travelled group of people to date, and when compared with other generations their financial resources are greater (Patterson 2006:15). Accordingly, the disposable income of this group is often used for leisure travel, for undertaking education, or for combining the two, so I enquired about any food/memory associations connected with their travels. When we were discussing whether they had ever copied any dishes from places they had visited, Frank told me:

Chinese food, I've cooked a lot of Chinese food, been there, and also mainly Mediterranean food we've had in the Mediterranean-Turkey, Cyprus, so feta cheese and cucumber and basil. It's just become part of my repertoire...and I was taught how to do paella in Spain.

To this last claim, joint interviewee John added, "He makes a nice, mean, paella!" Helen's story though, echoes a number of my immigrant interviewees' accounts regarding their traditional food preparation:

When I was [living] in Saudi I was making hummus and falafel and stuff, as opposed to being able to get it prepared. There was a Lebanese girl in our flat so she would teach us how to do all that, or oversee us anyway...[but now] it's too

²⁰ Baby boomers – a term used to describe a cohort of people who were born between 1946 and 1964 (Patterson 2006:15).

easy to just buy...the time spent—especially Arabic food, time spent—chopping and grinding, all day!”

Helen’s culinary knowledge gained during her time overseas, and the memories of that far-off place and its food remain with her. Similar to a number of my immigrant interviewees, though, she finds the preparation time prohibitive and has resorted to purchasing the products made commercially in New Zealand now. Her husband Paul added, “It’s pretty good stuff too, the one in the shop. And it’s cheaper”. Frank’s range of exotic cooking is largely reliant on his experiences and memories of overseas visits which he experiments with regularly nowadays as family cook. Despite Helen’s preference to buy certain exotic foods rather than make them now, both she and Frank, through their memories of exotic foods, are allowing those foods to act as bridges to specific overseas places for which they have special memories and strong affection.

Diane related how the mere sight of a remembered cheese prompted a pleasurable food memory for her, proving that the food need not necessarily be eaten to elicit a memory; the sight of cheese in a supermarket refrigerator was sufficient to transport her taste buds to a far-off place:

I saw some, cos two years before [visiting Turkey in 2008] I had a trip to Italy and I saw those little bocconcini, you know those little cheeses, I saw them in the supermarket, two supermarkets recently. I’ve seen them in the fluid. (Turning to her daughter Gemma) You would have got them in England maybe, like baby mozzarellas. That took me back. I didn’t eat it, but it took me back, and I thought that would be really nice to buy and have in a roll, cos that’s what we ate in Italy.

Cheese was being produced in New Zealand prior to the 1880s and by 1900 the hard, milder flavoured cheddar-type cheese proved the most popular, while interest failed to develop in regard to the small amount of softer cheeses produced, for example, cream cheese and Wensleydale. A survey conducted in 1977 confirmed that changes were taking place in the

cheese eating habits of New Zealanders: special cheeses such as Blue Vein, Gruyere, Parmesan, Feta, Camembert and Gouda were gradually becoming accepted, and although tasty cheese was gaining popularity, there was a continuing preference for milder flavoured conventional cheese (Bailey & Earle 1999:175). Since the 1970s and 1980s though, cheese consumption has not only increased but diversified as popular choices now include various softer cheeses, so decreasing the dominance of the hard, mild cheese (Bailey & Earle 1999:183). Evidence of New Zealand's continuing diversification of cheese appears in "Buffalo Soldiers" (*Cuisine*, May 2008), in which Fiona Smith tells of a group of New Zealanders who have invested in a herd of buffalo (and presumably female bufala) and are presently producing mozzarella and its by-product, ricotta, which they sell at the Clevedon Farmers' Market. Additionally, in "The Cheesemaker's Addiction" (*Metro*, October 2008) Simon Wilson outlines how a newly appointed French cheesemaker has extended the Puhoi Valley company's range of French-style cheeses.

The dietary patterns of New Zealanders have clearly undergone what Burton refers to as a 'revolution'; they have progressed from a narrow diet introduced by the early British settlers to a diverse and growing smorgasbord of gastronomic delights. However, the power of nostalgia, also means that our traditional fare, in the guise of comfort food, can still attract us. Although exotic foods are now in abundance, they fail to be the foods of choice for the entire nation. Those possessing particular food prejudices, ethnocentrism or budgetary constraints tend to maintain conservative eating customs, as do particular ethnic groups who may continue to eat mostly their own ethnic food. Nevertheless, through the eating of exotic foods, or through the memories constructed through experiences of such foods, those specific foods act as a bridge between New Zealanders and other places. In the following and final discussion chapter of this thesis the focus switches to how New Zealanders, through the assistance of a number of food related industries, are not only embracing a plethora of exotic

foods, but by combining them with New Zealand's excellent fresh produce, are making the exotic our own.

Chapter Five

Making the Exotic Ours

New Zealand Foodways in Transition

Food is a particularly powerful symbol underpinning not only individual identity, but also a sense of belonging to a common group; thus according to Wilk, food similarly symbolises a medium for national identity building (1999:246). He explains how Belize, formerly British Honduras, gained independence from Britain in 1981, and from that time it became evident that the country required a national culture, cuisine and identity to build on the legacy left by the British. Eventually, the traditional dishes that had been consumed for generations were publicly acknowledged by the media as representing the national cuisine; as a result, notions of a Belizean cuisine²¹ and Belizean restaurants became commonplace (1999:246). Through increased knowledge and consciousness over time, many Belizeans have been encouraged to perform their culture with pride, for example, the cooking and eating of local foods, whereas until comparatively recently, such cultural behaviour was interpreted as inferior and unsophisticated when compared with that of the colonisers and other foreigners (Wilk 1999:247).

Although New Zealand may not be faced with the dilemmas that Wilk speaks of, matters relating to New Zealanders' food consumption, as noted in prior chapters, are undergoing a process of transition. In contrast to Belize, where the age-old traditional dishes

²¹ Belizean cuisine consists of dishes such as *garnachas* and *tamales* (both corn meal flat breads usually enclosing a savory or sweet filling) (Wilk 1999:246).

now embody the nation's cuisine, New Zealand's contemporary foodways are taking a slightly different approach. Firstly, the customary British dishes brought to these shores by early settlers are either being abandoned or altered; mostly they are being exoticised. To demonstrate this process I have searched through several older New Zealand recipe books purchased at various markets during my fieldwork. In *Here's How: Cooking with Alison Holst*, produced in 1966, the only exotic inclusions to recipes were paprika in a fish dish, spaghetti (tossed in butter as opposed to today's olive oil) and Pumpkin Pie²². The last began with clarification that it is "served for dessert" (1966:310). By 1977 in *The Des Britten Cookbook*, garlic, eggplant, zucchini, spaghetti and red wine represented the exotic ingredients. Included in the recipe for 'Spaghetti and Rosemary Sauce' is "grated cheese (Parmesan if possible)" (1977:36), which suggests that Parmesan was not in common use at that time. By 1984 Tui Flower had increased exotic ingredients slightly in the publication *New Zealand the Beautiful Cookbook*, for example, red and white wines, fresh ginger and an assortment of exotic fruits and vegetables. Conversely, contemporary recipes rarely lack the inclusion of (often numerous) exotic ingredients. My examination of a number of current cookbooks and magazines, both general magazines which contain a recipe column and magazines dedicated to food, reveals that only our traditional baking remains unexoticised, though an abundance of modern baking recipes include exotic ingredients.

Secondly, countless exotic foods and dishes are now fundamental to popular taste, many of which are being modified to satisfy the local palate, and also frequently combined with our own fine produce, such as in Lynley Allan's recipes (for example, 'Five-Spice and Honey-Roasted Chicken with Kumara' and 'Slow-Cooked Moroccan Lamb') in the article "Get Thrifty" (*The Foodtown Magazine*, October/November 2008). Lastly, an emergence of

²² In *First Catch Your Weka*, Veart (2008), makes numerous references to the impact of American influences on New Zealand cooking and eating which began in the early 1900s through the popularity of American films in this country.

a modern-day version of New Zealand's indigenous cooking is making its presence felt as various Maori cooks and chefs also blend the plethora of exotic foodstuffs with traditional kai. This innovative food is being aimed at mainstream consumers through the media, for instance, on Food Television's *Kai Or a*, hosted by Maori chef, Anne Thorp. This programme is a cultural performance by Thorpe as a Maori woman chef, whose instruction focuses on the simplicity of introducing the exotic to New Zealand ingredients and so making it ours.

In today's climate of continuous international contact, media and marketing, the alteration to diets seems to have accelerated (Wilk 1999:244). This acceleration has been a conspicuous feature in the food culture in New Zealand which Veart maintains has changed more in the last thirty years than in the previous century: "All foods and national cuisines are available now. Food writing has been internationalised and New Zealand recipe writers are up there with the best" (2008:295). Regarding our relatively recent, but extremely enthusiastic adoption of exotic foods, Veart explains that we were a "blank culinary slate, [begging] please write on us" (2008:296). In fact, according to television celebrity chef and writer, Peta Mathias (Personal communication via email on 16 September 2008):

New Zealanders have one of the most adventurous palates I know of because we will try anything, and because we have such good growing conditions and we understand and respect the meaning of the word 'flavour'. We care about taste in New Zealand, love the land, have a pride in craftsmanship and a strong sense of integrity.

For many years now Peta has travelled and cooked extensively around New Zealand and the world, mixing with diverse people, interviewing them and participating in their food stories for her various television programmes and books, so she represents something of an authority concerning the food preferences of different peoples. She is proud of New Zealanders'

openness to assorted foods and of our appreciation of our excellent and flavoursome produce, and is justifying why we should make the exotic ours.

In view of the debate regarding the existence of a New Zealand cuisine and New Zealand's embracing of exotic foods, Simpson states, "In a land almost literally flowing with milk and honey, and in which the ingredients of a potentially great cuisine are freshly ready to hand, we have no excuse for not developing one" (1999:8). Therefore, I asked professional chef and restaurateur, Simon, his thoughts regarding the possibility of a New Zealand cuisine:

Well in New Zealand, we don't really have our own cuisine as such, so we cook from all over the world really; we do Asian, Mediterranean food. I'd like to think, I think we're starting to stamp our mark on the world in the way of food.... We're using a lot of the Asian influences cos we've got a lot of Asians here, but we freshen their cuisine up and add our touches, improve it, get rid of the MSG.

Although Simon is claiming that we are keen to embrace Asian food and flavours, similarly to numerous other nations, he believes we have taken it further, as not only have we made the exotic ours, but we have, in his view, enhanced it. Simon is pleased with the place New Zealand currently holds in world cuisine and is optimistic that we are being evaluated as an international culinary force.

The commandeering of others' gastronomic pursuits is not a new phenomenon to New Zealand, the nation has been appropriating foods from other places for some time, although at a lesser pace than that of today, as non-British foods have been making a gradual appearance in New Zealand since the late 1920s by recipe writers, non-British immigrants and Maori (Veart 2008:276). In "Pavlova Paradise Lost" (*Cuisine*, March 2008), Burton explains how several popular 'New Zealand' fruits were "introduced from elsewhere, had been brought into commercial cultivation in New Zealand and hence made our own", namely the kiwifruit

from the Yangtze Valley in China, and the feijoa and tamarillo from South America. However, rather than merely making these exotic fruits our own, we often tended to rename them, for instance, prior to 1967 tamarillos were known as tree tomatoes, and kiwifruit were originally called Chinese gooseberries (Grant 2008:29). Maybe such appropriation and renaming were a part of our British heritage considering how the Victorian British, in an earlier example of similar usurping of the foods of other places, initially devised curry and subsequently naturalised and nationalised it. Narayan clarifies that curry does not exist in India; what Indians make and consume are often called *masalas*, which are different mixtures of spices for various dishes. The British though, adopted a particular assortment of spices which they named curry, a mispronunciation of the Tamil word '*kari*' (Narayan 1995:65).

Curries and other types of Indian food represent a popular choice for today's New Zealanders wishing to consume ethnic food, therefore a common establishment in many New Zealand communities is the Indian restaurant which usually offers both eat-in and take-away facilities to patrons. An extremely limited selection of Indian dishes is also generally available in the food courts of the nation's shopping centres and malls. As Karl, a professional chef, pointed out:

You only have to go down to the food court, you've got a reasonable Indian, Italian, you've got your normal McDonalds and things like that, but I sat down and watched it one day and the ones that were the most popular are the Indian and the Kebab shop. McDonalds has still got their big queues, but I was amazed to see how many people and the diverse type of person, going to the Indian, the Italian and the Kebabs.... I think the takeaway market does push people into being more adventurous with food.

Karl's observations intrigued me so I carried out my own. I visited several food courts in various locations throughout Auckland, which included the one Karl referred to. I timed my week-end visits for approximately noon hoping to coincide with what I presumed would be the busiest time of both the day and the week. After purchasing my sushi I found a suitable

position from which to observe the activities of the different food outlets. My findings in Karl's mall, which I visited twice, only partially reflected his, as although McDonalds drew a continuous crowd of customers, the sushi bar did also, on both occasions. As my visits took place in spring/summer different results may have been gained during cooler months, for example, the outlet selling roast dinners may be better patronised during winter. My observations in other suburbs all revealed different food preferences, though in East Auckland a noticeable choice was for Indian food. I found this result surprising because this area is well-known for its large South-east Asian population. Overall I felt this activity to be a fascinating aspect of my fieldwork and one that could possibly be revisited more thoroughly in a future study. Regarding Karl's final statement, it seems takeaway ethnic food presents a less intimidating option to 'eat the Other'. Maybe if one is trying a specific ethnic dish for the first time in the privacy of one's home, the risks of insulting the purveyor and of self-humiliation are removed if one dislikes the food. So the food courts of New Zealand's malls and the countless ethnic takeaway outlets are allowing New Zealanders to make the exotic ours in a rather informal fashion. Although such food outlets are generally operated by the members of various ethnic communities in this country, the food is becoming ours in the sense that it is increasingly representing a normal part of our diet; we are accepting and embracing these foods alongside, for example, fish and chips.

Eating out in New Zealand

As New Zealand had few licensed restaurants prior to 1970, eating out in the 1960s and 1970s meant visiting a fish and chip shop, or a grill room, which served "steaks and mixed grills with chips and a teaspoon of salad...complete with the obligatory piles of buttered white bread" (Veart 2008:298). Although New Zealand has possessed some of the best raw

ingredients in the world for many years now, various items in restaurants, for example, steak, was shown little respect during earlier years. Whether through lack of knowledge or merely as general practice, chefs usually insisted on pressing steaks down on the grill with an old cast-iron clothes iron to ensure all moisture was removed (Burton 2003:16). The upgrading of our restaurant service was instigated by the increase in air-travel referred to in Chapter Two. While non-British tourists may have influenced the acceptance of ethnic foods here, their presence as visitors also impacted upon the standard of New Zealand's own foods, as although tourists expected the availability of their own foods here, they were also generally interested in distinctive New Zealand food. Thus, international tourism demanded improvement in the preparation and serving of New Zealand-style foods (Bailey & Earle 1999:274).

A number of my interviewees, for example, Celine, Michael, Leo, Louise, Rosa, John and Frank commented on the excellent quality of New Zealand's fresh produce compared with equivalents eaten overseas. Similarly all the chefs I communicated with also emphasised the superior quality of the fresh produce available to them presently and that it has been steadily improving over the past decade. Simon said:

We're a very cosmopolitan place now, we've got a lot more people that have brought their skills into this country, people who make all these flash breads, and we've got *pâtisseries* out there that make some good gear and chocolate work. There's outfits out there purely supplying restaurant quality meat, it's not like supermarket meat. Over the years it's got better again, it's well-aged, especially beef and lamb now. It's just huge!

Based on Pam's experience of travel and cooking overseas and certain feedback from clients, she considers New Zealand has the best food in the world. She spoke of a dinner that she had catered for recently for a Scottish couple who had previously spent some years here on a working holiday and who:

came out to New Zealand to celebrate their wedding and brought their families with them. They'd got married in an old castle in Scotland, that was the ceremony, but came to New Zealand to specifically have their food. I can remember this big tall Scottish guy saying to me, "You have the *best* food in the world". And they knew exactly what they wanted. We had to have salmon from a particular part of the South Island, I had to get them meat from here.... They had it at a particular time of the year so that they had everything they wanted.

Peta Mathias summed up the situation by stating that, "New Zealand food and cooking have moved from being the embarrassing cousin to the glamorous aunt in the space of half a generation".

The standard of New Zealand's food has clearly improved greatly since the days which Veart recollects. The quality and variety are exceeding those often found overseas and with industry based incentives provided by organisations such as the New Zealand Beef and Lamb Hallmark of Excellence awards. Competition amongst New Zealand's chefs to achieve personal selection as an Ambassador and achieve Hallmark status for their restaurant continues to raise the culinary benchmark as these professionals are encouraged to match locally grown products with flavours and ingredients from exotic places. The food-based skills and techniques of various immigrants are continually being incorporated into the hospitality industry's inventory, and subsequently increasing the availability of an assortment of foods unknown in this country a couple of decades ago. Peta Mathias acknowledged this contribution saying, "We love the food and cooking of our immigrants". As a result the hospitality industry, by combining the best of New Zealand's fresh produce with exotic foodstuffs, is making the exotic ours.

In addition to the improved quality of our food today, the standard of our contemporary chefs has also risen. Paul mentioned that, "There's a lot of good young chefs around that experiment", a point which Liz expanded on by saying:

I think a lot of the chefs we have are now, instead of everybody following a French style, as they would have in the 70s...or the Italian style as they did in the 80s, I think now we have a lot of chefs who actually, whether it's our society or whether it's just the chef schools themselves or the fact that some of these guys have had chances to travel and come back, we've actually got chefs who have their own styles.

Maybe our professional chefs have influenced today's home cooks with regard to this more liberal style of cooking as all of my general interviewees said that they do not necessarily follow recipes exactly, that they tend to express their creativity and add whatever they feel like at the time. Christine explained that she buys a number of food magazines, for example, *Cuisine*, *Dish* and *Taste*, but added:

even if I don't use the recipes, I like just flicking through for ideas and things. And you cross over, you may not have an authentic Italian meal as the Italians might cook it because you might throw a little bit of, I don't know, it might be an Indian spice or something, so I tend to do that quite a lot.

This group of interviewees is cooking in a 'free-style' fashion, disregarding recipe constraints and treating them as mere guides. They are maximising their enjoyment of their food by making the most of the ingredients they have to hand, and are taking culinary liberty in their mixing of ingredients to produce gastronomic cultural hybrids, that could possibly be considered on the fringe of 'fusion' cooking, which chef Simon explained as being, "where you marry something like a Japanese influence with a Mediterranean influence". Through experimentation these people are developing and personalising their food through their own unique combinations and consequently making the exotic their own. They are thus reflecting the do-it-yourself dimension of our heritage by demonstrating a willingness to appropriate and then invent a dish; they are not bound by any traditionally prescribed norms of cooking, but can creatively 'make do and get by' and so produce a successful meal. Such inter-cultural adaptations were spoken of by several of my immigrant interviewees with varying levels of

approval in Chapter Three. Johnston sanctions such methods by declaring that, “we keep traditions alive by remaking them in response to our own situations rather than by slavish repetition” (2008:9).

As noted previously, New Zealanders have been keen travellers for many years now; as Peta Mathias says, “We travel more and bring back ideas and products” and the nation’s chefs have perpetuated this custom. Our chefs, mirroring the practice of, for instance, Australian chefs, frequently return from their overseas experiences via Asia having “borrowed a bit of French, a lot of Mediterranean, a heap of Asian, and a *soupçon* from any other cuisine with an interesting recipe or ingredient to offer” (Burton 2003:57). The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the mode of fusion cooking by various chefs while New Zealand diners proved to be remarkably eager to be experimented on. This style of food or degree of experimentation would not have been accepted so readily by the inhabitants of countries such as France or Italy in which their traditional cuisines are maintained as a matter of national pride (Burton 2003:58). Regarding the overseas travel by our chefs, Simon explained how:

We’re encouraged—when we go to AUT to do our courses and study to become chefs, of course you couldn’t call yourself a qualified chef at that point it’s up to you how far you want to take it, so we’re encouraged—to go off-shore, get overseas experience. Generally a lot of people head towards London. I did. I went to London, Japan, I went to Australia, I even did the States. I had a really good look around. I think where it really worked for me was London, the West End. It’s really on to it over there. People cooked with a real passion, you really do get involved in it. You’re working in a much larger system. So as far as picking up the knowledge, it comes in abundance really. There’s really high-classed restaurants in the West End of London, most of them have produced their own cookery books and all that sort of thing, so they’re well and truly up with the play and the trends and right on top of it.

After more than thirty years of working as a professional chef, Pam continues to travel regularly at intervals of approximately twelve to eighteen months. She ventures overseas for

periods of three to four weeks during which time she has a short holiday “taking in the local culture” and then attends various cooking schools. She explained her need thus:

We have a little pot of creativity and a little pot of giving and those little pots get emptied and you have to fill them up, and the way I fill them up is to travel and just be inspired again; get my love of cooking back. It’s just to fill up the pots so I can come back for another year or so, because cooking is such a physical, mental, emotional thing to do that it’s very draining, incredibly draining and you can easily burn out. It really is physically exhausting to cook all the time, and I do cook a lot, and I need to go away and be nobody’s mother and nobody’s wife and just be myself for a little while.

Travel is a high priority amongst large numbers of baby-boomers and one of the main reasons resides in the fact that many of this age group prefer to buy experiences rather than material possessions (Patterson 2006:217). Having frequently attained higher levels of education than previous generations, they favour real life experiences which offer the opportunity to broaden their minds, so travel to countries to learn first-hand about the cultures. When travelling, their primary objective is often to enrich their lives through knowledge rather than seeking entertainment, which satisfies their needs for self-expression, creativity and internal growth (Patterson 2006:217). All of the chefs with whom I spoke had travelled extensively to gain professional experience, though only Pam and Peta continue to do so. Nowadays Simon relies on the Internet to keep him up to date with international food trends. He considers, “The Internet’s fantastic cos we can go all around the world now and see what other restaurants are doing. A lot of restaurants actually submit recipes on their sites now”. Karl explained he continually adds all types of food books to his home library, “I’ve got upstairs, I’ve got books and books and books and books and books and every time I have to come up with something different I research it”. So each chef draws on their preferred resource for creative inspiration and to remain current with international cuisine as they make the exotic ours according to the desires of their diners or their television audience.

Ethnic Restaurants

Although a dramatic rise in the number of ethnic restaurants in New Zealand has taken place since the 1960s, the earlier situation was in direct contrast: “The one or two Chinese restaurants in the principal cities used to be situated in the Chinese area and to cater mainly for Chinese. Today (1959) there are Chinese restaurants more centrally situated in Auckland and Wellington providing western as well as Chinese food for the general population. One Chinese restaurant has recently opened in Christchurch and another in Dunedin” (Fong 1959:17). Although the *Telephone Directory Yellow Pages* for Auckland and Wellington in 1960 showed a combined total of two clearly defined ethnic restaurants,²³ which were both Chinese, the Auckland issue of this publication for 2008²⁴ shows countless ethnic restaurants. Additionally today, ethnic restaurants, similar to their mainstream counterparts, are categorised, for instance, Bring Your Own (BYO),²⁵ fully licensed and unlicensed. And unlike the Chinese restaurants of which Fong spoke, present-day ethnic restaurants usually serve their own culture’s food exclusively.

Van den Berghe maintains that in one respect “ethnic cuisine represents ethnicity at its best, because [it is] at its most shareable” (1984:396), because it takes far less effort to appreciate food, than to learn another language. Ethnic cuisine is the easiest and most pleasant way to cross ethnic boundaries, because the sharing of food is perhaps the most basic expression of human sociality. Van den Berghe also discusses the dilemma faced by ethnic restaurants, not only in New Zealand, but also internationally, whether to remain authentic and cater to the tastes of an ethnic clientele or to become ‘touristy’. He considers

²³ Bailey and Earle clarify that some restaurant advertisements in this publication did not clearly define any ethnic basis (1999:265).

²⁴ *Yellow: Auckland, L to Z*, Telephone Directory, 2008, pp. 1873-1901.

²⁵ Bring Your Own (BYO) – Licensing laws changed in 1962 which permitted a very limited number of licences for restaurants. A development was Bring Your Own restaurants which did not sell wine, but patrons could bring their own (Bailey & Earle 1999:265).

urban ethnic restaurants flourish, firstly, because of a local ethnic community and, secondly, as such businesses overcome ethnic boundaries and thereby become a means of internal tourism; by eating an exotic cuisine “one is literally ‘taking in’ the foreign culture” (Van den Berghe 1984:394).

I spoke with my general New Zealand interviewees about their eating out habits and preferences. Both Louise and Christine have small children so eat out rarely at present, though they both emphasised that prior to becoming parents they did and frequented ethnic restaurants regularly. The balance all eat out between one to three times a month and all enjoy various ethnic cuisines, yet when Diane analysed her dining out habits she surprised herself. Before answering she gave the question some thought and then announced:

Interesting actually, because I think if anything I’m eating ethnic less. I used to, for a long time, up until probably the last year or two, would probably have chosen Thai, Malaysian, Japanese I like a lot, I’d still go Japanese, but I still like Thai, but sometimes it’s really nice to go somewhere like GPK which is your more traditional brasserie-type food. And I probably, it depends what I feel like... Yes it’s funny, I think I’m going less ethnic currently than I used to. I still like Indian from time to time.

Diane has overlooked the fact that much of the food served at GPK is in fact ethnic in origin, for instance, many of the dishes are adaptations of exotic ones and a selection of pizzas represents a significant portion of the establishment’s menu. As a result of deexoticising this restaurant’s food, Diane has indeed made the exotic her own.

Although a sector of society avoids eating in ethnic restaurants entirely, research conducted in England suggests the factors that encourage an individual to eat in a specific ethnic restaurant also increase the chances of them eating in a wide range of such establishments (Warde, Martens & Olsen 1999:117). The tendency to patronise ethnic restaurants is associated with frequent dining out, and this pursuit is subsequently reliant on

features such as a high level of income, tertiary education, being middle-aged and holding a high ranking occupational position. Thus, Warde, Martens and Olsen suggest that social class is a principal factor in regard to dining in ethnic restaurants (1999:114). They maintain that eating “ethnic cuisine carries a certain level of cultural distinction” (Warde, Martens & Olsen 1999:118), as their findings suggest that those with higher levels of both economic and cultural capital were more inclined to eat in ethnic restaurants, as higher education and cultural capital, they believe, “enhance tastes for the exotic” (Warde, Martens & Olsen 1999:119). Both higher education and cultural capital usually increase the individual’s tolerance of others and also raise one’s curiosity generally, accordingly this type of person seeks satisfaction through a range of food genres. Frequenting ethnic restaurants presents patrons with opportunities to make the exotic their own, usually among appropriate surroundings as ethnic restaurants often attempt to embody a microcosm of the place from which the food originates.

New Zealand’s Cafe Culture

As the modern New Zealand café, which emerged throughout urban New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s to replace an array of American-style milk bars and bohemian coffee houses (O’Connor 1995:59), was perceived as the “less formal cousin” (Veart 2008:300) of the restaurant, New Zealanders increasingly accepted the idea of eating out as they realised the somewhat daunting prospect of white linen and silver service was not mandatory. Cafés, with their popular al fresco tables, contradict the earlier New Zealand



Figure 14: Al fresco dining in Germany (June 2008)

norm of dining inside, and mirror a typical European informal dining practice. Many New Zealanders have embraced the casual atmosphere of the café as it is better suited to our informal antipodean lifestyle. Even the word ‘café’ has the ability to conjure up images of leisurely consumption amid the cordiality of a European eatery. Café food lacks the structure of a meal as the diner may consume a mere bowl of soup or the equivalent of an entrée in a more formal establishment or even just enjoy a coffee. Though cafés are places where people meet over coffee or lunch (Pollock 2001:45), the invitation for ‘coffee’ is often used in an ambiguous context as various liquid options may be drunk during such meetings and it is probable that some type of food will be eaten, but the main purpose of ‘coffee’ is commonly the sociality of the situation. This ambiguity is not idiosyncratic to New Zealand though, as for instance, Pollock describes how hospitality is similarly extended in the Marshall Islands when people invite passers-by to, “Come inside and drink coffee”. The invitation is really to

socialise, to talk and to share some gossip, and although coffee may not be offered, some kind of refreshments will appear (Pollock 2001:41).

Besides operating a catering business, Pam also acts as a consultant for cafés which are experiencing problems, so prides herself on her knowledge of such enterprises. She offered her explanation for their popularity in this country:

we are hard-wired from what our mothers did...having friends round for afternoon tea with the tea-trolley and the beautiful china, or morning coffee, we're hard-wired for that and so this café culture, I think, has just taken over from what our mothers did. We still want a lot of the same emotional stuff that that provided, but we're doing it in a different place.

Pam is claiming that today's women, through cultural conditioning established long ago, need to socialise over refreshments with other women, but as they are often busy with career and family commitments nowadays they cannot replicate their mothers' home-based style. She also acknowledged the numerous other activities that take place in cafés today, for example, that business is often conducted, and she compared how New Zealand cafés differ from, for instance, those in Portugal where she noticed they were predominantly a male domain.

Jill expressed her approval of today's cafés particularly in view of a recent holiday in the South Island when she had visited a number:

Having stopped at these little country places on the way, the thing I would say about New Zealand food, having looked at it quite a lot, is that the cafés, I think there's fantastic cafés in New Zealand.... My general feeling is that breakfast, you know the whole brunch scene and café lunch, fantastic! The food is excellent, really, really good.

Veart describes the food on our café menus as including "slimmed down French nouvelle cuisine dishes, married to imagined simple Mediterranean peasant cookery, mixed with a bit

of Thai, Moroccan or prehistoric comfort food (the fish pie is a favourite here)” (2008:301). Thus, café food offers New Zealanders another opportunity to make the exotic ours, generally in relaxed and relaxing surroundings. Concerning the quintessential New Zealand baking offered in many cafés Johnston maintains that, “home-made still has currency today. On a café menu it encourages the customer to imagine simple delights being whipped up in a warm and friendly domestic kitchen (and no doubt speeds up sales)” (2008:8).

Predictions for New Zealand’s Food in the Future

One can only speculate where food will take us in the future, particularly in view of its remarkable journey of transition recently. When I posed various questions regarding this I received an interesting assortment of answers. Some people raised the possibility of an even more culturally diverse New Zealand population and the subsequent increase in ethnic cuisines in this country. Some claimed that our traditional food is obsolete, but Diane argued, “I can’t see Kiwis ever totally losing their love of meat like roast lamb and barbeques with heaps of meat”. Maddie believes that our traditional food will survive, but in an exoticised form. Gemma is predicting that vegetarianism will increase for a number of health reasons, and pointed out that the specialist Asian grocery store, the Tofu Shop, offers the widest range of vegetarian food at the best prices. Overall, there was a sense of optimism about the future of our foodways; that we will continue to develop a healthier mode of eating, for instance, by increasingly turning to seafood in place of meat, and our food will continue to improve in quality and exotic diversity, ever allowing us to make the exotic ours.

In reference to the future of New Zealand restaurant food, Simon claimed that, “With being an island, predominantly seafood is where we’re at”. Paul also anticipates the status of New Zealand’s fish as rising further in the future by stating:

When I go for lunch, I've got two restaurants down the Viaduct I go to, they both serve seafood. Years ago the only seafood you had was battered fish or if you went to a restaurant it was a flounder. Now we're constantly going and buying squid, calamari, whatever, prawns because it's there and it's cheap. We've got a huge resource that we used to ship to the rest of the world, now we can get it served up to us.

The types of fish available to New Zealanders now include varieties that were not so commonly consumed earlier, for example, squid and prawns and for many people, at an affordable price, which has probably both assisted in the shift in New Zealanders' acceptance of fish, in comparison to the discriminatory attitude introduced by the British settlers that survived until only a few decades ago (Burton 2003, Bailey & Earle 1999). Peta Mathias describes New Zealand as, "an island, separated from the rest of the world by oceans of delicious fish and seafood. We have finally made a huge effort to bring the outside in".

Incorporation of Maori Foods

Not only does a cuisine often demonstrate the differences between cultures, but it also offers a collective understanding of what it means to belong to a specific community. Food alone does not constitute a cuisine, this is manifest through the "meaning and myths surrounding the ingredients, the preparation and cooking, the preferred combinations of foods, and the when and where of eating" (Richardson 2003:60). Traditional Maori foods are being rediscovered including indigenous plants, such as pikopiko,²⁶ horopito²⁷ and kawakawa²⁸, which is being boosted by television programmes on both Maori Television and mainstream channels, and a number of contemporary cookbooks. For instance, Peter Peeti's recipes, which include, 'Poached Trout on Mediterranean Charred Vegetables', 'Smoked Whitebait,

²⁶ Pikopiko – a fern shoot (Peeti 2008:140).

²⁷ Horopito – a variety of pepper from the horopito tree which is very hot and leaves a burning aftertaste (Peeti 2008:140).

²⁸ Kawakawa – a variety of pepper from the kawakawa tree (Peeti 2008:140).

Olive and Macadamia Omelette' and 'Venison and Eggplant Stack' in *Kai Time: Tasty Modern Maori Food*, are excellent examples of New Zealand's 21st century cookery (Veart 2008:309). Peeti maintains that his recipes are simple and encourages readers: "Get out and gather some of the ingredients yourself" (2008:8). Thus, we are to select exotic foods and make them our own by marrying them with archetypal New Zealand foods from places such as our native bush, rivers and sea using Maori inspired recipes as our guide.

On the subject of Maori foods, Sonya said:

We can never have a style that's completely of our own, it's always going to have a *little bit* of an influence, but...the industry is just going to get bigger and bigger with a lot of Maori foods as well, with the ferns, you know pikopiko. I think that's where we'll really go.... I really, really think it will go more that way, more Pacifica if you like.

Despite a handbook produced by George Earp in 1849 which contained information for settlers concerning the use of New Zealand's natural food resources, the European settlers largely ignored this natural resource regarding it as a curiosity, preferring familiar imported commodities as soon as they were available. Simpson states, "It has taken well over a century for the Pakeha to overcome this cultural arrogance, and to relearn and understand the value and pleasure of the traditional Maori foodstuffs which the land provides" (1999:91).

I initially became aware of the revival of Maori food and cooking some years ago when I was served a meal garnished, not with the ubiquitous parsley, but with a pikopiko frond. As this was an unusual culinary adornment at that time, I believed something was afoot. Maori chef and Kinaki Wild Herbs company founder Charles Royal told Sally Hoffart in *Alive* (Issue 3, 2009) that he likens pikopiko to asparagus and uses it in cooked and raw dishes or as a garnish. After an uneasy start, he now also sells his indigenous culinary herbs and spice rubs throughout New Zealand to restaurants, hotels and home cooks, and has been

approached to supply at least a tonne of dried indigenous herbs annually for a new range of sausages in New Zealand, for example, pikopiko and pork or lamb and kawakawa. So in addition to the recognition of indigenous plants from a therapeutic perspective, it seems they are finally acquiring acknowledgement from a mainstream culinary angle.

During a visit to a farmers' market recently, I purchased a horopito infused, locally produced olive oil and this very act represented a paradox, because my choice was based on the flavour's novelty as I could have purchased a more common garlic, lime or chilli infused oil, but as a Pakeha I exoticised the indigenous; I made it Other. Maori cuisine is gaining prominence in this country in a variety of ways, accordingly I wonder how far mainstream cuisine might benefit from its inclusion in a similar manner to our adoption of numerous exotic influences. For instance, in *Kiwi Kitchen* Richard Till adapts a traditional Maori 'boil-up' by replacing brisket and mutton with a duck and by the inclusion of several exotic ingredients.



**Figure 15: Maori cuisine is gaining prominence in New Zealand in diverse ways
(Waipu, January 2009)**

Activities such as these are of symbolic significance in this country as they represent the presence of a culinary uniqueness that continues to echo our do-it-yourself tradition as we embrace the exotic, combine it with our often unique foodstuffs, to make it ours. The tendency to eat the food of the Other nowadays represents a worldwide trend as wealthier societies and the more affluent members of less wealthy ones partake. While New Zealanders are also enjoying the variety this practice offers, we are simultaneously taking a different approach. We are finally awakening to the unique cultural value of the foodstuffs of our natural places and are exhibiting a pride in their usage. Thus our modern food practices reflect what is happening in our society today: amidst globalisation and the plethora of exotic foods generally available, New Zealand as a young nation is in the process of forging local customs and traditions, which includes a distinctive cuisine. Michael King's words offer hope for Sonya's anticipated inclusive New Zealand cuisine:

To be a citizen of Aotearoa in the 1980s, even a Pakeha one, is to be inevitably affected by the enlarging Maori presence and the renaissance of Maori rituals and values...the Maori presence has given the land on which I live an historical echo, a resonance it would otherwise lack; it has put me in touch with symbols that may arise out of man's collective subconscious, but which here are Maori and therefore New Zealand in idiom (1985:177).

Home-Grown Fresh Produce

The cultural significance of New Zealand's quarter-acre section began at the time of the early British settlers as market gardening had been practised in Britain for centuries. Therefore the settlers maintained the culture of growing their own fruit and vegetables and subsisted off the bounty in various forms: the produce was eaten fresh or was subsequently transformed into home-made pickles and jams (Simpson 1999:70). The tradition of the New Zealand vegetable garden was perpetuated in practically every garden in the land until the 1960s, when various sociological factors, for instance, increasing numbers of women entering the

paid workforce, caused its popularity to diminish greatly (Walker 1995:154). The practice of growing one's fruit and vegetables in one's own garden did not vanish entirely though, and over the years certain gardeners have kept the custom alive. This continuity has preserved the activity so that it remains a part of the collective contemporary memory and this recollection may be partially responsible for the recent upsurge in home-grown produce throughout New Zealand, which Maggie Barry describes in "Natural-Born Gardeners" as a "noticeable shift back to growing our own vegetables" (*New Zealand Listener*, 15-21 November 2008).

Despite the very recent increase of interest in home-grown fruit and vegetables, most of the food in industrialised countries nowadays is produced elsewhere, which has given rise to a paradox from the consumers' perspective, as although a wider range of food is now available, which includes exotic foods with fewer constraints, seasonal or other, food has undergone homogenisation and a loss of specificity. Consequently, food has become increasingly alike from one country to the other (Fischler 1980:945). A result of relying on commercially produced food is that a growing number of people are merely consumers; they consume food that they have played no role in producing, therefore a perception exists by some that food possesses a mysterious, alien quality (Fischler 1980:945). This notion is reiterated by Meigs:

Most persons in the industrialized West do not grow food or see or know those who do. We encounter food in tins, in boxes, under plastic. We know food as inert matter dissociated from its human producers and natural context. In fact, children in societies such as ours must be taught that the impersonal lifeless packages we call "food" were originally living animals or plants (1997:104).

In view of this, I should not have been surprised when several of my New Zealand interviewees suggested the need to return to growing fruit and vegetables in our gardens, for a number of reasons. At the time that the interview process was taking place, September and

October 2008, warnings of food shortages and a financial recession were being made internationally and the cost of our groceries increased exceptionally. Accordingly Maddie stated, “People are experiencing financially that they need to grow a few things in their gardens now instead of having all these gardens looking absolutely fabulous with no food in them”. In spite of New Zealand possessing a short economic history, a series of cycles revealing alternating periods of depression and affluence have been recorded; a number of troughs preceded the Great Depression of the 1930s to be followed by a period of relative affluence until the economic downturn of the mid 1980s. A legacy of the earlier economic slumps in New Zealand was the boost to home production of fruit and vegetables (Bailey & Earle 1999:271). Although Christine mentioned cost as a factor of enticement to grow one’s own food she also raised the notion of trust with regard to commercially produced food:

There seems to be a bit of a swing back to growing your own and being more self-sufficient. I don’t know if it’s because prices are sky-rocketing or if it’s the trust factor, certainly for me it’s what motivates me to grow-your-own, actually knowing where your vegetables have come from, and so I’m starting small and hoping to learn.

As the mother of a young family, Christine is concerned about the chemicals that are introduced to commercially produced food; because we are frequently presented with contradictory information, the level of safety becomes unclear²⁹. At the time of our meeting, Christine had strawberries growing in a pot on her deck and a mixture of traditional and exotic edibles in the garden, which included, basil, tomatoes, beetroot, lettuce, capsicums, eggplants, and broccoli, none of which had received any chemicals to enhance their growth or appearance she explained. Not only is Christine attempting to grow safer food for her family, but this assortment of plants suggests that she is making the exotic hers at an elementary stage in her garden.

²⁹ The adulteration of food dates back to the origins of the sale of food, and is a characteristic that emerges within a society that is alienated from its primary produce (Goody 1997:351).

Christine is determined to become an accomplished home producer of fruit and vegetables so she is learning all she can by reading and explained that:

I did a free course at the local café a few weeks ago on kitchen gardening. There was a gardener and a landscape designer and they said it's massive. Everyone wants low-maintenance gardens except for their vegetable garden, it's a trend; low-maintenance gardens with high maintenance vegetable patches.

This led us to discuss how the mounting interest in garden-based food production would probably be resulting in a boost in sales of such items as seeds, seedlings, bushes and trees that would eventually produce food, and we wondered whether the range of edible stock would expand, including exotic items considering the suitability of our local climate.

Consequently, I visited a garden centre and was astonished to note the increased diversity of exotic plant material that is available at present to the amateur gardener. For instance, among the trees and shrubs were various guavas, olives, figs, avocados, and pepinos, papaya, pomegranate, cherimoya, persimmons, cape gooseberry, pine nuts, tea, coffee, kaffir lime, and numerous citrus, while today's vegetable seedlings also include the exotic, for instance, peanuts, chillies, various capsicums, courgettes and Asian greens such as pak choi, rock melon, and mesculin. I later spoke with Cara, the garden centre manager about the increased interest of food production by home gardeners and the incredible range of exotic edible plant material presently available. She informed me that this season has experienced the biggest growth in edible products ever, for example, she said sales of seeds had been "massive" as they represent a "cheap option" when compared with seedlings, but that seedling sales represented "the biggest turn-over ever and the biggest increase in sales". Cara said her centre had not only experienced a dramatic increase of interest from people seeking information about the plants, but also about fruit and vegetable gardening paraphernalia in general. In fact, she has had to increase the area allocated to edible stock by

a half so that now thirty percent of the entire area of the centre is dedicated to food producing merchandise. With regard to the more recent exotic arrivals, she said that they had been accepted extremely well by the public, and attributed their early popularity to the fact that people want variety. She confirmed that the ratio and diversity of exotic edible plants compared with the traditional ones has increased greatly very recently, accordingly the garden centre industry is undoubtedly encouraging New Zealand gardeners to integrate the exotic into their gardens (Cara, Garden Centre Manager, personal communication, 9 February 2009).

The Hua people, inhabitants of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, consider all food to possess the vitality and dynamism of living things, that is, food is not only alive, but also contains the transmittable ‘*nu*’³⁰, and the emotions and feelings of their human producers. The Hua’s understanding of food is one of relatedness; eating is an economic, social, nutritional, emotional and mystical event that connects one with the world. As all organisms are linked in Hua cosmology, *nu* flows freely between all living beings (Meigs 1997:104). Aspects of the beliefs held by this traditional society are echoed by those upheld by some people in the West, that not only does gardening offer healthful benefits to humans, but that regular contact with the soil is therapeutic. Noel O’Hare reported in “Get Down to Earth” (*New Zealand Listener*, 31 August 2002) that the countless bacteria in the soil activate a defensive immune reaction in humans that helps increase resistance to infection and reduce our liability to allergies and auto-immune disease. Liz echoed these sentiments:

I think there’s a trend at the moment towards people gardening and things like that again, which means people are going to be a lot more involved in their food. Whether that’s just from the need to touch earth or because people think it’s cheap to grow fruit and vegetables...people want to go back to that raw, fresh ingredient and I think that is where a certain level of food is going to.... It’s really back to good grains, good fresh vegetables, good raw ingredients. I think we’re going to

³⁰ *Nu* – All foods with the exception of wild species contain the *nu* of their producer. Foods nourish humans by virtue of the *nu* that is in them (Meigs 1997:104).

get back. I think that the move is really to real food as opposed to processed, processed, processed! Particularly with all the things about the provenance of food, and suddenly we find that Watties vegetables are actually grown in China or Turkey. Things that you would just take for granted [that are New Zealand grown] and they're not.

It would appear that matters pertaining to the purity of food progress at a particularly slow rate as the safety of food continues to cause anxiety amongst people. A few decades ago Fischler drew attention to the link between industrially processed foods and a lack of purity of food, claiming such production "breeds symbolic danger" (1980:946), while our more recent fears concerning our food are centred on chemical additives, trace elements and excessive processing. Liz added:

You go overseas, in Italy fruit and vegetables have a lot more flavour than the fruit and vegetables you buy commercially here. It's like they've never lost their heritage. I'm sure they have at one level, but a hell of a lot of markets seem to do very good fruit and vegetables and fish. Whereas we've got to that Foodtown supermarket level and now it's well actually, let's pull back to the green-grocer who actually gives you good service and a good product and likewise the butcher and the farmers' markets.

In view of the on-going debacle concerning the contamination of our food through the manufacturing process, it seems timely that people either become closer to the soil and their own food production, or at least return to the food habits of an era when raw, fresh ingredients offered more assurance of purity. Veart maintains that to gain confidence with regard to what we eat we need to produce it ourselves, or failing that, buy our food directly from the person who grew it, in other words, at farmers' markets which he interprets as an extension of the traditional roadside stall, but with the additional bonus that the consumer actually meets the producer of their food (2008:307). Chris Fortune, Chairperson of Farmers' Markets New Zealand, stated in his Chairperson's Report for 2008 that consumers increasingly want and need to be reassured about where their food has come from and how it

has been produced, and that they are becoming progressively more discerning in what they choose to buy.

Farmers' Markets in New Zealand

The Farmers' Markets New Zealand rules state that they sell only edible food (no arts or crafts) from a defined region, for example, 100 kilometre radius from the market place (not from overseas), and that goods are sold by the producer or somebody involved in their production, that is, no middle-men are involved (www.farmersmarket.org). While farmers' markets may have evolved from the roadside stall, the range of produce for sale from this older rural institution was much narrower than today's farmers' markets which usually include an assortment of locally produced exotic edibles, for example, European-type breads, savoury and sweet offerings often made by Greek or Turkish immigrants, Asian and European vegetables, New Zealand olive oil and Mexican chilli sauce. Moreover, I consider farmers' markets to be a modern-day version of the historical European and British markets, and we are returning to our roots as our support of them increases³¹.

Confirming the “fresh, nutritious produce” (Fresh: The Clevedon Village Farmers Market leaflet) objective on which farmers' markets pride themselves, Christine said, “I've noticed even the stuff I bought at the Parnell market on Saturday, the few bits I got there, they just taste so much better, even things like the oranges, they really taste like oranges, the lettuce is actually fresh and tasty like lettuce rather than bland”. When I asked Maddie, who sells her hand-made pasta at several Auckland farmers' markets, about her typical customer she described them as:

³¹ Over the last three years the community of Farmers' Markets has grown from 21 to 42 (Chris Fortune, Farmers' Markets New Zealand Chairperson's Report 2008).

a conscientious eater who wants to know where their food comes from, this is a market customer, this is not a supermarket customer, and they want to know where the produce was grown and they want to also know what they can do with the product. They want to know what they're eating, they're discerning buyers nowadays.

These sentiments were echoed by Peta Mathias when she stated that: "Consumers want to know exactly what they are eating and what's in it. They want it to be safe, to promote long life and health and not harm the environment". An ambiance of not only fresh quality, local, seasonal produce, but also that of the exotic seems to permeate the farmers' markets I have visited. The markets' artisans, both indigenous and immigrant, have seized the opportunity to fill a niche which has been created in the food market for fresh, and often exotic foods, whether by growing or handcrafting locally, and so are enabling us to make the exotic ours, often in a healthy and simplified way as the stallholders also offer their expertise on how to prepare their commodities. In regard to her range of hand-made pasta, Maddie explained, "I have lots of people coming in and talking to me about the food, asking me what they can do with it, then coming back and telling me and that's nice".



**Figure 16: Seasonal exotic and local produce at Hawke's Bay Farmers' Market
(January 2009)**

Globalisation has undoubtedly affected the eating habits of industrialised countries so that we are all eating similar food now. Nevertheless, at the other extreme, people are returning to local markets as they want to reconnect intimately with their food and to know its source; the people who are responsible for its production, the place, and how it was produced. They want to have a whole experience not to just buy food. At the global level limited opportunities exist for people to ascertain even the country of origin of their food, in short, people are alienated from their food. Local markets allow a re-experiencing of earlier times when people dealt with the producers locally. Maybe people are returning to food markets partly in response to globalisation and the alienation that it has created between people and their food. A face-to-face relationship with the producer, as well as the food, may be a response to the distancing of people from their food's production sources and they are attempting to retrieve and relive it.

In conclusion, it is clear that the nation's foodways are in the midst of the greatest transition for some decades as we adopt the exotic ingredients from other places and adapt them, maybe even improve them, to suit our local preferences. This process of appropriating the exotic food of others is not peculiar to this country, it is happening in most industrialised societies around the world. However, in comparison to our short history as a nation we have a relatively long record of embracing various food practices, perhaps seeking to fill the void caused by the lack of a national cuisine or perhaps merely because as Anna and Liz pointed out, as a nation we are obsessed with food. From meagre beginnings New Zealand's hospitality industry has risen to the challenge of the expectations set overseas by both incoming tourists and our own chefs, while this development has been complemented by the inclusion of skills and techniques by immigrant food artisans. Overall, New Zealanders appear positive concerning the future of their modern food culture; the growing acceptance of nature's bounty from the sea, the emphasis placed on Maori food influences, the increasing numbers of New Zealanders (re)turning to garden-based (exotic) food production. Today ethnic foodstuffs are obtainable by New Zealanders from a vast range of establishments, mainstream and ethnic restaurants, ethnic takeaway bars, shopping mall food courts, cafés, farmers' markets and local garden centres. It seems we are increasingly faced with a multiplicity of ways to enable us to make the exotic ours.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis regarding eating as a cultural performance in the early 21st century in New Zealand and the relationships between food and place, I wish to consider a number of topics that gained prominence during this research, both from the literature and from my interviews. The numerous references to the importance of the taste of particular foods, especially from my immigrant interviewees, and also on occasion from my New Zealand interviewees, represent an example of the unintentional emergence of a subject that suggested the existence of some significant meaning. An advantage of the semi-structured interview technique used in this study is its provision of freedom for interviewees to tell *their* story. When a theme is repeated voluntarily by a number of interviewees it should alert the interviewer that something of significance exists. In addition, I wish to look at extraordinary outcomes from the interviews that have left me perplexed. An example that generated my bewilderment was the common occurrence of the deexoticising or normalising of countless exotic foods by various interviewees. A number of features also emerged during the interviews which require further consideration, for example, during the analysis process discrepancies arose between interview content and the literature, for example, issues related to the maintenance of traditional dishes by immigrants. Lastly, I wish to consider a matter that did not appear in the literature, but which has intrigued me and concerns New Zealanders' attraction to European/Mediterranean type foods in comparison with their love of Asian cuisines.

A popular topic raised particularly by my immigrant interviewees, but was not found in the literature, was the importance of the taste of familiar foods, in brief, that these foods rarely tasted authentic here. As I have mentioned previously, Veeba found great discontent with the ingredients that she used to produce her Indian dishes in New Zealand. In fact, after much discussion she finally admitted that the lentils she purchased from an Indian grocery store tasted the same as those in India, however, similar lentils bought in her local supermarket did not. A number of people expressed disappointment as familiar fruits in New Zealand often lacked remembered flavours when compared with those from their homelands. Mia described how:

It's the taste. We feel back home it's different in taste. It's the same fruit, but I don't know why. The peach, when you eat the peach back home, it's more yummiier, sweeter, juicier and it doesn't have to be the same shape. In here you feel that all the same shapes, but the taste is not yummiier.

We discussed how her family felt about being unable to acquire the correct tasting foods and she explained that in the beginning it was disappointing, but that over time they have adjusted. She nonchalantly added, "If you're settled here and relaxed and happy with the life, you don't have to have everything perfect, that's my idea of life.... For us you can't compare how you're living over here with a peaceful country or in a war-zone". Such profundity overrode any significance of the sweetness of a peach, and we turned to the contentment Mia's family has found in New Zealand.

Although my immigrant interviewees could buy most of their familiar foods in New Zealand, they all stated that they generally differed in taste or texture or both from those at home. For example, Celine spoke of her use of *crème fraîche* when preparing certain dishes, but that New Zealand versions do not have the 'correct' taste that she recalls from France. Angelina mentioned a number of foods, for example, ricotta, which lack the taste that she

remembers from Malta, but she said it was the taste and texture of the bread from home that she misses the most, “When I want something which is similar, sometimes I find some nice *ciabatta*, not the same, but close”. Elsa too eats *ciabatta* as a substitute for the buttery tasting Chilean bread which she yearns for, “I cannot wait to go back to Chile to eat, *oh real bread*. The taste, it’s much, much more buttery. It’s delicious”. As both of these women are of Mediterranean descent bread not only plays a primary role in their nutrition, but it holds both a symbolic and ritualistic place in their lives, therefore, the taste of their own type of bread represents an extremely important part of their cultural performance of eating (Balfet 1975:310).

It seems that it is not just the connection between food and place that is important, but also that the correct taste of the food and place holds significance, the remembered taste from one’s formative years that remains with one and that sets the norm, from which all similar foods are measured. So if eating food with the correct taste generates a connection with home, does the disappointment of eating ‘imitation’ or ‘substitute’ foods, that is, foods with the wrong taste, generate feelings of disconnection? This thesis has been arguing the connections between food and place, but when the taste is not right does the opposite occur? Do immigrants think of their imagined communities at home eating their food with the ‘right’ taste, and does this generate more than dissatisfaction for them in their new home? Does the experience of eating food with the wrong taste materialise a sense of Otherness for immigrants in this country? Perhaps eating food with the incorrect taste serves to remind the immigrant that here is not there; while foods can be reminders of home, maybe they can simultaneously emphasise the immigrant’s distance from home.

In contrast to the importance of the taste of their food to my immigrant interviewees, and despite Peta Mathias’ claim that taste is vitally important to New Zealanders, few of my New Zealand interviewees mentioned this subject. Taste was mentioned, for instance, as a

reason for our embracing exotic foods by, for example, Pam, Sonya and Louise, though when Anna spoke of taste in relation to exotic foods, she echoed my immigrant interviewees by claiming that the foods eaten in foreign places never taste the same when eaten on her return to New Zealand. With regard to New Zealand food, my New Zealand interviewees tended to speak generally about its quality rather than specifically about its taste. Perhaps the taste of New Zealand food for New Zealanders while in New Zealand is merely taken-for-granted; it is just as it should be, it is what we are accustomed to.

Maybe it is only when New Zealanders are in a place which renders them the Other that the taste of their familiar foods gain meaning. For example, I visited a New Zealand Shop in London in June 2008 which stocks a selection of New Zealand foodstuffs and souvenirs.



Figure 17: New Zealand food in a New Zealand Shop in London (June 2008)

I spoke with the assistant and learned that the majority of the shop's customers are homesick expatriates who are seeking out various New Zealand foods, for instance, among the most popular items are potato chips, Weetbix, Marmite and (Sanitarium) peanut butter. Although British companies manufacture equivalent items to these, the assistant assured me that they lack the authentic New Zealand taste; even the British made Marmite has a different taste. Remembered food tastes, such as these examples, are lodged deep within our core. They are as Bourdieu states, "the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning, the lessons which longest withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain nostalgia for it" (1984:79). Accordingly, they come to symbolise a crucial part of our cultural performance of eating as we define ourselves as New Zealanders through them.

An outcome of interest to me from this study was the common practice by various interviewees to have deexoticised or "deethnicised" (Van den Berghe 1984:394) many exotic foods. Not only was I surprised that Leo, who after just three years of living in New Zealand had reinterpreted assorted types of Asian food as normal, when they had been unknown to him previously in his homeland of Venezuela, but also a number of my New Zealand interviewees had, in my opinion, recategorised numerous exotic foodstuffs. The status of many different exotic foodstuffs has, over time, through regular use and routine consumption, been redefined as commonplace by many New Zealanders, which has subsequently placed the ingredients in something of an ambiguous position when considering their significance to the practice of eating as a cultural performance. For instance, on the one hand, certain foods are exotic, based on the simple premise that they are not indigenous, but on the other hand, their exoticness has undergone a re-evaluation; the status of these foods as exotic has been disregarded by certain New Zealanders. Therefore, when such foods are eaten by those New Zealanders their cultural performance no longer represents an enactment of eating the Other from their viewpoint.

Countless exotic foods widely available to us nowadays have become so entrenched in our daily eating patterns that we have become oblivious to their exotic roots. Van den Berghe explains how this occurrence evolves: “Ethnic food can fall victim to its success. Once its popularity earns it a place in the mass market, it loses all value as an ethnic marker, and thus becomes ‘deethnicised’” (1984:394). To illustrate this point he refers to pizzas, which were originally a European ethnic food, but few people would now delude themselves when frequenting a Pizza Hut that they were eating in an Italian restaurant. Van den Berghe states that the pizza has been transformed through familiarity in North America, a process which has also taken place in New Zealand (and presumably in other countries too), not solely with regard to pizzas, but also numerous other foods of exotic origin, for instance, hot dogs. Regarding the examples I included on the Exotic Food Sheet used in this research, Helen, for example, stated, “I’m just used to eating all these things...they’re just normal...they’re just ingredients so I use them if I fancy them”. Therefore, when Helen eats these deethnicised foods connotations of a performance of eating the Other would not materialise for her.

As I detected inconsistencies between the literature and my immigrant interviewees’ explanations regarding the perpetuation of their traditional dishes, I felt further consideration to be necessary. Atkins and Bowler claim that the first generation of immigrants living in a new land usually maintains its traditional foodways as they deem this cultural performance of eating vital to the preservation of their ethnic identity (2001:273). However, this assertion may require reconsideration, at least in the New Zealand context today. Several of my immigrant interviewees including Angelina, Mia, Lara and Vema, who are all first generation immigrants to New Zealand, stated that the preparation of their traditional food was too time-consuming and too labour intensive. Therefore, they have either adapted the preparation of their customary dishes (for example, Lara currently uses ready-made pastes when making

Thai curries and Vema now purchases ready-made pastes and packs of pre-prepared vegetables for her Indonesian dishes), or they have ceased to make various traditional dishes as, for instance, their work commitments and young families require much of the women's time. Consequently, their families may eat such customary food only very occasionally. Alternatively, and consistent with the literature (Reid 1999), some families may eat their traditional food regularly, but only when it is prepared by an elderly female family member who joins them at a later date and has sufficient time to dedicate to such work, as occurred in Mia's family.

In contrast to my immigrant interviewees' opinions about the amount of time and effort involved to produce many traditional dishes, a number of my New Zealand interviewees, for instance, Jill, John, Louise and Sonya deemed the popularity of many exotic foods to be based on qualities such as their quick and easy preparation. Perhaps the difficulties experienced by my immigrant interviewees stem from traditional beliefs and practices around the creation of their customary dishes from the basic ingredients, the traditional practice that Lara recalled from her childhood when life, as she said, was leisurely, as opposed to today's more hurried pace of life with its numerous culinary time-saving short cuts, and which my New Zealand interviewees perhaps use and refer to. One of my objectives when I attended the ethnic cooking courses as part of the fieldwork for this study was to learn how to make the various customary dishes from 'scratch', as Lara referred to it in Chapter Three. When I enquired about this feature of the preparation I was told similarly, that it took too much time. As this discrepancy appears to represent a fairly modern trend it is unclear what the outcome might be concerning the eating of specific traditional dishes as cultural performances by particular groups. Will some traditional dishes vanish? And if so, what will be the implications regarding the ethnic identity of the cultures involved? This variance between the literature and immigrants' traditional food preservation in New Zealand offers an

interesting opportunity for a future examination of the foodways of immigrants to this country.

A further noteworthy matter to emerge from this work was the importance of individual choice, irrespective of general opinion or the gender trends of New Zealand society. During my New Zealand interviewees' narratives it became clear that a number of them were in control of the decisions they made in their kitchens, and were not dictated to by societal norms. Examples of their culinary autonomy arose when Frank and John explained their positions as the 'key kitchen person' in their respective households, which represents part of their roles as house husbands, or when Paul chooses to prepare a meal. When certain women interviewees, for example, Gemma, Helen and Sonya, choose to recruit the males in their homes to cook, thus allowing themselves a respite, the women are resisting widespread gender expectations. In other words, my interviewees frequently redefine gendered roles and also certain social beliefs regarding aspects of the enactment of eating as a cultural performance, as they behave independently regardless of what society's gender norms stipulate. Perhaps their behaviour is indicative of a softening of contemporary attitudes with regard to society's expectations concerning the tradition of women fulfilling the role of family cook.

In view of such gendered expectations by our society, an attempt to reinforce the acceptability of men in New Zealand's domestic kitchens is the subject of "The Rise and Rise of Baking" by Stacey Anyan (*North & South*, April 2009). Anyan details the formation in September 2008 of both the support group, whose current membership numbers approximately 300, called 'Blokes Who Bake', and a website, www.blokeswhobake.co.nz, by Steve Joll, through which men share recipes. Based on firsthand experience, Joll claims that, "Men can now appreciate wine, gardening and cooking, but if we mention baking we get a hard time". Joll considers baking to be an appropriate pastime for men, likening it to do-it-

yourself building projects in which, “You measure twice, cut once. You’ve got to be quite precise”. This evidence of men’s attraction into their private kitchens to bake may be another manifestation of the influence of the numerous male celebrity chefs over the ordinary New Zealand man, which mirror Frank’s claim concerning Jamie Oliver’s sway regarding his recently established comfort as the family cook.

As noted in preceding chapters, the contribution of New Zealand males to cooking in the past was essentially in the role of the professional chef in the public sphere, but in the private domain men’s participation was basically limited to the barbeque (Herda & Banwell 1988:39). Similarities have traditionally existed within the field of baking, that is, unless the processes of bread or cake baking were carried out in a professional capacity men were conspicuous by their absence. However, nowadays men seem to display greater interest, not only in food generally, as Maddie described from her experience as a farmers’ market stall holder, but also more specifically in a hands-on context within their own private kitchens, whether it be John preparing pasta or Steve Joll’s ‘Blokes’ baking cakes. Furthermore, this may not be unique to New Zealand men. A number of my immigrant interviewees reported a trend in Chile, Venezuela, Thailand, France and Argentina of increasingly more men, usually those less than forty years of age, actively cooking in the kitchens of their homes. My interviewees each attributed this contemporary development to the influence of male celebrity chefs.

A popular, yet unsolicited topic amongst a number of New Zealand interviewees that did not appear in the academic literature was the need for us to grow food in our domestic gardens. While this suggestion was partially to assist us to establish a more intimate knowledge concerning the source of our food, it was also aimed at alleviating our anxieties about the food we eat. Sally, for example, stated:

I think the importance of growing something yourself cannot be overstated, and I think if everybody grew something themselves they would cherish the way they cooked it. They would be flabbergasted at the pleasure of the amazing feeling of, 'I grew that and I cooked it and I could combine it with so and so'. I think it would instantly change in half a generation. It would change New Zealanders' attitude to food if they could grow something themselves. Imagine a child who has planted a seed and doesn't realise that peas come out of a pod and not a bag in the freezer.

As noted in Chapter Five the production of home grown edibles saw a revival in this country during spring 2008 and summer 2009. This upsurge is in spite of various sociological changes that have taken place in New Zealand over the past few decades and which have influenced the ability of people who may have wished to grow their own (exotic) food. For example, the increasing number of women to enter the paid workforce during this period has allowed families little time for the traditional weekend activity of gardening, while the shift within the Auckland region to medium density housing³² has resulted in numerous homes in the region nowadays having either a small garden or no garden at all. Accordingly, the once ubiquitous vegetable garden is no longer the norm in the average New Zealand domestic garden, which is resulting in people becoming increasingly removed from the production of their own food. Hence, a generation of New Zealanders is growing up, many of whom possess little or no knowledge of where their food originates; an issue raised by Meigs (1997:104) and Fischler (1980:945), though not specifically targeting the population of New Zealand, but rather those of nations generally.

This topic emerged again and was expanded on in "Food's Best Defence" (*Dish*, August-September 2008), when Victoria Wells spoke with Michael Pollan, a writer and professor at Berkeley University in the United States, about people's current relationship with their food and present eating conventions. Critical of issues relating to globalisation's

³² Medium density housing – implemented by the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy as part of its plan to curb Auckland's urban sprawl throughout the region

concomitant multinational food companies, Pollan claimed that many of us have now “lost touch with our food”, and that contradictory nutritional advice is responsible for a growing rate of food related anxiety internationally. He stressed that we should be eating whole, fresh and unprocessed food, and his recommendation was to “move food closer to the centre of your life”, which were concepts that exotic food importer Liz spoke of to me. Christine also expressed that part of her desire to produce fruit and vegetables in her garden was to ease her worries about the safety of the food that she fed to her family. Echoing Fischler’s negative judgments vis-à-vis nutrition towards the end of last century, which Fischler encapsulated in the term ‘gastro-anomy’ (1980:948), Pollan drew attention to the connection between the contemporary food crisis and today’s health crisis which is causing various governments to incur huge financial healthcare costs. Pollan maintained that we should eat local whenever possible, for example, by purchasing food from farmers’ markets or growing it ourselves. Such changes would expand our cultural performance of eating to include food-related activities at a basic level with such enactments as preparing the ground, tending and harvesting plants.

Pollan is suggesting that we adopt the principles of locavorism. John Corbett explained in “The Rise of Locavore” (*Dish*, February-March 2009), that a locavore is one who eats food grown or produced within a certain radius of their home, for example, from farmers’ markets or that which they produce themselves, in brief, food that has traceability and is seasonal. Numerous overseas locavores are described as food activists who disapprove of a global, industrialised food economy dominated by large corporate bodies. They claim that such companies have reduced food quality, diminished its diversity and that global markets have eliminated the seasonality of food. In fact, one wonders whether a correlation exists between the requirements of humans for those nutrients that are available from certain foods in their own area at particular times of the year. For example, is it purely coincidental that

citrus fruits are in abundance during the winter months when the vitamin C contained is believed to be efficacious for the symptoms of colds and influenza? Similarly, that the foods that naturally appear during the same season frequently complement each other, for example, lettuce, tomatoes and cucumber in summer or Brussels sprouts and chestnuts in winter.

In “Homegrown Dilemma” (New Zealand Herald, Saturday 14 March 2009), reporter Chris Barton described how overseas celebrity chefs, for example, Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsey, are attempting to convert the British public to eat purely local produce for a whole raft of reasons, which include nutritional, economic and environmental ideals. Although various New Zealand experts are currently examining the possible outcomes of this, it is speculated that its success could impact greatly on New Zealand’s exports and subsequently our economy. However, according to Barton, New Zealand too is promoting ‘buy local’ stating that in March 2009, Farmers’ Markets New Zealand began a nationwide, “honest-to-goodness goodness”, newspaper advertising campaign, which is being funded by the Government’s ‘Buy Kiwi Made’ Campaign. Similarly, in “Market Value” (*Cuisine* September 2008), Jane Adams described how Christchurch chef and local-food advocate Jonny Schwass challenged fellow New Zealand chefs to commit to sourcing local and seasonal food, “even if it’s a one-off kitchen-door delivery from a passionate grower with great quality produce”.

I have been metaphorically immersed in exotic foods for approximately one year now; I have, for instance, read, talked, observed, grown, cooked, shared and eaten it in a diversity of styles and places. Therefore, as I approach the end of this thesis I feel compelled to reflect on a number of important cultural questions about the more specific social messages that New Zealanders convey through their selection, purchase and consumption of exotic foods, for example, baklava, puy lentils or tofu. My initial answer, and to quote Louise, is that, “we eat a lot of these foods because we love them”, but that is too simplistic. The choice of exotic

food serves as an indicator to other members of society that one possesses knowledge of cultures and cuisines beyond one's own geographical and cultural boundaries, that is, it expresses a level of what Atkins and Bowler call "status currency" (2001:285). Through the selection of exotic foodstuffs certain New Zealanders demonstrate that despite geographical isolation they are not parochial, but rather that they are sophisticated and know what commodities are available internationally, and they have the ability to access and enjoy them. Exotic food is not consumed by the entire population, so this particular cultural performance of eating conveys, for instance, the individual's elevated social class position, a concept that resonates throughout Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984).

Numerous academics have written about various aspects of food from the global perspective (Atkins & Bowler 2001, Counihan & Van Esterik 1997, Fischler 1980), however, I failed to uncover any scholarly reference to a phenomenon that exists today in New Zealand which intrigues me. Nowadays significant Asian communities live in New Zealand which is reflected in the abundance of Asian food stores and restaurants in our midst. The popularity of numerous destinations in Asia for New Zealand travellers and our previous military presence in various regions throughout Asia also contribute to understanding why we adopted and maintain a desire for Asian cuisines. Nevertheless, although Europe represents a favourite place for New Zealanders to visit, we do not have comparable European, and in particular Mediterranean groups in New Zealand, yet many of our population wholeheartedly embrace the foods of those places. My fascination surrounding this conundrum drove me to discuss the subject with my New Zealand interviewees. Amongst the various responses was Sonya's belief that the ease of preparation, the taste and the health benefits were all central to our attraction to European/Mediterranean foods, based on knowledge she had gained through the various media. She focussed particularly on the longevity of certain Mediterranean

communities, for example, those in Sicily. However, Paul maintained it was the result of the average New Zealander's overseas experience and the exposure to certain foods and tastes gained while travelling through specific places:

When we do our OE, Kiwis, you tend to go to Europe, and they're camping and living from the markets, and certainly not buying a van and driving in India, though some do, and driving around Thailand or whatever. You go spending three or four months driving round Europe.

Countless New Zealanders, it seems, are fixated on things European. For example, *Metro* (December 2008) included an article entitled, "Ooh la la! French Auckland", written by Amy Cameron who asks, "Noticed a certain *je ne sais quoi* about Auckland lately?" Cameron states:

French people in Auckland have been quick to capitalise on our fascination with their culture. In a city where 20 years ago even a croissant seemed terribly sophisticated, there is now a profusion of French-run bakeries, delis and chocolatiers to choose from.... If you think you're seeing more French products on the shelves of your local deli too, you're right...imports of agricultural products from France (a category that includes food) increased by more than 45 per cent between 2006 and 2007.

Then Matthew Deller states in "Italy Down Under" (*Dish*, April-May 2009) how New Zealanders appear to be having an "*affaire d'amore* with Italy", as in 2008 we imported Italian goods, for instance, cars, kitchenware, furniture, espresso machines, clothes, shoes and luxury foodstuffs totalling almost three quarters of a billion dollars. He adds, "Even more noticeable is how Italy influences our everyday lives: in the way we eat, cook [and] drink coffee". And so great is the influence of Spain on our present gastronomic pursuits that the October-November 2008 edition of *Dish* was entirely dedicated to the food of Spain.

Alternatively though, and as raised in the Introduction of this thesis, is such exotic consumption by a group of people at the bottom of the planet, physically remote from the

Other and their exotic homelands something less tangible, less corporeal? Is our cultural performance of eating exotic food an effort to seek the fulfilment of a fantasy, in a similar way to the woman who recreated her farm in rural Auckland to resemble a corner of Tuscany? Do we yearn to return to far-away places to sample again exotic foods once discovered and consumed there in a comparable fashion, as when Frank cooks his paella and is transported back to Spain? Or do we in fact 'recall' places which we have not visited, in accordance with Appadurai's 'armchair nostalgia' (1996:78), maybe places we merely learn of from friends or family members, in a similar style to Sally's family when hearing about her great-uncle's wartime food adventures in India, or perhaps via the media? Maybe we really do want to abandon our cultural obsession with the slim body and just enjoy the pleasures found in food and eating as different academics (Counihan 2004, Sutton 2001) have described in certain European societies.

New Zealanders' adoption of exotic foods is in direct contrast with the practices of the inhabitants of places such as Italy and France as these nations rely heavily on their own regional cuisines for identity building (Counihan 2004, Grimes 2001). As Burton states, such culinary experimentation on its citizens, as that conducted in contemporary times in New Zealand, would not be tolerated in those countries (2003:58). So with regard to the emphasis certain New Zealanders place on the consumption of exotic food, we know the food is available, we have often travelled to the places where these foods originate and experienced them *in situ*, we know immigrants through, for example, work, as friends or neighbours, and we want to enjoy the variety, the flavours and the health giving properties of food available to us from other places. In accord with these sentiments Peta Mathias maintains that:

the privileged world now lives to eat rather than eats to live. People are living longer, are more affluent and are more frequently eating for pleasure and demanding upmarket, sophisticated products—lots of niche markets are being created. They want a peak experience—they want to die with only the memories of the great meals they have eaten. NZ is not trapped in the grip of tradition—we're

inventive, don't like rules and will try to think outside the square...most of all what people want in NZ is *taste* and we still produce and import food which tastes good and is good for you.

Another significant matter concerning the consumption of exotic foods from the perspective of those New Zealanders who have so readily adopted them into their diets is that they are additional food choices; they are rarely consumed to completely replace foods that were previously eaten. Therefore, many New Zealanders are simply expanding their dietary variety. Despite the emphasis placed on the exotic in this study, most of the New Zealand interviewees admitted to still enjoying our traditional fare. This pleasure may only be indulged in occasionally, such as when Christine visits her mother for a helping of 'comfort' food, or such food may be revised, as Maddie described, by the addition of exotic ingredients in the stuffing of everyday meat. In the article "Pavlova Paradise Lost" (*Cuisine*, March 2008), Burton states that today's exotic additions can easily "coexist with the simple, honest food that New Zealanders used to cook so well". There is a place for both the local and the exotic, thus our New Zealand cultural performance of eating assumes a growing number of guises as we retain the traditional, yet increasingly include the exotic.

However, it appears that New Zealanders are no longer satisfied with merely including the exotic, but rather we are on a culinary quest for improved versions of exotic foods, for instance, locally produced foods such as artisan made *bocconcini* purchased at farmers' markets in preference to that imported and available in the supermarket refrigerator. As a result, are we witnessing a contemporary enactment, as described by Bourdieu (1984:274), by those of higher social classes seeking new commodities to re-establish their social distinction? The exotic foods that formerly allowed them social difference have, in a number of instances, become taken-for-granted foods by growing numbers of people who did not formerly eat such commodities, therefore they have become everyday foods.

This contemporary gustatory insatiability of New Zealanders might help account for the exponential growth of indigenous food events such as the Wild Food Festival which began in Hokitika in March 1990 when 1,800 people attended. The event has been held annually since that year, and for reasons of safety and crowd management attendance has been capped at 15,000 since 2003 when 22,500 people attended. This annual festival is a celebration of the wild foods of New Zealand's West Coast and today represents "an iconic and premier special event in New Zealand" (www.wildfoods.co.nz). Each year innovative locals introduce additional wild foods which enable festival goers to push their gastronomic boundaries increasingly further. For instance, this year (2009) wasp larvae ice-cream, garlic and gorse hamburgers and pickled huhu grubs were added to a growing menu. In the report "Where the Wild Foods Are", by Sally Hoffart (*Cuisine*, January 2004), Mike Keenan, the festival organiser, described festival foods such as, bulls' penises, sheep's eyes, worm truffles, grasshoppers and ponga slugs as "frightening delicacies", but gave assurance that reasonably conventional fare was also available, for example, venison, snails, whitebait, ostrich, eel and paua.

The patrons of the Wild Food Festival have taken items from the wild that generally exist beyond our culturally defined notions of food, and through ingestion have inverted widely held norms of what is edible. This group of bold consumers also disregards the possibility of physical danger that Pelchat and Pliner (1995:154) speak of concerning food found in situations in which our culture fails to guide us, or perhaps their confidence concerning a positive experience is based on the fact that somebody else has previously eaten such food and survived (Pelchat & Pliner 1995:163). Hence, they have awarded otherwise widely-considered inedible matter the rank of ultra exotic as they seek the Other within. Thus, they are reindigenising New Zealand's foodstuffs. Alternatively, perhaps they are attempting to reinvent our heritage, albeit a fantasy heritage, as Simpson (1999:32) mentions

the British ceased to eat a range of rudimentary meats, for instance, cows' udders, during the 18th century. It appears unlikely that earlier New Zealanders ate these more radical offerings.

In addition to these extreme wild food adventures indulged in by rather intrepid eaters, a market has developed for our wild game meats and they are becoming increasingly available throughout many New Zealand restaurants and retail outlets today. This is in direct contrast with earlier times in this country. Until recently, activities based around the pursuit of game, such as deer hunting, were the domain of a privileged few. In the account, "The Name of the Game" (*Kia Ora*, February 2008), Wellington chef Martin Bosley compares today's availability of farmed venison with that of several decades ago when it appeared on New Zealand restaurant menus illegally. Restaurants were regularly inspected by government officials and substantial fines were imposed on offending restaurants. Bosley also recalls how the earlier venison required up to a week of marinating in order to tenderise it and lessen its intense gaminess. In fact, I recall my introduction to venison during a South Island holiday in the mid 1970s. It was, as Bosley describes, tender, gamey and, unbeknown to me at the time, but as it transpires, illegal!

The supply of wild game represents a growing business in New Zealand, which requires full-time hunters such as Callum Hughes, Allan Spencer and Brent Thomson who roam the remote bush of the South Island. In "Game On" (*Dish*, April-May 2009), John Corbett describes how the men commercially hunt wild pigs, goats, hares and rabbits, though deer, the bulk of their businesses, are usually shot from helicopters to satisfy the growing popularity of wild game meat. At present in New Zealand it seems there are two contradictory impulses. One is the lure and allure of the exotic, a desire to feel connected to and experience distant places via their foodstuffs. The other impulse is a growing pride in the local, the urge to recover and emphasise the indigenous, indeed the superiority of the local and indigenous. These impulses are being united in a variety of ways, for example, as

Spencer explains, his company is continually “experimenting with new and emerging tastes and combining them...two recently added gourmet smallgoods lines are wild rabbit *boudin blanc*³³ with garlic and fennel, and wild game *kranskys*³⁴”.



Figure 18: A Queenstown café offers a selection of wild foods (November 2008)

These opposing desires are also demonstrated within the entertainment sector by Wellington chefs and restaurateurs Al Brown and Steve Logan via their television programmes, DVDs and a cookbook which are all entitled, *Hunger for the Wild*. The men combine their passions for hunting and gathering of New Zealand’s wild foods and cooking by combining the local and indigenous food they acquire with today’s proliferation of exotic ingredients. For instance, the DVD *Hunger for the Wild, Series Two*, produced by TVNZ in collaboration with Fisheye Productions in 2007, shows the men hunting deer from a helicopter above the Fiordland bush which they later cooked with the addition of an

³³ *Boudin blanc* – A French white sausage traditionally made of pork, which includes the liver and heart meat, but does not contain blood (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

³⁴ *Kranksy* – A smoked, spicy sausage of Dutch origin (www.verkerks.co.nz).

assortment of exotic mushrooms. Likewise, an example from their book details how they caught crayfish on the South Island's West Coast and combined it with local mussels, salad greens from a "roadside deli [that is] a ditch by the side of the road. It was on prime waterfront, spring-fed real estate—the perfect place to find salad ingredients to go with crayfish" (Brown & Logan 2007:20), and a number of exotic ingredients, such as chorizo, garlic and basil to produce "Barbecued Crayfish with Mussel & *Chorizo Ragoût* & Basil Mayo" (Brown & Logan 2007:22).

Perhaps this recognition by many contemporary New Zealanders of the extent of the food resources that our land and sea offer, and which the early settlers chose to disregard, represents an awakening on our part. As a gardener and a lover of food I am fascinated at the parallels I perceive between firstly, the dietary transformation from our limited British based diet to the broad food practices in New Zealand today, secondly, the transition of the style of our domestic gardens, and thirdly, that these alterations began during a similar period to complement the introductions, both culinary and botanical, by the early British settlers. Modifications commenced in the 1970s in New Zealand domestic gardens as our gardeners began to enhance the prior gardenesque³⁵ style introduced by the early settlers with indigenous plantings. Barnett maintains that this change symbolised an awareness of the growing ecology movement, and the importance of national identity (1995:175). The shift away from English flora in favour of indigenous and sub-tropical plants reflecting the South Pacific is interpreted as New Zealand's coming-of-age, in other words, we have grown from a colony to a nation "aware of its indigeneity" (Longhurst 2006:589). Similarly, our combining of local and indigenous foods with the exotic may be understood as the culmination of our culinary rite of passage in an enactment of eating as a cultural performance by modern New Zealanders. Firstly, we perpetuated the dietary legacy left to us

³⁵ Gardenesque - promoted the idea that the garden should be markedly different from the surrounding landscape (Bradbury 1995:6).

by the early British settlers. Secondly, through various means we have been accruing a far-reaching array of exotic edibles, though we do not simply appropriate the foodstuffs of the Other, but rather we endeavour to seize the whole: the food, in many cases its production, the cultural cooking methods and authentic cooking and eating accoutrements. Lastly, we are making the exotic ours by bringing our fine local and unique indigenous fare into a continually growing repertoire of combinations with the innumerable exotic foods before us, and those we have yet to discover.



Information Sheet

Dear

Eating as a Cultural Performance in the Early 21st Century in New Zealand: An Exploration of the Relationships between Food and Place

This letter is to invite you to participate in a Master of Arts research project I am undertaking in Social Anthropology. It will consider the meanings that people in New Zealand associate with the variety of international foods available in this country today. My name is Moira Markwick and I am working under the supervision of Associate Professor Kathryn Rountree from Massey University in Albany.

Although much research has been carried out regarding food and eating, it has been from various angles, such as its connection with gender or identity, or from a psychological angle. The focus of this research will be firstly, on food's ability to act as a link between immigrants with home and secondly, between immigrants and other New Zealanders. Also, I am interested to discover why many other New Zealanders have so keenly embraced the variety of international foods available here today and made them part of their everyday diets, for example, pesto from Italy, tabouleh from the Middle East, and tortillas from Mexico.

It is intended that this research form the basis of my Master of Arts thesis. You have been invited to take part in this research as an immigrant to New Zealand / a New Zealander with an interest in exotic food / a restaurateur / an operator of a specialty food outlet (*those alternatives inappropriate to interviewee were removed*). Your participation and assistance in this research would be greatly appreciated. Your involvement in the research would consist of one interview, which will take approximately one hour. The interview would be held at a place and time convenient to you.

The interview will be conducted according to the ethical principles that underpin university academic research. As a participant you have the right to refuse to answer any questions and to end the interview at any time. You also have the right to withdraw information related to this study for one month from the time of your interview. I can reassure you that all the information you provide is confidential. Also your identity will be protected, should you wish this. With your approval the interview will be audio taped, but the tape recorder will be turned off at any time during the interview if you so wish. I will transcribe all audio tapes

Appendix A

myself. A transcript of your interview will be made available if you wish, and you are free to make any alterations within one month of the interview.

Should you have any questions now, or at any time during the project please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisor. Our contact details are:

Moira Markwick

413-7004

moiramarkwick@hotmail.com

Associate Professor Kathryn Rountree

414-0800 ext. 9044

K.E.Rountree@massey.ac.nz

Thank you for your assistance

Moira Markwick

“This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University’s Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz”.

Appendix B

Interview Guide – Immigrants

(Interviewer’s prompts in italics – did not appear on interviewees’ copies)

Can we begin with you telling me about your first impressions of food in NZ?	
What do your traditional foods mean to you – so far from home?	<i>Memories Nostalgia- family/home, sharing/social</i>
Where do you buy your traditional foods in NZ	<i>Availability /changed over time</i>
How do you feel about the foods you cannot buy	<i>Substitutes</i>
Can you tell me about any other changes to your diet since arriving in NZ?	<i>Other cultures’ foods</i>
Can you describe a typical mealtime and if changes have occurred since coming to NZ?	
How does food differ for special occasions and everyday?	<i>Rites-of-passage, rituals, cultural festivals</i>
What do you think about other NZers cooking/eating your food?	
Have you ever introduced your food to NZers	

Is there anything you wish to add?

Is there anything you wish to ask me about this work?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Appendix C

Interview Guide – General New Zealanders

(Interviewer's prompts in italics – did not appear on interviewees' copies)

We (NZers) have fairly recently combined many exotic foods into our diets eg noodles, olives, fajitas – what are your reasons for us doing this?	<i>Overseas memories</i>
How does the food of your childhood compare with what you eat today?	<i>Variety, everyday food, Eat out/ethnic restaurants</i>
If you have travelled overseas can you tell me which countries?	<i>Copied food Memories</i>
How did your interest in exotic foods begin?	<i>Travel, friends, media</i>
Who does most of the cooking in your home?	
How did you learn to prepare exotic foods	
Do you ever combine exotic and traditional NZ foods?	
Where do you buy your exotic foods?	
How do you feel about the idea that eating exotic food is linked with social class / sophistication?	
What are your predictions for the future of NZ food / cooking?	

Is there anything you wish to add?

Is there anything you wish to ask me about this work?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Appendix D

Interview Guide – Chefs

(Interviewer's prompts in italics – did not appear on interviewees' copies)

We (NZers) have fairly recently combined many exotic foods into our diets eg noodles, olives, fajitas – what are your reasons for us doing this?	<i>Overseas memories</i>
How would you describe NZ food today?	
How would you describe your typical diner?	
How do you feel about the idea that eating exotic food is linked with social class / sophistication?	
Can you describe why / how you introduce new foods to your menu?	<i>Follow trends People's requests Seasonal</i>
Regarding the exotic foods you include in your menu, what type of feedback do you get from diners?	
Can you describe any changes in NZers dining out habits over the years?	<i>Frequency Variety of food eaten</i>
What are your predictions for NZ food/cooking in the future?	

Is there anything you wish to add?

Is there anything you wish to ask me about this work?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Appendix E

Interview Guide

Specialty Food Outlet – Farmers’ Market – Self-Service Meal Preparation

(Interviewer’s prompts in italics – did not appear on interviewees’ copies)

We (NZers) have fairly recently combined many exotic foods into our diets eg noodles, olives, fajitas – what are your reasons for us doing this?	<i>Overseas memories</i>
How would you describe NZ food today?	
How would you describe your typical customer?	
Can you describe why / how you introduce new foods to your range?	<i>Follow trends People’s requests Seasonal</i>
What type of feedback do you get from customers?	<i>Memories - eaten overseas</i>
How do you feel about the idea that eating exotic food is linked with social class / sophistication?	
What are your predictions for NZ food in the future?	

Is there anything you wish to add?

Is there anything you wish to ask me about this work?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Appendix F

Interview Guide - Epicurean Delight

(Interviewer's prompts in italics – did not appear on interviewees' copies)

Would you briefly describe the Epicurean Delight evening please?	<i>Reason for holding event How successful</i>
Can you tell me how the idea for the evening came about?	
Can you describe how you chose the range of foods for the evening?	
How would you describe the attendees of the evening?	<i>Foodies, class, adventurous</i>
Would you describe any feedback received after the event?	<i>Memories – eaten overseas</i>
<u>General questions</u> We (NZers) have fairly recently combined many exotic foods into our diets eg noodles, olives, fajitas – what are your reasons for us doing this?	
How would you describe NZ food today?	
What are your predictions for NZ food in the future?	

Is there anything you wish to add?

Is there anything you wish to ask me about this work?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Exotic Food Sheet

Ciabatta - Sweet chilli sauce - Basmati rice - Corn chips - Kebabs -
 Mango - Soya sauce - Biscotti - Pastrami - Tacos - Pesto - Sun-dried
 tomatoes - Antipasto - Koftas - Fajitas - Tabouleh - Salsa -
 Couscous - Sushi - Croissant - Falafel - Guacamole - Poppadums -
 Extra virgin olive oil - Aioli - Tiramisu - Satay sauce - Turkish bread
 - Bocconcini - Basil - Cardamom - Chilli powder - Tofu - Soy Milk -
 Rice bran oil - Dukkah - Avocado - Naan bread - Chapatti - Fresh
 vanilla beans - Cassata - Filo pastry - Baklava - Baguette - Hoi Sin
 sauce - Rice noodles - Snow Peas - Lebanese cucumber - Mung bean
 sprouts - Roti - Tamarind paste - Vermicelli - Thai fish sauce -
 Muesli - Refried beans- Macadamia nuts - Fresh limes- Saffron -
 Ghee - Pepperoni - Quiche - Dijon mustard - Green peppercorns -
 Pan au Chocolat - Semifreddo - Cannellini beans - Goat's cheese -
 White wine vinegar - Chickpea flour - Palm sugar - Cherry tomatoes
 - Preserved lemon peel - Feta cheese - Focaccia - Pizza - Calzones -
 Gnocchi - Tagines - Polenta - Anchovy fillets - Wasabi - Aubergine
 or Eggplant - Risotto - Aubergines - Pecorino cheese - Spaghetti -
 Balsamic vinegar - Olive oil - artichokes - Capsicums - Courgettes or
 Zucchini - Crostini - Salami- Bruschetta -Ricotta cheese - Turmeric
 - Coconut milk and cream - Mozzarella - Calamari - Fresh chillies -
 Tortillas - Pâté - Penne pasta - Linguine - Brie - Camembert -
 Roquefort - Parmesan - Chorizo - Truffles - Hummus - Tahini - Pine
 nuts - Parma ham - Pancetta - Prosciutto - Mascarpone cream -
 Crème Fraîche - Orzo - Tagliatelle - Garam masala - Rigatoni -
 Pannetone - Celeriac - Radicchio - Figs - Olives -Lemongrass - Chick
 peas - Pak Choy - Bok Choy - Burritos - Gorgonzola - Endive - Oyster
 mushrooms - Juniper berries - Oyster Sauce - Sesame Oil -
 Blackbean sauce - Pistachio nuts - Garlic - Fresh ginger - Lasagne -
 Coriander - Paella - Pasta salad - Avocado oil - Arborio rice - Paw
 paw - Jasmine rice - Ready-prepared: Egg fried rice: Pad Thai Kung:
 Shrimp Green Curry with rice: Butter Chicken Smoked paprika - Red
 wine vinegar - Roma tomatoes - Sour dough bread - Cumin seeds -
 Enchiladas - Puy lentils - Porcini mushrooms - Brioche

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