

**Visual consumption: an exploration of narrative and nostalgia
in contemporary South African cookbooks**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Visual consumption: an exploration of narrative and nostalgia in contemporary South African cookbooks* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Francois Engelbrecht
6 May 2013

Student number 92422013

“What is patriotism but the love of the food one ate as a child?”

– Lin Yutang (Lin Yutang > Quotes [sa])

SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

This study explores the visual consumption of food and its meanings through the study of narrative and nostalgia in a selection of five South African cookbooks. The aim of this study is to suggest, through the exploration of various cookbook narratives and the role that nostalgia plays in individual and collective identity formation and maintenance, that food, as symbolic goods, can act as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of national identity and nationhood. This is made relevant in a South African context through the analysis of a cross-section of five recent South African cookbooks. These are *Shiny happy people* (2009) by Neil Roake; *Waar vye nog soet is* (2009) by Emilia Le Roux and Francois Smuts; *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) by Evita Bezuidenhout (Pieter-Dirk Uys); *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* (2008) by Lannice Snyman; and *South Africa eats* (2009) by Phillippa Cheifitz.

In order to gain an understanding of cookbooks' significance in modern culture, it is necessary to understand that cookbooks – as postmodern texts – carry meaning and cultural significance. Through the exploration of cookbooks, as material objects of culture, one is also able to explore non-material items of culture such as the society's knowledge, beliefs and values. Other key concepts to this study include the global growth of interest in food; the shift from the physical consumption of food to the visual consumption thereof; the roles that consumption, narrative and nostalgia play in constructing and maintaining personal and collective identities; and the role of food as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood.

Key terms: consumption and identity, cookbooks, food, food imagery, food porn, gastronationalism, gastroporn, gastrosopher, identity, narrative, national identity, nationbuilding, nationhood, nostalgia, recipes, South African cookbooks, symbolic goods, visual consumption.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Cookbooks tell unusual cultural tales, according to Arjun Appudarai (1988:3), a social-cultural anthropologist. Even though cookbooks can be categorised as belonging to the humble literature of civilisation, they are unique in the way they combine the pragmatism of a manual or guide with the sensory pleasure of literature. They not only represent culinary lore and tradition regarding the journey of food from the garden to the market, kitchen and table, but may also confront the reader with domestic ideologies, the logic of meals, the demands and restrictions of the household budget, and culinary and cultural customs and taboos.

By exploring and understanding the interdependency of the material and non-material process of culture and the meaning of objects in culture, one sees how it is possible for cookbooks, as material objects of consumer culture, to carry meaning and cultural significance, transcending their genre as mere food preparation manuals.

According to Luz María Jiménez Narvaez (2000:38), artefacts created or constructed by human beings as part of the material process of culture rely on the non-material process of culture. This refers to the shaping of knowledge, beliefs and values through the process of ordering, disordering and re-ordering meaning as a result of everyday engagements with life (Buchanan 1998:10). These two processes are interdependent. Therefore, by examining material artefacts of consumer culture, one is able to explore non-material items of culture such as the society's knowledge, beliefs and values around intangible and (potentially inexplicable) concepts like identity and nostalgia.

The interdependency of the material and non-material processes of culture also raises the issue of meaning in objects of culture. Early modernist designers in the twentieth century, for example the Bauhaus and the Ulm School of Design

(*Hochschule für Gestaltung*), believed that meaning was embedded in the object rather than in interaction between the object and the consumer. In the modernist moment of consumption of an object, referents – such as beauty, clarity, function and integrity – were uncontested and their use deemed unambiguous and explicit (Margolin 1995:349). One of the features of postmodernism is the erosion of the boundary between high culture and popular culture, resulting in objects of mass culture, like cookbooks, becoming texts to be read and interpreted (Jameson 1984:112). The postmodern moment of consumption of such an object is no longer an individual, private act of use by the consumer, but a social act, where the meanings of social codes and relationships as well as the self and self-image, are created and re-created. Consumption becomes a moment of self-realisation for the consumer (Firat 1991:72).

Yet despite being recognised as cultural phenomena, academics have been slow to study cookbooks, according to Cindy Lobel (2005:263), an assistant professor at Lehman College in New York. This notwithstanding the fact that more than 24 000 cookbooks are published annually – a figure that increases by between 5% and 10% every year.

According to Mollie O'Neill (2003:39), the author of three cookbooks and a reporter and food columnist for *The New York Times*, the interest in food has never been as passionate or extensive as it is at present. In the 1950s, fewer than 20 food magazines were published in the United States of America (USA). By 2002, 145 food magazines, quarterlies, and newsletters were produced in the USA, reaching roughly 19.7 million people. Seventy-eight million households subscribe to television's *Food Network* and 530 million books about food and wine are sold each year in the USA alone, according to *Publishers Weekly* (O'Neill 2003:39). This number has no doubt increased since 2003.

In addition to the multitude of hardcopy magazines and cookbooks, there are also thousands of websites devoted to food and cooking – a search on

Google™ for the term “recipes” returns more than 29 million hits (Lobel 2005:263). *Technorati.com*, an Internet search engine for searching blogs, had over 18 000 blogs dedicated to food listed in March 2013 (Blog directory 2013). The 2009 film *Julie & Julia* chronicled celebrity food blogger Julie Powell’s decision to dedicate a year to cooking every recipe in Julia Child’s seminal 1961 cookbook *Mastering the art of French cooking*, while at the same time telling Child’s life story (Ephron 2009). The film grossed close to \$130 million worldwide during its initial run at the box office, more than three times its \$40 million budget (*Julie & Julia* 2013).

The increased interest in food is not confined to the USA and Europe but is alive and well in South Africa. In 2007, *Sarie*, an Afrikaans woman’s lifestyle magazine, expanded its food focus by establishing a quarterly culinary magazine, *Sarie Kos (Sarie Food)* (*Sarie presents ...* 2007). In May 2010, *Sarie* grew its culinary offering even further with *Sarie Kos vir Mans (Sarie Food for Men)*, an annual, stand-alone magazine (New food magazine ... 2010). Major retailers Pick ’n Pay and Woolworths both publish culinary magazines. Pick ’n Pay’s *Fresh Living*, under the editorship of Justine Drake – a well-known South African chef, author and editor (Brown 2007) – is South Africa’s top selling food magazine with a circulation of 80 511 and year-on-year growth of almost 20% since its launch in 2007 (Customising content ... 2010). Woolworths’s *Taste* magazine has been collecting awards since its inception and was awarded the Best Customer Magazine of 2009 at the SAPPI Pica Awards (Advertise with ... [sa]). Other South African culinary magazines include *Avocado/Avokado* and *Food & Home Entertaining* while upmarket lifestyle magazines such as *Garden & Home*, *House & Leisure*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Tuis/Home* all have substantial sections devoted to cooking.

Shifting from print to television, the first season of *Come Dine With Me South Africa* debuted on BBC Entertainment in South Africa in October 2011. The series, a local version of the international hit television-series in which four contestants compete for the honour of being the definitive dinner party host,

was a resounding success in terms of ratings. It attracted over 100,000 viewers per premiere episode, reached more than 2.5 million DStv (MultiChoice's digital satellite television service) viewers in total and enabled BBC Entertainment to attain number one channel status for DStv viewers in the 21h00 to 22h00 time slot for the duration of the first series (The hit show ... [sa]). The second season was even more successful, with the premiere on 24 September 2012 attracting 147% more DStv viewers during the primetime slot than on any day in September 2012 preceding the broadcast. The premiere of the second season also proved to be a popular topic on social media with the Twitter hashtag #ComeDineSA trending in South Africa with over 2000 tweets – an increase of 366% compared to the premiere of the first season (Return of ... 2012).

In 2012 the production of *Masterchef South Africa*, the South African version of the popular reality-based television cooking series, also commenced, with a second season scheduled to air in 2013 (*Masterchef South Africa* [sa]). *The Ultimate Braai Master*, produced by television celebrity chef Justin Bonello, was also broadcast in 2012. In this series, 15 teams of two contestants paid homage to the *braai* by competing in various outdoor cooking challenges over an open fire. As with *Come Dine With Me South Africa* and *Masterchef South Africa*, the success of the first season led to a second season being announced (*The Ultimate Braai Master* [sa]).

Another popular programme for amateur cooks seems to be *Kokkedoor* (2013), on DStv's Afrikaans channel Kyknet at the time of writing. This reality-based television cooking series is focused on the concept of *onthoukos*¹ – food associated with memory and nostalgia. The aim of the programme is to identify the best cooks in South Africa, who are able to recreate traditional dishes associated with nostalgia and memory in a way that gives them a twenty-first century twist. Two teams of 10 contestants each compete for 13 episodes. The teams are split into the *Onthoukokke* – cooks with no formal training but armed

¹ *Onthou* means to remember.

with well-proven family recipes and experience; and the *Kinkelkokke*² – cooks and chefs who have all had some form of professional culinary training.

The success of online, high-end kitchen goods retailer *Yuppiechef.co.za* is another indicator that the interest in food and cooking is on the rise in South Africa. The company, founded in 2006, ships between 100 and 500 deliveries a day, with an average value of R1000 per order. The staff complement grew from seven to 29 people between 2011 and 2012 and the company is more than doubling its size year-on-year – with no sign of slowing down (Manson 2012).

The preceding figures clearly indicate that the global and national increased interest in food is no longer confined to culinary professionals. It has clearly crossed over into the mainstream and therefore one could arguably say that it has become a part of everyday culture.

Thus, one could contend that cookbooks are suitable subjects for analysis for various reasons. Firstly, as objects of consumer culture they carry meaning and cultural significance around the knowledge, beliefs and values of a society. Secondly, the current increased interest in food – both globally and nationally – means that exploring, describing and defining the meanings and values of contemporary cookbooks may be able to provide insight into contemporary society values and the role cookbooks play in fulfilling the needs (both physical and emotional) of contemporary society. Thirdly, in the opinion of Lobel (2005:263), academics have been slow to study cookbooks, which means that studies in this field may contribute meaningfully to knowledge about the topic.

While identifying source material for the literature review of this study, the paucity of South African (or even Southern African) academic literature became evident. The concepts explored in Chapter Two – gastrosophy, food porn,

² *Kinkel* means to give it a twist.

visual consumption, consumption and identity, the narrative of the cookbook and the role of nostalgia in consumption – rely heavily, if not exclusively, on literature originating in, and referring to, the United States of America, Europe and Australia. While cookbooks, magazines and television shows that relate to food are being produced in South Africa, not much is being written about them. Similarly, literature relating to the role of food as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood mostly refers to case studies in Europe, North and South America, Asia and West Africa.

As the exploration of material culture informs one about the knowledge, beliefs and values of a society, the lack of knowledge about South African cookbooks and their meanings could possibly mean that there is a lack of knowledge about South Africans' beliefs and values about food. As such, this study could contribute to the current knowledge about the topic.

The aim of this study is to suggest, through the exploration of various cookbook narratives and the role that nostalgia plays in individual and collective identity formation and maintenance, that food, as symbolic goods, can act as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of national identity and nationhood. This is made relevant in a South African context through the analysis of a cross-section of five recent South African cookbooks determined by purposive sampling to fit the aims of the study. These are *Shiny happy people* (2009) by Neil Roake; *Waar vye nog soet is* (2009) by Emilia Le Roux and Francois Smuts; *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) by Evita Bezuidenhout (Pieter-Dirk Uys); *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* (2008) by Lannice Snyman; and *South Africa eats* (2009) by Phillippa Cheifitz.

The analysis is undertaken by exploring, describing and defining how the shift in theoretical focus from the consumption of real food to the consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery gives meaning and cultural significance to cookbooks as artificial, designed material objects of culture. Furthermore, the concept of the narrative is explored, described and defined, in order to

investigate how it manifests in the selected South African cookbooks mentioned above, and to determine which myths and ideologies the narrative perpetuates. The concept of nostalgia is also explored, described and defined, and the role that nostalgia plays in consumption and the visual consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery is investigated. The five South African cookbooks chosen for this study are explored and described insofar as their representation of the concepts of narrative and nostalgia are concerned; as well as how these concepts contribute to establishing food as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood.

The study comprises a literature review and a visual analysis of selected examples of South African cookbooks in terms of the concepts outlined above. A semiotic analysis is used as the theoretical framework to explore and describe the five South African cookbooks that represent the concepts of narrative and nostalgia. According to Gillian Rose (2012:106), semiology can be defined as “the study of signs”. Semiotic analysis is concerned with the meaning of these signs, as well as the social effects of meaning: in other words, what values and beliefs are communicated through the signs of the image.

Mieke Ball and Norman Bryson (cited by Rose 20102:106) contend that:

human culture is made up of signs, each of which stands for something other than itself, and the people inhabiting culture busy themselves making sense of those signs.

The sign consists of two parts: the signifier and the signified, which are always integrated into each other in practice. Williamson (cited in Rose 2012:113) defines a sign as a “thing-plus-meaning”, where the signifier is an image or sound and the signified is an object or concept attached to it. The example Rose (2012:113) uses is the word “baby” as signifier, and the concept of “very young human unable to walk or talk” as the signified. However, the relationship between signifier and signified is not inherent, as can be seen by the fact that the word “baby” can also be a term of endearment or a derogatory term to indicate immaturity. The distinction between signifier and signified is crucial to semiotic analysis, as the conventional rather than inherent relation between

signifieds (meanings) and signifiers mean that the relation between a certain signified and certain signifier can be questioned and different relations between signs can be explored (Rose 2012:113).

The units of analysis are artefacts, a selection of five South African cookbooks, as noted above, determined by purposive sampling. The bias in favour of white South African authors is a shortfall of the study. If one's purpose in exploring contemporary South African cookbooks, as a material objects of culture, is to explore the beliefs, knowledge and values of contemporary South African society, the sample unfortunately restricts one to white South African beliefs, values and knowledge. At the time of sample selection for this study, the scarcity of cookbooks written by non-white South African authors that corresponded to exploring nostalgia's role in individual and collective identity formation and maintenance, made the current sample selection a preferable choice in terms of answering to the purposes of the study. However, the exploratory nature of the study, as well as the paucity of South African academic literature relating to the topics discussed in the study, suggests that the sample bias does not impact significantly on the validity of the study as an explorative study in the field of Information Design.

The research approach of the semiotic analysis is qualitative and interpretive, within a framework of postmodern visual culture and design. The purpose of the analysis is to explore to which extent the concepts of narrative and nostalgia and their myths and ideologies are present in the chosen cross-section of South African cookbooks. The meaning of the concepts of narrative and nostalgia present in the artefacts examined is determined by the data obtained from the analysis, as well as the data obtained in the literature review. All data is taken into consideration and conclusions are drawn.

Primary and secondary literature is used to explore, describe and define the cookbook as designed object within a framework of Design Culture as well as to explore, describe and define the shift from physical to visual consumption.

This specifically relates to the cookbook as an artificial, material object of culture. Moreover, the role that the concepts of narrative and nostalgia play in identity construction by consumers through the visual consumption of food in cookbooks, recipes and food imagery as explained above is explored, described and defined. Books, periodicals and other documents are consulted.

The research methodology is qualitative and interpretive, within a framework of design culture, visual culture, semiology and postmodern modes of investigation. What is meant by postmodern modes of investigation is that the research methodology incorporates aspects of post-structuralist theory that contributed to the formation of postmodernism. These include the overlapping of other academic fields with design (for example, sociology and philosophy); how material objects, beliefs and theories of culture determine each other; and lastly, determining the meaning of objects in the moment in consumption rather than believing that objects have intrinsic meanings.

Chapter One consists of an introduction as well as the background and aims of the study. Chapter Two identifies the role that the preparation and consumption of food, as well as the activities and artefacts surrounding it, plays in popular culture, through the exploration of gastrosophy, food porn, visual consumption, consumption and identity, the narrative of the cookbook and the role of nostalgia in consumption. The theoretical exposition in the previous chapter underpins the visual analysis of the selected cookbook examples in Chapter Three. Narrative and nostalgia is explored, described and defined within the sample, as well as the role of food as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood. Chapter Four consists of a summary of the preceding chapters, contributions of the study to the field, conclusions, shortfalls of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NARRATIVE OF THE COOKBOOK AND THE VISUAL CONSUMPTION OF FOOD

The aim of this chapter is to discuss aspects of the role that the preparation and consumption of food, as well as the activities and artefacts surrounding it, plays in popular culture. By exploring gastrosophy, food porn, visual consumption, consumption and identity, the narrative of the cookbook and the role of nostalgia in consumption, it should become clear that the cookbook or recipe book, as an object of a culture, carries meaning and cultural significance. The theoretical exposition in this chapter underpins the visual analysis of the selected examples in the following chapter of this study.

2.1 Gastrosophy

The food industry can be very lucrative, especially if one has made a name for oneself. The two top earners on the *Forbes* magazine list of highest-earning chefs, celebrity chefs Gordon Ramsey and Rachel Ray, earned an estimated \$38 million and \$25 million respectively during 2012 from their restaurants, cookbooks, television programmes, celebrity appearances and deli products (The top-earning ... 2012). They are not the only ones.

These celebrity chefs are better described as gastrosophers. According to Caillein Gillespie (1994:19), gastrosophy has its roots in the Greek word *sophos*, meaning wise, and can be described as a term used to indicate specialism in hospitality and gastronomy. Gillespie (1994:19) refers to what he calls “contemporary entrepreneurial chef gastrosophers” leading the culinary hospitality market. Through the combination of business, marketing, financial and entrepreneurial skills, public relations and the personality cult, these chef gastrosophers have achieved international celebrity status and radically changed perceptions of their profession.

Gastrosophers' restaurants and businesses have succeeded in elevating the food industry from feeding as an essential activity to sustain life, to the idea of culinary art. It is not merely about the presentation of food, but a holistic concept combining art and business, similar to the fashion world (Gillespie 1994:21). This has led to startling changes in the hierarchy of the culinary world. While lengthy apprenticeships and serving in the great hotels of the world were enough to guarantee public and peer recognition in the past, it has now become necessary to possess values or skills such as entrepreneurship, risk-taking and individualism in order to stand out from one's peers (Gillespie 1994:22).

While some of the better-known gastrosophers such as Emeril Lagasse, Bobby Flay and Sara Moulton are all professionally trained chefs, roughly two thirds of the hosts on *Food Network* shows have no professional culinary training (Mitchell 2010:525). This in no way impacts on an individual's chance of success, whether in producing a television series or a best-selling cookbook. This can be seen in the success of Rachel Ray, who initially learned about cooking by watching her grandfather and parents cook in the family restaurant (Mitchell 2010:526).

Christine Mitchell (2010:527) questions whether cookbooks written by celebrities are helpful in teaching people to cook, or whether they are merely vehicles to promote celebrity status. Interestingly, the conclusion drawn from Mitchell's sample of celebrity cookbooks, is that cookbooks written by women focus on teaching readers to cook, and to develop cooking as a skill to expand on, while cookbooks written by men mainly focus on the celebrities themselves and their preferences. Mitchell's ideas are tested in the next chapter of this study in relation to the sample of South African cookbooks.

Be that as it may, gastrosophers have considerable influence in contemporary consumer culture. In 2001, a new term entered the *Collins English Dictionary*, called the *Delia effect*, after British celebrity chef Delia Smith (Smith 2008). The

Delia effect was first observed when Delia Smith used cranberries on a television programme one day and cranberry sales rose by 200 percent¹ the next. The phenomenon was repeated when her egg boiling and frying demonstration led to egg sales increasing by 54 million. Likewise, sales of salted capers rose by 350 percent and demand for dates by 35 percent after she recommended their use in her *How to Cook* television series. Probably the most dramatic instance of the *Delia effect* is the case of the Lune Metal Products 10-inch frying pan. After Smith called the pan “a little gem which will serve you for a lifetime of omelette-making”, the firm, which was in dire financial straits selling a mere 200 pans a year, had to increase its staff complement in order to make 90 000 pans in four months. Currently the term the *Delia effect* is used to describe any increase in demand for a product as a result of celebrity endorsement.

Probably the most successful gastrosopher in recent times is the British chef Jamie Oliver (Biography 2011). Best known as *The Naked Chef*, Oliver has produced various cooking series for television, including *Jamie’s Food Revolution*, for which he won an Emmy award. His programmes have been broadcast in over 100 countries and his cookbooks have been translated into 30 languages. *Jamie’s 30 Minute Meals*, published in 2010, is the fastest-selling non-fiction book ever recorded, as well as the fastest selling book in the United Kingdom of Great Britain (UK) ever. He also owns two restaurant groups; *Jamie’s Italian* in the UK and *Fifteen*, which is in three international locations, as well as *Barbecoa* restaurant in London, in partnership with American chef Adam Perry Lang.

In 2001, Jamie Oliver cooked at 10 Downing Street at the invitation of Tony Blair, the then British Prime Minister. In 2003, Oliver was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for exceptional contributions to the

¹ The writer does not specify the location of all instances of the *Delia effect* mentioned in the article. However, as the article was published on the British edition of the *The Guardian* website, one may assume the writer refers to Great Britain.

hospitality industry. In 2009, he again cooked at 10 Downing Street for world leaders assembled for the G20 talks. Most notably, Jamie Oliver has moved, perhaps inadvertently, into the political sphere as a result of his success in influencing government spending. Through his television series *Jamie's School Dinners* and *Feed Me Better* campaign, Oliver has succeeded in convincing the British government to pledge £280 million for the improvement of school meals and to control obesity in British schools.

Locally, South Africa's best-known gastro-sopher is probably Ina Paarman, a culinary celebrity who branched out into television, cookbooks and deli products. Her success story started when she began a cooking school in a converted garage at her home in 1982, after abandoning her career as a lecturer in home economics. As the school grew in popularity between 1982 and 1990, she also started developing her product range, which later grew into Paarman Foods. Ina Paarman quickly became a South African authority on food. She was the first food editor at *Femina* magazine; wrote a food column for *Die Burger* newspaper; and has hosted various television cookery programmes on South African television. The first edition of her first cookbook, *Cook with Ina Paarman* (2001), was also published in this period.

In 1990, Ina Paarman's product range was moved to factory premises and expanded extensively. The range was distributed at local major retailers and in 1995 Paarman Foods began exporting to the UK and Australia. Currently, Paarman Foods also supplies customised products to restaurants and franchised food groups (Ina Paarman – About us [sa]). Paarman has been a contributor to Pick 'n Pay's *Fresh Living*, South Africa's top selling food magazine as previously mentioned, since its inception in 2007.

The interest in food in South Africa is such that celebrities from fields traditionally outside of cookery are also entering into it. Jeremy Mansfield, a well-known South African radio personality, and his wife Jacqui co-wrote a cookbook called *Zhoozsh!* (2009). South African novelist Marita van der Vyver, who has been living in Provence with her French husband, Alain, wrote a

cookbook called *Summer food in Provence* (2010). Tafelberg Publishers describe the book, a collection of stories, recipes and photographs, as “a mixture of imagination and common sense, gastronomic delights and everyday practicality” (About this book. *Summer food in Provence* [sa]). In 2010, Pieter-Dirk Uys, a South African actor well-known for his character Evita Bezuidenhout, published a cookbook called *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010), the title a pun both on the South African national anthem *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, and the Afrikaans word for food, *kos*, implying a national cuisine.

Two South African television soap operas, *Egoli* and *7de Laan*, both published very similar cookbooks, in which characters share their favourite recipes. What is interesting about these two cookbooks is that it is not the actors sharing recipes, but the fictional characters they portray. It is a very conscious move away from reality toward a perceived reality and as such is typical of the postmodern blurring of fiction and reality.

The *Egoli Recipe Book* (1995) is supposedly a collaborative effort by four of the characters in *Egoli*, with Nenna, Elsa, Donna and Mrs Naidoo each contributing her favourite recipes. Similarly, *Cook with 7de Laan* (2010), is allegedly written by seven characters of this popular soap opera. In the cookbook, the 75 recipes are divided by character and correspond to each character's personality traits. For example, Matrone (matron), an older, motherly character focuses on traditional South African comfort food recipes like milk tart and chicken pie, while Paula, a more glamorous character, shares her cocktail recipes (*Cook with 7de Laan* 2010).

Even culinary biographies, which move away from the cookbook to the memoir, are currently popular. According to *Publishers Weekly*, an international website devoted to news and articles about books, authors and publishing, *Blood, Bones & Butter* by chef and restaurant owner Gabrielle Hamilton (Random House 2011) tops their list of ten cookbooks in 2011 and is “hands-down the best memoir – food or otherwise – I've read in years” (Adriani 2011).

Looking at the preceding paragraphs, it is clear that nationally and internationally, interest in food is at an unprecedented high – and the cookbook, as a manifestation of this interest and a material object of consumer culture, carries meaning and cultural significance. The visual consumption of cookbooks, as well as the meaning that the consumption of symbolic goods such as cookbooks give to an individual's identity, is expanded further later in this study.

2.2 Food porn

According to Nigel Watson (2001:57), one of the features of postmodernism is an emphasis on the importance of style and appearance over content. Cookbooks, food magazines and television cookery programmes present a culinary worldview distant from the worlds of viewers and readers, often utilising unusual and expensive ingredients unfamiliar in the average kitchen. Actual preparation of the food featured in these cookbooks, magazines and shows is often a labour-intensive and demanding task, and the cookbooks, magazines and shows become aspirational rather than functional artefacts (Magee 2007). This leads to conspicuous consumption, which can be described as a consumer's ability to reflect a lifestyle choice through spending, identifying with and consuming products that correspond to the way in which consumers would like to be perceived. In the postmodern world, this is perceived as real power (Watson 2001:54-55).

Watson (2001:61) describes themed shopping malls as the light-hearted construction of alternative realities brought to people as part of the everyday experience of shopping. Similarly, one could argue that the distant culinary worldview of the cookbook, food magazine or television cookery programme presents people with an alternative reality as part of the everyday activity of interacting with food. The choice of cookbook, food magazine or television cookery programme is a lifestyle choice in which consumers choose their

alternative reality. In other words, the symbolic value of an item of consumption, as opposed to the use value, has come to the fore. While one could argue that affluence has always been reflected through material objects of culture, including food (for example caviar *versus* gruel), it has certainly taken on a stronger dimension with postmodernism.

However, consumers not only choose their alternative reality, they also do this merely by looking. According to Jean Duruz (1999:232), looking becomes a route to absorbing the meanings of food, even when the food itself and what it symbolises is elusive. O'Neill (2003:40, 45) calls this 'food porn' and states that the movement in the consumption of food from 'food-as-fuel' to 'food-as-aesthetic-experience' has made the dawn of 'food porn' almost inevitable (O'Neill 2003:40, 45). She further describes 'food porn' as food writing and recipes so removed from real life, they can only be used as vicarious experiences (O'Neill 2003:39). British celebrity chef Nigella Lawson even refers to her cooking show *Nigella Bites* as 'gastroporn' in an interview with the *New York Times* (Hirschberg 2001).

In 2005, Frederick Kaufmann (2005), contributing editor for *Harper's Magazine*, interviewed Barbara Nitke, a photographer who began her career as a still pornography photographer in 1982 and worked on more than 300 pornographic films. Her work has been published in pornographic print publications such as *Swank*, *High Society*, *Climax* and *Nugget*. During the interview Kaufman and Nitke watched food television together in Nitke's Manhattan apartment and discussed similarities between sexual pornography and gastroporn (Kaufman 2005).

For several weeks prior to her interview with Kaufmann, Nitke had been watching pornographic films and *Food Network* shows alongside each other, examining the similarities. Nitke's conclusion was that gastroporn and sexual pornography address the same basic human desires and functions; and simultaneously idealise and demean those desires and functions

(Kaufman 2005). The consumer simultaneously believes in the possibility and impossibility of what he sees. In sexual pornography, the sex is impossible to replicate because of the lighting and camera angles. Likewise in gastroporn, the printed recipe seldom matches the dish prepared on-screen. In the words of Bob Tuschman, *Food Network* programming vice president, “We create this sensual, lush world, begging you to be drawn into it. It’s a beautifully idealised world. Who wouldn’t want to be a part of that world?” (cited in Kaufman 2005).

In Kaufman’s Nitke interview, various parallels are drawn between sexual pornography and gastroporn. Nitke compares the moment of consumption (eating) at the end of a food programme with orgasm in sexual pornography and claims that the videographic style is very similar in both: a slowing down and lengthening of the moment, coupled with extreme close-up videography. Nitke also identifies various pornographic archetypes in the personalities and styles of various celebrity chefs. For example, Rachel Ray is identified as the girl-next-door pornographic archetype. Ray further blurred the boundaries between food and eroticism by posing for soft-core men’s magazine *FHM* in 2003. Popular images from the photo shoot include Ray licking chocolate syrup from a wooden spoon, dressed in frilly underwear; and a shot where her legs are smeared with egg whites. Nitke also compares certain culinary skills to sexual skills. For example, she calls the fast hand chopping of onions and garlic the “hanging-from-the chandelier-having-sex” moment. It is the ‘wow’ moment that the consumer desires to watch again and again.

Richard Magee (2007) discusses gastroporn or food porn as exemplified by Nigella Lawson, as well as – on the flipside of the coin – food Puritanism, as exemplified by Martha Stewart. However, Magee maintains that these categories only seem like opposing terms initially, and that closer investigation shows that the same cultural and nutritional myths and notions drive these categories. Stewart’s food Puritanism becomes an obsessive fantasy that has as little in common with real eating as pornography has with real sex, while Lawson’s eroticised domestic guise enforces the metaphor of hunger for food

as representative of sexual appetite. Both food and sexual pornography simultaneously idealise and degrade basic human functions (Kaufman 2005).

Magee (2007) further states that the link between food porn and sexual pornography is voyeurism: both have a primary focus on food or sex as performance. Food is separated from taste and nutrition while surface appearance is vital.

It is clear that with the rise of food porn, the instrument of food consumption has shifted from the mouth to the eye, and cookbooks, food magazines and television cookery shows are primarily consumed through looking.

2.3 Visual consumption

The visual consumption of food is not a new phenomenon. As early as the 1950s, the French theorist Roland Barthes (1972:79), in his seminal work *Mythologies*, wrote about the shift in theoretical focus from the consumption of real food to the consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery. Barthes (1972:79) discusses cookery in *Elle* magazine and maintains that it is an idea: the concept of cooking as opposed to the reality of preparing food with all the problems associated with food preparation. The primary function of *Elle* magazine is to convey the concept of 'smartness' to a working-class readership and the cookery in the magazine is based on ways of disguising the often-ruthless nature of food. Cookery is meant for "the eye alone" as sight is a more refined sense than taste (Barthes 1972:78). Barthes (1972:80) calls the cookery in *Elle* "fiction". Reflecting on the visual aesthetic of food photography, he remarks that the food has "magical qualities", a simultaneous aloofness and attainability; and that consumption can be accomplished by simply looking (Barthes 1972:79). The item of food constitutes information, transmits a situation and signifies something (Barthes 1997:21).

To better understand the act of reading a photographic image, two essays by Roland Barthes are discussed: *The photographic message* (Barthes 1977), in which he discusses the press photograph and *The rhetoric of the image* (Barthes 1977), in which he discusses the advertising image.²

2.3.1 *The photographic message*

In *The photographic message*, Barthes (1977:15) states that the press photograph is a message, emitted from a source along a transmission channel and received at the other end, as depicted in Figure 1.

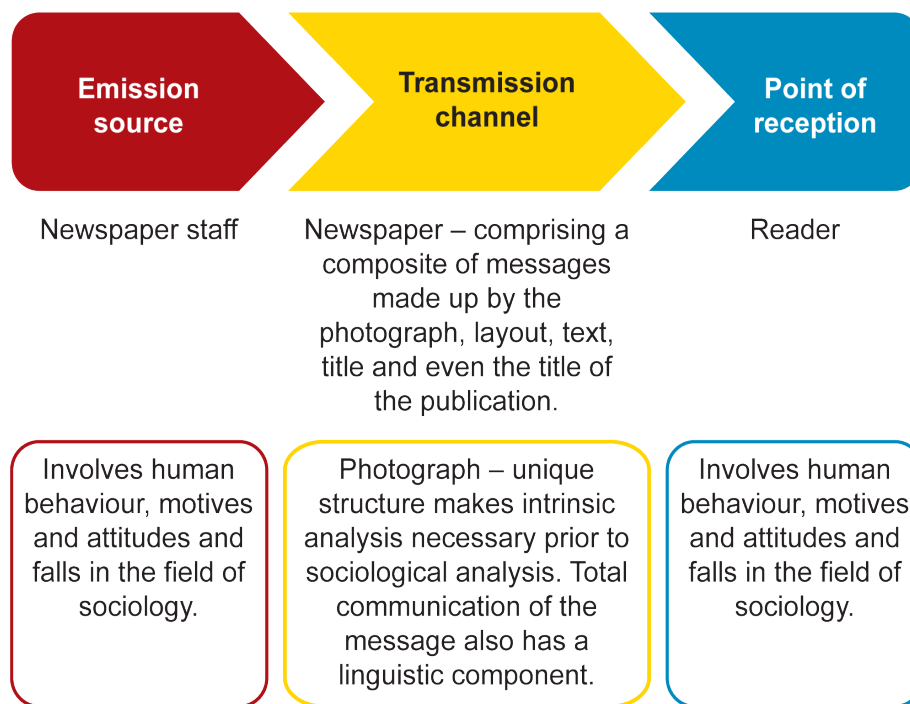


Figure 1: *The photographic message*.
Diagram by the author.

In the case of the press photograph, the emission source is the newspaper staff in their various functions and the point of reception is the reader. The channel of transmission is the newspaper itself, comprising a composite of messages

² Both essays are in his collection of essays, *Image music text* (Barthes 1977).

made up by the photograph, layout, text, title and even the title of the publication.

The three parts that form the message cannot be investigated using the same methods. The source of transmission and points of reception involve human behaviour, motives and attitudes and fall in the field of sociology. The photograph, however, has a unique structure and it is necessary for an intrinsic analysis prior to sociological analysis. In addition, the structure of the photograph is in communication with the text of the publication – title, caption and article content – and therefore the total communication of the message also has a linguistic component (Barthes 1977:16). This communication between image and text is especially relevant in fulfilling the mythical and ideological functions of the cookbook image. The cookbook image is not meant to function in isolation, but to form part of an all-encompassing collection and communicate the myths and ideologies of the whole, rather than the parts of the whole. As such, the text accompanying the image will influence the meaning and significance of the image.

The photographic image is unique in that it is an image without a code. It is a reduction of reality but not a transformation and there is no need for a code between object and image. The photograph presumes to be an analogue or equivalent of reality (Barthes 1977:17). However, the laying down of secondary meaning on a photographic image represents a coding of the analogue and happens at various stages of photographic production (Barthes 1977:17). Barthes discusses six procedures of connotation or adding meaning, specifically trick effects, pose, objects, photogenia, aestheticism and syntax. For the purposes of this study, it is only necessary to discuss pose, objects, photogenia and syntax.

Pose contributes to what a photograph signifies by depending on stereotyped metaphors which have instant significance in popular culture: for example, hands clasped together while facing upwards is commonly interpreted as an

attitude of prayer and could thus be seen to imply piety or purity. Objects rely on association of ideas for significance: for example a bookcase signifies the intellectual or a used mixing bowl next to a cake signifies homemade. They refer to well-known, transparent signifieds while remaining complete in themselves (Barthes 1977:22). Connotation in photogenia remains with the image; however, it is an image enhanced by techniques like lighting and exposure. Specific techniques signify specific properties, such as a motion blur to indicate speed or a sepia or black and white image to signify the past (Barthes 1977:23). Barthes (1977:25) discusses syntax by discussing pattern and sequence. In a sequence, the signifier of connotation lies in the sequence as a whole, instead of in any one fragment of it. The significance of an object in an image only becomes obvious when viewing the whole sequence of events. For example, an image of eggshells becomes significant only when one sees the sequence, which includes an image of a cake, in communicating the signifier home-baking.

As mentioned previously, the total communication of the message also has a linguistic component. In press photography, text accompanying the message is meant to connote the image and expand or anchor the meaning of the photograph. In a reversal of history, the image no longer illustrates the words but the text expands the meaning of the image. Barthes (1977:25) maintains that the image previously clarified the text, whereas the text now burdens the image with meanings, values and morals. And deciphering the code of connotation in order to read a photograph depends on a reader's knowledge of the signs; just as reading a text depends on knowledge of the appropriate language (Barthes 1977:28). This is relevant to the cookbook image as well, which relies on a caption or text reference to expand and explain the meaning and significance of the image.

2.3.2 *The rhetoric of the image*

In his essay *The rhetoric of the image*, Barthes (1977:32) begins by pointing out the etymological root of the word 'image', which is the Latin word '*imitari*',

meaning to imitate, copy or mimic. He then asks whether analogical representation can transcend being a mere grouping of symbols to producing true systems of signs. How does meaning get into the image, where does meaning end and what is there beyond meaning, are further questions that Barthes asks.

Barthes attempts to answer these questions by discussing the advertising image, as the signification of meaning in the advertising image is always intentional. The signifieds, formed by specific attributes of the product, have to be conveyed in a clear way, with the best possible reading in mind (Barthes 1977:33). One could argue that the signs in food imagery, specifically with regard to the cookbook, food magazine and television cookery programme, can be read in the same way, with an intentional signification of meaning. As it has already been established in this study that the cookbook has become an aspirational rather than functional object (Mage 2007), the signified of the cookbook is not so much urging the consumer to prepare the food portrayed, but rather to consume it visually by buying and reading the cookbook. It is no longer necessary to physically prepare and eat the food to consume it.

Barthes begins his discussion of the advertising image by analysing a Panzani advertisement (Figure 2). Barthes (1977:36) maintains that the advertising image discussed offers three messages: a linguistic message; a coded iconic message; and a non-coded iconic message. He first discusses the three messages specifically as they relate to the Panzani advertisement, and afterwards in generality.

The first message Barthes identifies is the linguistic, which consists of the headline and food labelling. The code of the denotative message is the French language and to be able to decipher it, a working knowledge of French and the ability to read is necessary. There is a connotational element to the linguistic message in addition to the denotative through the implied 'Italianicity' of the name Panzani (Barthes 1977:33).



Figure 2: Panzani advertisement.
(Barthes 1977:xvii).

The coded iconic message consists of a series of discontinuous signs, whose order is unimportant as they are not linear. The first sign is the concept of a return from food shopping at the market. The signifier is the open string bag with items of food spilling over the table, unpacked. The signified is the idea of freshness and domestic food preparation. Knowledge of a culture of daily food shopping is necessary to read this first sign, the culture of 'shopping for self' as opposed to 'stocking up'.

The second sign of the image is found in the colour of the image, specifically the red, yellow and green and the implied 'Italianicity'. It is worth noting that the signified of colour use in the image is not Italy, but 'Italianicity'. The knowledge this sign draws on lies in the point of reception, specifically the familiarity of a French audience with certain cultural stereotypes. Barthes (1977:34) maintains that an Italian audience would not perceive cultural signifieds in the name, nor in the tomato and pepper in the image.

The third sign that constitutes the message is the selection of varied objects in the shopping bag. Firstly, the signified is the idea of a total gastronomic experience provided by Panzani, as if nothing more is needed for a wholesome and tasty meal than Panzani products. Secondly, the fresh produce surrounding the Panzani products humanises the industrial process, suggesting the processed product is at least as good as the fresh product (Barthes 1977:35).

The fourth sign transmits an aesthetic signified, found in the composition of the image, which is reminiscent of countless alimentary paintings, and depends heavily on cultural knowledge (Barthes 1977:35). In addition to the four signs, the placement of the advertisement in a magazine and the deliberate legibility of the labels and captions further inform the reader that this is, indeed, an advertisement. However, inasmuch as the advertising character of the image is fundamentally functional, it avoids signification (Barthes 1977:35). These four signs all depend on the readers' general cultural knowledge and refer to global signifieds, filled with positive and joyous values. This then is the coded iconic message.

However, if these signs are removed from the message, one is still left with a number of identifiable objects assembled in a common space, and, even divested of all knowledge, these objects still communicate information. The real objects in the scene make the non-coded iconic message, the signifier and signifieds of the message in the third message communicated by the advertising image (Barthes 1977:35). Even though the composition of the photograph involved a certain arrangement of setting, the transition is not a transformation and the signs are not coded, resulting in a message without a code. The level of knowledge needed to read the message is basic and almost purely anthropological, comprising knowledge of what an image is and what each object is. The third message is a literal message, as opposed to the coded symbolic second message (Barthes 1977:36).

Having discussed the three messages of the advertising image as they relate to the Panzani advertisement, Barthes (1977:37) explores each message in generality, in order to understand the overall structure of the image and the inter-relationship of the three messages: the linguistic; the literal (denoted); and symbolic (connoted).

Barthes starts his discussion of the linguistic message by stating that the linking of image and text has been common since the advent of the printed book, although it has not been sufficiently studied from a structural point of view. He questions whether the image duplicates information in the text or whether the text clarifies the image. In mass communication, the linguistic message is very prevalent and can be found as caption, title, accompanying article, film or cartoon dialogue. Neither the position nor length of the linguistic message seems to be significant, merely that it is present. Barthes (1977:38) maintains that western civilisation is still a civilisation of writing and identifies two functions of the linguistic message as it relates to the coded and non-coded iconic message: anchorage and relay. While the function of relay is rare in fixed images, it is vital in film, where dialogue, though a succession of messages, communicates meanings not found in the image. The relationship between text and image is complementary and is especially prevalent in cartoons and comic strips (Barthes 1977:41).³

Anchorage is frequently found in advertising images and press photography, and is the most common function of the linguistic message (Barthes 1977:40). As all images are polysemous with "floating chains" of signifieds, the reader is free to consider some signifieds and disregard others. Various techniques, such as the linguistic message, are employed to narrow down possible signifieds. The text identifies the elements of the scene and answers the question 'what is it'. In this way, anchorage enables the correct level of perception, focussing

³ For the purposes of this study, further exploration of relay will not be pursued.

understanding and enabling interpretation. Barthes (1977:39) describes anchorage as a vice that keeps connoted meanings from multiplying.

In discussing the denoted image, Barthes (1977:42) states that the distinction between the literal (denoted) and symbolic (connoted) message is operational. In other words, the literal message is a message by eviction, made up of what is left behind when the signs of connotation have been mentally removed. One could almost say that the literal or denoted message is defined by what it is not, rather than what it is. At the same time, the message is sufficient, since it contains at the very least the meaning of identification. Since the literal message functions at both an evictive and sufficient state, it is perceived to have a Utopian character, radically objective and cleared of all connotations.

To illustrate, Barthes (1977:44) opposes the photograph, as message without a code, to the drawing, as a message with a code. The coded nature of the drawing is illustrated at three levels. Firstly, to reproduce objects or scenes, certain rules are needed for the act of transposing or reordering, for example perspective. Secondly, in drawing a distinction is made between significant and insignificant. A drawing does not reproduce everything, while a photograph cannot intervene with its subject matter without resorting to trick effects. Therefore, the denotation of the photograph is more pure than that of the drawing. Thirdly, the act of producing the drawing is an act of connotation by an apprentice while the photograph, as message without a code, has a unique relationship of signifieds to signifiers: one of 'recording' rather than 'transformation', while the absence of code reinforces the myth of the 'naturalness' of photography. The photograph is never experienced as illusion, but as 'having been there' and 'this is how it was' (Barthes 1977:44).

Barthes (1977:44) calls the photograph an anthropological revolution in human history in that it creates a new space-time category, an illogical combination of "here-now" and "there-then", of spatial nearness or closeness and temporal anteriority, the consciousness of something "having-been-there" as opposed to

it “being-there”. One understands the real unreality of the photograph at the level of denotation, the unreality of ‘here-now’, as the photograph – as message without a code – is never experienced as an illusion. The photograph creates a reality of ‘having been there’ as every photograph contains evidence of ‘this is how it was’.

Barthes (1977:46) starts his discussion of the symbolic or connoted message by stating that the signs of the symbolic message are discontinuous and that regardless of size and position, even if a sign covers the whole image, it is still a sign separate from the other. Therefore, the system of signs is a normal system in which all the signs are drawn from a cultural code. What makes it original is that different kinds of individual knowledge (practical, cultural, national and aesthetic) all contribute to differences in the reading of the image and add to the number of readings. Even though Barthes (1977:46) identifies four connotative signs in the Panzani advertisement, there are probably others.

Barthes (1977:46) goes on to state that although these different kinds of individual knowledge exist in a variety of individuals, it may as well exist in one individual and in a reading “the one lexia mobilizes different lexicons”. To elaborate, each person has bodies of individual attitudes (lexicons), which influence different readings of the image (lexia). The variety and identity of these lexicons make up the person’s idiolect or ‘language’ of interpretation. Each lexicon, or body of attitudes, is coded as if the psyche of each individual is expressed like a language. The language of the image comprises both the utterances sent out (at the level of image creation) as well as utterances received. Barthes (1977:47) insists that language must include what he calls ‘surprises of meaning’.

Barthes identifies another problem in analysing connotation in that no specific analytical language corresponds to the idiosyncrasies of its signifieds. The example he uses is the term ‘Italianicity’ in reading the connoted message in

the Panzani advertisement. A special metalanguage of connotation to be used in analysis is not yet specialised (Barthes 1977:48).

Signifiers of connotation, specified according to the chosen substance, correspond to the general ideology. These signifiers of connotation are called connotators; and a group of connotators, a rhetoric. The signifying aspect of ideology therefore appears to be rhetoric. Although rhetorics vary by substance (sound, image, gesture), they do not necessarily vary by form. Barthes argues that there may even be a single rhetorical form common to literature, images and dreams. Therefore, although the rhetoric of the image is specific in that the physical restrictions of vision apply, it is also general in that figures are mere structured arrangements of elements (Barthes 1977:49).

It is vital not to merely inventorise the connotators but also to understand that they make up discontinuous traits in the total image. Not all elements of the lexia can be transformed to connotators. A certain element of detonation in the discourse enables the discourse (Barthes 1977:50). The denoted message in the Panzani advert is located in a general setting with its own space and meaning: a syntagm, or construction, of denotation. This construction or syntagm of denotation is what connects, actualises and verbalises the discontinuous connectors, by naturalising and establishing the system of the connoted message. Barthes concludes that the structural functions are polarised in the total system of the image. On the one hand there is the syntagmic flow of denotation; on the other a paradigmatic condensation of 'scattered' connotators. Total meaning is divided internally between the system as culture and the syntagm (Barthes 1977:51).

It becomes clear that Barthes' breakdown of the image into a linguistic message, literal (denoted) message and symbolic (connoted) message creates a clear structure for the analysis of signs within the visual consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery. Once the signs have been read, consciously or unconsciously, focus shifts to the influence or effect the

signifieds have on the reader/consumer and his behaviour. This influence or effect is explored in the next section.

2.4 Consumption and identity

According to Russell Belk (1988:139), one first has to understand that “we are what we have” and grasp the meaning that consumers bestow on their possessions, before one can understand consumer behaviour. With increased affluence, consumption moves beyond fulfilling physiological needs to satisfying social and psychological needs. Among these, the search for identity is of great interest not only in cultural studies but also in marketing (Kwok, Nancarrow & Wright 2001:350). The possession and consumption of products is one of the ways in which consumers can give meaning to their identity. They know, even unconsciously, that the products they own and use are closely connected to their sense of self (Mittal 2006:550).

Robert Bocock (1993:50) defines consumerism as an ideology with the central belief that the meaning of life can be found through buying things and pre-packaged experiences. He maintains that consumption has become interwoven with the practices around identity development; and influences the way people form and maintain an awareness of who they are, or wish to be (Bocock 1993:x). Consumption is therefore not just a functional economic process, but also a social and cultural process, concerned with social and cultural symbols. This is not to say that economic factors do not matter. Economic factors do play a large part in patterns of consumption. However, once individuals have been affected by the social and cultural practices of consumerism, they can and do desire the goods portrayed in the media, even though they may not be able to afford them. In a recession, the desire to become a specific type of person through the consumption of symbolic goods may lie dormant until the means to consume said goods become available again (Bocock 1993:3)

A shift has taken place in postmodern consumption, resulting in social roles such as family structures, sexual partnerships, leisure-time activities and consumption being central in peoples' lives, displacing work roles (Bocock 1993:4). By the end of the twentieth century, social roles outside of work have as much significance attached to them as work roles had in earlier generations. People work not only to survive but also to be able to consume, and it is the idea of consumption, as much as actual consumption, that drives them (Bocock 1993:50).

According to Wilfred Dolfsma (2004:275), the identity of an individual and his dedication to that identity, are central ideas in answering the question of why consumers consume. Certain goods, like cars, clothes and music, are often used to signal identity, and there is a high level of consumer involvement in choosing those goods. These kind of products may be called 'symbolic goods' and often include food. One could argue that with the shift to the visual consumption of food, cookbooks may also be classified as 'symbolic goods'.

These symbolic goods signify who people are, how they see themselves and how they wish to portray themselves to others. For example, two people, one from a working class background and the other from a middle class background may have equal financial strength or 'economic capital'. However, the person from a working class background may lack cultural capital, a term first described by Pierre Bourdieu (1984:3) in his seminal work *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Bourdieu states that the act of consumption in reading a work of art is also an act of decoding. However, this assumes knowledge of a master code, which means that the ability to 'see' is dependent on knowledge. A work of art only has significance and meaning for the one who has the cultural knowledge or code to decipher it. Bourdieu (1984:1) also states that all cultural practices and preferences in art are products of social origin and education. Taste becomes an indicator of social standing. Thus, the person lacking cultural capital lacks the knowledge on how to behave in keeping with middle-class sensibilities (Kwok *et al* 2001:350). According to Mintz (cited by

Kwok *et al* 2001:353), sweet milky tea is historically associated with the working class, while an espresso or Earl Grey tea is associated with the professional class. In this instance, food becomes an indicator of social standing, and may be affected to portray a desired self to others.

If possessions are an extension of the self, there then exists a logical division between the self without possessions, and what the self becomes as a result of the ownership or consumption of possessions. To better understand the role of possessions in the construction of the self, it is necessary to first investigate the “*sans* possession” self (Mittal 2006:551).

Within consumer behaviour literature there are two different views of the “*sans* possession” self. Within the “personal identity” view, the consumer’s identity lies within the personal narrative, and this narrative is constantly constructed and played out as the self reflects on itself, questioning what it is and what it is striving to become. Within the “trait-centred” view, the self is made up of a number of personal qualities. These include personality (as perceived by the consumer himself), as well as behaviour and body appearance. This can be best explained by using the analogy of a mirror, where the consumer not only sees what is reflected on the surface, but also what lies within. This view is often called self-image and measured on a binary opposition scale with item pairs like polite/rude, modest/vain, and so forth (Mittal 2006:551).

Mittal (2006:552) proposes a third view of the self, based on six components. The first five components that make up the ‘I’ are all ‘*sans* possessions’ and are our bodies; our values and character; our competence and success; social roles; and subjective personality traits. The sixth component is an individual’s possessions. When one investigates the ‘I’, the way human beings see themselves, one finds that this sense of self is not only tied up in questions such as ‘who am I?’ or ‘what am I?’ but also extends to an individual’s possessions. Consumers constantly evaluate products as ‘not me’ or ‘oh, it’s so

me’ (Mittal 2006:552). In Mittal’s view, possessions cannot be separated from the elements that make up the self.

These elements differ in proportion from one person to the next, depending on their importance to that individual, as illustrated in Figure 3. Values and character may be paramount to one individual’s sense of ‘I’; while for another, body image might overshadow every other element. For some consumers, ‘possessions’ is the most important element in the mix that makes up ‘I’. The things they own are an intimate part of their lives and they start to see themselves as part of these products. These objects are tools to bring their inner ‘I’ out on display, so others may see them for who they are (Mittal 2006:554-555).

Together with the ‘I’ – how the consumer sees himself – there is also the sense of ‘me’, or how the consumer believes others see him. This view is made up of the same elements as the ‘I’, mainly because a person uses the same template he uses to define himself, to evaluate others. Therefore, if body image is the most important element in the consumer’s sense of ‘I’, he will also judge others by their body. Likewise, if material success is important to the ‘I’, possessions will be the measure by which others are assessed (Mittal 2006:555).

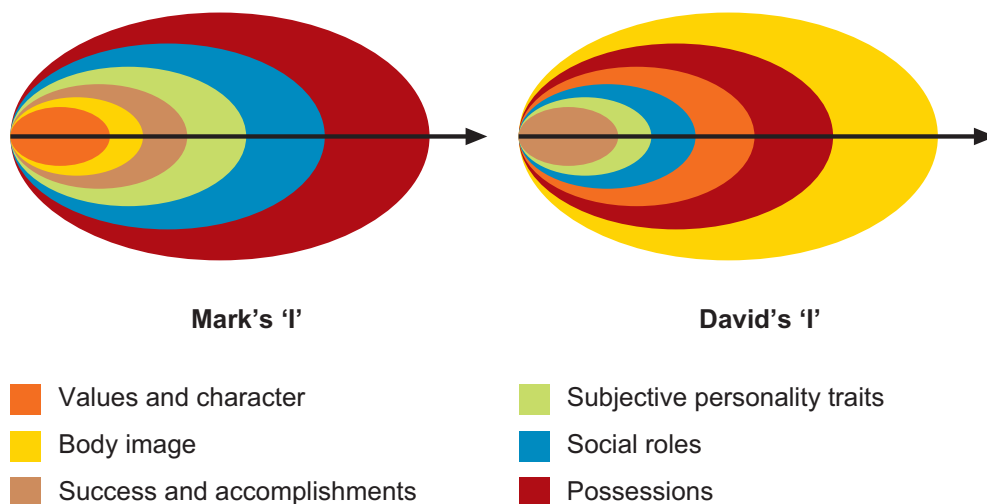


Figure 3: The various components that make up the self, 2006.
(Mittal 2006:554, redrawn by the author).

Furthermore, there is a certain tension between the 'I' and the 'me'. When there is a difference in importance in the elements that make up the 'I' between two people, one might perceive that he is without value in the eyes of another. Consumption plays a big role in resolving this tension (Figure 4), either by choosing products that project a desired 'me', or by choosing products more indicative of the true 'I', thus bringing the projected 'me' closer to the true 'I' (Mittal 2006:555).



Figure 4: Tension between 'I' and 'me' with consumption as reconciler, 2006. (Mittal 2006:556, redrawn by the author).

A cookbook by the latest flavour-of-the-month gastrosopher could be an object projecting a more desired 'me', whereas a traditional cookbook containing the recipes for food reminiscent of a consumer's childhood could be a product more indicative of the true 'I'.

According to Mittal (2006:556-557), there are various ways in which possessions become part of the extended self. He calls these 'mechanism of possession' and they are:

- by choosing products that fit the self-concept
- by the amount of resources invested in the process of acquiring the product
- by the amount of resources invested in the use of the product, for example learning to play a musical instrument
- by bonding with the product post-acquisition and it becomes symbolic in communicating our 'I' to others

- by the act of collection a specific type of product), and
- by associating the product with a specific time, place or person, in other words, by memories.

Cookbooks, as symbolic goods, signify who people are, how they see themselves and how they wish to portray themselves to others. In the same way, people use narratives to understand the world around them, understand their own lives and understand their identity as individuals and members of society (Escalas 2004:168).

2.5 The structure of the narrative

According to Rashmi Adaval and Robert S Wyer (1998:207), much of the social information people receive is conveyed in narrative form. In his essay *Introduction to the structural analysis of narratives* (1977), in which he suggests a common structure of the narrative, Roland Barthes commences his discussion with the statement that the narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is present in an endless variety of forms and substances, and crosses the boundaries of language, society, physicality, culture and history. It can be found in “myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass window, cinema, comics, news item, and conversation” (Barthes 1977:79). Every group of people in history has had narratives (Barthes 1977:79).

It is worth noting that Barthes mentions items of mass culture, such as comics and cinema in his list. Cookbooks, as popular items of mass culture, are therefore also worthy of study to ascertain their narrative.

This universality of the narrative makes it necessary for a common structure of differentiation and identification, open to analysis (Barthes 1977:80). Barthes proposes that the structure of the narrative is searched for in narratives themselves. However, as there are millions of narratives, it is necessary to

follow a deductive approach, that is to say propose a theory and then work from the theory toward the different types of narrative which either correspond to or differ from the model (Barthes 1977:81).

Barthes (1977:82) suggests that linguistics be used as the founding model for a structural analysis of narratives, as the linguistics model can provide narrative with preliminary terminology and principles. A sentence, as an order of units and itself the last unit of analysis to fall within the scope of linguistics, is made up of words and can be called a short discourse, while a piece of discourse (whose units are not necessarily sentences) is a long 'sentence' (Barthes 1977:83). Narrative and the sentence share the same structural characteristics. The difference between them is that narrative cannot merely be reduced to the sum of its sentences. A narrative is a long sentence, which contains in every constative sentence a short narrative. The major verbal categories – tenses, aspects, moods and persons – are found in the narrative.

By using linguistics as a basis for the structural analysis of the narrative, it becomes clear that the narrative is more than a collection of statements. By using the linguistic concept of levels of meaning, it is possible to classify the elements that make up the narrative (Barthes 1977:85).

These levels are in a hierarchical relationship with each other, each with its own units. The units have two types of relationships with each other: distributional (on the same level) and integrational (across levels). However, no level can create meaning in isolation. A unit only assumes meaning when it is brought into a higher level. The example that Barthes uses is that of a phoneme (the smallest segmental unit of speech sound), which only means something when integrated into a word. Likewise, a word must be integrated into a sentence for meaning to be created. Therefore, the narrative is a hierarchy of levels that need to be identified before conducting a structural analysis (Barthes 1977:87).

Barthes describes three levels of the narrative: functions as the bottom level, actions as the middle level and narration as the top level, as seen in Figure 5.

The first step is to define the smallest narrative units. These first units are called functions, as it is their functional nature (the fact that they carry meaning) that makes them units (Barthes 1977:88). This meaning may be acquired on the same level (distributionally) or across levels (integrationally) (Barthes 1977:89). Functions can be units on a higher level than the sentence (groups of sentences or an entire work) or units on a lower level (words or parts thereof) (Barthes 1977:91).

Top level Narration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative communication • Narrative situation
Middle level Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characters
Bottom level Functions	<p>Functional nature</p> <p>2 classes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cardinal functions – Catalysers • Indices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Indices proper – Informants

Figure 5: The three levels of the narrative.
Diagram by the author.

Functional units can be distributed in a number of classes. Barthes calls the two main classes of units 'functions' and 'indices'. Functions are distributional units and contain metonymic data (doing) while indices are integrational units and contain metaphoric data (being) (Barthes 1977:93).

Within functions there are two sub-classes of narrative units: cardinal functions (nuclei) and catalysers. Cardinal functions relate to actions that have a direct influence on the subsequent development of the story. Catalysers are complementary: while they connect to nuclei, the actions they refer to have a discursive function, they elaborate and add colour (Barthes 1977:95). Indices can be divided into two sub classes: indices proper, which relate to character, mood, emotion or philosophy; or informants, which operate to identify and position in time and space. Indices proper always have implicit signifieds and necessitate the act of deciphering. With informants there is immediate signification through clear and understandable knowledge (Barthes 1977:96)

A sequence is a logical chain of nuclei, connected by shared association. A sequence opens when one of its actions has no antecedent and it closes when another action has no consequent without moving out of the shared association (Barthes 1977:101). Sequences can form part of larger, over-arching sequences (Barthes 1977:104).

The next level in the hierarchy is actions, which deals with characters. In the structural analysis of the narrative, characters are classified as participants (agents of sequences of actions) rather than beings (psychological nature) (Barthes 1977:106). Barthes maintains that difficulties in the classification of characters of narrative are unresolved. In any actantial matrix (which reveals the structural roles in storytelling such as hero, villain, object, helper or sender) the question about the identity of the subject of the narrative (the hero) remains. Characters only find their meaning in the next level of the hierarchy, that of narration (Barthes 1977:109).

On the narrational level one deals with narrative communication and narrative situation. Narrative communication has to do with the author, narrator and reader of the narrative. As Barthes (1977:111) puts it, there can be no narrative without a narrator and a listener. It is important not to confuse the author of the narrative with the narrator, as the narrator and characters are “paper beings”.

Narrative situation involves the set of conventions by which the narrative is 'consumed'. These include coded signs and narrational devices such as styles of representation (Barthes 1977:117)

The French philosopher and literary theorist, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984:xxiv), in the introduction to his work *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*, says, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives." In this book he introduces the term *postmodern* into philosophy, where it was previously restricted to art criticism. Lyotard (1984:xxiv) further states that narrative function is losing its function objects, namely the great heroes, goals, voyages and dangers in, what he calls, "clouds of narrative language elements".

One could argue that the meta-narrative is insufficient to represent the differences, aspirations, beliefs and desires of the postmodern world and that a variety of micro-narratives are more representative of postmodernity. The link between narrative and postmodernism is important to this study, as postmodernism enabled the erosion of the boundary between high culture and popular culture, resulting in objects of mass culture, like cookbooks, becoming texts to be read and interpreted (Jameson 1984:112).

2.6 The narrative of the cookbook

In Susan J Leonardi's (1998:340) exploration of the recipe book narrative, she starts by describing her recipe for what she calls 'summer pasta', followed by the explanation that her article is an attempt to describe the nature of what she has just done, the giving of a recipe. She makes a very clear distinction between a recipe and merely a list of ingredients with instructions for assembling them. The Latin root of the word 'recipe' (*recipere*) implies an exchange between a giver and receiver; and like a story, a recipe needs a context and a reason to be, that is, a narrative.

To illustrate her point, Leonardi (1998:340) discusses the recipe for red devil's food cake in various editions of the popular American cookbook, *The joy of cooking*, by Irma S Rombauer. Although the first edition appeared in 1931, Leonardi uses the 1951 fourth edition as her starting point and later refers to the 1963 edition, which appeared after Rombauer's death.

In the 1951 edition, Rombauer introduces her daughter, Marion Rombauer Becker, as co-author and credits her with including an introduction to the book (cited by Leonardi 1998:340-341). Becker suggests that there was information that her mother needed to convey in an introduction, for example that an ingredient in parenthesis meant optional and that chocolate in a recipe meant bitter chocolate. While Rombauer deemed an introduction unnecessary and worried that readers might ignore it, Becker suggested that her mother tell a story to entice readers. While Rombauer's story had nothing to do with cooking (it dealt with a farmhand and his wooden leg), the frame or context of the story – the dialogue between mother and daughter – achieved two specific things. Firstly, it conveyed the information her daughter deemed necessary (that an ingredient in parenthesis meant optional and that chocolate in a recipe meant bitter chocolate) in an indirect way and secondly, it created distinct personas for mother and daughter (Leonardi 1998:341).

The accuracy of these personas was borne out in the 1963 edition, which appeared after Rombauer's death. In this edition Becker greatly reduced the narrative elements in the cookbook, for example deleting Rombauer's story from the introduction while keeping the explanations. Leonardi suggests that these reductions greatly reduce the appeal and usability of the recipes in the book, as illustrated in the case of the omission of the red devil's food cake from the 1963 edition. In all the editions leading up to the 1963 edition, Rombauer included her thoughts and reflections, such as her enthusiasm for chocolate cake, the apparent ease and glamour of baking in general and, specifically, the fact that while red devil's food cake is generally popular with others, it is not her favourite.

Leonardi's lament is not for the loss of red devil's food cake (which she admits she's never attempted), but the loss of Rombauer's comments and persona. The fact that Rombauer included a recipe that was not her favourite but acknowledged the popularity of it with others, endowed her as author with an identifiable persona that the reader is not only allowed to disagree with, but encouraged to disagree with. The inclusion of recipes outside of her personal preference enhances the instances when she does indicate preference and encourages the reader to comment and participate in the adventure of cooking. It becomes, as Leonardi (1998:342) puts it, part of "the Grand Tradition of recipe sharing".

In the 1963 edition, Becker persists in eliminating all references to participation, as well as all Rombauer's references to literary texts and authors. These omissions succeed in shifting the recipe away from being a highly embedded discourse and also remove the social context. In earlier editions Rombauer not only refers to a circle of friends and introduces each one with an anecdote, but she herself becomes a tangible personality, a first-person narrator with faults, failures and charms. By means of this, Rombauer succeeded in reproducing the social context of recipe sharing, that of a community of women that transcend age, class and race. Becker's foreword no longer thanks her circle of friends but home economists, consultants and male chefs. The subtitle of the 1931 addition, *A Compilation of reliable recipes with an occasional culinary chat*, no longer applies (Leonardi 1998:342).

Leonardi (1998:344) states that the social context gives a recipe far more significance than a mere rule for cooking. The merging of the embedded discourse of the recipe and the literal result of the recipe enhances the significance of recipes and recipe sharing. Similarities between recipes and narratives are that they are reproducible and that their receivers are encouraged to reproduce them, revise them and take ownership of them and make them their own. While both recipes and folktales are reproduced and

revised in this manner, the difference between them is that the repetition of a recipe can have a literal result, that is, a dish (Leonardi 1998:344).

One has to ask what the narrative of the cookbook is and what kind of myths it potentially communicates, keeping in mind that postmodern consumers no longer accept without question the universal claims to knowledge and truth of the cultural meta-narratives of the past (Watson 2001:58). What has become clear is that the cookbook as an embedded discourse does have a narrative and is of far more significance than mere rules for cooking.

In the same way that people use narratives to understand the world and their role as individuals in it, nostalgia has come to be considered an important sociological phenomenon that helps individuals maintain their identities in the face of major life transitions (Escalas 2004:168; Holak, Matveev & Havlena 2007:649). The links between nostalgia and consumption are briefly explored below.

2.7 Nostalgia and consumption

According to Banwari Mittal (2006:557), memories are a highly valued part of life, as are the objects connected with those memories. Self-concept spans past, present and future. Recollections of the past and visions of the future as well as the image of the present self, combine to form each person's view of self (Morgan 1993:429).

2.7.1 Definition of nostalgia

The term nostalgia derives from the Greek words *nostos* (to return home or to return to one's homeland) and *algos* (anguish, heartache and suffering) and was first discussed by Johannes Hofer in his 1688 thesis presented to the University of Alsace (cited by Havlena & Holak 1991:323). Hofer's study investigated the effects of nostalgia on Swiss soldiers stationed away from their

homeland and included symptoms like hunger, fever, diminished senses, loss of appetite and listlessness (Kessous & Roux 2008:194).

The current view of nostalgia differs from early writing on the subject in various ways. While early writing tended to focus on nostalgia as a pathological condition, the current view is that nostalgia is a normal sociological phenomenon that helps individuals maintain their identities when faced with major life changes (Holak *et al* 2007:649). Nostalgia is the result of an individual's failure to adjust to his or her environment (Kessous & Roux 2008:194). Increased mobility in modern society means that individuals are not as attached to a certain country, city, town or house as in previous times. Therefore nostalgia is no longer confined to a longing for 'home' or 'homeland', but a longing for continuity when faced with life transitions (Havlena & Holak 1991:324). These transitions can be changes in the life cycle, for example the change from adolescence to adulthood, or changes in circumstance, such as political, social and economic changes.

Whatever these changes, the nostalgic examination of the past is generalised by a tendency to view the past through rose-tinted spectacles, resulting in increased unhappiness with the present when contrasted with the past (Goulding 2001:567). According to Elliott Weiss (2004:61), nostalgia for something is an indication that one has lost it. In other words, nostalgia is only possible when that for which one is nostalgic no longer exists (or for something that one imagined to exist?).

2.7.2 Four classifications of the nostalgic experience

The current view of nostalgia differs from early writing on the subject in a second way. The traditional view of nostalgia is that it is a direct personal experience; in other words one can only be nostalgic for something one has experienced first-hand (Havlena & Holak 1991:325). However, research by Havlena and Holak (1996:37) on the nostalgic experience suggests that

personal experience is not essential in defining a relevant past for nostalgia. The relevant past may also include circumstances and happenings outside an individual's personal experience.

Based on these findings, Havlena and Holak classify the nostalgic experience in four ways, based on direct *versus* indirect and personal *versus* collective experience, as illustrated in Figure 6.

Firstly, personal nostalgia, which is based on direct individual experience – An example would be the nostalgia an individual experiences for a special holiday the individual went on. There is direct experience of the object of nostalgia, and the meaning attributed to that object is unique to the individual (Havlena & Holak 1996:37).

Secondly, interpersonal nostalgia, based on indirect individual experience – An example would be the stories a family member or close friend tell about a personal experience in their past. There is indirect experience with the object of nostalgia through direct interpersonal contact, and one can feel personally connected to the event through the unique meaning that the person who experienced the object of nostalgia attributes to that object (Havlena & Holak 1996:38).

Thirdly, cultural nostalgia, based on direct collective experience – For example, a national or international event like the 1995 Rugby World Cup final victory by South Africa or the death of Princess Diana in 1997. The experience of the object of nostalgia is direct, but based on shared symbols, so the resulting nostalgia is a reflection of the individual's connection to other members of the individual's culture (Havlena & Holak 1996:38).

Fourthly, virtual nostalgia, based on indirect collective experience – For example, the feeling of nostalgia experienced when watching a period drama

set in the sixteenth century. The experience of the object of nostalgia is indirect and based on shared symbols (Havlena & Holak 1996:38).

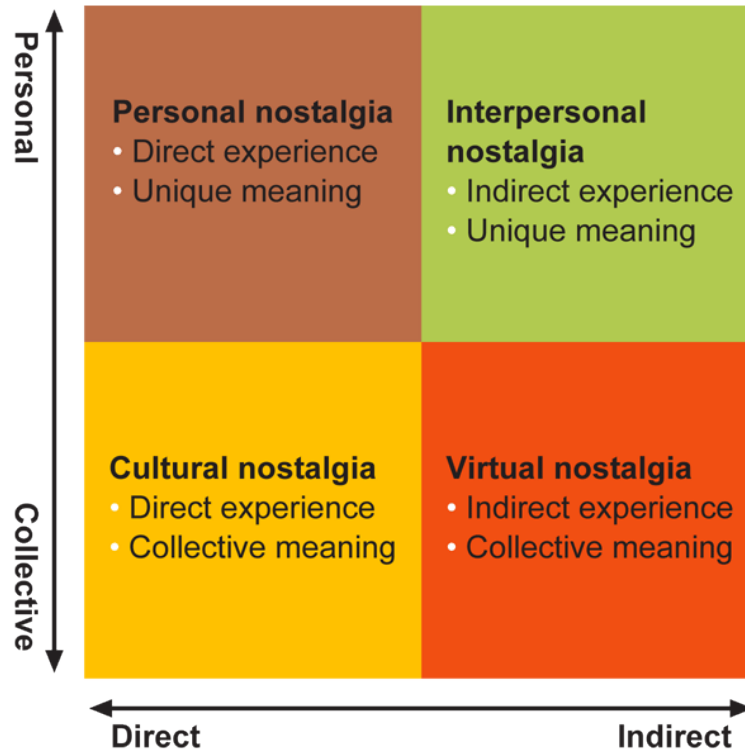


Figure 6: Mittal’s four classifications of the nostalgic experience, 2009. Diagram by the author.

Interestingly, when exploring personal nostalgia it is worth noting that not all eras of an individual’s past evoke equally strong nostalgic feelings. Adolescence and early adulthood seem to be the times of life that individuals feel the most nostalgic about and “nostalgia-proneness” seems to peak as individuals move into middle age (Havlena & Holak 1991:324). The application of this knowledge in terms of marketing to consumers means that the nostalgic experience can be directed to a certain extent when marketing to a defined age group.

It is also worth noting that, with regard to personal nostalgia, there is a distinct difference between nostalgia and autobiographical memory (an individual’s personal memories). The emotion associated with nostalgia is often bittersweet,

a longing for an idealised past that is gone forever, whereas not all autobiographical memories cause nostalgic longing (Muehling & Spratt 2004:26).

2.7.3 How objects of consumption become objects of nostalgia

Another way in which nostalgia, as experienced by consumers today, is in contrast with an earlier view typified by Johannes Hofer (cited by Havlena & Holak 1991:323) in his 1688 thesis, is how objects of consumption become objects of nostalgia. According to Kniazeva and Ventakesh (2007:422), the transformation of an object of consumption into a symbol can be seen as the crux of postmodern consumption. Consumption is no longer a purely rational activity, but a symbolic activity, defined by the consumer's perceptions of the object and the values he mentally assigns to it. As discussed earlier in this study, the symbolic value of an object of consumption has come to the fore, pushing back the use value. Not only are the products that consumers own and use closely connected to their sense of self (Mittal 2006:550), but through conspicuous consumption, also to how consumers wish to be perceived (Watson 2001:54-55). According to Paul Rand (A selection of quotes [sa]), one of the seminal designers of the twentieth century, the attributes of modernism include, among others, the absence of nostalgia. Postmodernism, on the other hand, is the era of the 'emotional economy', where consumers demand more interaction with their brand and expect the brand to satisfy unmet emotional needs (Gobé 2007:68-69). It becomes clear that objects of consumption become objects of nostalgia through meeting consumers' unmet emotional needs. One needs to ask what emotional needs are met through the consumption of objects of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a powerful force in fulfilling the emotional need for stability and continuity.

2.7.4 Prompting nostalgic reflection

In a study by Muehling and Sprott (2004:25) the question was asked whether nostalgic advertisements would elicit a more favourable response than advertisements with no nostalgic referents. A group of 159 undergraduate students from Washington State University, USA, ranging in age from 18 to 35, participated in the study. They were handed an instruction sheet, a fictitious print advertisement and a survey. Two fictitious advertisements for Kodak brand film (Figure 7) were created for the purposes of the study.

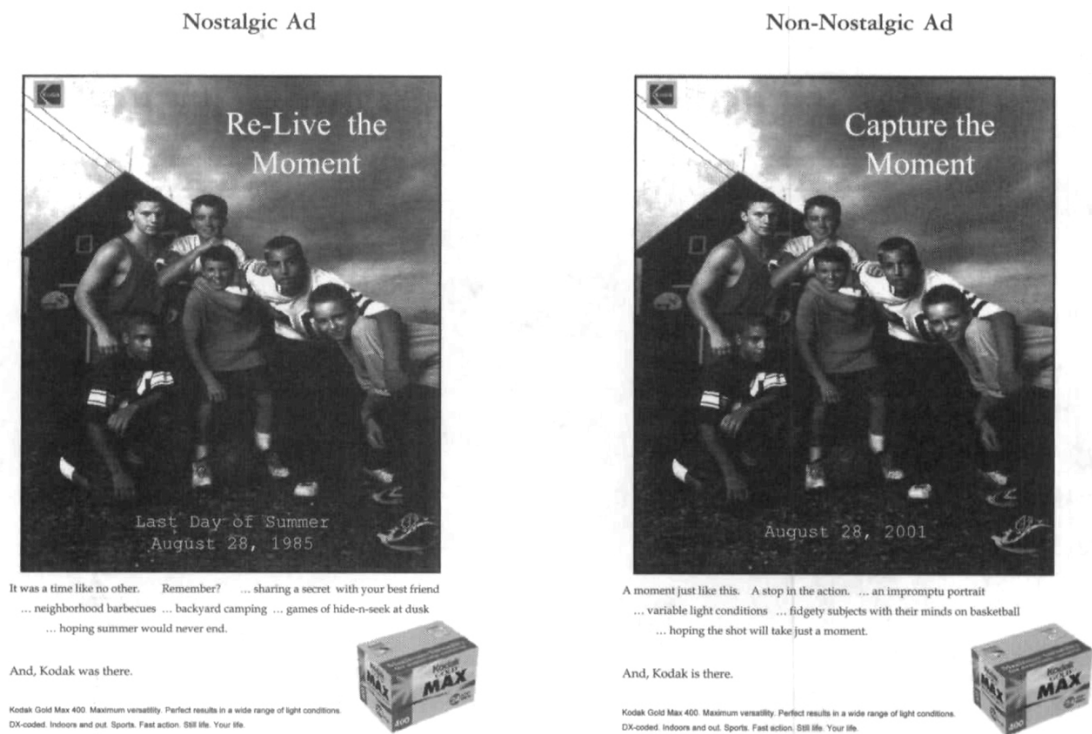


Figure 7: Two fictitious advertisements for Kodak brand film, 2004. (Muehling & Sprott 2004:35).

These advertisements were similar in terms of visual format, colour, illustration, brand logo placement and copy length. However, nostalgic cues replaced non-nostalgic cues in the copy content. The headline "Re-live the moment" replaced "Capture the moment" and the date below the photograph was changed to "August 28, 1985" from "August 28, 2001". Several statements in the copy were changed, for example "It was a time like no other... Remember?" replaced "A

moment just like this... A stop in the action". The tagline was also changed from "Kodak is here" to "Kodak was there".

The participants were asked to write down any thought that came to mind when viewing the advertisements and to evaluate them as positive, negative or neutral. When examining the results of the survey, researchers found that the nostalgically themed advertisement generated more thoughts that were considered positive than the non-nostalgic advertisement. Participants also expressed a more positive attitude towards the brand. Although acknowledging that further research is needed, Muehling and Sprott (2004:32) assert that the study results indicate that:

... causing consumers to 'yearn for yesterday' may be an effective strategy to get them to 'yearn for advertiser's goods' as well.

2.8 The role of nostalgia in the visual consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery

According to Holak *et al* (2007:649), the importance of nostalgia lies in the fact that it has come to be considered a sociological phenomenon that helps individuals maintain their identities in the face of major life transitions. This longing for continuity and an idealised past is echoed by Rachel Ray (cited by Mitchell 2010:527) when she states that:

Food is nostalgia. The smell of good simple food can take you back to all the good times in your life and make you forget all the bad ...

But even more so, with her statement Ray shines a spotlight on the power of food, and for that matter, food-related items like cookbooks, as symbolic goods to secure individual identity.

The visual consumption of food through food imagery, with food imagery as a designed and therefore artificial object, could also lead one to question the nature, role and boundaries of the concept of 'the real' and authenticity in food styling. Elliot Weiss (2004:48), examining nostalgia in kosher food package label design, states that the commodification of tradition is a method for

producers to bestow a handcrafted aura on their products, which, as objects of mass production, they lack. The products are endowed with mythical product histories as replacements for real histories. Nostalgia is an instance where the artificial replaces the real. In an unstable and changeable present, the individual longs for an idealised past (Weiss 2004:48-49). The cookbook by definition is a step back from mass production toward handcraft and the realities of the past become irrelevant as the individual longs for a mythical time and place where life was believed to be simpler and better. As this idealised view of the past is removed from reality, it does not necessarily have to be a personal view of the past or based on direct individual experience, but can be based on an indirect collective experience called “virtual nostalgia” (Holak *et al* 2007:650). One could argue that in the case of virtual nostalgia as found in certain cookbooks, because there is no direct experience of the past as referent, it leads to what could be called ‘convenient authenticity’, meaning a constructed or created ‘authenticity’ that satisfies the longing for the ‘real’ while offering contemporary convenience. It becomes a longing for something never possessed.

Weiss (2004:51) also notes the recurring presence of the mother figure in kosher food packaging and states that “... mothers are what memories are made of.” The mother, or rather the idea of motherliness, becomes an abstract concept. She is everyone’s mother and no-one’s mother, a timeless, mythical figure, elevated to a semi-divine being, far above comparison to any mere mortal. One could also argue that the mother figure is the archetypal symbol for ‘home’. As the longing for ‘home’ or homesickness is nostalgia in its purest form (Havlena & Holak 1991:323), it may be said that in an era of single parents, working mothers and latchkey kids, virtual nostalgia is especially relevant. Barbara Stern (1992:17) calls Martha Stewart and Alexandra Stoddard “consumption gurus” who have made longing for home a “multimedia event” through books, videos, television appearances and magazines.

Jean Duruz (1999:235) discusses two cookbooks that he describes as inviting forms of “retro-looking”. He states that the main purpose of these cookbooks is

not food preparation and consumption, but rather that the images, stories and recipes actively romanticise the 1950s and 1960s and that this romanticised view is put forward as nourishment for 1990s identities. For the purpose of this study, only Duruz's discussion of Helen Townsend's *The Baby Boomers cookbook* is touched on.

Duruz (1999:236) states that Townsend is unashamedly nostalgic in her approach, inviting the reader to remember the food of childhood, among pages filled with nursery rhymes, photographs of cooking utensils and food memories contributed by baby boomers. Duruz (1999:238) also mentions that Townsend does not differentiate between the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, but rather groups this as 'the baby boomer era' or childhood. One could argue that this blurring of the boundaries and selective attention to detail is typical of nostalgia, which is, after all, an idealised, selective remembrance. In the end, nostalgia obscures negative aspects of the past, such as rigidly defined gender roles, racism and nuclear threat. Duruz (1999:238) further asks whether the celebration of the 'good food' of the 1950s is not a search for a fictional childhood, innocent and free from worry. In a sense, the 1950s become the childhood of the 1980s and a remembrance – more of a case of 'how it should have been' than 'how it was'.

It is clear that nostalgia can be a tool to assist individuals in handling life's transitions and maintain their identities in uncertain times. Through an idealised remembrance of a simpler, better time – even if that time or place never actually existed – a longing for home and continuity is satisfied. South African cookbooks, as a local expression of the current increased global interest in food, are symbolic goods closely tied to individual identity and carry meaning, as are explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATIVE AND NOSTALGIA IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN COOKBOOKS

This section of the study explores the visual consumption of food and its meanings in a selection of five South African cookbooks through a study of the concepts of narrative and nostalgia. The selection of these cookbooks was determined by judgement sampling to fit the aims of the study. They are *Shiny happy people* (2009) by Neil Roake; *Waar vye nog soet is* (2009) by Emilia Le Roux and Francois Smuts; *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) by Evita Bezuidenhout (Pieter-Dirk Uys); *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen* (2008) by Lannice Snyman; and *South Africa eats* (2009) by Phillippa Cheifitz.

3.1 Narrative and nostalgia in selected South African cookbooks

Before analysing the narrative of the cookbook, it is important to briefly re-visit two points discussed earlier in this study.

Firstly, Jean-Francois Lyotard's (1984:xxiv) statement that one of the features of postmodernism is an unwillingness to believe in meta-narratives.¹ Perhaps this means that one cannot analyse or identify 'the' narrative of 'the' cookbook, but only 'a' narrative of 'a' cookbook. One could argue that postmodernism, and the blurred boundaries between high and popular culture, which allows one to study a cookbook as a designed object of mass culture, places one in a *Catch-22* situation, as it also means that there can be no cookbook meta-narrative – no overarching narrative common to all cookbooks. This could mean that the best one can hope for is to identify various narratives in the selection of cookbooks and establish which, if any, are common to more than one cookbook in the selection. However, even if one narrative is common to all, it will arguably still not be the definitive meta-narrative of all (South African) cookbooks.

¹ Meta-narratives can be described as grand narratives that place all aspirations, beliefs and desires within a common framework.

Secondly, Roland Barthes' (1977:46) discussion of the Panzani advertisement, in which he states that different kinds of individual knowledge (practical, cultural, national and aesthetic) all contribute to differences in the reading of the image and add to the number of readings. Barthes admits that even though he identifies four connotative signs in the Panzani advertisement, there are probably others. Each person has bodies of individual attitudes (lexicons), which influence different readings of the image (lexia). The variety and identity of these lexicons make up the person's idiolect or 'language' of interpretation. Therefore, any identification of a narrative of a cookbook will only be that: one narrative that has been identified out of infinite possible narratives, depending on who does the reading.

Having said that, the cookbook as an embedded discourse does have a narrative and is of far more significance than mere rules for cooking. One has to ask what the narrative of the cookbook is and what kind of myths it potentially communicates.

For the sake of consistency, the visual analysis of the selected cookbooks is restricted to the cover, dust cover or flaps, endpapers, introduction and one section of content.

3.1.1 *Shiny happy people (2009) by Neil Roake*

Neil Roake (2009) is a Durban-based creative director, restaurateur and the former food editor of *House & Leisure* magazine. He has produced five cookbooks, one of which, *Life's a beach cottage*, won the World's Best Barbeque Cookbook at the 2008 International Gourmand Cookbook Awards in London, UK, while another, *On the rocks*, won best South African Photography Cookbook.

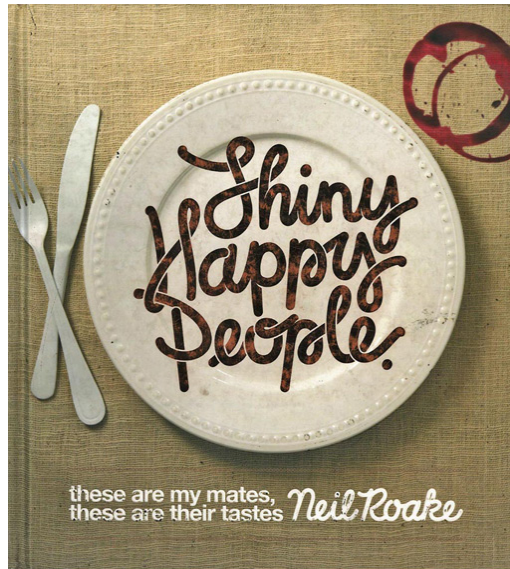


Figure 8: The cover of *Shiny happy people*.
(Roake 2009).

Looking at the cover of *Shiny happy people* (2009) (Figure 8), it becomes clear that this book is more food memoir than cookbook. The title makes no mention of food and gives no indication of the type of food that can be expected. The subtitle “these are my mates, these are their tastes” creates the expectation that the reader will be introduced to and get to know a group people who can be classified as friends of the author, and their individual (and one assumes varied) tastes. The only nod to food is an empty plate, knife and fork and red wine stain on the cover. If this book were removed from the cooking section in a bookstore, looking at the cover would make it quite difficult to judge what it deals with.

There is a general focus on primarily non-food images in this book, as can be seen in the front and back endpapers (Figure 9) and author’s introduction (Figure 10). The endpapers have a repeat pattern of illustrations of the author and his friends, and these are repeated later in the book as an introduction to each person. The first page to feature a recipe – in fact, to carry a photograph where the page focus is primarily on food – is page 12, which features a recipe for sweet potato, aubergine and beetroot crisps.



Figure 9: Endpaper of *Shiny happy people*.
(Roake 2009).

While a photograph presumes to be an image without a code, or analogue of reality, the illustrations in this cookbook are coded images, with layers of meaning laid down during the process of creation. During the creative process, the choice of source material and style of illustration are deliberate choices. The artist decides what to include, exclude or focus on. The question is, as coded images, what do these illustrations communicate about the narrative? One could argue that the act of illustration re-enforces the role that these persons play in the middle level of narration, that of characters of the narrative. The act of illustration shifts them from the realm of 'real people' and they become more like fictional characters. By including himself in this process, Roake also re-invents himself as a character, that of narrator.

When dealing with the top level of the narrative, that of narration, Barthes (1977:111) states that it is important to differentiate between the author and narrator, as the narrator and characters are "paper beings". In the same way that an author is selective and deliberate in what he communicates about a character, the author is also deliberate about what he communicates to the reader about the narrator. Even though Neil Roake is both author and narrator, one can argue that the personas and roles of 'Neil the author' and 'Neil the

narrator/friend' are sufficiently different to be seen as two different people. The question is not what 'Neil the author' has included about 'Neil the narrator/friend', but rather what he left out. The reader only knows what he is permitted to know about 'Neil the narrator/friend'.



Figure 10: Author's introduction to *Shiny happy people*. (Roake 2009:2-3).

The author's introduction consists of a chessboard-type composite of images with accompanying text (Roake 2009:2-3). The composite image is made up of 196 squares arranged in a colour-coded, rainbow-like composition. Of these 196 images, only 35, or 18%, are of food. The rest are repeats of images of the author's friends' houses and possessions that are featured on a larger scale further on throughout the cookbook. Images include flowers, wallpaper, paintings, clothing, doors and furniture.

The author's introduction starts with the following statement:

In an ever-changing world, upon which my family is widely scattered, it is comforting to know that my friends are my new family. Their homes are the places where I can find solace at the end of a working day, stay for a casual chow, and then the hours melt away – that's usually the way it goes. Whether it's with my kids in tow or on my lonesome, there's always room at the kitchen counter, around the

braai, or even at the stove, where cooking becomes a shared joy (Roake 2009:3).

When studying the statement above as a narrative unit on the level of functions, it is clear that the focus is not on food but on the act of and situation around preparing food. The statement is rich with indices such as “solace”, “casual chow”, “hours melt away” and “there’s always room”, which relate more the mood than the food, as well as to a practice of hospitality. The purpose of cooking transcends the production of food. What is produced and served up is not merely a plate of food, but a sense of community and belonging. The production and consumption of food becomes the glue that binds relationships.

This sense of community and belonging the author experiences can be described as emotional needs that are being met by an object of consumption. It satisfies the author’s need for a sense of stability and continuity, which is typical of the nostalgic experience. In the author’s own words, his family is spread out and his world is in a state of flux. Nostalgia for something is also an indication that one has lost it, meaning that one can only be nostalgic for something that no longer exists (Weiss 2004:61). The author is yearning for lost stability and order in his world as represented by his “ever-changing world” and “scattered” family.

When classifying the author’s experience of nostalgia according to Havlena and Holak’s (1996:37) four classifications of the nostalgic experience, this instance can be described as personal nostalgia, as it is based on direct individual experience (his personal experience of lost family life that he is missing). Words like “home”, “comforting”, “family” and the phrase “That’s usually the way it goes” all typically prompt nostalgic reflection, especially if one takes into account the fact that the nostalgic experience is always an idealised one.

The foreword ends off with the following:

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoy making friends
with colour, food, décor and most of all, my friends
(Roake 2009:3).

Again, it is worth noting that that as a closing statement the author only mentions reading, not cooking. There is no burden on the reader to cook, merely to consume visually.

The structure of the book consists of an author's foreword, 11 sections dealing with friends and their recipes, an addendum and index. As the friend-related sections are extremely similar in both structure and content, only one of these sections is discussed for the purposes of this study.

The focus on primarily non-food images persists in the friend-related section chosen for this study. It is titled 'Lucie, Sue and Tom' (Roake 2009:32-55). In this section there is a total of 43 photographs and illustrations. Of those, only 13 are images of food while another two are images of cookbooks. In fact, only seven images on the 24 pages in this section are of recipes. The rest consist of lifestyle-type images of Lucie, Sue and Tom's house and possessions, culinary quotes and sayings, as well as a Q&A-type interview with Lucie, Sue and Tom, the main protagonists in this section.

The section starts with a spread containing a chessboard-type composite of 16 images and accompanying text (Figure 11) (Roake 2009:32-33). These include photographs of Lucie, Sue and Tom, various lifestyle-type images and three food images, for which the recipes appear later in the book.

Four signifieds are identified on this double page spread. The first signified is that of artistry or creativity. When reading the captions, it is clear that, as part of the linguistic component of the photographic message, they perform the function of anchorage. They answer the question "what is this?" For example, an image of a bowl (row 1 column 4) becomes "Lucie's handcrafted bowl", transforming the image of the bowl into a sign signifying artistic talent. This artistic signified is re-enforced by the caption "Mademoiselle Lucie in her studio" to Lucie's portrait (row 2 column 3). Through the caption, the image transcends

being merely a picture of a pretty girl in a room, thus enabling the correct perception that this is an image of a talented young artist in her creative space. Other signs that further communicate artistry or an appreciation of creativity include the painting (row 4 column 1) and the Moses Mangaiso sculpture (row 2 column 2).



Figure 11: Page 32 and 33 of *Shiny happy people*.
(Roake 2009:32-33).

The second signified communicated through the images and captions on page 32 relate mainly to Sue and seem to centre on the concept of ‘Frenchness’ (the cultural stereotype of all things French). As Barthes (1977:16) stated, the structure of the photograph is in communication with the text of the publication and the text accompanying the image will influence the meaning and significance of the image. Through the introductory text on page 33, the reader is informed that that while Sue is currently a ballet teacher based in Cape Town, she used to be a model and ballet dancer in Paris and was married to a French antique dealer. Further signs that signify ‘Frenchness’ include the image of a French cookbook captioned as “An old Parisian wedding present”, French dishes such as Breton cake and parfait and an image of a blue ceramic ashtray captioned as an “Old French ashtray”. The use of the French title Mademoiselle

in the caption “Mademoiselle Lucie in her studio” also signifies ‘Frenchness’, even though it relates to Lucie, not Sue.

The third signified is that of a love of cooking, communicated through signs such as an image of crockery with the caption “Sue’s well-utilised kitchen”, as well as by mentioning in the introductory copy that “Sue’s home is known as the dessert capital of Cape Town ...” (Roake 2009:32-33).

The fourth signified is that of home. Signs for home include the image of the cat (row 2 column 3), captioned as “The family’s pet Miu-Miu. Get it?” which invites the reader to share in some family humour. Through the use of insider humour, the reader is invited to become part of the family. Other signs include the image of the house (row 3 column 3) and the “Entrance mirror made of carved bone”.

A fifth signified identified in this section is nostalgia, which is communicated through a multitude of signs spread throughout the section, although nowhere as strongly as the recipe for Tarte Tartin² (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Page 38 and 39 of *Shiny happy people*. (Roake 2009:38-39).

² Even though the dish is usually called Tarte Tatin, after the Hotel Tatin, it is spelled Tartin in the page title of the recipe in *Shiny happy people* (2009:38) and is referred to as such in this study (Roake 2009:38).

Reading the spread from left to right, one firstly encounters the text describing the recipe and origins of the dish. The recipe starts with the following statement:

When friends invite Sue away on weekends, it is usually on condition she brings one of these (Roake 2009:38-39).

The social context of food is immediately brought to the fore, reminding the reader of the author's earlier statement describing friends as his new family. The word "usually" lets one understand that these weekends away, as well as Sue's preparation of this dish, are regular occurrences, a comforting ritual in an unstable world. This version of the recipe is described as being by Paul Bocuse, a famous French chef, while the footnote at the bottom of the page is a short story about the creation of the dish in the Hotel Tatin in France in 1898. Together, this information creates an aura of authenticity, of perfection created through decades of repetition.

There are two photographs on the spread. The first one is of the completed Tarte Tartin on a ceramic plate, showing a close-up of the rich, golden caramelised apple topping. Next to the plate are what appear to be a vintage linen napkin and a silver fork. The fork looks like it is part of an antique cutlery set, richly patterned and engraved with a monogram on the handle. A reader would most probably assume that the fork is a part of Sue's family silver. When seen in partnership with the linguistic component on the left, this image prompts nostalgic reflection for family and tradition.

The second image is of what appears to be the preparation of the dish. The first element one sees is a recipe book, open at a handwritten recipe for apple tart. However, it is worth noting that the handwritten apple tart recipe is not for Tarte Tartin, but another apple tart that apparently had been published in *Fair Lady* magazine. The proximity of the two photographs is obviously deliberate and the second image is meant to bestow an air of handmade authenticity to the Tarte Tartin recipe. This is re-enforced by the other elements of the photograph, which include peeled pieces of apple and the discarded peel, an open packet of

butter, wooden chopping boards and blurred hand, which suggests the action of preparing the dish. The peeled apples and wooden chopping board, rather than tinned tart apples and a glass or plastic chopping board, signify nature and the goodness of the natural and handmade, combined with old-fashioned homeliness.

One of nostalgia's features is that producers commodify tradition to bestow a handcrafted aura on their products, which, as objects of mass production, they lack. This endows products with mythical product histories as replacements for real histories (Weiss 2004:48). Of course, should a reader choose to prepare the dish, it will be authentically handmade and not an object of mass production. However, one should bear in mind that, as discussed earlier in this study, television cookery shows and cookbook photography are primarily produced with visual consumption in mind. As Barthes (1972:79) said, consumption can be accomplished by simply looking. Therefore, the proposed item of consumption is not the dish but the cookbook (an item of mass production). Chances are that the readers of the cookbook will never physically reproduce the dish and as such, the handmade authenticity that he or she would have experienced while preparing the dish, is communicated visually.

The prevalence of non-food images in *Shiny happy people* (2009) could induce one to question whether the food images in this cookbook are examples of food porn. All the images in this book contribute to communicating the social context of food and the food images themselves are generally of unusual and sophisticated dishes most readers might be reluctant to try and only consume visually. The function these images fulfil is not to induce the reader to try and recreate the dishes themselves, but rather function as props on a stage where Neil Roake and his friends are the stars.

It is very evident when looking at the linguistic component of the message in partnership with the images, that in the introduction to this section at least, the narrative of this cookbook is that food cannot be viewed or enjoyed in isolation.

It needs a setting and that setting is home and friendship, or at least a nostalgic yearning for it. In the words of Epicurus, the philosopher and food lover, “We should look for someone to eat and drink with before looking for something to eat and drink” (cited in Roake 2009:172).

3.1.2 *Waar vye nog soet is (2009) by Emilia Le Roux and Francois Smuts*

Emilia Le Roux currently lives in Durbanville in the Western Cape with her family but grew up on the farm Doornkraal outside De Rust. She was one of seven children. She explains that the farm is more than a piece of land, but rather a way of life that they all imbibed. As an adult she obtained a Master's degree in food science from Stellenbosch University and in this way continued her family's traditional love of, and interest in, food (Emilia Le Roux biographical info [sa]).

Le Roux's (Le Roux & Smuts 2009) food memoir, *Waar vye nog soet is*³(2009), is, in her own words, more than just a cookbook. On the inside front flap of the dust jacket she describes the book as a self-help guide for everyone who has a longing to be close to the earth, who wants to cook and bake as if they were in a farmhouse kitchen. According to Le Roux, the book is meant to teach readers to plant, irrigate, fertilise, raise and care for their own food, to live simply and with soul. It is not surprising then that the first 56 pages deal primarily with the production of food, ranging from how to prepare the earth for a vegetable and herb garden, creating a compost heap, irrigation tips and techniques, down to which vegetables and fruits to plant.

These are all skills Le Roux was taught from childhood on her family's farm. The introductory paragraph on the inside front flap of the dust jacket starts as follows:

³ As this cookbook is written in Afrikaans, all direct quotations have been translated into English by the author. The title can be translated as 'Where figs are still sweet'.

The farm is called Doornkraal, just outside of De Rust. This is where Swepie and Ann Le Roux have been farming for years. This is where their children learned to live off the farmyard, all seven of them. Everything on Doornkraal's table comes from the farm⁴ (Le Roux & Smuts 2009).

The reader is immediately introduced to the context within which to interpret the rest of the book: that of an idyllic farm childhood and living off the land; a sense of home, family and self-sufficiency. This context can be described as deeply nostalgic, as both the author's longing for home, as well as her idealised, selective remembrance of an idyllic farm childhood are typically nostalgic yearnings.

The reader is first made aware of this nostalgic context on the cover (Figure 13) of the book. The title of the book, *Waar vye nog soet is*, is whimsical and communicates that this is a special place where figs are sweet – implying that they are not always sweet, even though they should be. Figs become a metaphor for a simpler, sweeter life and the title becomes a metaphor for 'how it was and how it should be'.

Two different classifications of the nostalgic experience – as described by Havlena and Holak (1996:37) – can be identified in this cookbook. The author is experiencing personal nostalgia, as it is based on direct individual experience (her personal experience of growing up on Doornkraal and all that entails). However, the reader, as someone whose experience of nostalgia is prompted by the author's personal reminiscences, is experiencing interpersonal nostalgia, as it is based on indirect individual experience.

⁴ "Doornkraal is die plaas se naam, net buite De Rust. Dis waar Swepie en Ann Le Roux al jare lank boer. Dis waar hul kinders geleer het om van die werf te leef, al sewe van hulle. Alles op Doornkraal se eettafel kom van die plaas af".



Figure 13: Cover page and inside front flap of *Waar vye nog soet is*. (Le Roux & Smuts 2009).

The front cover image is a photograph of a woven cane basket filled with ripe figs, held on a young girl's lap. The image is cropped in such a way that the girl's face is not shown, and the photograph could be of anyone, even the author as a child. She is dressed in a simple summer frock, made of old-fashioned floral print material, which looks as if it could easily be homemade. Under the girl's knees one can see what seems to be the corner of a picnic blanket, with some blurred vegetation peeking out. The subtitle of the cookbook is "*Van die werf na die spens en die tafel*", which can be translated as 'from the yard to the pantry to the table', giving the reader the first indication that this book is about not only cooking but also cultivation and preservation (Le Roux & Smuts 2009).

The author's introduction (Figures 14 & 15) consists of four pages, two of text and two of images (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:12-15). Interestingly, none of the images are of food. The first image is of a long hallway leading to an ornamental wooden door with stained glass windows. The floor is covered with Persian rugs and the walls are covered with picture frames. While the reader is unable to see what the framed images are, owing to glare, a prior knowledge of traditional South African farmhouses might lead a reader to assume that the

majority of these are family photographs. Other items include a wall-mounted hat rack with a variety of hats, two side tables and a chair.



Figure 14: Author's introduction to *Waar vye nog soet is*. (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:12-13).

While this image is without a caption and can initially seem to be a random addition to the book, the opening paragraphs of the introduction clarify the meaning of the photograph and enable correct interpretation through the function of anchorage, as described by Barthes (1977:38). The introduction commences with the author reminiscing about her childhood, specifically taking the school bus home on hot summer afternoons. She describes how entering the long hallway of the farmhouse on Doornkraal was like entering a cool haven after the heat, and the reader is left with very little doubt that this image is of the hallway of author's family home.

The remaining four images that form part of the introduction are of a horse; an elderly woman; a man playing backgammon under a tree; and a young girl swinging from a rubber tyre swing (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:15). The captions clarify the four images as Celia le Roux's horse; Ann Le Roux (the author's mother); Swepie Le Roux (the author's father); and the author's niece Anna.



Figure 15: Author's introduction to *Waar vye nog soet is*.
(Le Roux & Smuts 2009:14-15).

The reason for including the horse is clarified when reading the text of the introduction, in which the author tells a story from her childhood, about her sister Celia riding her horse through the hallway as a dare. One could argue that these are the types of stories that would normally be shared among family and friends around a dinner table, when a certain level of trust and intimacy has already been attained. Through the inclusion of family photographs and childhood reminiscences in the cookbook, the reader is invited to become part of the family.

The inclusion of so many family-centred images and stories is vital in building the myth of nostalgia. It has already been established earlier in this study that cookbooks, as symbolic goods and aspirational objects of consumption, are used to maintain and communicate personal identities. In the same way nostalgia has come to be considered a sociological phenomenon that helps individuals maintain their identities in the face of major life transitions (Holak et al 2007:649). Having looked at nostalgia as an idealised remembrance of the past where the artificial replaces the real, one could argue that the myth of nostalgia is summed up as 'It was like that'. However, when one takes the roles of nostalgia and modern consumption in personal identity building into account,

the myth changes to a more personal one, that is, ‘I was like that’ or ‘We were like that’. It is never too late to construct a personal past that ‘should have been’ rather than ‘was’.

In the course of the introduction, Emilia Le Roux reminisces about her childhood on Doornkraal and describes her experiences and memories as contributing to her *plaashart* (farm heart), an attribute she values and cherishes. She laments that many people grow up “... in an environment and era that values money and toys far more than the treasures of the soul.”⁵ (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:14), and now desire the simplicity and tranquillity of this *plaashart*. She goes on to describe her *plaashart* as a toolbox for dealing with life’s challenges, and the cookbook as an attempt to teach others how to acquire this ‘toolbox’ and regain a part of their soul.

Le Roux makes the following statement:

Now I carry the farm with me, inside me as a conscious and cherished part of me, and I share it with people in the same way my mother used to share her lemonade and love with us (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:14).⁶

When analysing the linguistic message in the statements above and coded iconic message of the introduction, it is clear that the intentional signified reinforces the linguistic signified of the front flap, that of home, family, tranquillity and self-sufficiency. Reading the introduction as a narrative unit on the level of functions, proper indices such as “treasures of the soul”, “simple, life-giving things”, “*plaashart*”, “cherish” and “share”, communicate the joy and satisfaction of living simply, surrounded by family, and how this can sustain an individual in an increasingly busy world.

⁵ “... in ’n omgewing en tydsgewrig wat geld en speelgoed bó die skatte van die siel stel”.

⁶ “En nou dra ek die plaas in my rond as ’n bewuste en gekoesterde deel van my, en deel dit met mense soos my ma haar lemonade en liefde met ons gedeel het”.

More importantly, these are joys to be shared and taught to others. As Le Roux (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:14) puts it:

... I tried to reach back to a time when people could live from what they had, and tried to plant something of that in each reader's heart. So that the dream of a farm afternoon with lemonade will continue to grow in many hearts.⁷

This cookbook speaks to dissatisfaction with modern life and communicates 'how it should have been'. Through reading this cookbook, the reader becomes part of a tradition in which simplicity, family and community lives on in the hearts of people.

When dealing with narrative communication, it is important to note the difference between author and narrator. While Emilia Le Roux's husband, Francois Smuts, is co-author of *Waar vye nog soet is* (2009), Le Roux is the sole narrator. As such, Le Roux the narrator is a paper being created by Le Roux and Smuts as authors, even though they operate on the same level of the narrative.

The section of content chosen for visual analysis is titled "*Die preserving van groengood*" and deals with preserving fruits and vegetables as jams, pickles and oven-dried produce (Le Roux & Smuts 2009:56-93). There are 29 photographic images in this section, of which 10 are of food, including raw food ingredients and the preparation and production of food. The remaining 19 images include farmhouse interiors and portraits of the family engaged in various activities. Of these 29 images, only five are captioned, these being images that relate to recipes that appear in the cookbook.

⁷ "... ek het eerder probeer teruggryp na die tydperk toe mense nog kon leef van wat hulle gehad het en iets daarvan probeer plant in die lesers van hierdie boek se hartgrond. Sodat die droom van 'n plaasmiddag met lemonade kan bly voortleef in baie harte".



Figure 16: Page 86 of *Waar vye nog soet is*.
(Le Roux & Smuts 2009:86).

For example, the image on page 86 (Figure 16) is of bags of dried citrus peel hanging from a coat rack, captioned “Dried lemon peel for firelighters”. While the image appears in this section, the text relating to the use of dried citrus peel as firelighters – owing to the natural oils in the skin – appears on page 39, in the section dealing with orchards. The signified in this image is self-sufficiency, which is impossible to identify unless the linguistic component of the message in partnership with the image is read, even though it appears in a different section of the book.

The first image in this section (Figure 17) is of an elderly woman preserving some kind of fruit or vegetable. She is wearing a short-sleeved blouse and apron and appears to be concentrating on the task at hand. Even though the image has no caption, the reader can identify her as the author’s mother, Ann Le Roux, as photographs of her are captioned earlier in the book.

Elliot Weiss (2004:51), in his article discussing kosher food packaging, examines the presence of the mother figure, or concept of motherliness. He argues that the mother figure transcends individual personality and becomes a mythical figure, everyone’s mother and no-one’s mother. As such, one could

also argue that the mother figure is the archetypal symbol for home, the first signified of this image.



Figure 17: Page 56 of *Waar vye nog soet is*.
(Le Roux & Smuts 2009:56).

The second signified is that of 'motherliness' (the cultural stereotype of motherhood) and the signifier is Ann Le Roux in the act of preserving food. One could assume that readers who grew up in an era of single parents and working mothers probably never experienced their own mothers preserving food, as these are time-consuming activities and mass-produced food products are, in most instances, more convenient and cheaper. However, when moving beyond individual personality and into the realm of the mythical *über*-mother, one could argue that the handmade preparation of food is an activity a mother *should* be doing as part of fulfilling her mythical role of caring and providing. If the nostalgic experience is not 'how it was' but 'how it should have been', perhaps in this instance the reader may experience not 'how my mother was' but rather 'how my mother should have been'. Objects of consumption become objects of nostalgia through meeting consumers' unmet emotional needs. In this instance, the concepts of home and 'motherliness' are powerful forces in fulfilling the emotional need for stability and continuity.

Figure 18 consists of a composite of five images, none of which are captioned. The first image is of Ann Le Roux, the matriarch of the family, paging through a cookbook, while a young girl (one assumes a granddaughter) looks over her shoulder. The other four images are of two women (perhaps the author and one of her sisters?) sitting side by side and embroidering a tapestry of a family tree, the completed family tree, a cardboard holder with a variety of different coloured embroidery yarns and a bed headboard with a carved monogram reading 'le R', which one assumes is for the surname Le Roux.



Figure 18: Pages 82 and 83 of *Waar vye nog soet is*.
(Le Roux & Smuts 2009:82-83).

The common signifieds in this composite are family and tradition. Signifiers include the passing down of cookery skills or interest from a grandmother to a granddaughter; the sharing of a hobby between two sisters; the monogrammed family surname; and of course, the family tree. These signs all strongly contribute to a sense of continuity that may be best described as 'I know where my home is' or 'I know where I fit in'.

The narrative of this cookbook is therefore that food is a part of the great tradition of home, family, self-sufficiency and simplicity. Preparing and enjoying

a meal are part of the simple pleasures of life that take on added significance when shared with loved ones.

3.1.3 *Evita's kossie sikelela (2010) by Evita Bezuidenhout*

Evita Bezuidenhout, former actress turned politician and ambassador, also fondly known as “the most famous white woman in South Africa”, is a fictional character created by author and actor Pieter-Dirk Uys in the late 1970s as a vehicle for political satire (Who is Evita [sa]). She got her name as a reference to Eva Peron and is perhaps best known for her role as South Africa’s ambassador to the mythical homeland republic of Bapetikosweti from 1981 to 1991. To date, Uys has written and performed over 20 plays and 30 revues and one-man shows locally and internationally. In 2001, his Evita Bezuidenhout character was awarded the Living Legacy 2000 Award in San Diego, USA, for “her contribution to the place of women in the last century.” Previous recipients included Mother Theresa, Margaret Thatcher, Princess Diana, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bette Davis. Uys was also awarded South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Award in 2001, as well as various honorary degrees through the years (Pieter-Dirk Uys CV [sa]; Bezuidenhout 2010:10).

The utilisation of the character Evita Bezuidenhout as the “author” poses a quandary when examining the narrative in this cookbook. If one uses the linguistic concept of levels of meaning to accomplish this task, one encounters a situation unlike any encountered in the previous two cookbooks analysed at the top level of meaning (narration), specifically with regard to narrative communication. As with Neil Roake in *Shiny happy people* (2009) and Emilia Le Roux in *Waar vye nog soet is* (2009), the presumed author and narrator of *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) are the same person. As discussed previously, a narrator is a paper being created by the author and it is important to differentiate between the two. However, Evita Bezuidenhout – as a created or fictional character – is already a paper being and as such, one is confronted by

a paper being creating another paper being, while in reality both author and narrator are created by a 'ghost' or hidden author, Pieter-Dirk Uys.⁸

One could ask what qualifies Uys to write a cookbook. Is it a love of food or is the cookbook merely a vehicle to promote the Evita Bezuidenhout brand? While the Evita Bezuidenhout character, or Pieter-Dirk Uys for that matter, is not a professionally trained chef, Uys has been the owner of a theatre restaurant in the West Coast town of Darling called *Evita se Perron* since 1996 (The venue [sa]). One could assume that he has an interest in food and has acquired at least some knowledge and experience with regard to the preparation of food. However, one could regard Uys a celebrity who cooks rather than a chef. This distinction also prohibits one from calling Uys a gastrosopher. While he is probably the most well-known of the five cookbook authors chosen for analysis in this chapter, his celebrity status is not as a result of involvement with food. Rather, Uys has achieved culinary success as a result of his actor celebrity status.

This leads one to the question Christine Mitchell (2010:525), a professor at Southeastern Louisiana University poses: whether there are differences between cookbooks written by professionally trained chefs or cooks, and those written by celebrities with an interest in food. Even though two thirds of *Food Network* shows' hosts have received no professional culinary training, it seems that a lack of professional training does not impact on an individual's chance of success, whether in producing a television series or a best-selling cookbook. An example would be gastrosopher Rachel Ray, as discussed in Chapter One of this study. It is worth noting that, following the success of *Evita's kossie*

⁸ Postmodern literature typically moves away from an omniscient third person narrator and instead makes use of subjective, ambiguous narrators. Postmodern literature is also often self-referential, clearly communicating to the reader that what they are reading is a fictional account of something that is being constructed, as is the case of Evita Bezuidenhout's life history.

sikelela (2010), a second cookbook was published in August 2012 called *Evita's bossie sikelela*⁹ (Bezuidenhout 2012).

Mitchell (2010:527) asks a second question: whether cookbooks written by celebrities are helpful in teaching people to cook, or whether they are merely vehicles to promote the celebrity. Her conclusion is that cookbooks written by female celebrities focus on empowering readers by teaching them to cook and on developing cooking as a skill to expand on, while cookbooks written by their male counterparts mainly focus on the celebrities themselves and their preferences.

While both the presumptive author and narrator of *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) are female (the character of Evita Bezuidenhout), the actual author or driving force behind the cookbook is male (Pieter-Dirk Uys). It is then worth noting that as least as far as the cover image (Figure 19) goes, *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) follows the pattern of male celebrity cookbooks in promoting the celebrity rather than punting the food.

The cover of *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) is a photographic image, in which the figure of Evita Bezuidenhout takes centre stage, wearing a glamorous black and red evening gown with ostentatious diamanté jewellery while holding an apple in her hand. She is standing in front of a table covered with a silver damask tablecloth, overlaid with a Nguni cowhide (the Nguni cattle breed is indigenous to southern Africa) on which various dishes of food are placed.

The title of the cookbook, especially the name Evita, is big and bold. The title of the cookbook, *Evita's Kossie Sikelela*, is a pun on both the South African national anthem *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, the Afrikaans word for food, *kos*, and the

⁹ *Evita's bossie sikelela* (Bezuidenhout 2012) follows a similar pattern to *Evita's kossie sikelela* (Bezuidenhout 2010) as a vehicle to promote the person of Evita Bezuidenhout. Photographs in the cookbook feature Evita Bezuidenhout with various well-known figures and in various locations throughout South Africa, rather than food. The cookbook also contains various anecdotes and stories by Evita Bezuidenhout in addition to almost 200 recipes.

isiXhosa word for bless – implying a national cuisine. Like the damask tablecloth and Nguni hide, the title is a marriage between African and Afrikaans references.

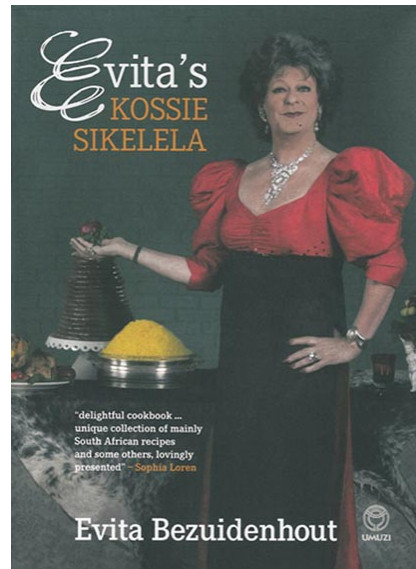


Figure 19: Cover of *Evita's kossie sikelela*. (Bezuidenhout 2010).

In this photographic image the coding of the analogue happens primarily through two procedures of connotation or adding of meaning – pose and objects. Evita's pose is reminiscent of Eve's pose in the painting *Adam and Eve* by German Renaissance painter Lucas Cranach the Elder, dating from 1528, now in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy (Art and the Bible 2007). In the painting, the Biblical figure Eve is pictured in the Garden of Eden, holding an apple while the snake is above her head in the tree of life.

As signification of meaning in the advertising image (including the cookbook image) is intentional, one needs to establish what the author wants to communicate. Firstly, the similarity between the names Eve and Evita is rather obvious. One could argue that by aligning herself with Eve, as Biblical *über-mother* figure, Evita positions herself as the matriarch of her family and fulfils the role of nurturing mother, feeding her children. This is enforced when one views the foldout dust jacket of the cookbook (Figure 20), of which the cover is

just a portion. The whole image shows Evita's husband, children, grandchildren and siblings at the dining table in a pose reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* (All you need ... [sa]).

The Biblical context is reinforced by the word *sikelela* in the title – *sikelela* meaning “to bless” in isiXhosa. So the title of the book effectively, is Evita's food blessings. Thus the apple, having been positioned in a Biblical context, could have a plethora of meanings. Firstly there is the forbidden fruit, which could be a reference to the sin of gluttony and Western society's obsession with staying thin, where the enjoyment of food becomes a guilty pleasure. The apple could also be indicative of the loss of innocence. A further possible meaning lies in the story of Adam and Eve, who ate from the Tree of Knowledge in order to attain the knowledge of good and evil. In Susan J Leonardi's (1998:340) exploration of the recipe book narrative she states that the Latin root of the word 'recipe' (*recipe*) implies an exchange between a giver and receiver. In this instance it could refer to the sharing of knowledge and the transfer of a skill, the art of cooking.

The reference to Eve depends on the reader having a prior knowledge of two things: a basic knowledge of the history of Western art and Judeo-Christian philosophy. While a reader without such prior knowledge would in all probability still identify the figure on the cover as Evita Bezuidenhout, the richness of meaning in the image would be lost. However, as Roland Barthes (1977:46) states, each person has a personal idiolect or 'language' of interpretation and as such, any reading of the image is a personal one.

A significant amount of signification of the expanded photographic cover image takes place through the use of objects as a procedure of connotation. The first thing one notices when viewing the expanded photographic cover image (Figure 20), are the groupings of people to the left of Evita, some behind the table and others in front. The graphic device and captions on the inside of the dust jacket allows the reader to identify them. Considering South Africa's

political past, the multi-racial aspect of the people around the table is quite important.



Figure 20: Dust jacket of *Evita's Kossie Sikelela*. (Bezuidenhout 2010).

From left to right, behind the table, the first person is a smiling African woman, satirically captioned as unidentified, but possibly one of the wives of the current South African President, Jacob Zuma, who is well-known for his polygamous marriages and various extra-marital affairs. The second person is a Caucasian woman, Evita's estranged sister Bambi Kellerman. The next two people, a Caucasian woman and African man, form a group through their pose and proximity to each other and are identified as Evita's daughter Billie-Jeanne and her husband Leroy Makoeloeli.

The last group behind the table consists of two Caucasian men and an African boy, identified as Evita's son De Kock, his best friend Moff de Bruyn and their adopted Venda son, Siphon. While it is not explicitly stated, it is implied that De

Kock and Moff are in a homosexual relationship. This is done through the name Moff, which refers to *moffie* (a derogatory Afrikaans slang word for a gay man) and also by the rather crude English meaning associated with Kock – ‘cock’, which is slang for penis.

In front of the table three light-skinned African children are playing. They are identified as Evita’s grandchildren La Toya-Ossewania Makoeloeli, Winnie-Jeanne Makoeloeli and Nelson-Ignatius Makoeloeli. The names of the children further communicate the marriage between African and Afrikaans culture through references to Nelson and Winnie Mandela, La Toya Jackson and the traditional Afrikaans name Ignatius. The name Ossewania is an unusual and archaic Afrikaans name and could possibly refer to the 1930s centenary celebrations of the Great Trek – a migration of farmers during the 1830s and 1840s from the Cape Colony to the interior of the country in protest against British colonial rule – and the names given to baby girls at this time. Ossewania relates to *ossewa* (ox-wagon), used by the farmers during the Great Trek to transport household goods.

A further reference to the Great Trek is found in a painting of the Battle of Blood River on the wall above the head of the alleged Mrs Zuma. Blood River is probably the best known of the Great Trek battles between the migrant Afrikaner farmers and the Zulu kingdom. It is significant that the two Makoeloeli girls, La Toya-Ossewania and Winnie-Jeanne, are playing with a scale model of a traditional ox-wagon on the carpet.

Other South African political signifiers include a mirror with a portrait of HF Verwoerd printed on it, the former South African president generally known as the ‘father of *apartheid*’. The wooden crocodile that Nelson-Ignatius Makoeloeli is playing with is captioned “Die Groot Krokkedil – given to me by the ANC Youth League in fond memory of PW Botha”, another former South African president often referred to as the ‘*die groot krokkedil*’ (the big crocodile) for his rigid and ruthless political stance.

An arrangement of proteas (the South African national flower) and a dish of koeksisters (an iconic Afrikaans confectionary) are among other typically South African references.

The introductory paragraph on the inside of the dust jacket states that:

If the road to reconciliation runs through a country's belly, Evita's book is a recipe for peace. The whole country, the entire world, is invited to her table where everyone can feast on dishes like green bean bredie and cumin chicken with sweet potatoes. Who would rant and rave with their mouth full of walnut balls, or pampoenkoekies, or baked apple clowns? Liewe aarde, her generous helpings of rabbit in red wine or guinea fowl with sultanas and hanepoot would only provoke brotherly love (Bezuidenhout 2010).

Reading the text as a narrative unit on the level of functions, indices proper such as "road to reconciliation", "recipe for peace", "whole country", "entire world" and "brotherly love" communicate the coming together and community of the dinner table, and how a shift in focus from the differences to the commonalities between people are often the first steps to reconciliation.

Bearing in mind the references to historical battles, cultural differences, past and current South African political figures, mixed race children, homosexuality and cross-cultural adoption, reconciliation and brotherly love, all of which co-exist at the peaceful haven of the dinner table, it is clear that the intentional signifieds of the expanded photographic cover image (Figure 20) are inclusivity and reconciliation.

The author's introduction (Figures 21 & 22) consists of three pages: one page of photography and two of text, including another photograph on the last page of text (Bezuidenhout 2010:8-10). None of the images are of food.



Figure 21: Pages 8 and 9 of *Evita's kossie sikelela*.
(Bezuidenhout 2010:8-9).

The first image (Figure 21) shows Evita, in what seems to be an official portrait. She is seated on a very ornate chair, placed on a Persian carpet with luxurious looking curtains drawn behind it. Evita is wearing a cream-coloured brocade formal evening gown with a jacket and is looking straight at the camera. She is wearing elaborate jewellery, including a ring, various brooches, a necklace and a tiara. She is also wearing a tri-coloured striped shoulder sash in orange, white and blue. In her right hand she is holding a rugby ball with the Springbok emblem, and in her left, a single protea flower. The entire photographic image is placed on an orange-coloured page.

To understand the coded iconic message of the photograph one has to read the linguistic message in the text of the introduction. While the image has no caption, the text of the introduction serves to create a context for the image, which is a mythical biography of Evita Bezuidenhout. It is extremely important to remember that Evita Bezuidenhout is Pieter-Dirk Uys' vehicle for political satire when reading the introduction. References to actual historical events are given a tongue-in-cheek slant through the presence of Evita.

The biography starts with Evita's humble origins in the Free State town of Bethlehem, her career as actress in Afrikaans films in the 1950s and 1960s and

subsequent marriage to her husband, then a National Party (the ruling political party during the heyday of *apartheid*) Member of Parliament. The paragraph of specific significance with regards to the image is:

From 1981, her ten years as the South African Ambassador in the independent black homeland republic of Bapetikosweti left an indelible mark on the blueprint of change, and today her recipe for bobotie is internationally regarded as the basis for reconciliation. *Sit down, eat and talk* has been her slogan, and trouble spots in the world owe their future to her cooking skills (Bezuidenhout 2010:9).

Seen in the context of this information, it becomes clear that the photograph is an official portrait dating to Evita's tenure as ambassador. Firstly, she looks a great deal younger than on the cover image of this cookbook, which means the photograph could arguably have been taken between 1981 and 1991 and would be in the correct timeframe. The sash over her shoulder becomes a sign for *apartheid*-era South Africa, as one now recognises the blue, orange and white stripes as the official colours of the pre-1994 South African flag. Likewise, the orange background of the page takes on new significance. The protea, as South Africa's official flower, transcends being merely a flower held by a woman for aesthetic reasons and becomes a national symbol. The rugby ball becomes a tongue-in-cheek reference to white South Africans' fixation with rugby. As a whole, the photographic image of Figure 21 becomes a sign for *apartheid*-era South Africa and the past.

When one compares the photographic image of Figure 21 with the photographic image of Figure 22, it becomes clear that the latter is, in contrast, a sign for the present. Evita Bezuidenhout is standing outdoors, next to a large yellow sign with the words 'Hello Darling' on them. The word 'Darling' is written in an official-looking sans serif typeface, all in uppercase, while the word 'Hello' has a hand-written feeling. One gets the feeling that the yellow sign existed with the word 'Darling' on it and that the "Hello" was added. However, the spacing of the typography on the sign seems deliberate, as the word 'Darling' is off-centre, allowing space for the rest. Underneath the yellow sign is a smaller sign in white, reading 'Evita Bezuidenhout Boulevard'. This allows one to identify the

setting of the image, which is the town of Darling – the actual location of the theatre restaurant *Evita se Perron*. The accompanying text “Now in her 70’s, this glamorous eternal flame of Boere chutzpah holds court at the former Darling Station, now famous as *Evita se Perron*...” (Bezuidenhout 2010:10), places the image in the present, or at least recent past. Evita’s clothing, a skirt and blouse in traditional African *shweshwe* cloth, made in traditional style with embroidery around the collar, also refers to current political sensitivities rather than the past.



Figure 22: Page 10 of *Evita's kossie sikelela*. (Bezuidenhout 2010:10-11).

The text of the introduction serves to re-enforce the signifieds of the cover image, inclusivity and reconciliation, specifically through food. Reading the introduction as a narrative unit on the level of functions, indices proper such as “bobotie ... basis for reconciliation”, “*Sit down, eat and talk*” and “trouble spots in the world owe their future to her cooking skills” communicate the role of food as a bridge between people with different ideologies.

The section of content chosen for visual analysis is titled “National Treasures” (Figure 23) and consists of a double page spread. The first page consists of an illustration and the second page is text.

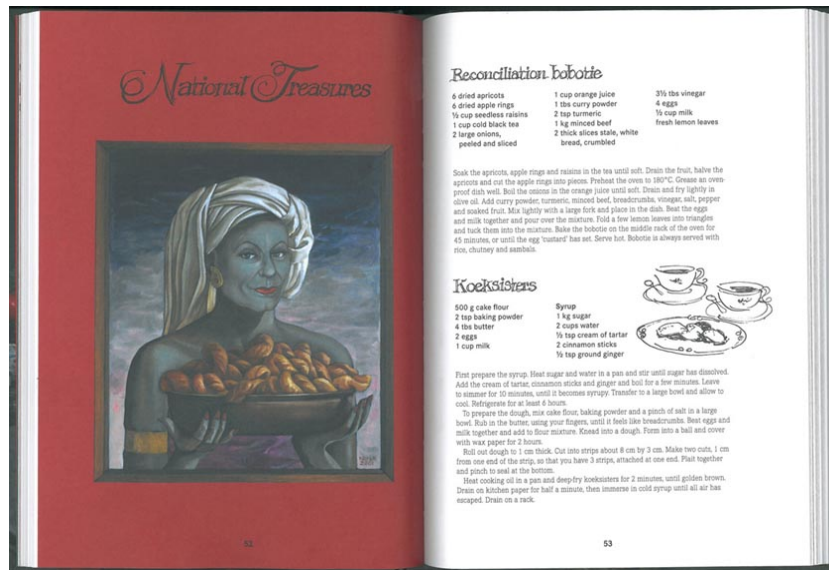


Figure 23: Pages 52 and 53 of *Evita's kossie sikelela*.
(Bezuidenhout 2010:52-53).

The illustration is the first thing one notices when opening the cookbook to this spread. It is a copy of the painting *The Fruits of Bali* by the Russian-born South African painter Vladimir Tretchikoff. In the original painting, a Balinese woman in traditional dress is shown holding a basket of fruit. Fruit is important in Indonesian religious ceremonies and baskets of fruit are often carried in religious processions to the temples (Fruits of Bali [sa]).

In this version of the painting by artist Nina van der Westhuizen, the Balinese woman has been changed to depict Evita Bezuidenhout and the basket of fruit is now a plate of koeksisters. This illustration is part of a series of paintings by van der Westhuizen called *Tannie Evita's Master Collection*, which are displayed at *Evita se Perron*. Each painting is a copy of an artwork by famous artists such as Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Raphael and others, copied and altered in order to depict Evita (Galleries [sa]). To understand the choice of illustration accompanying the spread called 'National Treasures', a basic knowledge of the painter Vladimir Tretchikoff and his role in South African painting is necessary.

Vladimir Tretchikoff was one of the first artists to sell prints of his own work and was often criticised for it, as the art establishment considered that he devalued his own work through this practice. When asked why he did it, he responded that he wanted his work to be widely available and that the enjoyment of art should not be a privilege of the rich. Tretchikoff was immensely popular among the masses and his painting *Chinese Girl* remains the best-selling art print of all time (Tretchikoff joins ...2008). Nonetheless, during Tretchikoff's career he was mostly ridiculed by local art critics and was nicknamed the 'King of Kitsch' (Tretchikoff joins ...2008). Recently however, Tretchikoff's works have been fetching record prices. On 26 May 2008, *The Fruits of Bali* was sold for R3.7 million at a Sotheby's auction in Cape Town, fetching ten times the reserve price of R300,000. This puts Tretchikoff in the same bracket as 'serious' artists like Maggie Laubser and Irma Stern, at least as far as price is concerned (Tretchikoff joins ...2008). As such, one could call Vladimir Tretchikoff and the painting *The Fruits of Bali* (belatedly recognised) national treasures themselves.

The other reason for putting this specific illustration in this section could be as simple as the fact that Evita, as the Indonesian woman in the painting, is carrying a plate of koeksisters and the facing page carries the recipe for koeksisters. However, as the cookbook was published two years after the sale of *The Fruits of Bali*, the placement seems too deliberate to be a coincidence. Bearing in mind the satirical nature of Uys' work, the parody of the Tretchikoff painting and the koeksisters, the signified of the image is irreverence toward national symbols.

The page opposite the illustration contains Evita's famous bobotie recipe, 'Reconciliation bobotie', mentioned in the introduction, as well as a recipe for koeksisters, the iconic South African confectionary pictured on the expanded cover image (Figure 20) (Bezuidenhout 2010:52-53). The recipes are straightforward, and in contrast with the cover and introduction, are not written in a satirical style. The earnest style, almost a 'jokes-aside' change of pace and lack of satire, suggests a seriousness about food and cooking that makes one

think that this might be a serious cookbook after all and not just a vehicle to promote celebrity.

When examining *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) for elements that prompt nostalgic reflection, one is confronted with a wide variety of objects that refer to the past, including historical paintings, visual reference to political figures of the past and various past national symbols. Viewed individually, there are as many meanings as objects and no cohesive whole is visible. However, the cookbook image is not meant to function in isolation, but to form part of an all-encompassing collection and communicate the myths and ideologies of the whole, rather than the parts of the whole.

The fact that an object references the past does not automatically make it an object of nostalgic reflection. There is a clear difference between nostalgia and autobiographical memory, as nostalgia is an idealised remembrance, often glossing over the realities of the past. Not all autobiographical memories cause nostalgic longing, and neither do all objects that reference the past become objects of nostalgia (Muehling & Sprott 2004:26). One can say that the objects in the cookbook refer to the past in an idealised way, as the realities of the previous political system are not addressed. Human rights abuses are glossed over and the mention of Nelson Mandela's incarceration on Robben Island is only there to highlight Evita's role in his release. Politician HF Verwoerd is visually referenced with no mention of the effects of his policies. In this way, through the idealised view, these references to the past fulfil the requirements of nostalgia, even though it is quite clear from Pieter-Dirk Uys' writing that he was no supporter of the previous political system and one can assume he does not long for a return to it.

Therefore, with regard to nostalgia in *Evita's kossie sikelela*, individual objects may prompt personal nostalgic reflection in readers (based on their personal

experiences), while the whole, seen as a collection of Boere kitsch¹⁰ through a satirical lens, prompts virtual nostalgia for a selective idealised past that glosses over social and political injustices.

A cookbook is an aspirational rather than functional object and in the end, the function of *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) is to build brand Evita. Food and cooking is merely a vehicle for this. Thus, the narrative of *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) is that South African society, as it exists today would not have been achieved without the actions of Evita Bezuidenhout, and that food and the community of the dinner table may be the first steps toward reconciliation.

3.1.4 *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen) (2008)* by Lannice Snyman

Lannice Snyman (2008), who passed away in 2010, was a South African author, publisher, food critic and restaurateur perhaps best-known for the years she spent as the *Sunday Times* newspaper's cookery editor. She won numerous awards and was a renowned food judge for Diners Club Wine List Awards and Galliova Awards for food writers. She held the regional chairmanship of UK-based *Restaurant* magazine's The S. Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants awards (Parker 2010). Snyman, through her diverse involvement in the South African culinary landscape and by being a household name, is probably the author of the chosen cookbooks for analysis in this chapter who comes closest to being called a gastrosopher.

Snyman (2008) describes *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen) (2008)* as more than a repository for recipes, but rather a journey to the gastronomic heart of South Africa, covering history, cultural traditions and cuisine. In the introductory paragraph on the front inside flap of the dust jacket (Figure 24), she explains that:

¹⁰ Memorabilia that reference Afrikaner culture and history in melodramatic, overly sentimental and garish ways. It is generally perceived to be in bad taste by current standards.

Tortoises & tumbleweeds glances over its shoulder, embraces current trends and looks to the future. It traces the origin of the people who have made their home at the southern tip of Africa and take the armchair traveller on a picturesque taste-trip through the countryside.

Phrases like ‘armchair traveller’ and ‘picturesque taste-trip’ give the impression that this cookbook is meant for visual consumption only, just another iteration of gastroporn. However, in the penultimate paragraph the reader is informed that not only are all recipes featured in the book personal favourites of the author, they have been updated to accommodate modern cooking techniques. Snyman calls it “glancing over the shoulder” – being inspired by the historical dishes and foods but adjusting them for modern cooks. If one re-visits Christine Mitchell’s (2010:527) question about cooking celebrities – and her conclusion that cookbooks written by women focus on empowering readers with cooking skills – it is clear that Lannice Snyman fits the mould of the female cooking celebrity and the dishes featured in this cookbook are undoubtedly meant to make it from the page to the table.

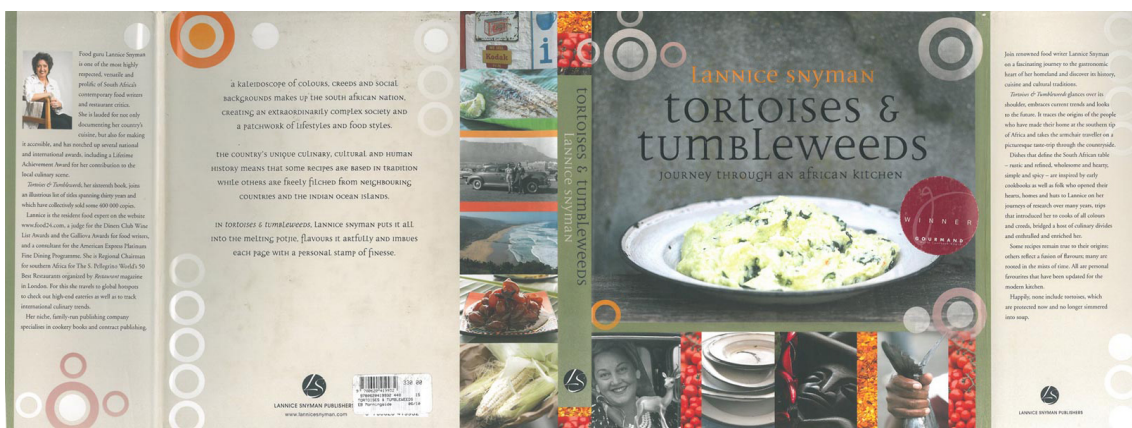


Figure 24: Cover and dust jacket of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*. (Snyman 2008).

When reading the linguistic component of the dust jacket (Figure 24), the signifieds identified are diversity and inclusivity. Snyman says that she was inspired by early cookbooks, but also by people who invited her into their “hearts, homes and huts” on her many journeys to do research. These journeys

introduced her to “cooks of all colours and creeds” and “bridged a host of culinary divides”. These indices properly communicate the broad cultural scope of this cookbook.

On the back cover of the dust jacket one reads that:

A kaleidoscope of colours, creeds and social backgrounds makes up the South African nation, creating a patchwork of lifestyles and food styles (Snyman 2008).

And:

In *Tortoises & tumbleweeds*, Lannice Snyman puts it all into the melting potjie, flavours it artfully and imbues each page with a personal stamp of finesse (Snyman 2008).

While the diversity of people and cultures again come to the fore, the reader is made aware that the author has taken this patchwork of cultural influences and combined them into a harmonious whole. The subtitle, *Journey through an African Kitchen*, re-enforces this inclusivity, where “all colours and creeds” “who have made their home at the southern tip of Africa” are part of, and at home in, the African kitchen.

It is also interesting to note that the author refers to herself in the third person. As a function of the top level of the narrative, narrative situation, it demonstrates the fact that the author and narrator are not the same person and that the narrator is a created entity.

The signifieds of diversity and inclusivity are further underpinned by the photographic images on the dust jacket of the cookbook (Figure 24), while a third signified is identified, that of ‘Africanness’ (the cultural stereotype of all things African). While none of the images on the cover are captioned, some of them appear elsewhere in the book with captions and are therefore identifiable. The captions perform the function of anchorage and answer the question ‘what is it?’

The main image on the front cover is a chipped, white enamel plate with a traditional African dish – *pap* (maize meal) with *morogo* (wild indigenous spinach). The plate is placed on a coarsely sanded wooden table top with a roughly plastered, unpainted wall behind it. The modest ambiance of this image communicates that this is ordinary cooking rather than fine dining, the kind of food people eat everyday in an everyday setting. Of the cookbooks discussed so far in this study, this is the first in which a prepared dish of food is the main focus of the cover. It is worth noting that Snyman chose to showcase a quintessential African dish and not a food item with its roots in Europe or Asia. Further signifiers for ‘Africanness’ can be found in the subtitle, *Journey through an African Kitchen*, as well as the image on the cover of an African mask – which the reader can identify further in the book as being the handle of a carved wooden pestle.

There are 14 smaller photographic images on the front and back cover. Of the 14 images, eight are of food, including fresh tomatoes, mealies, a dish of roasted beetroot and onion, masala, kumquat pickle and fish. The remaining six images are not of food.

Two of the photographs are of the parents of the author. The first image is a black-and-white photograph of a woman dressed in the style of the 1950s, looking out of the window of a motorcar while smiling. A photograph of her in the introduction allows one to identify her as the author’s mother, Lynette Barling. Both the author’s parents were enthusiastic travellers through Africa. The other image is a black-and-white photograph of a man and a woman standing next to a car with Cape Town and Table Mountain in the background. The clothing and vehicle place this image somewhere in the 1950s or 1960s. The woman is Lynette Barling and the man, one assumes, is the author’s father.

A reader picking up this cookbook in a bookshop would, in all probability, be unaware that these two images are of the author’s family, not having read the

introduction. However, even without the text performing anchorage, these images fulfil the function of prompting nostalgic reflection. The style of dress and motorcar, combined with the black and white photography, place these images in the past. The combination of these two images with the food images communicates a sense of history and traditional methods of food preparation. This could prompt virtual nostalgia, an idealised longing for a time when life was simpler, food was wholesome and mealtimes were a time of community and connection with one another.

The presence of Lynette Barling, as a middle-aged woman from the 1950s, signifies the idea of 'motherliness' (the cultural stereotype of motherhood). As discussed elsewhere in this study in more detail, the mother figure is the archetypal symbol for home, and a longing for home or homesickness is nostalgia in its purest form.



Figure 25: Pages 6 and 7 of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds* (journey through an African kitchen). (Snyman 2008:6-7).

The introduction of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds* (journey through an African kitchen) (2008) (Figure 25) consists of a double page spread with text and a photographic image.

Once again, the signifieds of the introduction are ‘Africanness’, diversity and inclusivity. Snyman credits her parents with instilling a love for, and curiosity about, Africa in her. She commences the introduction with an anecdote about her parents and their participation in a trans-African rally from Cape Town to Cairo in 1956. After their return, they would often invite friends over on Saturday nights to view their slides and listen to stories about the people they had met and countries they had visited. Snyman describes how, as an insular schoolgirl, these evenings opened her eyes to the continent of Africa and the influence it would have on her culinary pursuits. She says:

When, years later, a career in food claimed my heart, soul and future, childhood memories of African tales continued to colour my vision... I continued to be drawn to my own Anglo-Saxon-African roots (Snyman 2008:7).

Inspired by Africa’s undiscovered culinary wealth, Snyman undertook to research Southern Africa’s culinary history, and write and publish Afro-centric cookbooks as a result. The structure of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* (2008) consists of alternating chapters of recipes and South African regional history and culture. Snyman (2008:7) explains her reason for the structure by calling it a tribute to the people who created the recipes – the “cooks of all colours and creeds”, bridging what she calls “culinary divides” – and the region that provided the ingredients – Southern Africa.

In the last paragraph of the introduction, the author experiences personal nostalgia, based on her direct individual experience. She claims that all the recipes in the book evoke memories of notable food moments for her, as well as the love she remembers experiencing around the lunch table as a child. This feeling of nostalgia extends to the photograph on the first page of the introduction. The image is uncaptioned, but the linguistic component of the photographic image in the accompanying text allows the reader to draw the conclusion that the image is of Lannice Snyman in her childhood, accompanied by her sisters and mother. They are standing in front of a motorcar, next to the road in a rural area. After having read and understood the role that her parents

and travel played in her interest in African cuisine, one understands how fitting it is that the image accompanying this spread is that of a family road trip.

The section of content chosen for visual analysis is ‘Chapter Two: Breakfast’ and consists of five double page spreads containing nine recipes. The section starts with an introduction accompanied by a photographic image (Figure 26). The image consists of a close-up of man’s hands, holding a mug of dark liquid – one assumes black coffee – in the one hand, and a rusk in the other. The caption informs the reader that:

Breakfast may be as simple as a rusk dunked in a mug of coffee, as homely as a bowl of porridge, or as healthy as juicy, sun-ripened fruit (Snyman 2008:16).

The mug is fashioned to represent a giraffe, with the neck of the giraffe forming the handle. This is a sign for ‘Africanness’. The hands holding the mug belong to a Caucasian person and re-enforce ‘Africanness’ as the signified, as opposed to Africa or being African as a cultural stereotype, accessible to all regardless of race and culture.



Figure 26: Pages 16 and 17 of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*. (Snyman 2008:16-17).

The variety of choice in the breakfasts described in the caption signifies diversity, and is re-iterated in the text of the introduction to this section.

Snyman (2008:17) states that a South African breakfast may be simple or highly crafted, homely or wildly excessive. She elaborates by discussing various past and current South African breakfasts, starting with *amas*i (curdled milk), moving on to maize meal cooked in a clay pot over an open fire and other delicacies such as frikkadels, *skilpadjies* (finely chopped and spiced liver wrapped in caul fat) and even fresh oysters.

The diversity is not only limited to the variety of foods mentioned by Snyman, but is also present in the cultures and traditions she describes. Snyman (2008:17) describes the way VhaVenda women ladle *mukonde* (kings porridge) onto flat wooden plates to set in a layered pyramid shape, as well as the tradition in some communities for women to pattern their husband's maize porridge with a corn husk, as a way of demonstrating their love for him. She describes regional recipes as "a treat", specifically mentioning the Hantam speciality of *boermeel* porridge made with raisins traded from travelling Jewish pedlars, or *kambro konfyt* (kambro jam) made from roots of a plant found only in the Karoo area of South Africa. Diversity is carried through in the choice of recipes included in this section, with dishes ranging from maize rice and mabele *pap* of the Swazi and Tsonga people, through to kedgereee, which has its roots in colonial India under British rule. Food becomes directional arrows, pointing back to its place of origin and the people who live there.

One of the signifieds of the double page spread, containing the recipes for putu *pap*, maize rice and mabele *pap* (Figure 27), is nostalgia. Snyman prefaces the recipe for putu *pap* with the statement that while slow, steady heat is necessary to ensure the success of this dish, having a traditional stirring stick – the shape of which differs between clans – is also required. If the reader is not in possession of a traditional stirring stick, "a wooden spoon will do" (Snyman

2008:18). Snyman makes it clear that the traditional method and tools are preferred, but concedes that this is not always possible.

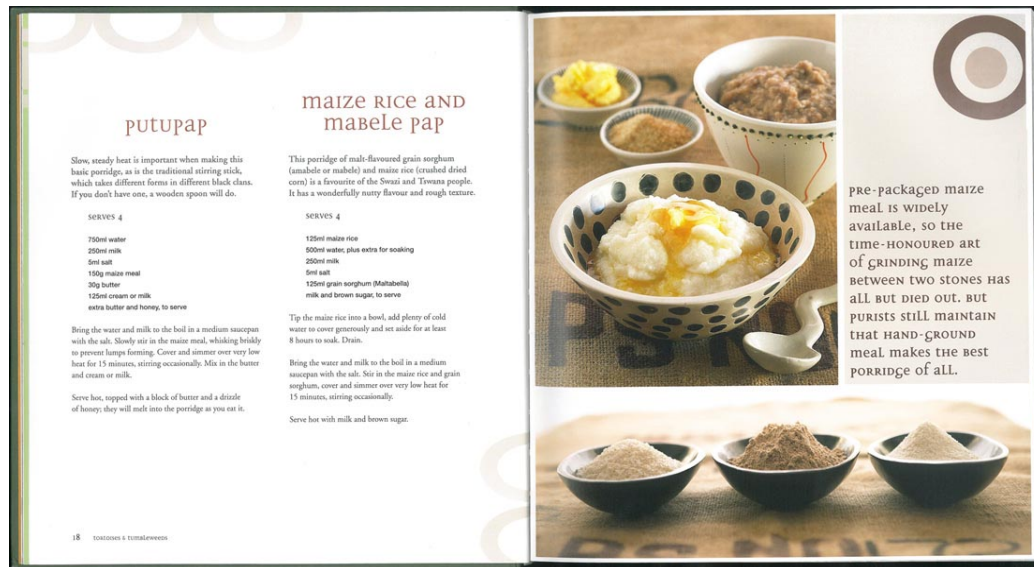


Figure 27: Pages 18 and 19 of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*. (Snyman 2008:18-19).

In the pull quote next to the photographic image, Snyman states that although pre-packaged maize meal is easily obtainable, purists maintain that traditional hand-ground maize meal makes a superior porridge. She laments that the “time-honoured art of grinding maize between two stones” has all but disappeared. This idealised view of the past and tradition, especially of a tradition that is not Snyman’s own (as a person of Anglo-Saxon heritage) is typical of virtual nostalgia and completely disregards the reality of modern convenience offered by store-bought maize meal *versus* the difficulty and effort required to grind maize by hand.

Nostalgic references are also present in Figure 28, the recipes for eggs in tomatoes and mushrooms in sherry, which are introduced by Snyman (2008:22) as:

I discovered both these long-forgotten recipes in an old cookbook and brought them to life for new generations to enjoy.

The statement creates an expectation of the mythical goodness of the past, when things were better; but now with the bonus of modern convenience.

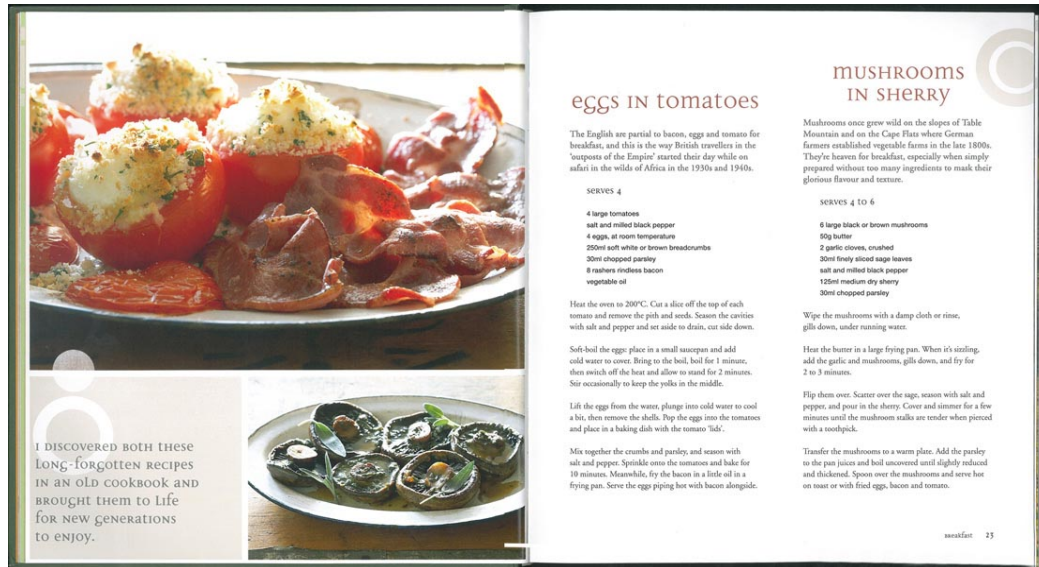


Figure 28: Pages 22 and 23 of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*. (Snyman 2008:22-23).

The nostalgic references continue in the recipe for eggs in tomatoes, which is described as:

... the way British travellers in the ‘outposts of the Empire’ started their day while on safari in the wilds of Africa in the 1930’s and 1940’s (Snyman 2008:23).

The 1930s and 1940s, two distinct decades, are grouped together into one romanticised past era, which completely obscures the realities of that time, which includes the Great Depression and the Second World War. Travel at that time, if not completely impossible, would have been severely restricted with food rationing in place in some regions, particularly in the early 1940s. Further indices such as “wilds of Africa” and “outposts of the Empire” romanticise and idealise Africa and re-enforce the signified of ‘Africanness’, the stereotypical view of all things African. One could also argue that this is an instance of colonial nostalgia. William Bissel (2005:216-217) describes the rise of imperial and colonial nostalgia since the 1980s as a response to the loss of privileged position and prestige, and a reaction to perceived changes in familiar identities,

social boundaries and political hierarchies. Snyman could arguably experience colonial nostalgia as a longing for familiar social and cultural roles and boundaries in a changing South African political and social landscape.

It is evident when looking at the linguistic component of the message in conjunction with the photographic images in *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* that the narrative of this cookbook is that food cannot be separated from the people and places it originates from. Human migration is reflected in the food people prepare and food fusion becomes a mirror that reflects the different cultural influences in society.

3.1.5 South Africa eats (2009) by Phillipa Cheifitz

Phillippa Cheifitz is a well-known South African author, blogger, former food editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and columnist for *Taste* magazine, among others. She has won numerous International Gourmand Cookbook Awards, most recently the Best Culinary History Book Award in 2010 for *South Africa eats* (2009) (About Phillipa Cheifitz [sa]).

In *South Africa eats* (2009), Cheifitz puts a fresh slant on the format of the celebrity cookbook. Instead of focusing on one celebrity, usually the author, and the food they know and love, Cheifitz approached 13 well-known South African cooks and foodies, and asked each to share their family history, culinary influences and favourite recipes. The culinary diversity is considerable, including Jewish (both Ashkenazi and Sephardi), Afrikaner, Indian, Greek, Italian, Asian, British, Portuguese, Cape Malay and Pan African. In the final section of the book, Cheifitz (2008) included some of her own favourite South African recipes that reflect contemporary South African culinary trends, which she describes as being “easy to make and delicious to eat.”

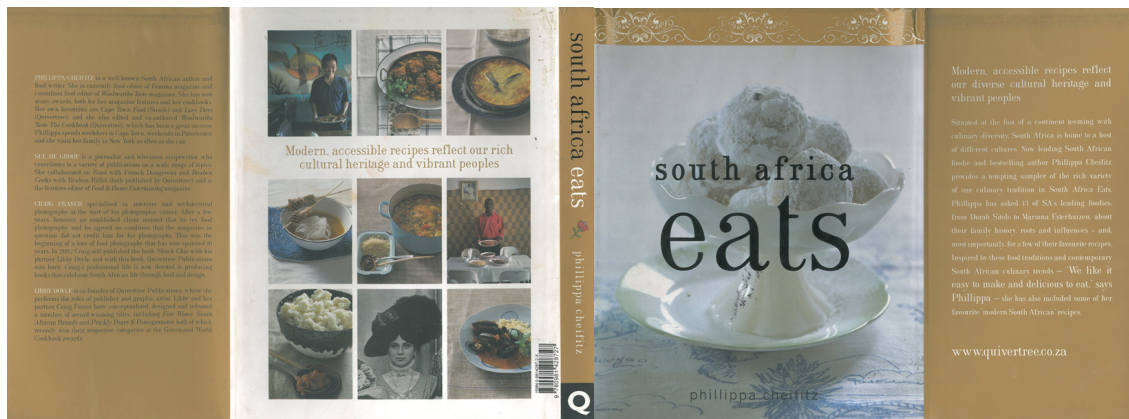


Figure 29: Cover and dust jacket of *South Africa eats*. (Cheifitz 2009).

Thus, following the linguistics model in a structural analysis of the narrative, at the level of narrative communication one can identify one author but multiple narrators. Cheifitz is the narrator in the section on Ashkenazi Jewish cooking, as that is her heritage. However, each section thereafter, with the exception of modern South African recipes, has a different narrator. The question arises whether these narrators are true paper beings created by the author, as they are real people who share personal recollections, separate from the author's consciousness. One could argue that they are: Cheifitz in her role as author edits the content that appears in the cookbook and as such, controls the glimpse the reader is allowed to have of each narrator. One could use the analogy of looking through a keyhole into each contributor's life and that Cheifitz controls the size of the keyhole.

The first things a reader notices when picking up this cookbook is the photographic image on the cover (Figure 29). The image is of an old-fashioned bowl of biscuits standing on a white linen tablecloth, printed with a lilac pattern. The dish obscures most of the pattern, but one can identify a stylised aloe, a very South African botanical reference. The decorative strip above the image consists of a pattern in white on gold. The pattern is reminiscent of the type of decoration one sees on good quality vintage china. In its totality the image looks as if the biscuits could have been baked by someone's grandmother and photographed on her dining room table, using her linen and china. It evokes the

feeling of a more decorous and refined age and prompts feelings of virtual nostalgia in the reader.

While the image is uncaptioned on the cover, it is repeated inside the cookbook in the section on Greek cookery by Sophia Protoulis. The caption performs the function of anchorage, which allows the reader to identify the biscuits as *kourabiedes* – traditional Greek shortbread. At first the photographic image and title seem at odds with each other – *South Africa eats* and a traditional Greek delicacy – but the introductory paragraph on the front flap of the dust jacket explains that in this cookbook:

Modern, accessible recipes reflect our diverse cultural heritage and vibrant people (Cheifitz 2009).

As such, the combination of image and text typify the cultural melting pot that is South Africa, with its diverse and ever-evolving culinary influences. This statement is repeated on the back of the dust jacket, indicating its importance as a key assertion of this cookbook, and ensuring that should a reader pick up this cookbook in a book shop without opening it, they would still be aware of it.

Apart from the text there are 12 photographic images on the back cover of the dust jacket. All images are uncaptioned but can be identified by referencing them against the contents of the book. Six of the images are of food: a Moroccan-style chicken dish; a fish bobotie; sweet potato and squash soup with seared tuna; seven vegetable soup with couscous; phutu porridge with tomato relish; and mussels with millet pilau. There are also three photographs of people: the author's grandmother Annie Kantor; and two restaurateurs – Etienne Gaba of Restaurant Ivorian in Yeoville, Johannesburg; and Kevin Hsu of The Fisherman's Plate Restaurant in Cyrildene, Johannesburg. The variety of dishes and the cultural influences they reflect, the different nationalities of people and the positioning statement repeated on the dust jacket, can lead one to conclude that the intentional signifieds of the cover are diversity and inclusivity.

While the general focus of the images on the cover of *South Africa eats* (2009) is on food, the focus shifts when the reader opens the book to the front endpaper (Figure 30).



Figure 30: Front endpaper of *South Africa eats*. (Cheifitz 2009).

The endpapers have an illustrated repeat pattern of non-food-related items on a golden background. Signification of meaning in the endpaper image is through the use of objects, and these objects are stereotypically South African. They include a wind pump, road signs with South African place names, a kettle braai, a carved wooden giraffe, a *kettie* (hand-held catapult), South African animals and many others. Among the illustrations of objects there are also illustrations of people, including a rugby player; an African woman with a paint tin on her head; a farmer (complete with safari suit); and others – all stereotypical South African characters.

As illustrations are coded images, with layers of meaning laid down during the process of creation, the source material and style of illustration are deliberate choices made during the creative process. As coded images, what do these illustrations communicate? Looking at the diversity of subjects in the illustrations, the first signified re-affirms the diversity signified by the cover.

However, the illustrations also signify ‘South Africanness’, the cultural stereotype of what it means to be South African, as a second signified. These are not objects and people that most South Africans see every day during their normal routines, but as a whole, they are create an over-exaggerated visual representation of South Africa, hence ‘South Africanness’.

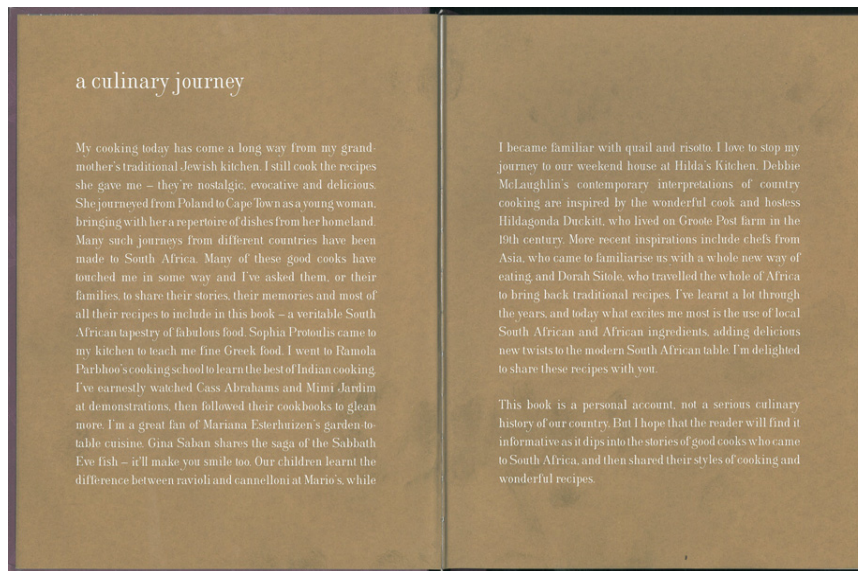


Figure 31: Pages 4 and 5 of *South Africa eats*.
(Cheifitz 2009:4-5).

The author’s introduction (Figure 31), titled ‘A culinary journey’, consists of a double page spread of text on a golden background. Cheifitz (2009:4) starts the introduction by saying:

My cooking today has come a long way from my grandmother’s traditional Jewish kitchen. I still cook the recipes she gave me – they’re nostalgic, evocative and delicious.

One can infer from Cheifitz’s statement that cooking from her grandmother’s recipes evoke strong feelings of personal nostalgia. She states that her cooking has come a long way from her grandmother’s traditional Jewish kitchen. It goes without saying that as a food editor, author, columnist and blogger, Cheifitz’s culinary influences through the years have been extensive, far beyond the scope of traditional Jewish cooking. However, being nostalgic for something is an indication that one has lost it. Therefore, one can assume that Cheifitz

experiences a sense of loss when comparing her cooking to her grandmother's kitchen. The question is, what is she nostalgic for? As one can see from the statement on the cover, modern accessible cooking is important to her. It is also worth noting that she compares her cooking not to her grandmother's cooking, but kitchen. One can then deduce that her nostalgia is not for traditional methods of food preparation, but for an idealised place and time in her past. Cheifitz's nostalgic recollection of her grandmother elevates her to the mythical *über*-mother figure, the archetypal symbol of home and another sign for nostalgia.

Cheifitz's (2009:4) grandmother journeyed to South Africa from Poland as a young woman, bringing a personal collection of traditional Ashkenazi Jewish recipes with her. Cheifitz states that many such journeys to South Africa have been undertaken, from a variety of countries, and several cooks from this diverse ensemble have influenced her. These are the cooks (or their descendants) she approached as contributors and she calls this collection a "veritable tapestry of South African food" (Cheifitz 2009:4).

It is important to note that Cheifitz calls this collection, with all its different cultural influences, South African food. As a tapestry consists of interwoven strands, one cannot separate dishes from their place of origin and the people who created them. However, people change in new settings owing to fresh and often diverse cultural influences. Cheifitz, herself a third-generation South African, has, in her own words, come a long way (culinarily speaking) from her grandmother's Jewish cooking. One can therefore presume that as people change, the food they prepare is bound to change in order to reflect new influences. An example is Cheifitz's description of the current interest in local South African and African ingredients: she states that these ingredients have added tasty new variations to the modern South African table. One can therefore deduce that the intentional signifieds of the introduction are diversity and inclusivity.

The section of content chosen for visual analysis is ‘South Africa eats: Jewish’, which consists of Ashkenazi and Sephardi sections. As there are different narrators in each section, for the purposes of this study discussion is limited to the Ashkenazi section. This section consists of three double page spreads with two recipes and two photographic images and the intentional signifieds are home, family and tradition.

The first three pages consist of four distinct personal memories by Cheifitz of her youth, each memory tied to her grandmother and food.



Figure 32: Pages 8 and 9 of *South Africa eats*.
(Cheifitz 2009:8-9).

In the introductory paragraph to the section (Figure 32), Cheifitz (2009:8) recalls that on Friday mornings the fish seller would walk through her grandmother's neighbourhood selling fresh fish, blowing a horn to announce his arrival at each house. Cheifitz describes the various ways her grandmother would prepare fish; her opinion that no fish was better than fresh hake; and especially the way she used a sliced onion to gauge when the temperature of the frying oil was right. Cheifitz wonders whether this was the moment when her interest in food was kindled.

The second recollection is in the caption underneath the black and white photograph of a woman dressed in clothing from the early twentieth century, looking straight at the camera with a half-smile on her lips. The image is on a gold-coloured background and is captioned as Annie Kantor, the author's grandmother from Poland. In the caption, Cheifitz (2009:9) describes her grandmother's care and attention to detail as the defining characteristic that made her cooking inspirational. She cites the example of her *borscht* (beetroot soup), which was tasted and adjusted repeatedly until it was satisfactory.

The third recollection is of Friday evenings and the Sabbath meal. As a traditional Jewish household, the entire extended family would gather at Cheifitz's grandmother's white damask-covered table. The blessing would be said and the *kitke* would be broken. Cheifitz describes the traditional dishes on the table, the order of the meal and even some of the kosher laws. Indices such as 'decoratively', 'old-fashioned', 'leisurely' and 'quite a feat to master' indicate that this was a special time and that care was taken in the preparation serving and enjoying of the meal, as well as the community that went with it.

Cheifitz's fourth recollection (Figure 33) is that all the Jewish holidays were celebrated at her grandparents' house. She proceeds to name each holiday in combination with the food she associates with it: Passover and *matzo* balls; New Year and *tsimmes*; Shavuot and white cheese *blintzes*; and Hanukkah and potato *latkes*.

Through these recollections one gets a better idea of the person Annie Kantor was: she loved fresh hake, used sliced onion to test oil temperatures, had a white damask tablecloth and was a bit of a perfectionist in the kitchen. One cannot separate food from the one who prepares it; this is part of the social context of food. It is clear that for Cheifitz the social context of food is very important and that she is experiencing personal nostalgia for family time around a big communal dinner table. Tradition and food also plays a big role. Food

becomes the link to tradition and – as symbolic goods – the link to maintain cultural identity.

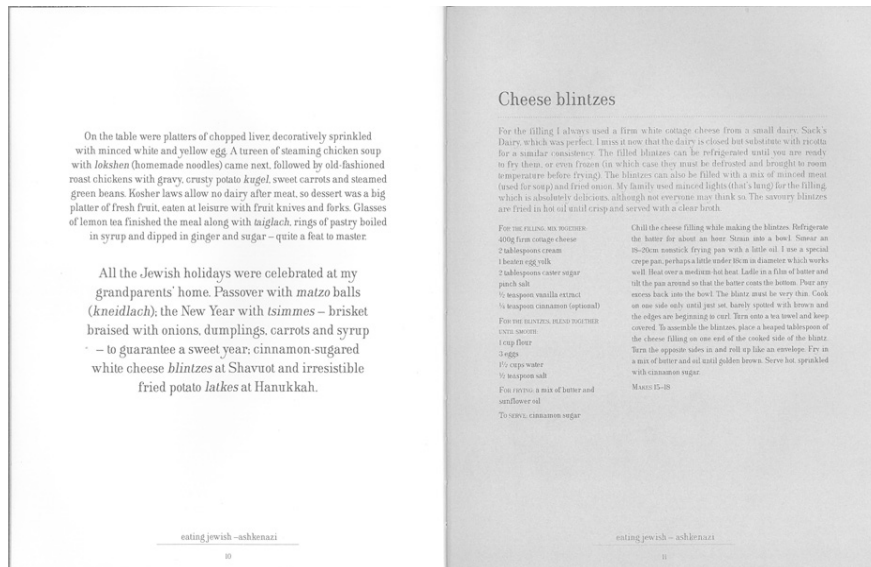


Figure 33: Pages 10 and 11 of *South Africa eats*.
(Cheifitz 2009:10–11).

The recollection of the fish seller and the *borscht* preparation could prompt virtual nostalgia in the reader for the ‘good old days’ when fish was eaten fresh from the sea, and the mother or grandmother-figure would take time and care to make sure each meal was just right. The realities of modern life, including working mothers, ready meals and pre-mixes, are in stark contrast with this idealised view and remind the reader of what has been lost.

The remainder of this section contains two recipes mentioned in the introductory text to the section: cheese blintzes (Figure 33) and iced *borscht* with hot potatoes (Figure 34).

In conclusion, some of the signifieds identified in the visual analysis of *South Africa eats* (2009) include culinary diversity, ‘South Africanness’, family, home and tradition. This could lead one to speculate that the narrative of this cookbook is that one cannot separate food from people and places. Food needs

a social context and can help individuals maintain cultural identity, even while that identity is changing and evolving.



Figure 34: Pages 12 and 13 of *South Africa eats.* (Cheifitz 2009:12-13).

It is clear that there are similarities between the five cookbooks. In *Shiny happy people* (2009) Neill Roake is clearly nostalgic for family and stability that he has lost. His friends, and the community he experiences around their tables, fulfil this need for kinship. Food becomes the context for community. While Roake does not reminisce about what he has lost, Emilia Le Roux in *Waar vye nog soet is* (2009) is deeply nostalgic about her idyllic farm childhood, which she describes in detail. She credits it with giving her a *plaashart* (farm heart), a tool for coping with the trials and tribulations of modern life. Like Roake, Le Roux considers that food has added significance when prepared and shared with family and loved ones. *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) by Evita Bezuidenhout (Pieter-Dirk Uys) also touches on the community of the dining room table. However, in this instance it becomes the setting of, and food the tool for, unity and reconciliation. In *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* (2008) Lannice Snyman takes the reader on a journey highlighting South Africa's diversity, not only in cuisine, but also history and cultural tradition. She shows how the richness of the whole can be displayed by the

diversity of the parts. This is similar to Phillippa Cheifitz's *South Africa eats* (2009). By compiling the contributions of 13 culturally diverse well-known South African cooks and foodies, Cheifitz illustrates what a cultural and historical melting pot South Africa is.

If one compares the signifieds identified in the selection of cookbooks, the three most common are inclusivity, diversity and home (which is also a sign for nostalgia). Taking into account that other signifieds include reconciliation and certain cultural stereotypes, one could speculate that the social context of food identified in the analysis, might also be a national context. Food has the power to unite and bring people together, whether it is family, friends, political enemies or nations. Nostalgia's idealised view is removed far enough from reality to counter the divisions of race and culture and make to make the narrative of the cookbook accessible to all.

The Chinese writer Lin Yutang (Lin Yutang > Quotes [sa]) addresses the significance of food in a national context when he asks, "What is patriotism but the love of the food one ate as a child?" The next section explores the role of food as a unifying ideology in nation building.

3.2 Food as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood

A commonly held belief in the developed world is that every nation has its own cuisine. Whether it is England's roast beef or Italy's pasta, food is part of everyday nationalism (Cusack 2000:209). Food, as symbolic goods, is used to signal and maintain individual identity. Symbolic goods signify who someone is, how they see themselves and how they wish to portray themselves to others (Dolfsma 2004:275). Food is also important to national cultural identity and one can argue that cuisine may be used to gauge how a nation sees itself and how it wishes to portray itself to others (Cusack 2000:208).

In an article about the traditional food and politics in the European Union, Michaela DeSoucey (2010:433) uses the term *gastronationalism* to describe the juxtaposition of food and globalisation. She claims that the sociological relationship between food and globalisation highlights the tension between globalisation's ever increasing tendency to homogenise, and the new forms of identity politics that appear in reaction to that, prompted by an environment that becomes more and more standardised. Gastronationalism utilises the use of food – production, distribution and consumption – as a means to define and sustain nationalist sentiment. Food and eating, as cultural expressions and identity shapers, communicate thoughts of similarity and otherness, 'us' and 'them', 'we do but they don't', through collective consumption (DeSoucey 2010:434).

Gastronationalism, as a means to convey collective identity, also proposes that any action against a nation's culinary customs and traditions is more than an action against the specific food item, but an attack on the nation's heritage and culture itself. DeSoucey (2010:433) uses the example of *foie gras* – a food product made from the liver of a force-fed duck or goose. In France, *foie gras* is seen as a symbol of French culinary tradition and national heritage and identity. However, within France's pan-national relationships, *foie gras* is seen as a morally problematic object, drawing fierce criticism from animal rights organisations.

In 1992, the European Union recognised that its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) created difficulties for artisanal and small-scale producers of traditional foods. A programme was launched whereby producers of traditional foods could apply for cultural exception to CAP and receive protected status within the European Union. If successful, their foodstuffs are awarded one of three EU-sponsored labels, recognising unique characteristics that are usually linked to a geographical place. Under this scheme, *foie gras* has been awarded one of these labels, the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) label (DeSoucey 2010:438).

Claims of authenticity linked to geography – as in the case of *foie gras* – rests on the assumption that the local environment plays a significant role in the individual characteristics of an agricultural product, a concept the French call *terroir*. Paul Nugent (2010:95) states that in France the formation of a national cuisine necessitated the incorporation of regional specialities and variants into a national whole. However, despite these unifying tendencies, regional identities are still closely tied to the uniqueness of local cuisine. Reconciliation of national and regional identity in France has been achieved through the concept of *terroir*, which can be translated as ‘a sense of place’. Regional wines are a good example of the *terroir* influencing the product. The majesty of France as a whole is supposedly displayed through the individual merits of each region. Hence, in France, there is an understanding that eating, specifically *what* one eats, is loaded with meaning. It is not a commonplace or thoughtless act. While consumption is not the key to national identity, it is an integral part of it (Nugent 2010:96).

The origins of any national cuisine are intricate and are drawn from multiple sources. Cuisines – whether ethnic, regional or national – should not be seen as neutral concoctions but rather – as part of material culture – the product of dominant ideologies and the accompanying structures that enforce said ideologies (Cusack 2000:207). Most emerging African cuisines reflect a colonial past and the resulting dependence on the West, as well as local ethnic culinary customs (Cusack 2000:207, 209). Examples are the introduction of groundnuts from Brazil to Africa by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, which are now indispensable in West African cooking. Another example is maize meal – introduced from the New World to Africa – which is a staple in Southern African cooking (Cusack 2000:210). However, this phenomenon is not limited to Africa, as Christine Paponnet-Cantat (2003:11) demonstrates by examining Cuba as a post-industrial, post-colonial society in which food practices can shape, represent and reproduce a particular collective identity.

Cuban cuisine is demonstrative of both the pre- and post-conquest histories of the island. Paponnet-Cantat calls it a 'contact cuisine' that incorporates the culinary traditions of the original inhabitants, African and Asian influence, as well as the cuisine of Spain. The history of Cuban cuisine is a history of power. The contact between these disparate cultures often happened in situations of unequal political power, where Euro-dietary tastes became one of the means to communicate and maintain colonial domination. However, a closer examination of Cuba's culinary history also reveals ideas and influences that do not represent the dominant power but the dominated (Paponnet-Cantat 2003:12). For example, the inclusion of okra and plantain in contemporary Cuban cuisine can be traced back to West African plantation slaves (Paponnet-Cantat 2003:14). Similarly, Cuba's reliance on rice – its most important staple – is a result of Asian indentured workers brought to Cuba after the abolition of slavery (Paponnet-Cantat 2003:14).

One can argue that the cuisine of South Africa, as in the case of Cuba, is also a 'contact cuisine'. South Africa was an important stopover on the maritime trade route between Europe and Asia for a number of centuries, and as such, the development of a South African cuisine was affected by African, European and Asian influences. As Africa's culinary history has remained largely unexamined until recent years, the popular view of what comprises South African cuisine was dominated until recently by Euro-dietary tastes (Snyman 2008:7).

Cuba and South Africa are similar too in the sense that both are post-colonial, post-revolutionary societies with a non-homogenous population. While South Africa did not experience a revolution *per se*, it did experience a significant regime change in 1994, which dramatically influenced the South African social and political landscape. As the history of food is often a mirror in which to examine the history of political power, Paul Nugent (2010:99) examines shifting patterns of alcohol consumption in South Africa from the end of the Second World War to post-apartheid South Africa to show how these changes in consumption reflect changing political and economic fortunes and South

African's understanding about individual and national identity. While wine – or alcohol in general – is not food, it falls within the broader culinary family and could arguably also be seen as symbolic goods, like food. As such, alcohol consumption is not a thoughtless act, but used to project individual and group identity.

After the Second World War, as in many British colonies, the liquor market in South Africa was segmented by race. Black South Africans were not allowed by law to drink 'European alcohol' but could brew their own beer, coloured people could drink wine in the Cape but not anywhere else, and whites could drink pretty much anything anywhere, depending on local licensing laws. However, patterns in alcohol consumption among all races changed in the decades after the war, in large part owing to the reforms proposed by the Malan Commission of 1956 (Nugent 2010:99).

The commission was set up to advise on all aspects of liquor distribution and made two significant proposals. Their first proposal was that – subject to strict licensing laws – all racial groups have access to the same types of alcohol. Secondly, after noticing that white South Africa's per capita hard liquor consumption was much higher than Europe's, awareness campaigns were launched to promote drinking wine and beer as an integral part of a healthy diet, as they were considered more benign than liquor (Nugent 2010:99).

The wine industry believed that these measures would result in a vast increase in black consumption of wine, and various marketing campaigns aimed at the black middle class were launched during the 1960s. These campaigns had little permanent success in establishing a culture of drinking wine among black consumers. Bottled beer sales boomed, however, as South African Breweries (SAB) targeted black consumers in *shebeens*. The upward trend in beer sales continued during the 1970s, while wine had difficulty in maintaining its market share. Beer was marketed as the product of choice for male bonding, whether in a *shebeen* or at home, with Castle and Lion as the most popular brands with

white consumers; and Black Label with black consumers. Wine, on the other hand, was marketed (less successfully) as something that couples enjoy together at a *braai* or other social event. By the 1980s, despite a political system that purposely separated South Africans of different races, black and white South Africans were basically drinking the same alcoholic beverages, the primary remaining difference being that black consumption occurred mainly in *shebeens* and white consumption mainly at home or at outdoor spaces (Nugent 2010:101).

After the 1994 elections, SAB was quick to take advantage of the notion of the 'rainbow nation' and national pride, specifically around sporting events, and positioned the consumption of their beer as a patriotic act that promoted a sense of one-ness and nationhood, with jingles such as:

One nation, one soul, one beer, one goal.
Let the nation pull together
Let's celebrate our soccer today.
The beer of the people is with us,
With us every step of the way (Nugent 2010:102).

However, despite the on-going popularity of beer among South African consumers, the time for the wine industry may finally have arrived. While per capita consumption and total volume of domestic sales of wine in South Africa have fallen during the 2000s, a growing appreciation by the black middle class that wine can provide a better gauge of status than beer, could change the picture considerably. In 2009, Julius Malema, the then leader of the ANC Youth League, castigated key figures in the ANC-SACP alliance for non-performance and accused them of "spending most of their time drinking red wine" while pretending to be representing the poor, thus corroborating wine's status as a beverage consumed by the elite and representative of political and economic power (Munusamy 2012).

Growth in the popularity of wine is not merely at the top end of the market. Attendance figures for the Soweto Wine Festival keep rising year on year and in December 2007, the 1.5-litre bottle of Van Loveren winery's *Four Cousins* wine, catering to the lower end of the market, reputedly outsold 2-litre bottles of Coca-Cola at the Pick 'n Pay supermarket in Soweto's Maponya Mall (Nugent 2010:103). One has to ask whether growth in wine sales to African consumers in the lower and middle end of the market is in spite of wine's perception as an elitist beverage consumed by those in power, or precisely because of it, and does that mean that wine is, among lower and middle-class African consumers, an aspirational beverage? Whatever the reason, these recent trends suggest that wine is starting to be considered more as a drink for all South Africans, instead of just white and coloured consumers.

Furthermore, the shift in pattern of wine consumption is accompanied by a significant change in local wine label design. More and more wine labels are discarding traditional European motifs and embracing themes celebrating local geography, fauna and flora. Thus, by adopting the French concept of *terroir* on African soil, the merits of the different regions of South Africa display the majesty of the country as a whole and promote the idea of nationhood in South Africa (Nugent 2010:103).

While the shift in patterns of alcohol consumption in South Africa has been the result of political power and marketing, nothing equals South Africa's National Braai Day (24 September) as a deliberate attempt to foster a national culinary heritage and purposely build a sense of nationhood. Archbishop Desmond Tutu – the patron of National Braai Day – described the aims of Jan Braai (real name Jan Scannel, who heads the initiative) as “nurturing and embracing a common South African culture, which is shared across all races and genders” (National Braai Day [sa]). As National Braai Day coincides with Heritage Day, the organisers of Heritage Day initially complained that National Braai Day belittles their efforts to promote the celebration of a common past among all South Africans. However, Archbishop Tutu was quick to point out that cooking large

quantities of meat on an open fire is highly regarded by South Africans of all races. The name of National Braai Day has even been changed to Braai4Heritage to cement the idea of a *braai* as a celebration of South African heritage (Nugent 2010:103).

The aim of National Braai Day to contribute to nation building and a sense of nationhood is further expounded on the website *Braai.com*, where a visitor is invited to “Join the revolution to unite 50 million people” (National Braai Day [sa]). The aim of National Braai Day’s organisers, as described on the website, is to entrench the day as an annual day of celebration, where South Africans across cultures celebrate by lighting the braai and preparing an awesome feast. At these feasts they share a common cultural heritage called by different names in different languages – *braai* in Afrikaans and *chisa nyama* or *ukosa* in Zulu. National Braai Day is further described as a “noble cause” that serves to “strengthen South Africa as a nation” (National Braai Day [sa]).

The extent to which the *braai* has become entrenched in South African culture can also be seen in the success of the reality-based television series *The Ultimate Braai Master*, as mentioned in Chapter One.

Nugent (2010:106) states that the best indicator of a national food consciousness is the existence of cookbooks and national restaurants. In South Africa’s case one could argue that having both a national holiday and reality television programme dedicated to national cuisine would serve to confirm that in a South African context the idea of food shaping and defining national identity is an integral part of the national consciousness.

In conclusion, one could say that national cuisines are the material product of political ideologies. Furthermore, national cuisines and national cultural identities are almost impossible to separate. In a world that is becoming more and more homogenous, food is a mirror in which a nation sees itself and affirms its identity. However, a national cuisine is not only a reflection of political power and cultural identity. It can also be used to create and maintain that identity and

serve as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood: firstly, through the idea of the *terroir*, where regional specialities contribute to a national whole, a kind of ‘unity through diversity’, ‘what makes us different makes us one’ approach; and secondly, through a more homogenous approach, by identifying that which is common to all or most, an ‘umbrella’ cuisine across cultures and races, as is the case of the *braai*.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of chapters

Cookbooks are cultural phenomena that transcend their genre as mere food preparation manuals, having become postmodern texts that carry meaning and cultural significance. Through the exploration of cookbooks as material objects of culture, one is able to explore non-material items of culture such as the society's knowledge, beliefs and values. Yet academics have been slow to study cookbooks, despite increased interest in food both globally and in South Africa. The increased popularity of cookbooks, food magazines, food blogs, television cooking programmes and even films indicate that interest in food preparation is no longer confined to culinary professionals but has become a part of everyday culture. The exploration of cookbooks provides insight into contemporary societal values and the role cookbooks play in fulfilling the needs of this society. The paucity of academic literature about South African cookbooks and their meanings could indicate that there is a lack of knowledge about South Africans' beliefs and values about food.

The preparation and consumption of food, as well as the activities and artefacts surrounding it, play a significant role in popular culture, as can be seen in the success of gastrosphers such as Gordon Ramsey and Rachel Ray, who earn small fortunes from their restaurants, cookbooks, television cooking programmes, celebrity appearances and deli products. They have considerable influence in contemporary consumer culture and, through their culinary flair and entrepreneurial skills, have not only elevated food preparation to culinary art but have contributed to the rise of 'food porn' – defined as food writing and recipes that are aimed mainly at visual consumption.

However, this is not a new phenomenon, as theorists like Roland Barthes have been writing about the shift in theoretical focus from the consumption of real food to the visual consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery since

the 1970s. Through his essays, Barthes creates a clear structure for the analysis of signs within the visual consumption of cookbooks, recipes and food imagery, which enables one to shift focus – post-analysis – to the effect the signifieds have on consumer behaviour. The possession and consumption of products is one of the ways in which consumers can give meaning to their identity and cookbooks, as symbolic goods, signify who people are; how they see themselves; and how they wish to portray themselves to others. In the same way, people use narratives to understand, build and maintain their identities. Narratives are present everywhere and are countless. In order to do a structural analysis of narratives, Barthes suggests that linguistics be used as the founding model. Postmodernism is important to the study of narratives in two ways: it enables objects of mass culture, like cookbooks, to become texts to be read and interpreted; and, secondly, incredulity toward meta-narratives is a feature of postmodernism. Nostalgia, like narratives, is a way in which people attempt to understand the world and their role as individuals, especially when faced with major life transitions.

The exploration of narrative and nostalgia in a selection of South African cookbooks in this study therefore provides insight into the visual consumption of food and its meanings. *Shiny happy people* (2009), Neil Roake's food memoir, emphasises the social context of food. In it he introduces the reader to his friends – who he calls his new family – and the food they cook. More than that, the reader is invited to share the sense of community and belonging he experiences at their tables. Roake's experiences fulfil his need for stability and family in a deeply nostalgic way and he clearly feels that food requires the setting of home and friendship to be enjoyed optimally.

Waar vye nog soet is (2009) by Emilia Le Roux and Francois Smuts is more than a cookbook or food memoir. It is also a self-help guide for anyone who wants to plant, raise and prepare their food as if they were living on a farm. Drawing on her experiences of growing up on Doornkraal, her family's farm, Le Roux paints a whimsical picture of an idyllic farm childhood and living off the

land. In this book, the preparation of food takes on added significance when shared with family and loved ones.

In *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010), Evita Bezuidenhout (Pieter-Dirk Uys) gives her blessing to the power the community of the dining table has to unite and reconcile. Evita's lighthearted, satirical description of the past (and the role her dining table played in it) promote inclusivity, diversity and, above all, brand Evita Bezuidenhout.

Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen) (2008) – Lannice Snyman's cookbook slash coffee table book about South Africa – is a compilation of South African recipes, history and cultural traditions. In it, food points the way to South African society's history and cultural influences and promotes inclusivity and diversity.

South Africa eats (2009) by Phillippa Cheifitz is a fresh view on the celebrity cookbook format. Through the contributions of 13 well-known South African cooks and foodies, as well as Cheifitz's own favourite South African recipes that reflect contemporary South African culinary trends, the reader is exposed to the diverse historical and cultural melting pot of South Africa, including Cheifitz's own Ashkenazi Jewish heritage.

Looking at food in a national context, a national cuisine is intertwined with national cultural identity and can be used to create and maintain that identity. More than that, a national cuisine can serve as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood.

4.2 Contribution of the study

In the literature reviewed for this study, it soon became apparent that there is very little South African academic literature that deals with the subject. While the growing global interest in food is evident in South Africa as well – as can be

seen by the plethora of local cookbooks, food magazines, websites and television cooking programmes – almost all of the research regarding this phenomenon have been undertaken in Europe and the USA, using European or American case studies. Likewise, literature relating to the role of food as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood mostly refers to case studies in Europe, North and South America, Asia and West Africa. The contribution of this study to the field of knowledge was to apply the concepts and theories discussed in Chapter Two to the five South African cookbooks selected for analysis as South African examples. The findings are briefly summarised below.

When one compares the five South African cookbooks discussed in Chapter Three, there are various similarities between them. Some similarities are common to all, while others are only common to some. These similarities allow conclusions to be drawn.

Firstly, in terms of format, both *Shiny happy people* and *Waar vye nog soet is* are food memoirs, the one about time spent with friends and the other about time spent with family. However, both have a strong nostalgic element tied to the community of the dining table. *Waar vye nog soet is* also serves as a self-help guide of sorts for anyone who longs be more closely involved with growing their own food. A further similarity is that both of the authors are relatively unknown in that they are not household names. The remaining three cookbooks, *Evita's kossie sikelela*, *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* and *South Africa eats* are celebrity cookbooks in the sense that their authors are well known, whether in culinary circles or the arts. In *South Africa eats*, Phillippa Cheifitz refreshes the celebrity cookbook format by including 13 well-known South African cooks and foodies, their family history, culinary influences and favourite recipes, instead of just focusing on one person. *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* also serves as a type of coffee-table book about South African history, cultural traditions and cuisine. One could say that it is part celebrity cookbook, part travel guide.

Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen) also fits Mitchell's (2010:527) stereotypical pattern of celebrity cookbooks written by women through a focus on expanding readers' culinary repertoires and teaching them to cook unfamiliar dishes. Snyman's dishes are all personal favourites that have been updated and tested and as such are meant to be cooked and eaten. When one compares it with *Evita's kossie sikelela*, which follows the stereotypical pattern of male celebrity cookbooks in promoting the celebrity rather than the food, one must bear in mind that the driving force behind the persona of Evita Bezuidenhout and the cookbook *Evita's kossie sikelela*, Pieter-Dirk Uys, is male, which affirms Mitchell's theory.

Evita's kossie sikelela is also unique among the five cookbooks in this study on the level of narrative communication, that of characters, by virtue of the fact that Evita Bezuidenhout, who is both author and narrator, is a creation of Pieter-Dirk Uys, who acts as a kind of 'author behind the author'¹. However, it is worth noting that this persona has been present in South Africa since the late 1970's and as such has built up a 'family' history. In the other four cookbooks the author and narrator are the same, although the character of the narrator is an entity of the author's creation. This separation between author and narrator is affirmed in *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*, where Lannice Snyman refers to herself in the third person in the text. In *Shiny happy people* Neil Roake, through the use of illustration, re-creates himself as a character of the narrative and distances 'Neil the narrator' from 'Neil the author'. In *South Africa eats*, Phillippa Cheifitz, as author, filters what the reader knows about the multiple narrators. One could say that readers only ever know what they are allowed to know about the narrator, and that is usually determined by what serves the narrative.

¹ *Evita's kossie sikelela* is unique in the fact that all the characters in the cookbook, with the exception of well-known public figures, are created 'paper beings'.

A similarity between all five cookbooks is a general focus on non-food images. These images serve different purposes in the different cookbooks. In *Waar vye nog soet is*, the inclusion of so many family-centred images and stories is vital in conveying the nostalgic myth of an idealised childhood to the reader. In *Evita's kossie sikelela* the many non-food images assist in boosting the Evita Bezuidenhout celebrity cult, while non-food images in *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* support the culinary and cultural journey on which the author takes the reader.

In terms of mythic discourse, the following are important in the sample. Inclusivity is a signified common to *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*, *South Africa eats* and *Evita's kossie sikelela*. The second most common signified is diversity, which is common to *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* and *South Africa eats*. The concept of home, which is also indicative of nostalgia, is present as a signified in both *Shiny happy people* and *Waar vye nog soet is*. Four of the cookbooks have different cultural stereotypes as signifieds. These are 'Africanness' in *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*; 'South Africanness' in *South Africa eats*; 'Frenchness' in *Shiny happy people*; and 'motherliness' in *Waar vye nog soet is*. While it is only present in one of the cookbooks, in light of the study's focus on food as unifying ideology in building a sense of nationhood, it is worth noting the presence of reconciliation as a signified in *Evita's kossie sikelela*, as it highlights the role of food as a bridge between people with different ideologies. Thus, the three most common signifieds found in the cross-section of five South African cookbooks in this study are inclusivity, diversity and home (which is also a sign for nostalgia).

In terms of nostalgia, *Waar vye nog soet is* could probably be called the most nostalgic of the cookbooks if one looks at its signifieds; home, 'motherliness', food and tradition. Nostalgia becomes the context in which to interpret the book – first, the personal nostalgia of the author as she reminisces about her idyllic farm childhood; and second, interpersonal nostalgia as experienced by the

reader, whose experience of nostalgia is prompted by the author's personal reminiscences.

In *Shiny happy people*, the sense of community and belonging the author experiences can be described as emotional needs that are met by an object of consumption – food. One cannot be nostalgic for something unless one has lost it and the author yearns for lost stability and order in his world. The focus changes from the consumption of food to the community around food preparation. What is produced and served up is not merely a plate of food, but a sense of belonging. The production and consumption of food becomes the glue that binds relationships.

In *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* there are various instances of both personal and virtual nostalgia. The selection of black and white photographs of the author's parents fulfil the function of prompting nostalgic reflection – personal nostalgia for the author and virtual nostalgia for the reader; while the images of the author's mother prompts nostalgic reflection in yet another way; by signifying 'motherliness' (the cultural stereotype of motherhood), the archetypal symbol for home. In another instance of personal nostalgia the author states that all the recipes in the book evoke memories of notable food moments for her, as well as the love she remembers experiencing around the lunch table as a child. The author laments the disappearing traditional methods of preparing food, while disregarding the inconveniences of preparation, thereby romanticising the past and disregarding the realities of those times – nostalgia at its most typical.

In *South Africa eats*, the author is deeply nostalgic (personal nostalgia) for her grandmother's traditional Jewish kitchen. The nostalgic recollection of her grandmother elevates her to the mythical *über*-mother figure, the archetypal symbol of home and another sign for nostalgia. It is clear that for Cheifitz the social context of food is very important and she experiences personal nostalgia for family time around a big communal dinner table.

In *Evita's kossie sikelela* (2010) the collection of Boere kitsch objects (many of them political in nature) prompts virtual nostalgia for what appears to be a selective idealised past. Evita Bezuidenhout, as a vehicle of satire, seems to gloss over social and political injustices. However, it is exactly this apparent myopia that reminds her readers of those injustices. It also serves to reinforce the mythology of Evita Bezuidenhout – the satirical vehicle used by Uys to comment on political issues, both past and present.

Of the five cookbooks, three – *Waar vye nog soet is*, *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* and *South Africa eats* – were written by female authors and two – *Shiny happy people* and *Evita's kossie sikelela* – by male authors (although Pieter-Dirk Uys writes as a female persona). The cookbooks by the female authors generally have more instances of personal nostalgia (based on direct personal experience) in them than the books by the male authors. All three – Emilia Le Roux, Lannice Snyman and Phillipa Cheifitz – share personal recollections of family dinners and the emotions associated with those occasions. Evita Bezuidenhout (Pieter-Dirk Uys) – as a female persona – exhibits personal nostalgia as she shares recollections from her political past throughout the book. While Neil Roake in *Shiny happy people* alludes to family being scattered over the world, he does not reminisce or share tales about family meals. His meals with friends are narrated as on-going events, which he cannot be nostalgic for, as he has not lost them.

The analysis of the five cookbooks identified various narratives. In *Shiny happy people*, the narrative is that food cannot be viewed or enjoyed in isolation, it is a shared joy and one needs community and a sense of 'home' to enjoy it to the full. This is very similar to the narrative in *Waar vye nog soet is*; preparing and enjoying a meal is part of the great tradition of home, family, self-sufficiency and simplicity; and these simple pleasures take on added significance when shared with loved ones. This link between people and food is also present in the narratives of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* and

South Africa eats. The narrative of *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* is that food cannot be separated from the people and places from which it originates. Human migration is reflected in the food people prepare and food fusion becomes a mirror that reflects the different cultural influences in society. Likewise, the narrative in *South Africa eats* is also that food cannot be separated from its social context. It becomes a tool to maintain cultural identity, even while that identity is changing and evolving – one cannot separate food from people and places. The narrative of *Evita's kossie sikelela* is that South African society, as it exists today, would not have been achieved without the actions of Evita Bezuidenhout, and that food and the community of the dinner table may be the first steps toward reconciliation. While the first part (the role of Evita Bezuidenhout) has to be seen through the lens of satire, food and community may truly play a role in reconciliation.

Thus, in answering the question regarding what the narrative of the cookbook is and what kind of myths it potentially communicates, one could say that one possible cookbook narrative (among the many possible depending on the reader's language of interpretation), identified through analysis of these five South African cookbooks, is that food cannot be separated from its social context. Food is better enjoyed in community and reflects the community it originated from.

As stated in the introduction, the aim of the study is to show, through the exploration of the narrative and nostalgia and its myths that food can act as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood. Of the five cookbooks in the study, *Evita's kossie sikelela*, while partly satirical, is probably the most deliberate attempt at nationbuilding, through signifieds such as inclusivity and reconciliation. It highlights the role of food as a bridge between people with different ideologies and puts forward the possibility of reconciliation around the dinner table. This mythic 'community of the dinner table' can be the sharing of similar cultural values and focus on common ground between disparate groups within a nation. A good example is *National Braai Day*, which

is a deliberate attempt to foster a national culinary heritage and purposely build a sense of nationhood. This is no mean feat in a non-homogenous nation like South Africa.

Cultural stereotypes also become a way of seeking common ground between disparate groups within a nation. Four of the cookbooks have different cultural stereotypes as signifieds, including 'Africanness', 'South Africanness' and 'Frenchness'. National cultural stereotypes obscure the reality of cultural differences and are accessible to all, regardless of race and culture. One could say that cultural stereotypes and nostalgia are similar in this regard, as the idealised view of nostalgia also masks reality in such a way that it becomes accessible to all. The nostalgic view of the past, especially with regard to virtual nostalgia, means that the past becomes a shared past, removed from the realities of history (which is how Barthes characterises mythic discourse). Emilia le Roux's idealised childhood in *Waar vye nog soet is* becomes everyone's childhood, even if it only 'should have been like that'. In the same way the reader is drawn into the homes, lives and community of Neil Roake's friends in *Shiny happy people*, and may find emotional needs met through virtual nostalgia by looking.

As is clear from the common narrative of the five cookbooks in this study, one cannot separate food from its social context – food is better enjoyed in community and reflects the community it originated from. This is also seen in gastronationalism, where food is not only a way of fostering and communicating individual identity but also collective identity, like a national identity. Food and eating communicate thoughts of similarity and otherness, 'us' and 'them', 'we do but they don't', through collective consumption and fosters a collective identity. As Lannice Snyman (2008:7) says in *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)*:

... sharing food – a simple snack, a casual campfire past, or a banquet – is a powerful and intimate form of communication.

In a South African context, faced with a non-homogenous population spread over a vast geographical area, the French concept of *terroir* would probably work best at deliberately fostering a national identity through food. *Terroir* means that the glory of the whole is displayed through its parts and is a way for all historical, geographical and cultural contributions to enjoy equal importance. Of the cookbooks analysed in this study, *Tortoises & tumbleweeds (journey through an African kitchen)* probably best demonstrates the concept of *terroir* through its focus on South Africa's geographical regions and their culinary specialities.

In conclusion, one could say that in a world that is becoming more and more homogenous, food is a mirror in which a nation sees itself and affirms its identity, even if that identity is a constructed one.

4.3 Limitations of the study

If there is a significant shortfall in this study, it's that the issues of race and gender were not key points of consideration.

The five cookbooks in this study were chosen for analysis by purposive sampling. As briefly discussed in Chapter One, all five authors are white South Africans and as such, the narratives constructed and identified in the sample could be called white narratives. While signifieds such as 'Africanness' and 'South Africanness' were identified, one must bear in mind that these cultural stereotypes were constructed, in this instance, from a white perspective. Similarly, signifieds like inclusivity and reconciliation in the sample are also constructed from a white perspective and would arguably look significantly different if constructed from a non-white perspective.

South Africa is a country preoccupied with race, where one's race arguably influences one perspective on history, culture and intangible tenets like beliefs and values. A potentially contentious issue such as nationbuilding, especially in

a nation with heterogeneous population such as South Africa, cannot possibly be explored sufficiently from the perspective of only one of many population groups. As such, one would have to say that the bias of the sample prohibits any definite conclusions about the ability of food to act as unifying ideology in nationbuilding in a South African context, and as such, defeats the premise of the study.

However, the value and contribution of the study arguably lies in the fact that it has brought to light more questions than answers and as such, has identified topics for further research regarding the role of food and cookbooks as symbolic goods used to construct, maintain and portray identity within a South African context.

For example, it would be useful to analyse cookbooks written by African authors based on the criteria of this study and compare the results. The lack of cookbooks by African authors that corresponded to the criteria of the study raises questions in itself about the roles of food and nostalgia in identity formation in Southern African culture,

Similarly, with regard to gender, while the difference between male and female celebrity cookbook writers was touched on briefly in Chapter Two, it would be interesting to analyse cookbooks written by South African authors centered on a gender-based view of nostalgia and narrative.

4.4 Suggestions for further research

Considering the limitations of the study discussed in the previous section, an obvious suggestion would be to analyse cookbooks by Indian, Coloured and African authors based on the criteria of this study and compare the results of the two studies in order to see the influence of race on nostalgia and narrative in cookbooks. Similarly, a study in which cookbooks written by South African

authors were analysed centered on a gender-based view of nostalgia and narrative would be a logical suggestion for further research.

Another possibility is the creation of a designed object that is a cookbook. The aim would be to create a cookbook that, through deliberate signification, communicates diversity, inclusivity and reconciliation through the visual consumption of food and shows how food can act as a unifying ideology in the construction of a sense of nationhood.

An additional possibility for further study would be to analyse the visual collateral around National Braai Day, specifically the website, cookbooks and any other internal and external communication. The aim would be to explore, describe and define whether the visual collateral of Nation Braai Day serves the stated purpose of the movement, which is to foster a national culinary heritage and purposely build a sense of nationhood.

Lastly, as food is a way to maintain collective cultural identity, it would be interesting to explore South African gastronomic nationalism outside the borders of South Africa, especially the role of nostalgia in food as unifying ideology in maintaining national identity in ex-South African emigrants in the popular emigration locations such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

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