



Università di Scienze
Gastronomiche di Pollenzo
University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo

Food and Memory: Practices, Narratives, and Afterlives of the Past
University of Gastronomic Sciences (Pollenzo, Italy)
September 17–18, 2026

Program

Day 1 – Thursday, September 17

8:30 – Registration (Aula Magna)

9:00 – Welcome address by President and Rector Prof. Nicola Perullo and conference organizers Prof. Gabriele Proglia and Dr. Claudia Sbuttoni (Aula Magna)

9:30–11:00 – Panel 1 (Aula Magna)

11:15–12:15 – Keynote speaker: Alessandro Portelli (Aula Magna)

12:30–13:30 – Lunch (Tavole Accademiche)

13:45–15:15 – Panel 2 (Aula Magna)

15:30–17:00 – Panel 3 (Aula Magna)

Day 2 – Friday, September 18

9:00–10:30 – Panel 4 (Aula Magna) and Panel 5 (Aula 9)

10:45–11:45 – Keynote speaker: Marianne Hirsch (Aula Magna)

12:00–13:00 – Lunch (Tavole Accademiche)

13:15–14:45 – Panel 6 (Aula Magna) and Panel 7 (Aula 9)

15:00 – Closing remarks (Aula Magna)

DAY 1 – Thursday, September 17

Panel 1 – Transnational Italian Food Memories

Aula Magna | 9:30–11:00

Discussant: Claudia Sbuttoni (University of Gastronomic Sciences)

1. Diana Willis (State University of New York, Oneonta) – Stirring the Past: Food, Memory, and Italian-American Identity on *Lidia's Kitchen*
2. Giuseppe Gazzola (Stony Brook University) – Amarcord in America: Marcella Hazan, Culinary Memory, and the Gentrification of Italian Food
3. Salvatore Campisi (Durham University) – Food, Language, Memory and Italian Identity from a Transnational Perspective
4. Amy Boylan and Paula M. Salvio (University of New Hampshire) – The Afterlives of Nonnas: Postmemory, the Donna-Madre, and the Transnational Status of the Italian Grandmother

Panel 2 – Diaspora, Gender, and Inheritance

Aula Magna | 13:45–15:15

Discussant: Gabriele Proglia (University of Gastronomic Sciences)

1. Azza Basarudin (California State University, Long Beach) and Elora Halim Chowdhury (University of Massachusetts, Boston) – The Afterlife of Eating Memories: Domestic Cultures, Food Histories, and Diasporic Imaginations



2. Masooma Zafar (Nanyang Technological University) – Cooking “Hindustani”: Gendered Food Practices, Contested Naming and Partition (1947) Memory Among the UP Muslim Migrants in Lahore, Pakistan
3. Ali Sahib (Independent researcher) – The Disappearing Table: Ecocide, Memory, and the Loss of Culinary Identity among Indigenous Women in the Iraqi Marshlands
4. Claudia Sbuttoni (University of Gastronomic Sciences) - A Case Against Authenticity: Food Memories and Italian-American Oral Histories

Panel 3 – Food, Displacement, and Belonging

Aula Magna | 15:30–17:00

Discussant: Amy Boylan (University of New Hampshire)

1. Alicja Śmigielńska (University of National Education Commission, Krakow) – The Taste of Exile: Food, Hunger, and Survival Strategies among Polish Deportees in the Soviet Union during the 1940s
2. Ojārs Lāms (University of Latvia) – Taste of Belonging Between Expectations and Disillusions: Food and Drink Imagery in Latvian Transnational Post-Exile Prose
3. Monika Šavelová (Constantine the Philosopher University) – Culinary Memories and Migrant Identities: Food as a Site of Belonging and Difference
4. Gabriele Proglia (University of Gastronomic Sciences) - Memory of Foods as Metaphors of Mediterranean Diasporas: The cases of *ghurba*, *el hadeen* and *në kurbet/mall*

DAY 2 – Friday, September 18

Panel 4 – Food and Holocaust Memory

Aula Magna | 9:00–10:30

Discussant: Paula M. Salvio (University of New Hampshire)

1. Hanna Abakunova (University of Alberta) – Between Kosher Food and Hunger: Childhood Memory among Soviet Jews Who Survived the Holocaust in Evacuation
2. Kaja Kaźmierska (University of Łódź) – Food as a Subject of Memory Related to Biographical Experiences Embedded in Relationships
3. Robert Bernheim (University of Maine at Augusta) – The Metamorphosis of a “Modest Bread”: The Bagel, Poland, and New Forms of Culinary Memory and Holocaust Remembrance

Panel 5 – Embodied Practice and Ritual

Aula 9 | 9:00–10:30

Discussant: Paolo Corvo (University of Gastronomic Sciences)

1. sahar tavakoli (University of Milan) – Time Sip: Tea Drinking, Embodied Memory, and National Reiteration in Iranian Domestic Space
2. Jiajing Cai (Sichuan University of Culture and Arts) – At the Stove: Culinary Labor and the Reconstruction of Family Memory and Narratives among College Students from China’s Migrant Families
3. Justyna Dworniak (University of Łódź) – Between Ritual and Memory: Food Offerings at Grave Stelai on Attic White-Ground Lekythoi of the Fifth Century BCE

Panel 6 – Food, Empire, and Institutional Memory

Aula Magna | 13:15–14:45

Discussant: Luca Antoniazzi (University of Gastronomic Sciences)



1. Aditi Das (National Centre for Social Research) – Food, Memory, and the Afterlives of Colonial Public Dining on Park Street, Kolkata
2. François-Xavier Nérard (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University) – The Afterlives of Stalin's Kitchen Factories: The Lasting Presence of a Past that Barely Existed
3. Katja Uusihakala (University of Eastern Finland; University of Helsinki) – Remembering Bad Food: British Child Migrants' Memories of Institutional Food at the Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College
4. Cecilia Furioso Cenci (University of Ljubljana) – Food in the Memory of Slovenes in the Italian Colonies in Africa

Panel 7 – Food, War, and Its Afterlives

Aula 9 | 13:15–14:45

Discussant: Elena Fusar Poli (University of Gastronomic Sciences)

1. Kolleen Guy (Duke Kunshan University) and Jay Winter (Yale University) – Keeping Time in Exile: Food Practices as Structures of Feeling among Stateless Refugees in Wartime Shanghai
2. Carla Panico (CES, University of Coimbra) – The Rabbit of *Cristu Mas*: Family Memory and the Historical Afterlives of an Italian POW
3. Wioletta Rebecka (Independent Researcher) and Oxana Bayer (Alfred Nobel University) – War, Hunger, and the Social Transmission of Survival: A Trauma-Informed Analysis of Food Habits in the Dnipro Region, Ukraine
4. Chiara Nencioni (University of Pisa; National Institute Ferruccio Parri) – Hunger, Coffee, and Memory: Food Practices and the Afterlives of the Srebrenica Genocide

Panel Abstracts and Speaker Bios

Panel 1 – Transnational Italian Food Memories

Diana Willis (State University of New York, Oneonta) - Stirring the Past: Food, Memory, and Italian-American Identity on *Lidia's Kitchen*

Lidia Matticchio Bastianich has been a fixture of American public television for nearly three decades. With her award-winning show, *Lidia's Kitchen*, Bastianich transforms a televised kitchen into a site of ritual communication (Carey, 2009). Drawing on Halbwachs' position on collective memory and Svetlana Boym's (2001) framework of restorative and reflective nostalgia, this paper argues that Bastianich employs mediated memories of her childhood in Istria and her family's refugee experience to construct a comforting narrative of displacement, resettlement, and success in the United States. Central to this process is her loving and nurturing "nonna" persona, which functions as a vehicle for cultural memory, enabling mediated and intergenerational transmissions of family narratives while reinforcing a recognizable – if at times hegemonic – Italian-American identity. With each episode of *Lidia's Kitchen*, food practices play a crucial role in this memory work. The preparation of emblematic dishes such as gnocchetti, lobster, and pasta, staged within both domestic and televisual kitchens, operates as an embodied archive in which gestures, techniques, and ingredients materialize the past. These spaces function as lieux de mémoire (Nora, 1989), where culinary repetition collapses temporal distance and produces an affective sense of authenticity. Through references to family archives, photographic displays, and shared meals, the program invites viewers into a form of imagined digital commensality, fostering an intimate engagement with Bastianich's mediated memories. At the same time, Bastianich's nonna figure reinforces gendered expectations of care and domesticity, even as Bastianich's professional authority and the inclusion of male family members complicate these roles. Situating food television within memory studies, this paper demonstrates how mediated culinary practices reconfigure memories of migration, identity, and home in contemporary culture. Ultimately, *Lidia's Kitchen* reveals how culinary media not only preserves personal and collective memory but also actively shapes narratives of belonging and identity within the American cultural imagination.

Bio: Diana Willis is an Assistant Professor of Communication and Media at the State University of New York, Oneonta. Her research is situated at the intersection of food studies, media studies, and memory studies. Her dissertation, "Dishes of Yesteryear: Memories, Stories, and Representations of the Past within Food Media," examines how gastronomic media reconfigures personal and collective histories. She is also the author of the chapter, "Chef's Table and a Collective Past: Netflix, Food Media, and Cultural Memories," published in the Routledge volume, *The Political Relevance of Food Media and Journalism*.

Giuseppe Gazzola (Stony Brook University) - Amarcord in America: Marcella Hazan, Culinary Memory, and the Gentrification of Italian Food

This proposal moves from Marcella Hazan's *Amarcord: Marcella Remembers* as a culinary memory text that helped reshape the boundaries between "Italian" and "Italian American" food in the United States after WWII. Moving from the cookbook industry celebration of Hazan as the figure who "taught



America how to cook Italian,” the paper asks how her (autobiographical and non-) memories of Italian cuisine came to marginalize and delegitimize preexisting Italian American food traditions.

Born Marcella Polini in Cesenatico in 1924, Hazan survived Fascism and World War II, trained in the natural sciences, and worked as a high school teacher before migrating to New York in 1955 after marrying Victor Hazan. In the United States, linguistic isolation, gendered domestic expectations, and her ambiguous position within a Sephardic Jewish immigrant family redirected her intellectual labor toward the kitchen. From this domestic space, Hazan transformed personal memory into culinary authority. Her cookbooks, including *The Classic Italian Cookbook* and *Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking*, promoted simplicity, regionality, fresh ingredients, and techniques presented as authentically Italian.

The paper argues that Hazan’s “memories” did not simply preserve Italian foodways; they participated in a broader process of cultural gentrification. In the context of the American culinary renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s, and through the mediation of editors, critics, and institutions such as *The New York Times*, Hazan’s version of Italian cuisine became legible as refined, traditional, and culturally legitimate. By contrast, Italian American cooking – red-sauce restaurants, abundance, adaptation, cheese-heavy dishes, necessity-induced improvisation – was increasingly coded as inauthentic, excessive, and vulgar.

Whose memories should be considered ‘authentic’? Through Hazan’s memoir and culinary writing, this paper explores food memory as a site of hierarchy, erasure, and commodification. It shows how immigrant food memory becomes authoritative by suppressing other memories, transforming cuisine into a contested archive of class, gender, ethnicity, and cultural capital.

Bio: Giuseppe Gazzola is Associate Professor of Italian Studies at Stony Brook University, where he directs the Graduate Program in Languages and Cultural Studies and the Stony Brook Program in Italy and serves as Executive Editor of *Forum Italicum*. A scholar of modern Italian literature, cultural history, and transnational Italian studies, he has published widely and presented extensively at international venues including Yale, Columbia, Harvard, Bologna, Genoa, Marburg, Utrecht, Jerusalem, New Delhi, and Singapore. His teaching regularly includes 300-level courses on Italian culinary traditions, Italian American culture, cinema, and literature, linking food, memory, migration, and identity across diasporic contexts today.

Salvatore Campisi (Durham University) - Food, Language, Memory and Italian Identity from a Transnational Perspective

The transnational perspective, understood as ‘a new analytic optic’ (Vertovec 2001), has brought the porousness and fluidity of identity formation and definition into sharp focus. Like language (a ‘site of complex identity formation’, Burns and Duncan 2022), food is ‘a potent marker of cultural identity’ (Chapman and Beagan 2013), and it bears clear traces of that fluidity, as shown by growing literature exploring the intimate connections between distant culinary traditions (see Zhang’s *Italian Dumplings and Chinese Pizzas*, 2025).

Italy boasts a rich culinary tradition, and food is a pillar of its identity (Dickie 2007). However, that tradition has often been distorted to fit narratives aimed at consolidating a sense of national belonging and pride. These narratives have falsified memories, and in some cases invented traditions, turning the origin and authenticity of Italian food and dishes into monolithic dogmas, incompatible with any ‘foreign muddling’ and the fluidity underpinning identity in a transnational perspective (Grandi 2018; Montanari 2019; Cesari 2021).

Words such as origin designations have been instrumental in codifying the above narratives. On the other hand, words and their etymology can demystify those narratives. Babbà (rum baba), whose



name and origins have travelled across space and time before becoming one of the quintessential and iconic desserts of Neapolitan cuisine, bring the transnational lineage of Italian food to the fore. *İtiryya*, a probable ancestor of pasta, evokes traditions and memories stretching through several civilizations.

Through key items of food that have shaped regional and national narratives of Italian identity, this paper explores food, words, and memory as unavoidably intertwined and intrinsically transcultural (Erll 2011). It also shows how ‘flexibility’ and ‘exchange’ – key attributes of the transnational (Bond 2014) – are essential prerequisites for approaching questions surrounding identity and heritage.

Bio: Salvatore Campisi is Assistant Professor in Italian Studies at Durham University. He was awarded a PhD with a thesis on Hermann Hesse in 2011 and has taught Italian at various UK universities since 2005 (Salford, Manchester, Leeds). His scholarly interests include independent learning, artificial and human memory in language acquisition, music and language, as well as identity in a transnational perspective.

Amy Boylan and Paula M. Salvio (University of New Hampshire) - The Afterlives of Nonnas: Postmemory, the Donna-Madre, and the Transnational Status of the Italian Grandmother

This project explores contemporary iterations of the Italian Nonna as a transnational phenomenon – saturating cookbooks, TikTok’s “nonna-maxxing,” gastro-tourism, and advertising. We question the extent to which these figures, used for marketing and branding on one hand, but also for meaningful transmission of memory and identity for some groups, constitute a post-memorial reanimation of the *donna-madre* and *massaia rurale*, ideals consolidated under Italian Fascism. Reading Marianne Hirsch’s *Generation of Postmemory* (2012) against the historiography of Fascist maternal politics (De Grazia 1992; Pickering-Iazzi 1995; Re 1995; Willson 2002; Helstosky 2004; Garvin 2022), we argue that Hirsch’s distinction between familial and affiliative postmemory is indispensable for theorizing how a rural, food-producing, dialect-speaking maternal iconography – first codified through state pronatalism, the Battle for Births, and the *Massaie Rurali* – now circulates affiliatively, across generational and geographic distance, as an important component of culinary heritage.

Our paper brings together three areas of inquiry. First, following Garvin and Helstosky, we argue that the *cucina povera* authenticity, now marketed globally as a Nonna-aesthetic, was also operationalized as Fascist patriotic gastronomy: scarcity rebranded as virtue, women’s autarkic labor naturalized as love. Second, drawing on Cinotto (2013), Fortier (2000), Marino (2018), and Colalillo (2023), we read diasporic and platform-mediated Nonna content as affiliative postmemory – an inheritance performed by descendants and strangers who often possess no living tie to the women they invoke, and whose longing is shaped by what Bardenstein (Signs 2002) calls “interrupted transmissions,” the type of transmission that occurs when “contextual” transmission, such as a multi-generational family preparing food for specific holidays together, no longer occurs. Third, mobilizing Italian sexual-difference feminism (Muraro 1991; Bono and Kemp 1991), Poppi’s (2024) critique of the *mater familias* myth, and Strand’s (2022) synthesis of food, trauma, and postmemory, we ask what a feminist counter-archive of grandmotherly knowledge – one refusing both Fascist exaltation and consumerist sentimentality – might look like.

By naming the historical resonances between fascist maternal iconography and contemporary Nonna-as-brand, this paper contributes to the conference’s interest in gendered food memory, the afterlives of historical trauma, and the methodological labor of distinguishing testimony, narrative, and commodified nostalgia.



Bio: Amy Boylan is an associate professor of Italian Studies and Core Faculty member of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of New Hampshire. Her research and teaching interests include memory studies and commemorative practices; nationalism and national identity; nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Italian literature; early Italian cinema; and migration studies. She has published essays on historical and contemporary memorials in Italy; literature and poetry of the First World War; nationalist propaganda and anti-war activism; representations of food and foodways in Italian cinema; and First-World-War-era Italian cinema. She is currently working on a documentary film about migration from Santarcangelo di Romagna, Italy to Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Paula M. Salvio is Professor of Education and Affiliate Professor of Italian Studies at the University of New Hampshire. She writes and lectures on the cultural and historical foundations of education with a specialization in psychoanalysis, life-writing, and the impact that marginalization, trauma and war have on women, children and youth in formal and informal educational settings. She explores transitional moments in history and society – reform, wars and revolution and their aftermaths- and how these affect the relations of education, culture and politics. Her books and numerous essays reflect her dedication to interdisciplinary inquiry. Her recent book, *Italian Landscapes of Disavowal: Fascism, Curriculum Studies and the Work of Memory* is scheduled for release in the fall of 2026 with Routledge Press.

Panel 2 – Diaspora, Gender, and Inheritance

Azza Basarudin (California State University, Long Beach) and **Elora Halim Chowdhury** (University of Massachusetts, Boston) - The Afterlife of Eating Memories: Domestic Cultures, Food Histories, and Diasporic Imaginations

What happens to memories through cultural traumas, migration journeys, and feminist friendships? What silences and insistences do memory as a site of struggle and meaning-making hold for diasporic subjectivities? What stories do memories tell? This collective paper draws on autoethnography as a method to narrate the overlapping narratives of gender and patriarchal contestations within familial, social, and political contexts. As feminist scholars with roots in the Global South (Bangladesh and Malaysia), our friendship anchors our memory, ties us to rich domestic cultures and food histories, and generates a fertile space to reconceptualize the gendered division of reproductive labor that structures our attachments to kin and community.

Our friendship originates through scholarly, activist, and pedagogical collaborations. It is shaped by our lifelong commitment to building and sustaining collective feminist knowledge production that reflects the visceral realities of our everyday lives as friends, daughters, partners, and mothers. The stories we tell are tied to our friendship – and to a sense of belonging to each other – because these memories and experiences, which are profoundly intimate and often painful, shape who we are as diasporic subjects. Centering autobiographical narratives, we use feminist storytelling to examine how the trauma reverberating from Bangladesh's Independence War in 1971 surfaces in a family's everyday food tales, mapping onto other times of crisis, namely the Covid-19 pandemic, and to trace the language of self-expression through embattled gendered culinary practices and the trauma that



unleashes from a woman's refusal of domesticity, docile womanhood and social conditioning in Malaysia. Our storytelling is situated at the nexus of feminist, intersectional, and postcolonial approaches to food studies and memory work to rethink home and nation, disrupt the normative academic knowledge-production process, and reimagine the interconnections among gender, heritage, and memory.

Bio: Azza Basarudin is an associate professor of women's, gender, and sexuality studies at California State University, Long Beach. Her research and teaching interests are social and legal regimes of gender, feminist foodways, Islam and gender, transnational feminism, with an emphasis on Southeast Asia.

Elora Halim Chowdhury is a professor and chair of the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Her teaching and research interests include transnational feminisms, violence and human rights advocacy, and narrative and film with an emphasis on South Asia.

Masooma Zafar (Nanyang Technological University) - Cooking "Hindustani": Gendered Food Practices, Contested Naming and Partition (1947) Memory Among the UP Muslim Migrants in Lahore, Pakistan

After the 1947 partition of India, Muslim migrants from Uttar Pradesh (UP) crossed the border and settled in Lahore, Pakistan, carrying with them not only memories of displacement but also everyday cultural practices. Among these practices, food became an important medium through which migrants negotiated identity, continuity, and belonging in a new social environment. Within this context, the label "Hindustani" emerged as a marker of incomplete belonging and social distinction.

Drawing on oral interviews with the Muslim migrants from UP and their subsequent generations currently residing in Lahore, this paper examines how food practices function as a gendered, classed and contested site of partition memory and how the same dish operates differently across generations. Within domestic spaces, female migrants transmit food practices and dishes like Haleem, Nihari, Korma, Kathal (jackfruit) ki sabzi, and distinctive spice assemblages to their daughters, constructing through Sutton's embodied memory for the first-generation food practices and Hirsch's post-memory (for the transference to the subsequent generations) as an embodied archive of pre-partition UP identity. However, this transmission is neither static nor frictionless: economic constraint among lower-income migrant households produces material modification (cheaper meat, ingredients adaptations) that quietly alter the dishes while the family continues to claim them under the same names.

This paper argues this gap between the remembered dish and the cooked dish is not a failure of memory but its most honest expression, post memory under conditions of class precarity. Meanwhile, the label "Hindustani," deployed stigmatically by the local Lahori community to mark the incomplete belonging of the migrants, is simultaneously reclaimed within domestic space as a marker of culinary pride and quiet resistance to assimilation.

This paper seeks to bring forth a classed and gendered lens to partition food memory which is largely absent from existing scholarship, and it also explores that resistance to cultural assimilation is never pure and it is materially compromised and politically insistent.

Bio: Masooma Zafar is a final year PhD candidate in History at School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She is working under the supervision of Dr Jessica Hinchy, Dr



Emma Flatt, and Dr Tapsi Mathur. Her doctoral research examines how material memories of the Partition of India are formed and preserved among migrants and their subsequent generations from India to Pakistan, with a particular focus on Lahore, and how these memories overlap with the narratives produced by state institutions such as museums. She is an oral historian, her research interests include the Partition of India, Modern South Asia, memory studies, and material culture. Her recent publications include a book chapter, “Material Culture and the Partition of India 1947: Walled City as a Space of Transnational Memories of Migrants” in *Pakistan: Partition, Politics and Society* (edited by Naumana Kiran), and an article on digital oral archives and the material memorial turn in Partition historiography.

Ali Sahib (Independent researcher) - The Disappearing Table: Ecocide, Memory, and the Loss of Culinary Identity among Indigenous Women in the Iraqi Marshlands

This paper examines how ecocide and drought-induced displacement have erased culinary practices among Indigenous women in the Iraqi Marshlands, transforming food memory into a site of loss and nostalgia. In Iraq, ranked the fifth most climate-vulnerable nation, the disappearance of a natural ecosystem leads directly to the disappearance of a cultural world. Drawing on twelve oral histories conducted with Ma'dan women living in urban peripheries between 2023-2025, I explore the impact of losing ancestral ingredients – water buffalo milk for Qaymar, indigenous carp for Masgouf, and bulrush pollen for Khirret. A 4,000-year-old Sumerian dessert known as the “edible gold” of the Marshlands, Khirret is vanishing as drought causes the bulrush to disappear, taking with it a living testament to Mesopotamian culinary memory.

Bridging Marianne Hirsch's postmemory – how second-generation Ahwaris remember a cuisine they can no longer taste – and Alessandro Portelli's oral history methods, this research argues that the environmental destruction of the Marshlands constitutes a form of “culinary grief.” The fragmentation of intergenerational recipe transmission, caused by the abandonment of traditional reed-house kitchens, transforms the communal table into a nostalgic memory-scape.

By centering the lived experiences of displaced women, this study challenges narratives that assume food memory is always recoverable, illustrating that culinary identities dependent on fragile ecosystems face irreversible erasure. Ultimately, the “disappearing table” is not only a symptom of climate change but a political unmaking of Indigenous life-worlds demanding urgent recognition.

Bio: Ali Sahib is a dedicated human rights defender and a former Environmental Official at the Iraqi Ministry of Environment (2008-2023). He holds an MPhil in Nonviolence and Human Rights from AUNOHR, Lebanon. His work bridges the gap between grassroots peacebuilding and climate justice, with a specialized focus on Indigenous communities in Southern Iraq. Ali has been officially selected to present his research at the Disappearance Studies Conference at Ulster University (2026) and the CEEISA International Conference in Sarajevo (2026). Currently serving as the Deputy Director of Al-Weyam Organization for Human Rights Defending, his current research explores the nexus of ecocide, food memory, and displacement among Ma'dan women in the Mesopotamian Marshlands.

Claudia Sbuttoni (University of Gastronomic Sciences) – A Case Against Authenticity: Food Memories and Italian-American Oral Histories

Food has long been recognized as a powerful site of Italian-American identity, yet its persistence is frequently described through a vocabulary of authenticity, preservation, and loss. Building on



scholarship that instead understands Italian-American foodways as products of migration and exchange, this paper asks what is obscured when diasporic food memories are evaluated according to their proximity to an “original” Italian tradition.

Drawing on a selection of first-, second-, and third-generation testimonies from Florida Atlantic University’s *Italian American Oral History Archive* and Fordham University’s *Bronx Italian American History Initiative*, this paper examines recollections of family meals, inherited recipes, dialect food names, gardens, return journeys, and encounters with foods in Italy. It asks why culinary practices acquire particular authority as markers of an “authentic” past when other forms of transmission such as language, community, and direct migration memory begin to recede. The paper argues that the search for culinary authenticity is itself a form of diasporic memory work: an attempt to stabilize relationships to places and pasts that are increasingly fragmentary and mediated. Yet the oral histories reveal that the foods remembered as evidence of continuity were themselves continually transformed through migration, substitution, exchange, and generational change. Rather than treating such transformations as departures from an “authentic” past, the paper suggests that they are among the very processes through which diasporic culinary memory is produced and sustained.

Bio: Claudia Sbuttoni is a cultural historian and Research Fellow in Modern History at the University of Gastronomic Sciences (Pollenzo, Italy). Her research lies at the intersection of contemporary history, cultural history, oral history, and memory studies and investigates dynamics of identity, belonging, and marginality in Italian and diasporic contexts throughout the twentieth century. She currently works on the Horizon Europe project RELISH, which examines recipes as forms of cultural heritage across Europe. She holds a PhD in Italian Studies from Columbia University and has previously taught Italian history, literature, and food studies at the University of New Hampshire.

Panel 3 – Food, Displacement, and Belonging

Alicja Śmigiel (University of National Education Commission, Krakow) - The Taste of Exile: Food, Hunger, and Survival Strategies among Polish Deportees in the Soviet Union during the 1940s

Food occupies a central place in individual and collective memory, particularly in experiences marked by violence, displacement, and forced migration. This paper explores the role of food, hunger, and strategies of obtaining nourishment among Polish citizens deported deep into the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Based primarily on oral history testimonies collected by the Center for Documentation of Deportations, Expulsions and Resettlements (UKEN, Kraków), as well as memoirs, diaries, and personal documents, the presentation examines everyday practices of survival in conditions of extreme deprivation.

The experiences of deportees reveal how food became not only a biological necessity but also a powerful symbol of loss, longing, dignity, and resilience. Witnesses recall persistent hunger, the search for edible plants, barter practices, informal exchange networks, and attempts to recreate familiar culinary traditions under radically altered circumstances. Particular attention will be paid to children's memories of food scarcity and to the sensory dimensions of remembrance, including tastes and smells that remained deeply embedded in postwar narratives.

The paper argues that memories of food function as an important medium through which deportees narrate exile and trauma. At the same time, recollections of meals, recipes, and communal food practices reveal forms of agency and cultural continuity that helped preserve a sense of identity in conditions of forced displacement. By focusing on food-related memories, the presentation contributes



to broader discussions on the relationship between memory, everyday life, and survival in contexts of wartime deportation and exile.

Bio: Dr Alicja Śmigielńska is a historian, museum professional, and Director of the Center for Documentation of Deportations, Expulsions and Resettlements at the University of the National Education Commission in Kraków. She holds degrees in American Studies and Cultural Studies from the Jagiellonian University and earned her PhD in History with a dissertation on the Polish diplomat Wacław Babiński. Her research focuses on forced migrations, Polish deportees and refugees, the Polish diaspora, and the history of the Second Polish Republic. As a museum professional, she is involved in exhibition development, public history, heritage preservation, and educational outreach. She has participated in numerous international research and heritage projects, including the documentation and preservation of Polish refugee cemeteries in East Africa.

Ojārs Lāms (University of Latvia) - Taste of Belonging Between Expectations and Disillusions: Food and Drink Imagery in Latvian Transnational Post-Exile Prose

Latvian transnational post-exile prose is a literary phenomenon created by authors of Latvian origin writing primarily in English (and other languages) after the end of the Latvian exile period. This body of literature emerged in the aftermath of the Latvian exile community that was formed as a result of the Second World War, when Latvia was reoccupied by the Soviet regime. Unlike exile literature, which was produced within émigré communities and was closely tied to the experience of displacement, post-exile prose reflects the perspectives of later generations and transnational identities that developed after the restoration of Latvia's independence.

This study focuses on the aspect of gastropoetics in two novels – Agate Nesaule's *Lost Midsummer* and Ilze Berzins's *Happy Girl*. Both authors depict the experiences of Latvians in exile trying to find a connection with the post-occupation homeland. Within these narratives, food functions not merely as a material necessity but as a powerful cultural symbol through which questions of identity, belonging, memory, and adaptation are negotiated.

In *Lost Midsummer*, Nesaule uses food as a medium for reconstructing memory. Traditional Latvian dishes, festive meals, and references to seasonal celebrations evoke an imagined homeland that remains emotionally significant despite geographical distance.

Similarly, in *Happy Girl* by Berzins culinary experiences become markers of both difference and adaptation, illustrating the challenges of balancing inherited traditions with the demands of assimilation. Food thus serves as a site where cultural boundaries are crossed, negotiated, and sometimes contested.

By comparing these two works, the study demonstrates that food imagery occupies a significant place in Latvian post-exile literature. Food and drink imagery simultaneously expresses attachment, displacement, expectation, and disappointment. Through everyday acts of eating, preparing, and sharing food, both Nesaule and Berzins reveal the emotional and cultural dimensions of transnational experience and the ongoing search for home in conditions of migration and exile.

Bio: Literary scholar and classicist, professor and senior researcher of comparative literature at University of Latvia. He has studied Classical, Latvian and Baltic philology at the University of Latvia, and further continued his studies at the University of Turku (Finland) and University of Athens, and the International Olympic Academy (Olympia, Greece). As guest lecturer he has worked at the University of Muenster. He is author of several monographs and numerous articles on different issues of history and theory of Latvian and world literature. His current research interests focus on various aspects of exile and post-exile, intercultural and transnational literature, and gastropoetics, as well.



Monika Šavelová (Constantine the Philosopher University) - Culinary Memories and Migrant Identities: Food as a Site of Belonging and Difference

Through a comparative analysis of works by two female writers connected to the Slovak cultural context – Michaela Šebőková Vannini (*Le custodi della memoria. Racconti al femminile su migrazione, appartenenza e felicità* [The Keepers of Memory: Women's Stories of Migration, Belonging and Happiness], 2025) who engages with Slovak, Hungarian, and Italian experiences, and Kvet Nguyen (*Všetko, čo nás spája* [Everything that brings us together] 2024), who reflects on the Vietnamese-Slovak context – this paper explores the relationship between food, memory, and identity in contemporary migrant literature and how food functions as a multisensory trigger of remembrance and as a marker of both belonging and otherness.

Memories associated with taste, smell, and culinary practices frequently challenge migrants' perceptions of successful integration. Šebőková Vannini thematise unexpected recollections connected with childhood foods that reveal the persistence of cultural affiliations that survive changes in citizenship, language, or place of residence. Food thus operates not only as a Proustian catalyst of nostalgia but also as a reminder of difference and displacement. At the same time, the texts question the assumption that birth in a particular country automatically guarantees cultural rootedness. The experiences of second-generation migrants show how family food traditions often shape emotional attachments more profoundly than national culinary stereotypes.

Nguyen's writing highlights the central role of food in Vietnamese culture and presents culinary practices as a means of intercultural communication: food emerges as a language of hospitality, openness, and human connection capable of transcending linguistic barriers and expressing shared values.

By focusing on food as a site of memory, identity, and cultural negotiation, the paper argues that migrant literature reveals the complex afterlives of the past embedded in everyday sensory experience. The works of Šebőková Vannini and Nguyen demonstrate how culinary memory can simultaneously preserve cultural heritage, expose feelings of uprootedness, and create spaces of intercultural encounter.

Bio: Monika Šavelová is Associate professor of Translation Studies at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. Her research focuses on translation history, literary translation, translation criticism, and Slovak-Italian literary and cultural relations. She is the author of several monographs on Italian literature. Her current research also explores migration, intercultural communication, and cultural memory in contemporary literature.

Gabriele Proglia (University of Gastronomic Sciences) – Memory of Foods as Metaphors of Mediterranean Diasporas: The cases of *ghurba*, *el hadeen* and *nə kurbet/mall*

Mediterranean mythology has always used food as a memory of mobility - the lotus that abolishes the desire to return, the pomegranate that divides Persephone's belonging forever. The three monotheisms of this sea multiplied that grammar: the longing for the foods of the house of slavery (Numbers 11:5) and the unleavened bread eaten "so that you may remember" (Deuteronomy 16:3); the refusal of the king's table in Babylon (Daniel) and the recognition at the breaking of bread (Luke 24:30-31); the boundaries of the community negotiated at table (Acts 10; Galatians 2:11-14) and the first conflict among migrants erupting over the distribution of food (Acts 6:1); the pact of shared table that seals the hijra, the table sent down as a sign (al-Mā'ida, 5:112-115), the lawfulness of others' food and the exemption granted to necessity (5:5; 2:173).



Contemporary migrations use language as an instrument to convey emotional states and social conditions that are habitually flattened into the single European term nostalgia. Yet the words used, once in Europe, to name that condition describe something far more complex. My oral history research at Porta Palazzo in Turin, the largest open-air market in the Mediterranean, documented these terms as emotional states concerning the dual or multiple cultural belonging of the subjectivities involved: *ghurba* among Tunisian and Moroccan women, *el hadeen* among Egyptian women, being *në kurbet* and feeling *mall* among Albanian women. Food, and above all the memory of taste, is used to keep the weight of that belonging from crushing the person, to recover lost bonds, and to continuously redefine one's own diasporic geography.

Bio: Gabriele Proglia is an Associate Professor of Modern History at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, whose research focuses on the Mediterranean, food and migration, memory studies, and subjectivity. He holds a PhD in Modern History from the University of Turin (2014), where he defended a thesis on Italian colonial imaginaries. From 2014 to 2018, he was based at the European University Institute as a researcher in the framework of the B.A.B.E. project – acronym of Bodies Across Borders: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond – headed by Luisa Passerini. Between 2015 and 2017, he also held positions at the University of California, Berkeley, and at the Université de Tunis “El Manar”. In 2017, he received a six-year FCT grant for a research project dedicated to examining mobility and oral memory across the Mediterranean, serving as PI at the University of Coimbra, Centre for Social Sciences. Since 2020, he has been an Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Gastronomic Sciences. His publications include *The Horn of Africa Diasporas in Italy. An Oral History* (Palgrave 2020), *The Black Mediterranean. Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* (Palgrave 2021), and the co-edited volume *The Mobility of Memory. Migrations and Diasporas across European Borders* (with Luisa Passerini, Berghahn 2020). In 2021, his book on the Genoa G8 Summit's protests was published by Donzelli, collecting more than eighty oral interviews with different typologies of activists. His most recent work is an oral and sensory history of Porta Palazzo, the largest open-air market in Europe.

Panel 4 – Food and Holocaust Memory

Hanna Abakunova (University of Alberta) - Between Kosher Food and Hunger: Childhood Memory among Soviet Jews Who Survived the Holocaust in Evacuation

This paper examines food memory in oral history interviews with Soviet Jews who survived the Holocaust as children in evacuation. It argues that repeated disruptions of the cultural environment – Sovietization, displacement, evacuation, hunger, and postwar return – gradually weakened the practice and transmission of Jewish food traditions, while traumatic deprivation made memories of ordinary eating fade, fragmented, or difficult to narrate. Food, therefore, appears in these testimonies not as a stable cultural heritage, but as a trace of interrupted family life, religious practice, and embodied survival.

Methodologically, the paper draws on Alessandro Portelli's approach to oral history as a narrative form in which meaning, rupture, and subjectivity are produced, rather than merely factual information recovered. It also engages memory studies' attention to embodied and sensory memory, asking how hunger, taste, prohibition, and domestic food practices reveal the changing conditions under which childhood can be remembered. The paper focuses on survivors born between 1923 and 1938 who were evacuated in 1941 from Ukraine and Belarus to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Central Russia, the Urals, and Siberia.



The analysis follows three shifts. First, prewar Jewish food is often recalled through grandparents' stricter kosher observance, named dishes, and domestic practices, but already as a world partly distanced from the narrators' own childhood. Second, Soviet social and political transformations weakened kosher practice through urbanization, schooling, work, and the pressure to "eat like everyone," including, in some cases, pork. Third, evacuation replaces food memory with hunger memory: survivors rarely recall ordinary meals and instead remember starvation, exceptional foods, or isolated moments of receiving or cooking something.

By tracing the Jewish Holocaust survivors' memories from kosher food to hunger, the paper shows how traumatic experience and cultural rupture reshaped both Jewish food practices and the later narrability in survivor testimony.

Bio: Hanna Abakunova is Tompkins Visiting Professor in History and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada. She is a Ukrainian historian of Eastern Europe, focusing on Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus, with research interests in the Holocaust, the genocide of Roma, interethnic relations, oral history, and memory studies. She holds a PhD from the University of Sheffield and has held positions at Harvard University, YIVO, Yad Vashem, Uppsala University, and the USHMM. As an interviewer for the USC Shoah Foundation and through her own research in Eastern Europe, she has conducted numerous oral history interviews with Holocaust survivors.

Kaja Kaźmierska (University of Łódź) - Food as a Subject of Memory Related to Biographical Experiences Embedded in Relationships

The symbolism of food is rich and varied, deeply embedded in cultural patterns and traditions. Food is also often an important part of our personal memories. The tastes and smells of childhood stay with us for life. Interestingly, it is difficult to recreate the flavours of our childhood for ourselves or our loved ones through cooking. In my presentation, however, I intend to focus on another aspect of memories of food. I am referring to extreme situations linked to the experience of war and, very often, hunger. At the same time, in such situations, it is important to define and understand the nature of relationships. In the paper, I will present an analysis of two situations. The first is an excerpt from the narrative interview of a former prisoner of the Mauthausen concentration camp, who speaks of the significance of bread in relation to friendship and the preservation of human dignity. The second is an excerpt from Władysław Szpilman's book *The Pianist*, an autobiographical account of the experience of war in the context of survival from the Holocaust. In it, Szpilman describes the scene of the family's last meal together at Umschlagplatz, which consisted of a sweet carefully divided into small pieces (this scene also features in the film *The Pianist*). In both cases, I intend to demonstrate the biographical significance of remembered experiences expressed through and embedded in the symbolism of food.

Bio: Kaja Kaźmierska, titular professor, is Head of the Department of Sociology of Culture at University of Lodz, Poland; Head of the Centre for Biographical Research and Oral History at University of Lodz; Chair of 03 RN Biographical Perspectives On European Societies in ESA (2015–2019); and member of the board of 38 RC Biography and Society in ISA. Her research interests include biographical research, collective identity, collective memory, generational memory, biographical memory, and studies on Jewish identity.



Robert Bernheim (University of Maine at Augusta) - 'The Metamorphosis of a "Modest Bread": The Bagel, Poland, and New Forms of Culinary Memory and Holocaust Remembrance

The bagel first became a Jewish culinary symbol in Poland. For more than three centuries, it flourished among Ashkenazi Jews in the "Old World" and was enjoyed by Jews and ethnic Poles alike. As a result of the Nazi Holocaust from 1939–1945, however, the bagel, like the Jewish bakers who formed, kettled, and baked this "modest bread," disappeared from Poland, annihilated from the land. After the fall of communism in 1989, the bagel began a slow return to its nation of origin, but not as the ubiquitous street food available morning, noon, and night as it had been in the prewar period. Rather, it metamorphosed into a glamorous, super-sized "New York-style" American breakfast and lunch sandwich food, all the while shredding its Jewish ethnic identity.

In this essay, I first examine the impact of the bagel's return through a lens of an evolving memoryscape of absence and displacement amidst generational layers of antisemitism and new efforts at philosemitism. I then interpret ways that the reintroduced bagel is imbued with the force of testimony as a site of memory that has the potential to shake, shatter, avoid, and cover up the sometimes competing narratives of what the German occupation and Holocaust in Poland actually looked like. Based on my sabbatical experiences as a "returning" Jewish bagel baker to the former family shtetl of Kańczuga, a community of some 4,000 people in the southeast region of the country, this study also deconstructs "bagel diplomacy." "Bagel diplomacy," as it has been used in cultural discourse, is a form of cross-cultural community building that fosters mutual understanding between local ethnic Poles and the Jewish Diaspora, founded on bagels and their unique Polish history, and proposes some new culinary forms of remembrance using grassroots community storytelling.

Bio: Robert Bernheim is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Maine at Augusta in Holocaust & Genocide Studies. He has written on the origin and implementation of the Commissar Order during the first phase of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, German soldiers' first encounters with Jews in Ukraine, and has been examining the return of the bagel to Poland and its impact on the memoryscape of the Holocaust and German occupation in Poland through "bagel diplomacy." He will be a Fulbright scholar in Poland for the 2026–27 academic year in Rzeszów.

Panel 5 – Embodied Practice and Ritual

sahar tavakoli (University of Milan) - Time Sip: Tea Drinking, Embodied Memory, and National Reiteration in Iranian Domestic Space

I was roughly fifteen years of age when my father revealed to me that his two front teeth were not, biologically speaking, his own. With a small glass of tea between our seated bodies and a large gap in his smile, he pulled a partial denture from his breast pocket, fitting it between his upper lateral incisors before proceeding to drink. For my father, drinking tea is a matter of routine. So too is the discussion of national politics. In this instance, the actions combined into one.

Across many Iranian households – domestic and diasporic – tea is not sweetened by direct mixture, but by sipping hot liquid through cubed sugar held between the drinker's teeth. Widespread, this orthodontically ruinous practice occupies an ambiguous position between naturalised gesture and conscious act. Typically performed without reflection, practitioners, when pressed, offer convergent, albeit empirically imprecise, accounts of the practice's genesis, locating it within nineteenth-century anti-Qajar and anti-colonial protest, and clerical injunctions against improper mixtures. By defamiliarising his dental profile, my father transformed a once mundane motion into a remarkable act.

Tea drinking and its consequences became a visible inscription of national identity, foreign intervention, and intergenerational political suspicion; and his proficiency in the act an embodied practice of revival and transfer.

Drawing together Diana Taylor's work on assimilated memory and archive, Carlo Ginzburg's attention to peripheral clues as historiographic evidence, and Homi Bhabha's characterisation of national identity as simultaneously reiterative and ambivalent, this paper takes the example of tea drinking in Iranian domestic spaces as an entry point into discussions of the embodied archive; into memory, postmemory, and counter-memory in constructions of home and heritage; and into postcolonial approaches to historical consciousness. Here, I argue, history persists less through documentation than through gesture and habit – not in archival stability, but in dental decay.

Bio: sahar tavakoli is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Dipartimento di Filosofia “Piero Martinetti” at the Università degli Studi di Milano and a member of HORIZON RELISH – Reframing European Gastronomy Legacy through Innovation, Sustainability, and Heritage. She received her PhD in Science and Technology Studies from Cornell University. Her research examines infrastructures of culinary standardisation, banal gastronomicalism, and the role of food heritage in the production, stabilisation, and naturalisation of national identity and the national body. The lower-case spelling of her name reflects the unicameral alphabet from which it is transcribed.

Jiajing Cai (Sichuan University of Culture and Arts) - At the Stove: Culinary Labor and the Reconstruction of Family Memory and Narratives among College Students from China's Migrant Families

How can everyday food practices reconstruct life experiences? Grounded in reflective practice, this action research explores how authentic culinary labor serves as an embodied medium for Chinese college students from migrant families to reconstruct their relations and narratives. Amidst rapid urbanization, prolonged spatial separation strips away their shared familial experiences, devolving kinship into a speechless state of "not knowing where to start." Simultaneously, ubiquitous digital media exacerbates their atomization among peers. These intertwine to form a relational landscape of suspended intergenerational ties and thinned peer support.

Consequently, the researcher transforms the campus kitchen into a micro-fieldwork site. Replicating family recipes, students' authentic manual labor shatters their bystander illusion. Practical frustrations trigger dual actions: shared challenges catalyze embodied peer collaboration, loosening their digital atomization; meanwhile, ruptures in tacit knowledge drive them to call distant parents for culinary details. Through the physically demanding processes of chopping and cooking, students' bodies subtly “overlap” with their migrant parents' lived experiences, utilizing cross-spatial labor textures to firmly re-anchor suspended intergenerational relations.

Furthermore, food's materiality becomes a medium to transform past experiences. Students materialize complex familial tensions using ingredients (e.g., constructing a metaphorical “birdcage”). When peers “consume” these artworks, a concrete perspective of the Other is introduced, deconstructing original narratives – reframing “confinement” as “protection” – and triggering profound cognitive reframing.

Ultimately, transcending passive nostalgia, this course unfolds a transformative path from classroom to authentic field. Returning to family stoves during holidays with reconstructed experiences, students transition from passive “bystanders” to active “agents,” re-embedding classroom-acquired capacities into authentic family spaces to continuously reshape intergenerational relations.



Bio: Jiajing Cai is a lecturer at the School of Psychology and Education, Sichuan University of Culture and Arts, a researcher at Dayu Youth Public Welfare Development Center, and holds a Master's in Applied Psychology from Zhejiang University. Her psychosocial services root in post-earthquake Beichuan's vulnerable children and college students from migrant families. Focusing on the interdisciplinary "Food×Agriculture×Art×Psychology" framework, her reflective action research investigates how embodied practices (agricultural/culinary labor, artistic handcrafts) deepen self-awareness and connect mind-body experiences with socio-historical contexts. She is co-authoring the upcoming books *From Classroom to Field and Embodiment, Craft, and Everyday Aesthetics*.

Justyna Dworniak (University of Łódź) - Between Ritual and Memory: Food Offerings at Grave Stelai on Attic White-Ground Lekythoi of the Fifth Century BCE

This paper examines representations of food offerings deposited at grave stelai on Attic white-ground lekythoi. The analysis focuses on baskets, vessels, wreaths, and more difficult-to-identify food items depicted on these funerary vases. The aim of the paper is to investigate the meanings conveyed by these representations and to explore how they contributed to commemorative practices and reflected contemporary notions of care for the dead in fifth-century BCE Athens.

The findings may be summarized in three main arguments. First, food offerings almost never appear in isolation. They are most frequently depicted alongside taeniae, lekythoi, alabaster, and wreaths, suggesting that these scenes represent successive stages of a visit to the grave, including arrival at the tomb, the decoration of the stele, the pouring of libations, and the presentation of offerings. Second, representations of food do not indicate a literal "feeding" of the deceased. Rather, their primary function was to sustain the memory of the dead and to symbolically renew bonds of care, remembrance, and mutual recognition between the living and the deceased. Third, the predominance of female figures in these scenes portrays women as the principal performers of commemorative rituals and the guardians of family tradition. At the same time, these images reinforce a normative vision of the ideal order of the oikos, revealing the social roles assigned to women within the sphere of funerary cult and the commemoration of the dead.

Bio: MA in Classical Philology, MA in Archaeology, and PhD in Humanities (Mediterranean Archaeology) from the University of Łódź. Head of the Department of Neophilology at the Piotrów Academy and lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Łódź. My research interests focus on Greek vase painting, Greco-Roman burial practices, and the figure of Medea, as well as the Latin language and its influence on and connections with English. I have participated in archaeological excavations and fieldwork projects in Greece, Sicily, Montenegro, and Bulgaria.

Panel 6 – Food, Empire, and Institutional Memory

Aditi Das (National Centre for Social Research) - Food, Memory, and the Afterlives of Colonial Public Dining on Park Street, Kolkata

This paper explores Park Street, Kolkata's historic dining district, as a site of memory where colonial histories are remembered, embodied, negotiated, and reimagined through food. Once the epicentre of European public dining in colonial Calcutta, Park Street remains associated with iconic establishments, culinary traditions, and dining rituals that evoke a persistent nostalgia for a cosmopolitan urban past.



This nostalgia, produced through selective acts of remembering and forgetting, shapes contemporary understandings of heritage, identity, and belonging in the city. Emerging during British rule as a corridor of elite public dining, Park Street's restaurants were historically implicated in projects of racial and spatial segregation. Yet, in the post-independence period, these same spaces became accessible to an aspirational Indian middle class, who appropriated and re-signified colonial culinary forms. Building on scholarship on food studies, memory studies, postcolonial geographies, and affect theory, the paper examines restaurants as mnemonic spaces in which the sensory experience of taste, smell, ambience, and ritualised dining practices mediates connections between the past and present. Using memories associated with landmark establishments such as Flury's and other colonial-era restaurants, the study investigates how memories of empire survive beyond formal colonial rule. I ask how food practices become vehicles for transmitting memories across generations, and how these memories are transformed through processes of adaptation, appropriation, and cultural hybridisation. Drawing on oral histories, archival research, and ethnographic encounters, the paper foregrounds how culinary practices and cultural materials, such as menus, dining etiquette, and the atmosphere of the restaurants, evoke what may be understood as a form of urban nostalgia rooted in colonial modernity. By examining the relationship between food, affect, memory/nostalgia, and the afterlives of empire, the paper contributes to ongoing conversations on culinary spaces as forms of embodied archives where collective memories are preserved, contested, and continuously remade in the postcolonial city.

Bio: Dr Aditi Das is a Human Geographer and interdisciplinary scholar with over a decade of experience in both development practice and academic research. She is a Senior Researcher at the Methodology and Innovation Hub at the National Centre for Social Research (UK) specialising in qualitative and participatory methodologies. Her academic work critically examines how histories of empire, colonialism, and neoliberalism shape contemporary urban and socio-cultural practices and processes. She has published on postcolonial geographies of food and heritage in South Asia and contributes to interdisciplinary debates on heritage, food, and the politics of everyday life.

François-Xavier Nérard (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University) - The Afterlives of Stalin's Kitchen Factories: The Lasting Presence of a Past that Barely Existed

During Stalin's First Five-Year Plan, collective catering became a powerful tool for feeding the new Soviet workers. Thousands of canteens were created in almost every town or plant of the USSR. In this context, a very peculiar sort of institution appeared on the streets of some Soviet cities. They were called "factory kitchens" and were intended to embody the height of modernity (they were equipped with the best techniques bought abroad). Places of centralized production of food that was eaten elsewhere after being delivered in thermos, these kitchens were highly publicized in the press. Dozens of photos, sometimes shot by the best Soviet photographers, like M. Rodchenko, were published to showcase these laboratories of mechanized food production. However, behind the curtain of this official discourse, the reality was dire. These Factory Kitchens did not live up to expectations. And the number of effectively opened Factory Kitchen never exceeded 150 for the whole USSR. This communication will study the memory of these kitchens. For example, in Samara (Russia), a new museum is now open in a former factory kitchen, whose building is shaped after a hammer and a sickle. Photographs are omnipresent on the web and in books about the 1930s. This hiatus reflects the story of these establishments that were at the center of the propaganda system, but highly ineffective. They disappeared pretty rapidly, but their image persisted in Soviet and post-Soviet memories. They act as a veil above the dire reality of the Soviet 1930s, promoting a modernized and romanticized picture of the Soviet industrialization. This paper will use archival materials, on site observations of what happened to buildings of former Factory Kitchens, web resources, and photographs.



Bio: François-Xavier Nérard is a Professor of Modern Russian History at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. He specializes in Soviet history. His publications include an *Historical Atlas of Russia* (Autrement, 2004), a study of denunciations in USSR *Cinq pour cent de vérité* (Tallandier, 2004) and a book on victims commemorations in Europe, *Commémorer les victimes en Europe, XVI-XXI siècles* (Champ Vallon, 2011). He is also the author of several articles on Soviet social history of the 1920s and 1930s. His last project and book, *Les cantines bolcheviques: une histoire du stalinisme vécu* (Bolshevik canteens: a history of Stalinism as it was lived) (CNRS editions, 2026), is about collective catering and canteens in USSR.

Katja Uusihakala (University of Eastern Finland; University of Helsinki) - Remembering Bad Food: British Child Migrants' Memories of Institutional Food at the Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College

This paper examines the embodied and distraught memories of institutional food among former British child migrants who were selected and shipped to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) between 1946 and 1962, where they were resettled at a childcare and boarding school institution, the Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College. The migration scheme professed to offer the children a better future with prospects of social advancement. At the same time, however, the intention of this project of social engineering was to populate the colony with “fresh white stock” and thereby solidify and strengthen imperial rule in the postwar era.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic research with former Rhodesian child migrants, this paper uses institutional food as a lens through which to explore the children's senses of displacement and loss, as well as their vulnerable and subordinate position in the boarding school's institutional hierarchy. Studies of food memory and nostalgia in diasporic and displaced communities often emphasize how recollections of familiar and comforting tastes and smells have the power to evoke a sense of homeness and belonging. Cooking and consuming homely foods in diaspora attests to the enduring sentimental power of food, which does not merely feed the stomachs, but emphatically nurtures ties to homeland and ties that bind the consuming community (Uusihakala 2008, 168). However, far less has been written about how remembering bad food may equally bind together those who recall its unpalatable tastes and smells and its repugnant mouthfeel. This is fundamentally how institutional food at Fairbridge is collectively remembered.

The paper therefore explores how the former migrants' individual and shared recollections of Fairbridge food carve out the children's senses of displacement, loss and longing, while also revealing the institution's disciplining practices: the deeply corporeal attempts to shape and remake the children's bodies through regimented mealtimes, forced feeding or the lack of food.

Bio: Katja Uusihakala is a University Lecturer in cultural anthropology at the University of Eastern Finland and a Docent (adjunct professor) of social and cultural anthropology at the University of Helsinki. She has specialized in questions of memory and remembrance, food memory, forgetting and silencing, British child migration, postcolonial apologies and reconciliation processes. She is the author of *Imperial Investments: Legacies of displacement in British child migration to Southern Rhodesia* (Palgrave 2025), among other works.

Cecilia Furioso Cenci (University of Ljubljana) - Food in the Memory of Slovenes in the Italian Colonies in Africa



This contribution aims to examine the role of food in the memorial context of Italian colonialism by focusing on the case study of Slovenes from Venezia Giulia who were enlisted as soldiers and employed as workers in the Italian colonies in Africa between 1935 and 1941. This contribution is situated within the fields of oral history and memory studies, analyzing oral and written testimonies provided by direct participants and their descendants.

The few testimonies left by Slovene soldiers and workers in the colonies assign considerable importance to food, offering a distinctive perspective, since these individuals were unfamiliar with the Mediterranean diet provided in Italian colonies. The availability of different foods, the conditions in which they were consumed, and the cooking techniques describe territories characterized by very different hydrological, faunal, and geographical conditions, as well as the strategies adopted to compensate for the shortage of raw materials and tools.

The theme of food emerges in the letters of a militarized worker in Ethiopia addressed to his wife, in which nostalgia appears through memories of meals, beverages, and convivial rituals that also recur in his dreams. Food is also the most distinctive element emerging from the diary of Bruno Trampuž, analyzed by Marta Verginella, in which the author reworked memories of his meals, describing them obsessively, as a way of revitalizing family ties. The persistence of food memory is evident also in Boris Pahor's work *Nomadi brez oaze*, written fifteen years after his experience in Libya, where vivid images of foods, meals, preparations, and moments of conviviality punctuate the narration, ranging from conditions of scarcity to lavish banquets.

Finally, the contribution will consider the presence (and absence) of food in the postmemorial testimonies of the descendants of Slovene soldiers in Africa.

Bio: Cecilia Furioso Cenci is a PhD candidate at the University of Ljubljana and young researcher at the Institute IRRIS of Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment, where she is part of the Center for Oral History. She is editor of the scientific journal *Acta Histriae* and member of the EgodocLab at the University Ca' Foscari in Venice. Her Master's thesis, "Vite e scritture di confine in epoca fascista. Due casi studio italo-sloveni" received the Giuseppe Del Torre prize and the Slovenian research institute prize. Her research interests are focused on the history of the Northern Adriatic region, history of fascism and Resistance, Italian colonial history, oral history and memory studies.

Panel 7 – Food, War, and Its Afterlives

Kolleen Guy (Duke Kunshan University) and **Jay Winter** (Yale University) - Keeping Time in Exile: Food Practices as Structures of Feeling among Stateless Refugees in Wartime Shanghai

Food practices were among the most important ways stateless refugees reconstructed ordinary life during the upheavals of the Second World War. Meals organized time, preserved ritual rhythms, sustained memory through repetition, and recreated fragile forms of social belonging under conditions of displacement, uncertainty, and waiting. This paper examines how food practices functioned as what Raymond Williams termed "structures of feeling" among Jewish refugees in wartime Shanghai.

Drawing on Hannah Arendt's reflections on statelessness and Reinhart Koselleck's work on historical temporality, we argue that displacement ruptured not only political belonging, but also ordinary experiences of time. Refugees lost familiar routines, social rhythms, and meaningful horizons



of expectation. In Shanghai, food became one of the mechanisms through which temporal continuity was partially restored.

We explore this process through two contrasting refugee communities. The first centers on the humanitarian work of Laura Margolis and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, whose communal kitchens, feeding programs, and child welfare efforts sought to reconstruct everyday social life for a diverse refugee population. The second examines the Mir Yeshiva, an ultra-Orthodox community that preserved sacred temporal rhythms through strict observance of kosher dietary laws. Conflicts over food provision revealed competing understandings of survival, continuity, and the path to the future.

Before wartime scarcity reduced food to a struggle for survival, refugee cafés and bakeries also recreated familiar rhythms of conversation, sociability, and urban life, restoring fragments of prewar Europe in exile. In different ways, these food practices enabled stateless refugees in Shanghai to reconstruct collective identity, fortify emotional resources, and restore a sense of historical time linking past and future.

Bio: Kolleen Guy is Professor of History at Duke Kunshan University and co-editor, with Jay Winter, of *Statelessness after Arendt: European Refugees in China and the Pacific in the Second World War* (2025). She is the author of *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of French Identity, 1820–1920* and is currently completing a book on terroir and the relationship between taste, memory, and belonging in the modern world.

Jay Winter is Charles J. Stille Professor emeritus at Yale University. He is a historian of the First World War and the author of *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995), *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the Twentieth Century* (2006), and *War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present* (2017).

Carla Panico (CES, University of Coimbra) - The Rabbit of *Cristu Mas*: Family Memory and the Historical Afterlives of an Italian POW

Until his death, Antonio Panico, a Southern Italian peasant who served as an army cook during the Second World War, marked the anniversary of his capture by hosting a family lunch during which he retold the story of his seven years of war and imprisonment. Among the episodes that returned each year was the story of a rabbit he cooked on Christmas Day while interned in Australia as one of the 18,500 Italian prisoners of war. For his children and, especially, his grandchildren, these lunches became a privileged encounter with a past that was at once intimate, fragmentary, and only partially understood.

Starting from this commemorative practice, this paper explores the relationship between food rituals, postmemory, and historical reconstruction. It examines the annual lunch as a performative space in which family history was repeatedly narrated and transmitted across generations. Drawing on Marianne Hirsch's (2008) work on postmemory and recent reflections on grandchildren's relationships to inherited pasts (Dellios et al. 2025), I ask how memories mediated through commensality, storytelling, and repetition shape historical inquiry. In this case, the lunches transmitted not only memories of war and captivity, but also the desire to understand a past that exceeded the stories themselves.

That desire led me from family memory to archival research. Combining oral recollections with military and public archives, I undertook an independent reconstruction of Antonio's trajectory within the broader history of Italian POWs. Following Alessandro Portelli's (2006, 2010, 2025) reflections on



the relationship between memory and history, I approach the gaps between oral narratives and archival records not as deficiencies to be corrected but as productive sites of inquiry.

Finally, I reflect on my position as both granddaughter and historian. Research on race, colonialism, and the political uses of Italian POW memories in Australia (Ricatti 2018; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2024) has complicated the inherited narrative attached to these lunches, situating a family story within wider histories of fascism, settler colonialism, and racial formations of whiteness. By tracing the afterlives of a commemorative food ritual, the paper examines how family memory can become both a source of historical knowledge and an object of critical interrogation.

Bio: Carla Panico (CES, University of Coimbra) is an early-career scholar working on Italian colonialism, emigration, and the Southern Question. She has recently submitted her PhD dissertation in postcolonial studies. She holds an MA in Contemporary History from the University of Pisa, where she was also a research fellow (*assegnista di ricerca*) (2022–2024), and has held visiting fellowships at universities including Paris XII, Seville, and Napoli - L'Orientale. In recent years, her work has also focused on colonial memory, both in academic research and public engagement. She has contributed to debate on public history on platforms such as Jacobin Italia, Fondazione Feltrinelli, Dinamopress, and Il Manifesto, and has been involved in initiatives such as the Yekatit-19 network in Naples.

Wioletta Rebecka (Independent researcher) and **Oxana Bayer** (Alfred Nobel University) - War, Hunger, and the Social Transmission of Survival: A Trauma-Informed Analysis of Food Habits in the Dnipro Region, Ukraine

The research examines how experiences of famine, war, and political violence continue to shape contemporary food practices in the Dnipro region of Ukraine, an area deeply affected by the waves of the Holodomor. Drawing on qualitative interviews with individuals and families influenced by intergenerational memories of starvation, Soviet repression, World War II, post-Soviet instability, and the ongoing Russian invasion, the study explores food habits as embodied forms of historical memory and trauma adaptation.

The findings suggest that everyday practices surrounding food cannot be explained solely through culture or economics. Behaviors such as compulsive food storage, fear of shortages, refusal to waste bread, overfeeding children, emotional attachment to soups and preserved foods, and anxiety around empty refrigerators reflect long-term survival strategies rooted in collective experiences of famine and insecurity. Food emerges not only as nourishment, but also as a psychological safeguard against anticipated catastrophe.

Particular attention is given to the gendered dimensions of these practices. Women frequently act as carriers of intergenerational memory through cooking, preservation, rationing, and caregiving. We argue that domestic labor became historically tied to survival during the Holodomor and continues to structure responses to contemporary wartime conditions, including displacement and economic precarity.

Methodologically, the study employs a trauma-informed qualitative approach integrating oral history, memory studies, feminist anthropology, and food studies. It proposes that domestic food practices function as living archives of historical violence, preserving social memory even when direct testimony is fragmented or absent. The research contributes to scholarship on transgenerational trauma and demonstrates how the legacy of famine continues to shape contemporary experiences of fear, care, and survival in Ukraine.



Bio: Dr. Wioletta Rebecka is an independent researcher, psychotherapist, and psychoanalyst based in New York City. She completed her Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) at Touro University Worldwide and holds a Master's degree in Social Sciences from the University of Warsaw. Since 1994, she has pursued extensive clinical and psychoanalytic training in Poland and internationally, including trauma training at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Rebecka is the author of *Rape: A History of Shame – Diary of the Survivors* and the creator of several original frameworks, including War Rape Survivors Syndrome (WRSS), the Social and Political Nervous System concept, the SERS method, and the Axis Methodology Approach. She is affiliated with the American Psychological Association Division 48 and GHSCN – Genocide Holocaust Scholars Crisis Networking.

Dr. Oxana Bayer is a psychologist, psychotherapist, and researcher based in Dnipro, Ukraine. She holds a PhD in Psychology from V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University and has extensive experience in teaching, qualitative research, and psychological rehabilitation. Her work focuses on trauma, war-related psychological support, disability, existential analysis, and transgenerational memory. She has been a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Duquesne University and has participated in international research and rehabilitation projects in Germany, Lithuania, and France. Dr. Bayer currently teaches at Alfred Nobel University while also working in psychotherapy practice and community mental health initiatives.

Chiara Nencioni (University of Pisa; National Institute Ferruccio Parri) - Hunger, Coffee, and Memory: Food Practices and the Afterlives of the Srebrenica Genocide

This proposal explores the relationship between food practices and the afterlives of war and genocide, examining how culinary traditions and scarcity function as sites of memory, trauma and resilience. Moving beyond the symbolic dimension of food as cultural heritage, the study investigates how experiences of hunger, deprivation, and forced displacement reshape foodways and embed historical trauma into everyday practices.

Particular attention is devoted to the role of hunger during the Srebrenica genocide, where prolonged siege conditions, the breakdown of supply systems, and the insufficiency of humanitarian aid produced extreme food scarcity. Drawing on oral history interviews – including testimonies by Mesud Omerović, Sabra Kolenović, and Kada Hotić – the paper highlights how hunger structured daily life and social relations. These accounts, alongside materials collected within the oral history project of the Srebrenica Memorial Center, document reliance on humanitarian airdrops, the uncertainty of food distribution, and the widespread use of substitute or improvised foods.

Within this framework, the ritual of Bosnian coffee (*kahva*) serves as a key site of embodied memory. Traditionally grounded in shared preparation and consumption, the coffee ritual embodies sociability, continuity, and cultural identity. Testimonies emphasize how, during the war, the absence of coffee, sugar, and fuel disrupted or suspended this practice, transforming it into a powerful marker of loss. The sensory dimensions of coffee – its smell, taste, and the temporality of its preparation – persist in post-war narratives as traces of a fractured everyday life.

In the post-genocide context, these memories are reactivated both in private narratives and in public commemorative practices. This is evident in *Što te nema* by Aida Šehović, where thousands of fildžani are collectively arranged and symbolically filled. The installation mobilizes an everyday object tied to coffee consumption to evoke absence, mourning, and communal participation, transforming a disrupted ritual into a performative act of remembrance.

The paper argues that the memory of hunger – transmitted through oral testimonies, embodied practices, and material culture – constitutes a central yet underexplored dimension of post-genocide

memory. In line with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which includes the deliberate infliction of life conditions leading to physical destruction (Art. II, c), the paper suggests that deprivation and starvation should be understood not only as consequences of war but as potential instruments of genocidal violence.

By focusing on the sensory and performative dimensions of food and drink, this study contributes to broader debates on the afterlives of mass violence, showing how trauma persists not only in narratives but in gestures, tastes, and everyday practices. Ultimately, it calls for a closer integration of oral history, food studies, and public history in order to better understand how societies remember and live with the legacies of extreme violence.

Bio: Chiara Nencioni is a seasoned Italian Professor in humanities, PhD., affiliated with Pisa University, and National Institute Ferruccio Parri for Resistance and Contemporary History. She acts as fellow researcher, lecturer and freelance journalist on contemporary history and politics on a wide range of subjects with primary focus on gipsy studies, the Balkans, the Holocaust and 20th century controversial non-strictly genocidal mass killings. Essays and workshops on the mentioned subjects alongside classical philology-related subjects at academic level across Europe and USA. Youth-targeting intercultural dialogue-promoting activities for social responsibility. Last publications: *A forza di essere vento. La persecuzione di rom e sinti nell'Italia fascista*, Pisa, ETS, 2024; *The Forgotten Resistance of the Sinti and Roma*, “Modern Italy”, Cambridge University Press, 2025; *Vittoriosi al fin liberi siamo. Rom e sinti nella Resistenza italiana*, Pisa, ETS, 2025.