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Kitchen Anthropology: Understanding Food, Cooking and Eating in Bruneian Middle-Class Families

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Abstract:

Cooking food is a beautiful alchemy and transformation; the consequence of this is where we integrate various influences to create certain meanings. Claude Levi-Stauss said that food can be conceived as a language that expresses social structure and cultural system. Certain food means different things to different communities.

In a time and age where we are infiltrated by commercial interest and encouraged to consume fast food, to cook or not to cook becomes a consequential question. When we do cook, we utilize a space very familiar to us called the kitchen for cultural mixing through hybrid dishes, negotiating gender identities through food preparation and determining kinship ties through sharing of food. What is the meaning of the kitchen for Malays who cook in their homes in Brunei? When we use complex ingredients, do we create a new ethnic culinary culture? What are the social realities such as gender, sex and kinship that will be the outcome when preparing, sharing and distributing food on the dining table?

The consumption of everyday food is one of the most important everyday arenas in which rigid rules about how things should be done are often apparent, although they are often unspoken or only partially explicit. Preparation, sharing and distribution of food are significant and when we prepare cooked food in the Malay kitchen, there are meanings behind it and we instil these meanings in our friends, family and whoever sits down with us at the dining table.

Keywords: *cultural anthropology, food, kinship, gender, cooking, hybridization*

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Kitchen Anthropology: Understanding Food, Cooking and Eating in Bruneian Middle-Class Families

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INTRODUCTION

The Kitchen: Where it Starts

"By 2020, comes the warning, kitchens may become a thing of the past. The death of home cooking has been foretold." – Frances Short (2006)

A gloomy predicament for the kitchen! Short (2006: 28) predicted in 2006 that the kitchen will be irrelevant and a thing of the past in the coming years. Cooking skills and practices along with eating habits at the kitchen's dining table change. He argues that this is primarily due to the move towards an ever more routinized and depersonalized 'cooking' reliant on processed and prepared food. He complemented his argument with Ritzer's (1996) hypothesis that industrially and commercially made food is part of the rationalization of contemporary society – such food gives people greater convenience and greater control over their lives. About eleven years later, can we say the kitchen is seeing the end of its days? Has it become impersonal and inconvenient to our lives as Short claimed it to be?

The kitchen is a dynamic space that we interact in daily and routinely. While food studies may be the 'growing trend' (Cosgrove, 2015) in today's anthropological, sociological and even cultural studies, the kitchen has taken a back seat. It is even often overlooked and may be deemed unimportant, as Short argues. However, I find that the kitchen is culturally significant (Chua and Rajah, 2003) and where important interaction takes place, and this paper shows that it is more than just a place to prepare the everyday meal. With the findings from my pilot interviews and review

of the literature, I discuss the influence, impact and significance of the kitchen in five major talking points:

- The Kitchen: Where it Starts
- Made in the Kitchen: Fascination with Food and Cooking
- Food Politics: Power Comes from the Kitchen
- Kitchen Identity: Cuisines, Markers and Identification
- The Kitchen: Fluid Through Space and Time

But first, I like to comment on the middle-class Bruneians, the focus of my interest. While everyone has or owns a kitchen, social class status should be considered. Pierre Bourdieu (1979, 1984) believes taste preferences, including those of food, are an expression of individual identity and status. He argues that the higher social classes use 'good taste' to differentiate themselves from the lower classes. I have found a keen interest of Bruneian middle-class families in food and what their 'taste preferences' are. Meanwhile, there are literature from Gunn (1993, 1997) and King (2008) that argue that the Brunei society doesn't have a middle class. However, their notion was not based merely on education, income, occupation and lifestyle, but on political considerations and evidence of processes of democratization. Gunn concludes that in Brunei there is 'an underdeveloped civil society characterized by low political inputs, low political participation, and seemingly low political consciousness' (1997: xxii). Therefore, by his definition there is no middle class. Though, while Brunei is apolitical, as argued by Gunn, I find that it is still possible to measure their middle-class status by using Dittmann's (2017) criteria for the typical middle-class markers. This include education, homeownership, geographic mobility and annual income. Below is a table of information from the pilot interviewees.

As Table 1 shows, the Bruneian participants from the pilot interviews can be considered middle class except maybe for participant three. The middle-class groups have a basic income around $30,000 - $70,000 annually (Gabrenya Jr., 2003). We cannot conduct this research without considering social class. And while it can be difficult to generalize Bruneians as middle-class citizens, we can measure and systematically categorize which can be considered in this social status. According to Short from 'The Construction of the Middle-Class Family', this model of studying the family meal is relatively recent. Less than a hundred years ago commentators on family life recommended that children eat separately from adults, preferably in a nursery. This was

so that children were not prematurely tempted by adult dietary practices and other aspects of adult life which could be corrupting for both the body and the mind (Kociumbas, 1982). Modern families which is what is documented in this study, on the other hand, are encouraged to eat together. As one of my pilot participants would say that *"we always try to eat together".*

Table 1. General Information of Informants

Participant	Size of Family	Annual Income	Children's Education	Homeownership	Geographic Mobility	Parents' Self-Described Employment
#1	7	$30,000 - $50,000	Universiti Teknologi Brunei	Yes	Yes	Father: Furniture Store Manager Mother: Housewife
#2	8	$40,000 - $70,000	Universiti Brunei Darussalam	Yes	Yes	Father: Immigration Officer Mother: Hospital Lab Assistant
#3	8	$96,000 - $120,000	University of Leicester	Yes	Yes	Father: Diplomat Mother: Diplomat
#4	5	$70,000 - $96,000	Universiti Brunei Darussalam	Yes	Yes	Father: Architect and Consultant Mother: Clinic Nurse
#5	9	$40,000 - $70,000	Universiti Brunei Darussalam	Yes	Yes	Father: Cultural Centre Officer Mother: Cultural Centre Officer
#6	6	$40,000 - $70,000	Universiti Brunei Darussalam	Yes	Yes	Father: Retired Civil Servant Mother: Nurse

Domestic food consumption begins with what is bought; what is bought and what is served are in turn circumscribed by the ability to prepare food (Fieldhouse, 1995). And according to Fieldhouse, 'heightened self-esteem', 'confidence' and 'sense of purpose' have all been noted as outcomes from the kitchen, food and domestic consumption. There is a further layer of complexity still regarding the concept of 'kitchen anthropology' – understanding, at a more precise level, what is meant by it. To explore the ideas and meanings that come from the kitchen, it is necessary to think about how and when someone or a family are cooking, consuming the food, preparing it, learning the craft and techniques. The kitchen and its culture, however, is not just disengaged, it is also intricate and individualized, with a wealth of different meanings, approaches and abilities. If anything from the kitchen such as cooking practices and food choices are to change, it affects a person or family life.

I refer to the Oxford English dictionary definition that's also used in The Kitchen and Politics (Fajardo: 2006): ***a kitchen as a room or area where food is prepared and cooked and politics as the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power***. There's always a connection between food and politics; when food is prepared, distributed or eaten, it influences family politics. One such example is the women of Sierra Leonne where one woman said, "I give (cook and distribute food) to whom I please!" (Leach, 1991) and this underlines how power can come from the kitchen. From food and cooking to politics and power, we explore further the influence, impact and significance of the kitchen.

Made in the Kitchen: Fascination with Food and Cooking

"Food is not only good to eat, it's good to think with." – Levi-Strauss.

Food Fascinates. I want to reconsider the perception of food. For food, at least in certain wealthier parts of the world, is becoming not only ever more commodified but also as potentially frivolous (a simple action that's taken for granted) as it is functional - when it is ingested by humans just for nourishment and to sustain life. And, as it does so, a subject long dismissed by serious scholars as being too every day and banal, too lacking in scope for intellectual elitism perhaps (everyone eats, so we all feel we can talk about it), has become increasingly popular as a subject of study and interest (Cosgrove, 2015).

In rural societies and tribes such as the Kelabit who are the indigenous people of highlands of Borneo believe that growing and cooking of rice can only be carried out by women and the cooked food are eaten to provide context for discussion and interaction (Janowski, 2007) and similarly, the Kerek from East Java who also highlighted the role of women as providers and makers of food offerings to the gods (Brinkgreve, 1997). Claude Levi-Stauss once mentioned that food can be conceived as a language that expresses social structure and cultural system (1958). Certain food means different things to different communities. The consumption of everyday food is one of the most important everyday areas in which rigid rules about how things should be done are apparent, although they are often unspoken or only partially explicit (Janowski, 2007). Preparation, sharing and distribution of food are significant as we can see in the Kelabit where sharing food means sharing the same feeding source; you are feeding a family member. For the Kerek from East Java, the division of food follows a pattern determined by generational and social differences (Heringa, 2007). When we prepare cooked food in the Malay kitchen, there are meanings behind it and we instil these meanings into our friends, family and whoever sits down with us at the dining table. I would like to prove that there is a strong sense of the ways different people cook and eat together in the kitchen when compared to the rural ones that are already well documented in the works of Janowski, Heringa, Kerlogue, Davis and Sparkes.

In an urban context, the roles of parents have become more important since the 1950s and 1960s to 'infuse and shape the personal investments of individuals, the ways they formed, regulated and evaluated their lives, their actions and their goals (Rose, 1990: 129). The use of food in the family provides an opportunity to further examine the construction of family life (Coveney, 2000: 123). Meals together were, for these families, regarded as an important part of family life. On these occasions, they 'sit together as a family' or 'eat together as a family' and this is highlighted throughout the pilot interviews I conducted. When shared meals do not happen, families have 'lost the family combination'. Mealtimes are part of the way a family is defined: the family itself is realized in preparing and sharing food. Family meals are often difficult to organize with children. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that children need to be taught and disciplined to 'eat as a family'. To add, I've read that bonds, friendships and companionships in early Christianity were even founded on sharing food. (Coveney, 2000:33) The word 'company' derives from communis meaning 'common' and panis, meaning 'bread'. Christian communion, therefore, begins with sharing, or breaking, bread (Barbotin, 1975: 329). Sharing of food is, of course, not

confined to Christianity. Many religious traditions focus on the importance of sharing food. Food has touched the rural, urban, familial and even religious aspects of human lives, and we'll get to see the ramifications for kinship and politics in kitchen anthropology.

Evolution of Culture: Cooking. Cooking food is a beautiful alchemy and transformation (Pollan, 2013); the consequence of this is where we integrate various influences to create certain meanings (Chua and Rajah, 2003). Cooking is such a simple action, even taken for granted, that takes place primarily in the kitchen, but it is an action that creates great change through our use and consumption of food. And whenever there's change, we always create new things that's valued. As Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau (2009) pointed out, once cooked, such food becomes a valuable resource. They use the word 'resource' to describe cooked food because it attains a higher value and worth than when it is still raw. We may also take joy and satisfaction when preparing this valuable resource and when it's eaten (Short, 2006: 33). It comes also from satisfaction with the standard or appearance of the food in question or from others 'appreciation of their ability, either as a cook or as a host. This is especially apparent with a participant in the pilot interview where he mentioned that *"the family enjoys my chicken broth soup."* Despite the focus on the state of contemporary domestic cooking, there is still very little research on the state, meaning and process of cooking (Short, 2006).

I've found that food magazines, television cookery programs predominantly offer passive viewing and easy-going entertainment, and recipe leaflets have joined the food conversation. Two such examples are from Borneo Bulletin Food Guide (2017) and Borneo Insider's Guide (2017) who may be considered industry experts. As there is still very little research on food anthropology in Brunei, we consider commentators outside of academia for insight. *"A country with a rich culinary heritage. Brunei is currently undergoing a food revolution. With a proportionately young population, Brunei's millennial foodies are the taste-setters when it comes to what we eat, where we eat and how we eat."* – The Food Guide. From one reason or another, there is a prevailing view that we are in the middle of some kind of food revolution (Fort, 2003) and on a local level this is supported by the Borneo Bulletin Food Guide. While 'food guides' have made big claims over the years, as stated earlier, there is still very little research on the state, meaning and process of cooking. With claims such as "happiness can be found at a dining table" by the publication's Pauline Chan and Borneo Insider's Guide's showcasing the annually planned Brunei Gastronomy

Week starting in 2017, they're staking their claim to be industry experts on food, eating and cooking.

Short claims that cooking has generally been treated as a straightforward, purposive process but Michael Symons otherwise quite astoundingly claims that cooks, as he writes on their history, are 'gods on earth'. He continues to add that 'they are nurturers, sharers and minders. They are the practitioners, creators, observers and thinkers. They are the food-getters, distributors and story-tellers. And by this account, cooking starts to have even more of an ambiguous meaning. To further complicate things, some commentators and researchers use 'cooking' to refer to 'the preparation of raw foods only' while others have interpreted it as the household task of food preparation. Cooking has also been explicitly defined by those in education as the process of 'designing and making something to eat'. Others in the same field, however, see it more prescriptively, as 'following a set recipe: the exact measurements and ingredients are given in order to produce a successful outcome', a process that 'often has to follow some predetermined stages if it is to come out right'. For people who cook, cooking can mean both 'doing the cooking' or 'making something to eat' and more highly valued, but not necessarily 'from scratch', 'real cooking'.

While cooking may have many meanings that many can't choose one to agree on, cooking is cultural. People's cooking lives cannot be separated from their wider lives, from their access to food and information about food, from the social and cultural settings in which they live and their generation and gender, from mediated constructions and shared beliefs and values, from their religious and ethnic background, from their personality and from the responsibilities they have for providing others with food. Like food, cooking is cultural. The food we cook and eat unravels habits, desires, deficiencies, motives and bodily constituents. For John Coveney (2000), he argued that an analysis of our understanding of food should not begin with the minds of the discoverers or the inventors of nutritional wisdom. We should rather examine the construction and fabrication of this entity, known here as the modern subject of kitchen anthropology.

Food Politics: Power Comes from the Kitchen

Research in the last twenty-five years by Short, Coveney, Pollan, Janowski, Heringa, Kerlogue, Davis and Sparkes have made domestic food ways and food arrangements more visible. Family

and household studies have revealed that the hierarchical organization of the family or household is manifest in the different members' entitlements to food and in the subjugation of the tastes and preferences of some to those of others (Short, 2006).

From my literature review, along with my pilot interviews, I've found that power relations and gender roles are established, acknowledged and represented at the dining and kitchen table. The literature refers to family mealtimes as hierarchical – gender, relative and child divided – and as places where fierce power games are played out. In terms of cooking, various studies have set out to show that 'the actual labour of food preparation is embedded in domestic power relationships' and have found that, though men do cook, doing the cooking is generally women's work. You can clearly see from the data from the pilot interviews that the female members are the primary cooks in the kitchen. It is women who are responsible for feeding the family, it is they who are the guardians of food-related health and well-being. Yet, despite consistent findings that women take on the bulk of the everyday food work, Shorts shows too that women do not generally have autonomy over what is prepared or how it is cooked. This may even be proved by one of the participants, *"we follow the taste of the father."* We can see that the father or the oldest member of the family dictating the taste or as stated 'autonomy over what is prepared or how it is cooked' of the household. One can also make a case that by making everyone eat the same kind of food in the same way and at the same time, isn't the family meal, asks Jane Jakeman (1994) in an article that challenges 'food snobbery', merely an instrument of family government, a means of instilling discipline and codes of behaviour? Meanwhile in Sierra Leone, there's a different literature that shows otherwise. The Mende women of the Gola Forest cook for the intention of economic and social interest and men are expected to allow them this authority. They 'organize' cooking arrangements on a day to day basis. "I give (cook and distribute food) to whom I please!" (Leach, 1991) underlines the difference in dynamics and how power can come from the kitchen. These women gain so much from just positioning themselves as controllers of the kitchen. By controlling the kitchen, women would have power over the household, visitors and even men in a patriarchal Sierra Leone society.

Perhaps, this is more of the urban context. But what does it mean for women to be in the kitchen? They plan and provide meals around their partner's and children's food preferences, tastes and requirements, diaries, schedules and more emotional food demands according to DeVault

(1994). Finding 'feeding the family' both oppressive and rewarding work, women are drawn into 'social relations that construct and maintain their subordinate position in household life', argues Marjorie DeVault. Even in the most egalitarian of households, cooking and feeding are perceived as 'women's work'– an association that is so strong it is a 'natural expression of gender', as 'womanly' rather than 'manly'.

Delegation of Work in the Kitchen. Designation may also be a representation of how power is practiced in the kitchen. I was inspired by my own pilot interviews on how they allocate work amongst the family members on the basis of gender. Essentially, preparing large quantities of food is an effort, so too is preparing small quantities. Washing up, asking for advice and finding and using recipes are all an effort, as are preparing messy foods and making special shopping trips. Also thought an effort are preparing everyday food and meals 'just for us', making food for special occasions, cooking 'dishes', serving more than one course and cooking with 'fresh' food rather than 'pre-prepared' food. Women do (most of) the food work, research consistently tells us, because it is their responsibility to do so. They may enjoy it, they may not, they may be good at it, they may not, but they generally feel obliged to feed the household and 'do the cooking'. But what of men who cook? Rarely are they found to be, or presented as, competent everyday cooks recumbent in their nurturing role and ability to feed the family. Nor are they generally seen as the kinds of cooks who prepare food every day. At this day and age, it may be time to revisit the role of men (and again women) in the kitchen, more so, in the Malay kitchen. My pilot interviews have already showed a glimpse of what to expect: *"if you want to find a good husband, you must know how to cook."*

Are the male cooks the inept helper and the understudy who enters the kitchen to cook only when pressed to do so? Or are they the hobby cook, the artist in the kitchen, the amateur chef? Men, it appears, find the label of home cook and feeder of the family a difficult one to attach. (Short, 2006: 69) When men cook, their masculinity must not be diminished, says Sherrie Inness (2001). Their choice to cook and the food they produce should be just cause for applause. You can even see this in participant four when the male is the spectacle for a group of women when he cooks as it doesn't appear to be normal. They cook difficult dishes and recipes. They become, Sherrie claims 'the male cooking mystique', artists, experts and creators.

Kitchen Meal Time. I would like to also briefly draw attention to perception of space and time. Mary Douglas researched and analysed the food practices and choices of both her own household and colleagues from several middle-class families in London (Sutton, 2001). She found that there are many rules determining how often different foods are prepared and consumed, the types of food chosen for a meal or snack and the preparation and cooking techniques that are then applied. The rules governing each separate meal reveal its relative importance and the social relationships involved. Drawing from Douglas's work on the rules of meals, some of my own findings revealed quite clearly, some cooking occasions (meals or snacks) are valued more highly than others. Most usually, weekday cooking occasions are thought less important than weekend cooking occasions and evening or night cooking occasions are thought more important than daytime occasions. Breakfast is a less important cooking occasion than dinner and as such cooks appear to differentiate less between a weekday breakfast and a weekend breakfast than they do between their evening meal equivalents. In general, it is only a breakfast on holiday or when guests are staying that adds much importance to the meal as a cooking occasion.

Construction of Table Talk. One of the main reasons given for families to share mealtimes is to talk together. *"We always talk about work, life and so on over the dining table."* said one of the interview participants. Parents want to catch up on events and experiences that have happened during the day or discuss plans. The meal table therefore becomes the 'talk table'. In their detailed study of family mealtimes, Ochs and Taylor (1992: 330) showed how the evening meal is often the first time of the day when family members interact for a sustained period of time. In studying the mealtimes of seven American middle-class families, these authors found repeated patterns in 'table talk' where conversations were mainly introduced by parents – principally the mother – to question children. The questions were designed to elicit information about the day's events by way of 'stories' (events that had a central problem) or 'reports' (accounts of an activity). We can see two constructions going on: parents are constructing themselves in the ethics of parenthood and children are constructed as subjects who must be trained, disciplined and watched over. The mealtime, as we have already said, is an activity where the modern family itself is constructed.

Going back to the Oxford English dictionary of the definition of the kitchen referred to earlier, Fajardo describes the kitchen as "*a room or area where food is prepared and cooked and*

politics as the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power."

Kitchen Identity: Cuisines, Markers and Identification

Global Ingredients. Food is an important object of consumption, the examination of which reveals much about culture and society. For most of human existence, basic foods and its ingredient came from no more than a dozen miles away (Janowski, 2007). This contrasts with today's far-flung international trade in food, in which tomatoes can move from Mexico to Canada and rice from India to the United States. The use of canning, freezing, and other preservation methods has made it possible for the volume of food moving from continent to continent to greatly increase (Mintz, 2006). We now have a rich choice of ingredients found in the everyday kitchen which influence our culinary culture.

Global ingredients create hybrid dishes. In Life is Not Complete Without Shopping: Consumption Culture in Singapore under the title: Food, Ethnicity and Nation (2003), Chua and Rajah researched the food landscape in Singapore by looking at ethnic cuisines consumed in the public. Hybridization happens due to appropriation and borrowing; we tend to want to racialize food and this is a form of 'misrecognition' in Bourdieu's (1979, 2004) sense of the word. Misrecognition in this instance, can be by state or even historically-embedded 'typification' of food. Basically, when we label and associate food with race, ethnicity or nationality, we are first reimagining food with something that has rich history or culture. In practice however, it is also a way of establishing hierarchy, cultural appropriation and social standing. Misrecognition is used to describe a phenomenon of describing a practice using one set of terms, but acting in accordance with another set. Essentialization and creolization is a running theme in Chua and Rajah's work. Chua and Rajah asked the cardinal question, 'What prohibits it?' My follow up is, 'What prohibits it in the kitchen? There must be cultural boundaries that we cross and don't cross when we consider food. There must be reasons as to why certain ingredients are used to make a cuisine 'Bruneian' or 'Malay' while others are ignored because they're 'Chinese', 'Indian' or other foreign ingredients. While Chua and Rajah (2003) believe that food must be placed under social constructs such as taboo in the public eye, what are the boundaries in our kitchen? Why haven't we researched on hybridization of dishes in the everyday kitchen in Brunei?

If you take a step back and look at the rural communities and tribe, in Heringa's work on the Kerek people of East Java, she researched on food exchanges. While this is an area that will be relevant in my own research, I do want to emphasize first on her thoughts on symbolic ingredient where the Kerek people consider the ingredients of a fruit concoction symbolically and then form a complex metaphor (Heringa, 2007). The term 'symbolic ingredients' echoes Chua and Rajah's (2003) deduction that we always try to crisscross and integrate foreign influences with local meaning. I'd like to also briefly mention Duruz and Khoo's work in Eating Together Food, Space, and Identity in Malaysia and Singapore (2015). Indians and Malays adopt Chinese ingredients like noodles, tofu, bean sprouts and bean paste, giving rise to dishes like mee rebus, mee goreng and mee Siam, while Indian and Chinese foodways show evidence of adaptations of local or Malay influences to produce those uniquely hybrid dishes such as Indian rojak and Penang rojak (Duruz and Khoo, 2015). While we inevitably essentialize food, the reality is that we create a hybrid culture. By studying the kitchen, we may have the opportunity to see hybrid cultures through the dishes created with global ingredients.

With the essentialization of food, we now come to the recent public news that Bamboo chicken – a traditional native dish known locally as 'Manuk Pansuh' took centre stage in Brunei's inaugural Gastronomy Week in February 2017. Now championed as a national dish, it is hoped that Bamboo Chicken will join a host of hallmark foods such as Korea's Kimchi, Thailand's Tom Yam Gong Soup and Japan's Sushi according to the Brunei Tourism Board (2017). The dish features pieces of chicken which are marinated in ginger and lemongrass, then stuffed into a bamboo joint. The tube is sealed with a banana leaf, creating an oven-like effect when placed over an open pit fire. According to my informant, the Bamboo chicken is claimed to be an Iban traditional dish rather than Malay. Even more so, it is not an everyday dish that's made in the kitchen and only cooked during special occasions. This seems to be an example of the state appropriating a cuisine to get global recognition similar to Tom Yam from Thailand, Kimchi from Korea, which are dishes cooked more often in their local kitchens.

However, one can argue that our ingredients have always been global (Ritzer, 1996). Curry paste were popularized through nasi kandar vendors, usually Tamil males from Ramnad, India. (Duruz and Khoo, 2015: 72). A popular opinion is that the curry was invented in Southern India with the word curry deriving from the Tamil word 'Kari'. As seen in all six of the participants,

curry is a commonly cooked everyday dish. Although, Brunei's household curry is arguably the milder and less intense version of the South Indian counterpart. Most families, especially seen from my first informant's household, are very keen on South and East Asian dishes with Chicken Korma and Chicken Soy Sauce respectively also a daily fixture in the dining table. From my pilot interviews, I find it very interesting to hear *"Malays are not creative enough…because we tend to steal or borrow things from other culture…we never developed curry, it's not from us!"* while other informants took dishes such as Ayam Masak Merah and Beef Broth to be Malay dishes. One added that*, "those rempah (spices) those Malay use"* is the difference between Malay cooking and the rest like Westerners. 'Rempah' is significant in Malay cooking because it is used to mark and identify which food categorically belongs to the Malay. 'Rempah' is used to '*codify'* (Chua and Rajah, 2003) a Malay dish or cuisines. Also, when eating out, most if not all are more likely to eat Malay style cuisines.

According to the Borneo Bulletin Food Guide (2017), *"two thirds of Brunei's population are made up of Malays, and their influences on the country's history and culture is particularly prevalent in its cuisine."* While also adding that Brunei has a strong Chinese and Indian representation too, and admitted that they produce a unique fusion of dishes which reflects its diverse population rather than full assimilation into the Malay culture. From Nasi Kandar, to Sambal to The Tarik, it should be said that several narratives exist when it comes to the origins. Even the Teh Tarik was made with sweetened condensed milk, which signified traces of British colonial hybridity and adaptation. Hybridity and cultural adaptation does not however, compromise one's sense of identity.

Eating Has Symbolic Significance. *"Human consumption of food follows cultural rules regarding what is eaten, when, with whom, and how—with which utensils you eat, with the right hand, and not the left."* – Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau (2009). As humans, we have given meanings to food like no other. A great example is a study by Kerlogue (2007) where he researched on the Malays in Jambi, Central Sumatra. It's understood that kinship can be created through the shared consumption of food as well as through marriage and the birth of children. Exchanged food may signal a more explicit relationship, distinguishing between affinal and consanguineal members of the family. Even Davis (2007) argued that the role of women and sharing of food is vital. For her, food consolidate kinship identity, symbolize fertility and strengthen affinal ties in

both every day and ritual life. Eating together is a symbol of trust. There's no practice less selfish, any time less wasted than preparing food for kinship (Pollen, 2013) and this is what food can mean symbolically.

Eating can even be a metaphor for sexual intercourse in a great many societies, including our own (Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau, 2009). Why is one a metaphor for the other? What do the two actions have in common? These two acts are completely different physiologically; nonetheless, they are tied together in their symbolic significance. In many societies, 'eating' can be used figuratively for sexual intercourse. "To hunger for" is a metaphor for sexual desire. Among the Mehinaku of the Amazon region, having sex is defined as "to eat to the fullest extent" and the essential idea is that the genitals of one sex are the 'food' of the others" (Gregor, 1985). In a different part of the world, among the Lardil of Mornington Island, Australia, 'there is a strong identification between food and sex, sexual intercourse and eating' (McKnight, 1999). In discussing eating practices among Americans, Lukanuski has pointed out the same in relating eating with sex (1998). Eating is a metaphor that is sometimes used to signify marriage. In many New Guinea societies, like that of Lesu on the island of New Ireland in the Pacific, and that of the Trobriand Islanders, marriage is symbolized by the couple's eating together for the first time. Adolescent boys and girls freely engage in sexual intercourse without commitment to marriage and without any gossip or criticism from the community. But eating together constitutes a public announcement that they are now married. Eating symbolizes their new status as a married couple (Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau, 2009).

In other New Guinea societies, such as Wogeo, if a man eats with a woman, then she is like his sister and he can't marry her (Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau, 2009). Here, eating has the reverse meaning. Instead of marriage, eating symbolizes a brother-sister relationship—those who cannot marry. Similarly, Vaughan (1987) observed the matrilineal Chewa society in Malawi where groups of sisters who eat communally, sometimes with other maternal relatives, cook food separately before sharing it at the point of eating. Among the Na of China, sexual intercourse is forbidden among close consanguineous relatives. The Na say, "Those who eat from the same bowl and the same plate must not mate" (Cai Hua, 2001). In some New Guinea societies, the nuclear family is not the unit that eats together, as is the case in American society. The men take their meals in the men's house, separately from their wives and children. Women prepare and eat their

food in their own houses, and take the husbands' portions of food to the men's house. This pattern is also widespread among Eastern societies, where men usually eat with other men and women with other women, and husbands and wives do not eat together. This is the case among the Marri Baluch of western Pakistan where the family arranges marriage between close relatives, and husbands never eat with their wives. But in adulterous relationships between a Marri Baluch man and woman, illicit eating together symbolizes their love for one another. In Lesu, the symbolic meaning of eating is exactly opposite from its meaning among the Marri Baluch. In Lesu, marriage is symbolized by a man and woman sitting down and eating together, but a woman never eats with her lover (Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau, 2009).

The Kitchen: Fluid Through Space and Time

The kitchen will continue to change and shape people, families and more so foods. The food that we cook, and we eat and how and when we cook and eat it tell us whether we are marking an anniversary, celebrating a time of the year, perhaps, or simply refuelling for the day ahead. Wherever you are in the world, elaborate meal structures, special foods and different types of eating and serving implements (say, more than one course and/or cutlery and crockery in some parts) mark an occasion that only certain, clearly defined people can take part in (Fox, 2015).

The kitchen is the place where everything comes together with its compelling imagery of mixture and social realities: meanings of food, perception of cooking, using global ingredients, ethnic origins, national identity, gender and power, and familial relations. The kitchen touches every facet of human living. And I would argue that the kitchen is fluid through space and time merely because of the emergence of new media and new ways of consuming food information. As my informants put it, they learned their new style of cooking via the internet and YouTube. I believe the effects of today's mass media and Internet of Things (IOT) will influence and continue to change and hybridize our cultural cookbooks and how we perceive food. This is seen from almost all the interviewees with Korean and Western dishes now becoming popularized in Bruneian kitchens. Another instance is American Barbecue becoming a new habit for leisure for the Bruneian middle-class families. Foreign recipes first entered our homes through spices and migration and now the media affects our culinary landscape.

Cuisine – distinctive ingredients and favours, dishes and their trimmings and accompaniments, styles and methods of preparation and presentation – is vitally important to our understanding of who we are. For Mintz (2006), a cuisine can only truly exist if people regularly produce not only the food and cooking of that cuisine, but also opinions about it. Therefore, it's the story from the kitchen of the food, distinguishes its differences and how it is 'other' to the food of the mainstream culture. It provides a site for individuals to negotiate those differences and their choices about what to eat, how to eat and perhaps where to eat. As seen in this review, what the food means is notoriously difficult to pin down. It continually changes, blended and fused. While you see this happening in eateries, it's happening more so in the kitchen. The potato, for example, is 'traditional' to many European cuisines. Yet, the potato only arrived in Europe in the seventeenth century and it didn't catch on until much later. The everyday Malay Cabbage Soup (*Sayur Kubis*) is equally popular in European countries such as Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine. The ingredients used to '*codify*' (Chua and Rajah, 2003) the Malay version uses mushroom stock along with mushrooms, carrots and chicken stock while in Europe, they would use beef or pork stock. Chilies are indigenous to South America but are synonymous to many of us with, amongst other places, the hot, spicy cooking of India – India being a country where chicken tikka masala, a favourite 'Indian dish' in Britain, doesn't even exist, it being a recently 'invented 'combination of the kind of creamy, tomato sauce which the British apparently love.

Most of us expect food to be served on plates and eaten with a knife, fork and spoon. We take it for granted that certain flavours 'go together', that sweet follows savoury and that the three main meals are eaten daily even though these patterns and ways of combining, cooking, serving and eating food are culturally specific and far from universally 'normal'. I'd like to quote Michel Foucault in Hall: *"nothing which is meaningful exists outside discourse"*. This doesn't mean that there is nothing outside discourse, but Foucault means that *"nothing has any meaning outside of discourse"* (Foucault, 1972 in Hall, 1997). Anything that does 'make sense' needs to be described in discourse, including 'saying' and 'doing' (Beverungen, 2006) and in this case, cooking, eating and food. When most Malay households with a kitchen still produce local food, the dynamics of the kitchen is worth 'making sense of'. Additionally, nothing meaningful exists outside of discourse in the form communication, interpretations and meanings. It is what makes us "human" and in the case of food, it has been attached with meanings related to kinship and gender relations.

Without discourse, as Hall (1997) said, the realities that made up our shared 'cultural maps' will not be conceived.

While Shamsul AB (2015) looks at Mamak stalls and research on food and social cohesion in multi-ethnic Malaysia on recent research on food studies and Duruz and Khoo (2015) examining the restaurants and third space around Singapore, I am interested in the kitchen of our homes in Brunei. I find that the food created from the kitchen and eaten can become a point of entry. And with the rich and global ingredients flown all the way from Malaysia, India, Mexico and many other places (Mintz, 2006), I am certain that we will witness hybrid dishes and the multi-ethnic nature of Brunei's culinary culture will be evident today. This is an opportunity to study the symbolic significance from ethnic foods and ingredients, oriental condiments, which are on the shelves of the kitchen.

Everything starts in the kitchen. Cooking is all about connection between us and other species, other times, other cultures (human and microbial both), but, most important, other people (Pollan, 2003). Cooking is one of the more beautiful forms that human generosity and intimacy takes. Cooking transforms 'raw things' into 'food'. Once cooked, such food become a valuable resource; a reason to negotiate kinship ties, determine gender identities and complete daily rituals. Ultimately, I believe it is important to tell the story of the kitchen and its life, that is kitchen anthropology.

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