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# Fusion food

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## INTRODUCTION

With cooking as interface, the exploration, testing, analysis and enjoyment of food in a group environment functioned not only as a social cooking exercise, but also as a meta-process for collaborative strategies in art and design. Our group was comprised of a diverse set of participants with varying backgrounds and interests. Individual's curiosities and questions ranged from medicinal properties of ingredients, cultural identity attached to cuisine, to food writing and the effect of constraints on recipes. Through using and modifying the recipes, specifically heirloom recipes, participants were able to scrutinize hybridity. They examined this prevalent topic through the lens of both familiar traditions and exotic new experiences. By creating pairs in the workshop the participants were immersed in the new methods and materials of their partners, as well as being asked to subject their own process to focused criticism. The advantage of focused individual scrutiny quickly began to influence cooking decisions of the entire group.

From day one of the workshop, participants' relation with food was to discuss, and recipes were scrutinized together. Starting at personal histories allowed for introductions while simultaneously framing future conversation.

*"I grew up in Minnesota, and salsa is not usually considered a part of the Minnesotan culinary imagination. One rather tends to think of Scandinavian foods like lefse, a traditional Norwegian flatbread made from potatoes. Whenever we gather as a family in Minnesota, there's always a bowl of delicious, beautiful, bright red salsa next to a big bowl of crisp, white corn chips waiting for us upon arrival. Everyone eats chips and salsa casually, an ongoing affair, like conversation. Sometimes it is partnered with large blocks of cheese and olives. We munch all day, like cows grazing in a pasture."<sup>1</sup>*

The rhythm of creation and critique allowed for participants to move from "active" focus on process to "passive" reflection, expansion and inquiry. Each cycle ending in a semi-formal meal/critique allowing for an open conversation about specific and general successes and failures as participants continued to chew on and digest a range of notions from hybridity to their own practice well after the kitchen had been cleaned and the oven turned off.

*"How do you make the okra crisper? Should we become generalized or specialized practitioners? How open and fluid are you within your respective discipline? Can hybridity become chaos or does it become its own structure? How do we place value on food? Where is the rice?"*

These conversations ranged from "big" ideas, to silly and lead to not only an appreciation and understanding of individuals in the group but also insight into perspectives, assisting in understanding not just the what and how, but also the why.

Food is a primary determinant in our behaviors, health and beliefs and so it acts as a universal language, connecting us across traditions, disciplines and cultures. "Everything about eating including what we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it and who's at the table – is a form of communication rich with meaning. Our attitudes, practices and rituals around food are a window onto our most basic beliefs about the world and ourselves."<sup>2</sup> This endeavor demonstrated what participant Jessie Ulmer eloquently wrote, "this process of making not only has the capacity to create great tasting food, but it can also function as a powerful catalyst for conversation and thought. Our cooking and eating naturally gave rise to a collective Socratic dialogue, an ongoing, dynamic, largely inquiry-based

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conversation that reached far and wide but always returned to cooking and eating. This pattern suggested to me that, ultimately, cooking and eating is much more than the sum of its parts, particularly in the context of hybridity.”

The documentation from the Tasmeem workshop and our ongoing research exploring both collaborative situations, the evolution of recipes, kitchen tools and objects in and around food can be found at <http://kitchenstation.wordpress.com/>

**Gallery**



Q2

Figure 1. Chillies.



Figure 2. Conversational map.

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Figure 3. Fisherman.



Figure 4. Fish market.



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Figure 5. Kitchen.



Figure 6. Market.

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Figure 7. Okra.



Figure 8. Recipe box.

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Figure 9. Recipe box 2.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Ulmer J. Workshop Reflections. 2013. <http://kitchenstation.wordpress.com/>
- [2] Harris P, Lyon D, McLaughlin S. *The Meaning of Food*. CT: The Globe Pequot Press; 2005.

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