

SARAH LAWSON WELSH

**FOOD, TEXT  
AND CULTURE IN  
THE ANGLOPHONE  
CARIBBEAN**

# **Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean**



# **Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean**

Sarah Lawson Welsh

ROWMAN &  
LITTLEFIELD  

---

INTERNATIONAL

*London • New York*

Published by Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd  
6 Tinworth Street, London, SE11 5AL  
[www.rowmaninternational.com](http://www.rowmaninternational.com)

Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd. is an affiliate of Rowman & Littlefield  
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706, USA  
With additional offices in Boulder, New York, Toronto (Canada), and Plymouth (UK)  
[www.rowman.com](http://www.rowman.com)

Copyright © 2019 by Sarah Lawson Welsh

*All rights reserved.* No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

#### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: HB 978-1-78348-660-1  
PB 978-1-78348-661-8

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Lawson Welsh, Sarah, 1966– author.

Title: Food, text and culture in the Anglophone Caribbean / Sarah Lawson Welsh.

Description: London ; Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2019003236 (print) | LCCN 2019017519 (ebook) | ISBN 9781783486625 (electronic) | ISBN 9781783486601 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781783486618 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Food habits—Caribbean, English-speaking. | Caribbean literature (English)—History and criticism. | Food habits in literature. | Food in literature. | Caribbean, English-speaking—Social life and customs.

Classification: LCC GT2853.C27 (ebook) | LCC GT2853.C27 L38 2019 (print) | DDC 394.1/209729—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019003236>

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

# Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction	xiii
<b>1 Famine, Feeding and Feasting: Slave Foods, Provision Grounds and the Planters' Tables</b>	1
<b>2 White Accounts: The Nineteenth Century</b>	43
<b>3 Black Hunger and White Plenitude: Food and Social Order in Two Historiographic Metafictions</b>	77
<b>4 'You Are What (and How) You Eat': Food and Identity Politics in the Caribbean</b>	95
<b>5 KitchenTalk: Caribbean Women Talk about Food</b>	137
<b>6 Reading the Culinary Nation: Recipes, Books and Barbados</b>	203
<b>7 'Put Some Music in Your Food': Caribbean Food and Diaspora</b>	229
Bibliography	251
Index	263
About the Author	275



# Illustrations

## INTRODUCTION

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| I.1 | Cooking pans and raised stone hearth at Tyrol Cot House and Heritage Village, Barbados. Photo courtesy of Kaye Hall. | xvii |
| I.2 | Usain Bolt grocery/store, Jamaica 2018.<br>Photo courtesy of Henrice Altink.   | xix  |

## CHAPTER 1

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.1 | Great House dining room at Tyrol Cot House and Heritage Village, Barbados. Photo courtesy of Kaye Hall. | 7 |
|-----|---|---|

## CHAPTER 2

- |     |   |    |
|-----|---|----|
| 2.1 | ‘Cultivation of Sugar-Cane, Jamaica’. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <a href="http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-6e76-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99">http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-6e76-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99</a> .         | 49 |
| 2.2 | “Busy Barbados”: Going to Market with Poultry’. Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <a href="http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-8d39-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99">http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-8d39-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99</a> . | 60 |

- 2.3** ‘Opening Cocoa Pods, Trinidad’. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-00d8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. 69

## CHAPTER 3

- 3.1** ‘The Barbadoes Mulatto Girl’. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-d5db-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. 86

## CHAPTER 4

- 4.1** ‘Guarapucu, Piracarpa and Flying Fishes’. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-f5ba-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. 103
- 4.2** ‘By the Rio Cobre—Coming from Market—A Coolie Village’. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-bc75-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. 112
- 4.3** ‘A Priest’. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-d753-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. 121
- 4.4** Rastafarian Menu, Temple Yard, Barbados, 2018.  
Photo courtesy of Sarah Lawson Welsh. 122

## CHAPTER 6

- 6.1** ‘Bruce Weatherhead’ from Mrs Yearwood’s *West Indian Recipes*. 208
- 6.2** ‘British Butter’ from Mrs Yearwood’s *West Indian Recipes*. 212

# Acknowledgements

This book, suitably enough, started with a suggestion by a great cook and bon vivant, my partner, Richard Every-Clayton, in the fine surroundings of the Queen Adelaide Public House in Kingsthorpe, Northamptonshire. Many years later the book is here, and I'm so thankful for his love and support in setting the table and joining me in all the courses of this culinary adventure. This book is dedicated to you, Richard, for keeping me 'fed and watered' during the long winter months of writing of this book, with your passion for good, homemade food and all the magical things you cook.

To my mother, Frances Lawson, and my late grandmother, Frances Samler, both of whom always knew how to put on a good spread and who nurtured me in more ways than they could ever know. To my father, David Lawson, whose conviviality, generosity and willingness to invite anyone to our dinner table if they happened to call at our door during meal times is a life lesson I have never forgotten.

To my daughter, Imogen Welsh: I'm so glad you've grown up to be an informed and adventurous eater who is interested in foodways, and especially in food ethics. I'm equally glad that I no longer have to supply endless meals of pasta, pesto and ham (with the odd banana and avocado thrown in for variety).

At home, my thanks go to my marvellous neighbours, the McDougall family, who know a thing or two about food, drink and spontaneous good times. I love the food-themed film nights and 'shared pot' gatherings with our respective families even when our food combinations push the boundaries of the 'eclectic'. Thanks for all the sunshine you bring, your kindness, wit and good cheer.

In the UK, my thanks go to my colleague, Dr Alex Beaumont, who kindly read and commented on my initial book proposal. Also thanks to York St John University for its help in funding my KitchenTalk oral history project in Barbados in 2018 and my symposia 'Culinary Cultures: Food and the Postco-

lonial' (2017) and 'Culinary Cultures: Continuing the Conversation' (2018). Thanks too to my wonderful Writing the Caribbean students who continue to teach me so much. My dear friend, Dev Dee, with characteristic generosity, introduced me to some hugely useful family contacts in Barbados; thank you, Dev. To David Dreuer, specialist Caribbean book dealer extraordinaire, I owe a great debt. Not only did he provide me with many early historical texts but also gave me generous access to his tremendous collection of early West Indian postcards. Thank you, David, for all the resources, conversations and welcome cups of tea! Thanks also to Alison Donnell for the wonderful birthday gift of an original copy of Mrs Yearwood's cookbook and for the inspiration of a longstanding shared love of all things Caribbean, literary and culinary. Special thanks go to Kate Baker, former student and long-suffering friend, for making me laugh and always managing to respond with interest and good humour to my frequent conversations about the Caribbean.

In the Caribbean, thanks go to Karen Sookram in Trinidad for supporting my KitchenTalk project. In Barbados, thanks to all those wonderful people who made my research both fruitful and unforgettable. Thanks to Ian and Dr Cecily Jones: their beautiful apartment 'Somnia' and Cecily's kind loan of her extensive library on Caribbean history made this the perfect 'home from home'. Also, immeasurable thanks to Marquita Sugrim and her lovely mother, Patricia Sugrim, for taking me to meet the stallholders at Cheapside Market, Bridgetown (special call-out to Stephanie and Vincent for their generosity and to Ras Chloe for his excellent conkie), introducing me to Ras Bonza, Ras and all at the Temple Yard Rastafarian Community Bridgetown, inviting me to the Thursday night provision of excellent food and drink to the homeless and food-poor in the city, and for arranging invaluable meetings with Dr Lystra Fletcher Paul, representative of the Barbadian Food and Agricultural Organisation to the UN and to Harrow Organic Produce, the organic farm of the truly inspirational Yoshia and Conrad Harrow. To Susan Walcott of the Waterfront Café, I owe a great debt for taking me off the beaten track on some memorable island 'adventures' and for great food and company; likewise, Sophia Lewis for her warmth and amazing historical and cultural knowledge and Dr Marcia Burrowes and Chauntel Thomas for their friendship, excellent tour guiding and photography. I wish to thank Chauntel in particular for going to the trouble of securing for me, at short notice, a copy of Rosemary Parkinson's excellent but weighty two-volume tome, *Barbados B'un B'un*, and a rucksack in which to carry it home! Bruce and Marcia Hennis were hugely supportive in the early stages of planning my trip, and I thank them for making time for me despite busy schedules. Thanks to Dr Alessandra Cummins, director of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, for hosting my talk on Mrs Yearwood's *West Indian and Other Recipes* (1911, 1932);

to Harriet Pierce, librarian at the Shilstone Memorial Library Barbados, for invaluable research assistance in locating early sources; to Dr Tara Innis for generously sharing her research on Mrs Yearwood; and Mr Carlyle Best at the West India Special Collection, University of the West Indies (UWI) Library, Cave Hill, for his cheerful helpfulness.

Thanks to Kaye Hall and Henrice Altink, Caribbean historians both, for their kind permission to reproduce their photos in this book.

Finally, I wish to thank all those who spoke to me formally or informally about food, including Sandra Darius, Gloria Gooding, Karen Sookram, Annette Mayers, Conrad and Yosia Harrow, Kaye and Patricia Hall, Sophia Lewis, Chauntel Thomas, Anthony Hunte, Susan Walcott, Ras Chloe, Ras Bonza, Catherine Wilson, Philip Nanton, Andrea Daniel, Marquita and Patricia Sugrim, Bruce and Marcia Hennis, Penny Hymen, Dr Marcia Burrowes and Dr Tara Innis at UWI, Sally Miller of Miller Publishing, Annalee Davis of Fresh Milk, Dr Lystra Fletcher Paul of the FAO to the UN, Shanise Taylor of the Barbados Product Authority and all the amazing retired Bajan ladies bathing in the sea early in the morning at Brown's Beach (Carlisle Bay). I miss the beauty of these surroundings and our early morning chats about food!

Parts of this book are based on much earlier versions of my research, which have been substantially extended and revised. They include:

'Caribbean Cravings: Food and Literature'. In *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food*. Edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien, 194–208. London & New York: Routledge, 2018.

“If I Could Mix Drinks Like My Grandfather I Would Be Worth Marrying”: Reading Race, Class and Gender in Mrs H Graham Yearwood’s *West Indian and Other Recipes (1911 and 1932)*. In ‘Special Focus: Culinary Cultures: Food and the Postcolonial’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 4 (2018).

‘Jamie Oliver’s Jerk Rice Is a Recipe for Disaster—Here’s Why’. *The Conversation*, August 2018. <https://theconversation.com/jamie-olivers-jerk-rice-is-a-recipe-for-disaster-heres-why-101879>.

‘Performing Cross-Cultural Culinary Discourse: The Case of Levi Roots’. In *Caribbean Food Cultures: Culinary Practices and Consumption in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas*. Edited by Wiebke Beushausen, Anne Bruske, Ana-Sofia Commichau, Patrick Helber, and Sinah Kloss, 153–74. New York: Transcript Verlag/Columbia University Press, 2014.

“A Table of Plenty”: Representations of Food and Social Order in Caribbean Writing: Some Early Accounts, Caryl Phillip’s *Cambridge* and Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song*. In *Entertext*, special issue on *Caribbean Literature and Culture: ‘Opening Out the Way(s) to the Future’* (2013), 73–96. Edited by Sandra Courtman and Wendy Knepper.



# Introduction

If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food.<sup>1</sup>

Call it gut memory. Stuff sticks in the craw.<sup>2</sup>

Caribbean literary texts abound with scenes of preparing food, cooking and eating, often in communal settings such as kitchens, rum shops, food stores and the outside domestic spaces known as yards. They also often feature narrators and storytellers who show how voice and narrative can be powerful sources of agency and resistance (for example, to oppressive regimes of power such as slavery). Storytelling linked to food can be used to connect to origins and ancestry, to transmit communal wisdom or to affirm individual or group identities. Sometimes they are dark and disturbing, as in Trinidadian American Lolita Hernandez's haunting stories of food, death, desire and the supernatural.<sup>3</sup> In Hernandez's stories, making food often involves the return of the repressed; it is part of what she terms 'gut memory. Stuff sticks in the craw'.<sup>4</sup> Hernandez suggests that 'Callaloo [a characteristic one-pot meal including green spinach-like vegetables called 'callaloo']] is a metaphor like no other for all of this', but she also warns, 'It is not for everyone'.<sup>5</sup> Even in the wider cultures of the Anglophone Caribbean, food and storytelling are prominently and frequently linked. Such links are not coincidental. This first study of food, text and culture in an Anglophone Caribbean context examines a rich and varied tradition of oral and written cultural forms and demonstrates how, in a Caribbean context, the creation and consumption of food and narrative are intimately linked cultural practices which can productively illuminate each other. The book's analytical focus on food *and* text not only furthers our understanding of the connections between the two but also illuminates the unique history and culture of the Caribbean. Historically, Caribbean

writers have explored, defined and reaffirmed their different cultural, ethnic, caste, class and gender identities by writing about what, when and how they eat. Images of feeding, feasting, fasting and other food rituals and practices, as articulated in a range of Caribbean writings, can be seen to constitute a powerful force of social cohesion and cultural continuity. Food is also often central to the question of what it means to be Caribbean, especially in diasporic and globalised contexts. What happens when food ‘travels’, and how do diasporic writers negotiate their identities through and with food? How do contemporary Caribbean writers navigate tensions between the local and the global, foodways of the past and of the present, and how are concepts of culinary ‘tradition’ and ‘authenticity’ articulated in Caribbean cookery writing? These are some of the questions which this book explores.

In ‘Make It Your Own’, Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff explores the bittersweet legacies of a long history of stereotypical constructions of Jamaica (and the wider Caribbean) by outsiders, visitors and tourists. Her text takes the form of a dialogue between tourist and native, with the voice of the voluble tourist I/eye dominating as they reiterate a series of stereotypes about the Caribbean. These include the beauty and poverty of the island, the friendliness of the ‘locals’ and the ‘exoticism’ of its food: ‘and your food is so interesting. / I didn’t know people ate goats. Or turtle either. / What does turtle taste like?’ / ‘Turtle’.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the tourist’s volubility, the native respondent’s words remain interior and unvoiced (but nonetheless highly articulate), signalling the potent legacy of these stereotypes, their problematic ‘drowning out’ or silencing of native voices and the complexities of this kind of cross-cultural communication. In many ways, Cliff’s text is a good place to start, as it reflects a wider lack of awareness of Caribbean cuisine and the obfuscation of its specific origins and history by reductive constructions of the Caribbean and its food. Indeed, images of food are often used metonymically to represent the Caribbean as a whole, as in the appellation ‘Spice Islands’ and in the frequent construction of the Caribbean as a place of exoticism and spice, a paradise ripe for consumption. Valérie Loichot goes as far as to argue that the Caribbean has always been a space (imagined and real) linked to processes of consumption. She suggests that following Columbus’s mishearing of ‘Carib’ as ‘Canibal’, ‘Europeans and other western colonizers, tourists, and readers have associated the Antilles with the primal act of eating, whether in the figure of the cannibal, or in that of its tamed counterpart, the Caribbean itself—its land, people, and language—all reduced to delectable objects: “Cannibal islands”, “spice islands”, “succulent women”, “luscious beaches”, “peppery language”’.<sup>7</sup> Loichot draws here on Mimi Sheller’s important study, *Consuming the Caribbean* (2003), in which Sheller argues more widely that ‘Caribbean subjects have been “ingested”

by the global machine of the conquest and the genocide of Amerindians, the spread of disease, plantation slavery, colonial capitalism, tourism, and sexual exploitation'.<sup>8</sup> This is one possible starting point for *Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*.

An alternative starting point might be *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (2014), the Booker Prize-winning novel by Jamaican writer Marlon James. An early chapter in the novel stages the tension between the ‘meals’ offered by multinational fast-food outlets in the Caribbean and ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’ Jamaican foodways. The chapter ‘Barry Diflorio’ is set in a fictitious fast-food outlet, ‘King Burger, home of the Whamperer’, in 1970s Jamaica and centres on American CIA agent Diflorio, who has been posted there a year. Barry comes to the restaurant, as ‘nobody here has heard of Burger King . . . [it] is never packed at three p.m.’.<sup>9</sup> As he reflects, ‘One of the things I fucking hate about my fellow Americans [is] whenever they fly to a foreign country, first thing they do, they try to find as much of America as they can get their hands on, even if it’s food in a shitty cafeteria’.<sup>10</sup> Like other white characters in the novel, he thinks he is embracing ‘authentic’ Jamaican food and culture, although his claim to authenticity is considerably problematised by the Jamaican characters in the novel, who are altogether more ambivalent, not to say divided, on this matter. Despite his regular consumption of the restaurant’s cheeseburgers, on this occasion Diflorio challenges the female server, ‘Who’s been here since the Johnson administration [and] has never had ackee and saltfish ever, despite me being probably the two millionth person to say baby, it’s like scrambled eggs but better. My kids love it. My wife, she wished they had Manwich or Ragu, or even hamburger helper, but good luck finding that at a supermarket. Good luck finding anything, really’.<sup>11</sup> Visitor and native, home and abroad, food plenty and food shortage, imported foods and local food, the foodscapes of modernity and of ‘traditional’ Caribbean home cooking: these are some of the tensions which this book also examines. Diflorio recalls his first taste of jerk chicken at a local jerk shack after literally being apprehended in his car by the owner. It is a neat irony on James’s part that—in a book so filled with violence—this encounter ends with food rather than death, although the violent imagery used throughout this encounter suggests that food and death (or the threat of death) are also often linked:

The man grabbed the biggest fucking machete I ever saw in my life and sliced off a piece of chicken leg as if he had just cut through warm butter. He handed it to me and as I was about to eat it, he closed his eyes and nodded no. Just like that: firm, peaceful and final . . . he pointed at a huge jar . . . of mashed pepper paste. I dipped the chicken in and swallowed the piece whole . . . Somebody had doused my mouth with sugar and gasoline, lit a match and woof.<sup>12</sup>

When Diflorio teasingly asks the King Burger cashier ‘if they ever thought of [creating a] jerk burger’, she responds, markedly, ‘ghetto food?’<sup>13</sup> For Diflorio, his first taste of jerk signifies something ‘authentically’ Jamaican. However, for the cashier it suggests something very different: it connotes class, ethnicity, a certain kind of space and cultural milieu, although her tone also suggests a certain playfulness and sarcasm at the ‘tourist eye view’ of what ‘ghetto’ might (differently) mean to Diflorio as a white American and outsider. Diflorio’s suggestion of a ‘jerk burger’ neatly encapsulates one of the many ways in which traditional foodways are changing or being adapted in new and increasingly commodified forms throughout the Caribbean and its diasporas. The different meanings ascribed to different foods by different groups and the tension between traditional and newer foodways are key concerns of this book.

Kim, a Jamaican character, cooks up both traditional Jamaican food and new identities for herself, as she creates the alter egos of Nina and Millicent. Whilst she cooks traditional Jamaican food (ackee) for Chuck, her white American boyfriend, he continues to refer to the dish as ‘that scrambled egg thing’ and questions whether ‘all Jamaican women can cook’, a challenge to which Kim responds by significantly linking home cooking with female propriety: ‘Yes. Well, all the women who are not worthless. So no, no Jamaican woman in Montego Bay can cook’.<sup>14</sup> This link between food, sexuality and especially gender is another of the concerns of *Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*. The final chapter of James’s novel returns to food as Kim/Nina/Millicent sets off from her apartment with an intense craving for traditional Jamaican ‘home food’. She finds herself in a ‘little restaurant . . . Boston Jamaica Jerk chicken. Jamaican Chicken and Food, Hot and Ready. Two rows of orange plastic booths with ketchup, salt and pepper on every table’.<sup>15</sup> Inside she is confronted with a mixture of associations and emotions evoked by ‘home’ food:

On the counter . . . coconut drop are in a cake dish reminding me of country. Never liked going to country—too much coconut drops and pit toilets. Right beside it another cake dish with what looks like potato pudding. I haven’t had potato pudding since 1979—no, longer. The more I look at it the more I want it, and the more it feels like I should think it’s a sign of something deeper, that what I really want to taste is Jamaica and that just sounds like some psychological bullshit. . . . Now me feel like me want chat patois all night . . . Maybe it’s because I’m looking at damn coconut drops and feel like asking if they have any dukunnu, asham or jackass corn.<sup>16</sup>

Eventually she orders everything she craves: ‘fry chicken and rice and peas and some fry plantain and shredded salad’ and asks after ‘oxtail’ and



**Figure 1.1. Cooking pans and raised stone hearth at Tyrol Cot House and Heritage Village, Barbados. (Photo courtesy of Kaye Hall)**

‘curry goat’.<sup>17</sup> Surprised to find that sorrel is available all year round, and not just served as a Christmas drink, as it was traditionally, she is asked by the Jamaican proprietor, ‘Is where you deh the last umpteen years, lady? Everything Jamaican boxed up and on sale’.<sup>18</sup> The scene suggests the increasing commodification of ‘everything Jamaican’, food included, but the place still retains the ‘authenticity’ of a ‘little Jamaican food shop’ with ‘a man giving me granny wisdom’,<sup>19</sup> food and grand/motherly wisdom being closely linked in many Caribbean texts but affectionally ironised here. The idea of culinary matrilineages and food nostalgia for ‘back home’ food is also examined in *Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*. However, this scene is far from cosy with food nostalgia, as James breaks it with the traumatic news report of gang leader Josey Wales’s violent death by fire in his prison cell, a darker and altogether different kind of ‘cooking’. On hearing this news, the traumatised Kim/Nina/Millicent vomits outside and, whilst watching TV reports of Josey’s death later that night, reflects, ‘Don’t think I’ve ever seen a man look cooked’.<sup>20</sup> Food here, then, signifies the past, nostalgia and early memory, but also, more ambivalently, less positive perceptions of the backwardness of rural Jamaican life and, most important, urban gang violence and death by violent means.

## CARIBBEAN FOOD

Another reason for choosing to start with James's award-winning novel is its setting in 1970s Jamaica and its narrative which centres around the real-life assassination attempts on reggae musician Bob Marley. Jamaican food and music (to which should be added sporting prowess in the shape of Olympic Usain Bolt<sup>21</sup>), are some of the Caribbean's most successful exports, and this is to be celebrated.<sup>22</sup> However, crucially, though culturally dominant, Jamaica does not represent the Caribbean as a whole. There is much more to Caribbean food than Jamaican food, and more to Caribbean music than Marley and reggae (although some might disagree). This sense of a reductive or homogenising vision of Caribbean food is one of the central ideas this book seeks to dispel. The Caribbean has a long and multilayered history as a region of trade and encounter, colonial settlement, movement and migration, cultural admixture, syncretism and creolisation, and its culture reflects this diversity and complexity. Trinidadian writer and painter John Lyons has reflected on his Trinidadian culture and cuisine thus:

Our cooking reflects our past: the Amerindian Caribs who were there before the Spanish arrived, the French who ruled the island until the beginning of the nineteenth century (when the British took over), and the Africans, Indians (Hindus and Muslims), Chinese and Portuguese Madeirans who came enforced or with varying degrees of choice, to labour on the sugar estates, or the Syrians or Lebanese who came to peddle goods and later set up some of our biggest stores. From all of these came elements of our cuisine and no Trini has ever felt shame in borrowing, adapting and calling their own (what we call creolizing) whatever may be had in the way of food from their neighbours. That dynamic, rich, cultural intermix is embedded in the very notion of the cook-up.<sup>23</sup>

However, despite this 'dynamic, rich, cultural intermix', Caribbean cuisine is much less well known than others such as Thai or South Asian food. In the UK, until lately it has been eclipsed by the ever-popular 'Indian' curry served by restaurateurs of mainly Bangladeshi or Kashmin Pakistani origins. With very few exceptions (rum punch, hot pepper sauce and Jamaican jerk chicken), Caribbean food seems to have travelled less well than other world cuisines. Why should this be so? Outside of diasporic West Indian communities in the global North, knowledge about Caribbean foodways is often mired with problems of homogenisation (the belief that all Caribbean food is the same) and ignorance. As British-Trinidadian cookery writer Shivi Ramoutar reflects in *Caribbean Modern* (2015):

I find it quite astonishing that when the word 'Caribbean' is mentioned, a hundred beautiful clichés bubble to the surface . . . And yet, when the words 'Carib-



**Figure I.2.** Usain Bolt grocery/store, Jamaica 2018. (Photo courtesy of Henrice Altink)

bean' and 'Food' are thrown together in a sentence, the first thing that generally springs to mind is the stereotypical 'Jerk Chicken, Rice and peas' (mutton curry usually comes in second and there is normally a struggle to think of a third). I am not certain how this particular dish has become representative of Caribbean cuisine . . . but there are so many other [dishes] that deserve to battle it out for centre stage.<sup>24</sup>

More recently, Caribbean food in Britain has been the subject of controversy and charges of cultural appropriation, as British celebrity cook and businessman Jamie Oliver was censured for his naming of a convenience rice product 'Punchy Jerk Rice'.<sup>25</sup> For many, the ignorance or carelessness which led to the marketing of a nonsensical product (you cannot jerk rice) that used none of the traditional jerking spices or cooking processes was indicative of larger issues regarding culinary authenticity. The controversy surrounding this episode, dubbed 'Jerkgate' by some British commentators, may ultimately have had a positive effect in raising awareness of the history and culturally specific nature of this Jamaican cooking method. However, Caribbean food, arguably one of the most globally influenced and historical rich cuisines, is still hugely neglected and unknown outside of the Caribbean and the largely urban pockets of diasporic settlements in North America and

Europe. This crucial neglect is also one of the issues which this book addresses, especially in its final chapter.

## DEFINING THE CARIBBEAN

Importantly, this study treats the Caribbean as both an imagined space and a geographical place, centred around the Caribbean Sea but also radically decentred in terms of the diasporic routes taken by its peoples. Writing from the vantage point of Britain and the global North, the Caribbean can be seen as not just ‘out there’ but also ‘here’. Indeed, many of the Caribbean’s most successful writers are located in Britain, America or Canada, and some of its most important cultural traditions are now global commodities. The Caribbean has always been a meeting place of many peoples and cultures, as John Lyons suggests, but its long history as the site of transatlantic encounters has also always been accompanied (and sometimes preceded) by its role as the focus of manifold desires and imaginings. It is the locus of El Dorado, the apocryphal city of gold rumoured to exist by Spanish colonists and searched for by Walter Raleigh. It is also the ‘desert’ island topos of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and of Shakespeare’s island-based psychodrama *The Tempest*. The Caribbean is a place imagined and reimagined as ‘Paradise’, a place where infinite fortunes (notably in sugar cultivation) might be made, through to the current day and the Caribbean’s centrality to narratives of encounters with the ‘exotic’ other, whether through tourism (including sex tourism), drugs, luxury lifestyles or food and drink. In this and other senses, the Caribbean cannot be easily contained within geocultural borders but instead can be seen to exceed its own limits. For postmodern theorist Antonio Benítez-Rojo, the Caribbean is *The Repeating Island* (1996), a fluid space of plurality, difference and discontinuity which is yet paradoxically united by certain ‘endlessly repeating’ experiences, practices and phenomena. Building upon Benítez-Rojo’s idea of the Caribbean as a ‘cultural meta-archipelago without center and without limits’,<sup>26</sup> the book shows how the Caribbean is also a ‘moveable feast’ where different ethnicities, cultures and cuisines (Amerindian, European, African, Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern among them) have created some unique literary as well as culinary practices.

## FOOD, TEXT, CULTURE

So what of the relationship between food, text and culture? British Marxist critic Terry Eagleton suggests, ‘Food looks like an object but is actually a

relationship, and the same is true of literary works. If there is no literary text without an author, neither is there one without a reader'.<sup>27</sup> Eagleton continues: 'Language is at once material fact and rhetorical communication, just as eating combines biological necessity with cultural significance . . . Food is cusped between nature and culture, and so too is language . . . which is [both universal as a human need and] as culturally variable as cuisine'.<sup>28</sup> To this we might add, in the words of British cookery writer Nigella Lawson, 'Language is an abstract thing. Food is very physical'.<sup>29</sup> French Structuralist critic Roland Barthes famously argued in his 1957 book *Mythologies* that cuisine and language are both systems of signs. Barthes uses semiotics, the study of signs, as a methodology to show how food signifies—that is, functions as a sign. Crucially, for Barthes (and Eagleton), food communicates more than itself, perhaps even something other than itself. As Eagleton suggests, 'If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food'.<sup>30</sup> In short, when we buy a product or consume a meal we are consuming more than food as a material object; we are also consuming a whole system or chain of meanings. Fascinating and accomplished though Barthes's analysis is, it does not allow for an adequate analysis of the larger cultural work which food does, in linking human beings to each other and to specific places and spaces. A structuralist analysis is also especially deficient as a framework for considering shifts over time (the diachronic dimension of food and foodways) and the important affective and sensory elements of food. In 'Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption' (1961), Barthes is more explicit about the centrality of food to culture. He argues for a wider interdisciplinary approach to food studies and for a central recognition that food and culture are very closely related. Anticipating his critics, Barthes writes:

No doubt, food is, anthropologically speaking, the first need . . . but ever since man has ceased living off wild berries this need has been highly structured. Substance, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens we have communication by way of food . . . people may very well continue to believe that food is an immediate reality (necessity or pleasure), but this does not prevent it from carrying a system of communication; it would not be the first time that people continue to experience as a simple function at the very moment as they constitute it into a sign.<sup>31</sup>

Alongside Barthes, other structuralist thinkers such as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss have provided us with more relational ways to think about the meanings of food, and especially how food functions as a means of communication. As Eagleton intimates, both cooking and writing are communicative acts which demand a response from another human being: one writes and cooks

for someone (even if that ‘someone’ is only oneself). Similarly, both cooking and writing share a vocabulary of production and consumption which may be read within the specifics of a Marxist critical framework or more generally. In a Caribbean context, the implications of ‘plot’ as both an agricultural and a narrative term are also significant, as is discussed later in this introduction.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

One of the earliest and more focused provocations to this book was Doris Witt’s *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America* (2004) and the intersectional methodologies she espouses in ‘From Fiction to Foodways: Working at the Intersections of African American Literary and Culinary Studies’ (2007). However, the present study moves beyond Witt’s methodology by using a wider range of approaches and perspectives drawn from historical, literary, cultural and feminist theories, oral history, food studies and postcolonial studies. Chapters 1 and 2 build upon the approaches of established social and economic historians of the Caribbean in reading a white colonial archive and in considering other evidence by which we can piece together the lives, diets and food practices of the enslaved. In the third chapter, there is a turn to the postmodern notion of historiographic metafiction, most extensively theorised by Linda Hutcheon but widely regarded by others as one of the dominant forms which world fiction has taken in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Chapters 4 and 5 make use of existing concepts, such as Lynn Marie Houston’s (2005) discussion of ‘Making Do’, as both a characteristically Caribbean culinary and a wider domestic practice (which may be read as feminist and/or anticapitalist in significance). Chapter 5 also draws on David Sutton’s (2001) research on food, tradition and memory and is informed by theories of feminist oral history, such as those of Geiger (1990), Armitage, Hart and Weathermon (2002) and Hesse-Biber (2007). Chapter 6 on Barbadian cookbooks draws on recent research on early twentieth-century Caribbean print culture, such as that of Claire Irving (2015). Irving’s focus is on early literary magazines rather than cookery books, but her research is useful in foregrounding the role of the paratexts in early printed sources and in demonstrating the close relationship between commerce and trade in the early print culture of Barbados. Chapter 7 is a case study of the cookery writing of Jamaican-born British celebrity chef Levi Roots and examines Caribbean food in a British diasporic context, drawing upon a range of theoretical perspectives including Pierre Bourdieu on cultural capital, Mimi Sheller (2003) on the politics of consumption in a Caribbean context, Judith Butler’s theories of performativity and Arjun Appadurai’s writing on cookery writing.

## KEY CRITICAL CONCEPTS

Key critical concepts such as hybridity and creolisation are well known in postcolonial studies and, indeed, they are often invoked in broader postcolonial contexts in relation to culture; however, their specifically Caribbean forms are less frequently discussed in relation to food. Although it is recognised that many foodways and food histories have a pan-Caribbean dimension, the current study focuses only on the Anglophone Caribbean and makes no claim to cover the French, Dutch or Spanish islands and territories. That is the subject for another book. Specificity is important to any literary critic, but also to the oral history respondents and the producers of the texts discussed here. With this in mind, it's important to read Caribbean texts in relation to Caribbean theories of the role of food and consumption.

Arguably, the most important of these Caribbean theories is the concept of Nam—Nyam—Nyame, developed by African Caribbean, Barbadian poet, critic and historian Kamau Brathwaite. In *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica* (1961), Frederic Cassidy explains:

An African word for food is still to be heard: /ninyam/—evidently the reduplicated form of /nyam/, to eat greedily, related words appear in most of the Niger-Congo languages, usually meaning meat; but one may also note such a form a Twi anyinam, a species of yam.<sup>32</sup>

Brathwaite draws upon this African-derived term, still in common usage throughout the Caribbean, in his concept of *nam*. For Brathwaite, *nam* is the submerged (and thus potentially subversive) core of Amerindian and African-Caribbean culture which remained through colonialism and slavery. Significantly, he uses terms of consumption as he defines *nam* as ‘secret name’ or ‘soul-source’, a source of resistance to the consuming power of Prospero the European, as the representative of colonial oppression. Brathwaite links *nam* to *nyam* (to eat), *yam* (root food) and *nyame* (name of god) in a semantic chain, which suggest the role of food in cultural memory, of maintaining continuity with one’s ancestors and original homeland, and also a crucial source of resistance to the larger process of consumption (in the sense of being swallowed up and at risk of obliteration) involved in colonisation and slavery. At the heart of this concept is what Brathwaite terms the ‘sacred plot of land where slaves wd plot’<sup>33</sup>—the provision grounds. This is where they find ‘groundation’,<sup>34</sup> a Rastafarian word meaning ‘gathering’ but implying spiritual strength as well as connection to the soil, a crucial rootedness. Of course, ‘plot’ signifies multiply here too, since it means a plotting of the land, plotting for survival and resistance and the plotting of new expressive forms, ultimately the beginnings of a Caribbean-based culture created outside of

the confines of the plantation (and all it symbolises). These concepts can be found throughout Brathwaite's critical and creative writing<sup>35</sup> and represent another important branch of indigenous theorising of consumption in a Caribbean context. Maureen Warner-Lewis has also noted that in some African languages such as Ewe-Fon, spoken in modern-day Eastern Ghana and the Republic of Benin, the word for 'eat' is the same as 'defeat', as used in the sense of eating one's illness—that is, defeating one's illness. As she observes, this is important since to 'eat goes beyond physical consumption to encompass spiritual [and other kinds of] consumption'.<sup>36</sup>

The focus of this book is the dialogic relationship between Caribbean food and Caribbean texts of different kinds (written and oral, literary texts, historical accounts, travel writing, memoirs, cookery books), as well as the wider interplay between food, text and culture in a Caribbean context. To date, this subject has received little serious academic focus, with a small number of notable exceptions.<sup>37</sup> Most of the standard scholarship on the relationship between literature and food considers only canonical British and American authors, and until 2018, one of the standard reference works on this subject, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food*, contained no chapters on the Caribbean.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, wider scholarship on Caribbean food has been dominated by geopolitical studies of food histories (e.g., Mintz 1985), studies of single territories (Wilk 2006) or micro-level studies of practices of food preparation and consumption, with a preponderance of anthropological and qualitative sociological studies of single foods such as bananas and sugar, the latter of course being the cash crop which utterly transformed the Caribbean, its ecology, history and culture. Those studies which do engage with food and textuality tend to focus on the Francophone Caribbean rather than the Anglophone Caribbean (Loichot 2013, Githire 2014) or exist only as chapters within larger studies on particular subgroups in the Caribbean, such as Indo-Caribbean women (Mehta 2009). The current study therefore makes an original contribution to a growing field of food scholarship by focusing on the dialogic relationship between food and writing in an Anglophone Caribbean context. It builds upon but also moves beyond existing research methodologies in a study which combines historical narrative, close textual analysis and synchronic analysis (in the form of the KitchenTalk interviews of chapter 5). At the heart of this study is the interplay between food and writing, what Anu Lakhan has recently termed the 'call and response between food and culture' (2008). Call and response always involves the potential not just for repetition (mimeticism) but also for subversion (mimicry)—and repetition as subversion—as Homi Bhabha has most famously theorised.<sup>39</sup> In this sense it is a useful way of thinking about the interconnections between food, texts and culture as dynamic, mobile and spaces of resistance or critique. Lakhan's

term is also useful in that it suggests both a politics of production and that of consumption (which is common to both food and texts) and a distinctively Caribbean aesthetic of orality and communality in the study of the relationship between food, text and culture. Caribbean culture starts with orality, and residually oral forms (such as Anancy tales, sung and spoken forms) are still crucial to any understanding of its foodways. For this reason, I decided to conduct a series of KitchenTalk interviews with female respondents in Barbados in order to give a central space for Caribbean-speaking voices and to allow further exploration of the role of oral culture in the transmission of traditional foodways and food practices in the words of the participants themselves.

## THE BOOK'S STRUCTURE

Chapters 1 and 2 examine the role of food and social order in early ‘white writings’ from and about the Caribbean. They explore the representation of different foods, indigenous and imported, the foodways of different groups (including the legendary excesses of the white elite, planter class). They also consider the central role of slave provision grounds as important sites of survival and resistance for the slaves. The provision grounds were also foundational to the creation of an internal ‘higgler’ economy within Caribbean plantation societies, one which gave a measure of autonomy and economic independence to slaves and their descendants. The first chapter covers the period from the earliest accounts to the late eighteenth century. The second chapter covers the nineteenth century. Chapter 3 complements the first two chapters in considering food and social order in two more recent historiographic metafictions from the Anglophone Caribbean: Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song* (2010) and Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge* (1991). It shows how these later fictional texts make use of some of the earlier sources discussed in the first two chapters and write back to them in some surprising and resistant ways. Chapter 4 focuses more centrally on how foodways and food choices reflect the politics of identity and how race, class, caste and gender are reflected in (mainly literary) texts. It traces the role of oral traditions from early Amerindian accounts, and the survivalist, trickster tales of Anancy which often feature food through to the literary representation of food and identity, and the erotic and the spiritual in more recent texts. It also looks at travelling food and food nostalgia in diasporic contexts. Through a discussion of a series of literary and nonliterary textual locales, it shows how culinary deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation take place. Chapter 5, ‘KitchenTalk: Caribbean Women Talk about Food’, ‘strikes out’ in a slightly different

direction by focusing on a series of oral histories gleaned from interviews with Barbadian respondents in 2018. These respondents ranged from governmental ministers with portfolios for food, fisheries and agriculture, to former home economic teachers, certified organic farmers, Rastafarian ‘I-tal’ cooks, market vendors, restauranteurs, historical tour guides, food charities, educators and those working with small businesses and the Tourist Product Board. The chapter draws on this rich qualitative data and shows how Caribbean oral traditions are still central to the preparation, cooking and consumption of food in this island nation and how wider issues such as tradition, authenticity and the tension between local and global foodways and foodstuffs are still very much to the fore in a series of different contexts. Chapter 6 reads for the politics of race, class and gender in a series of Barbadian cookery books from the earliest twentieth-century examples to contemporary recipe books and other food writings. The final chapter is a case study of Jamaican-born British entrepreneur Levi Roots and his Reggae Reggae brand. It looks at the commodification of diasporic Caribbean food culture and unravels the complex local and global forces at play in the marketing of food products and cookery writing as ‘authentically’ Caribbean. The Reggae Reggae story is fascinating, as despite the presence of a Caribbean diasporic population in Britain since the 1950s, Caribbean food and cooking have not really permeated the culinary mainstream in Britain. Does the Reggae Reggae phenomenon reflect a welcome trend in deterritorialising ethnic foods in Britain as part of a new culinary cosmopolitanism, or should it be read as a less positive reification of ‘ethnic’ food? Does Roots construct a version of Caribbean cuisine which travels well in the global marketplace but which—crucially—overwrites the geographical variables and historical complexities of Caribbean foodways with a new homogeneity and new constructions of ‘authenticity’? The book concludes by asking, ‘What is the future of Caribbean food?’ It considers the new phenomenon of pan-Caribbean food as an effect of the increasing commodification and ‘globalised reach of Caribbean food’, one which exists largely outside of, but is still closely connected to, the Caribbean.

## NOTES

1. Terry Eagleton, ‘Edible Écriture’, in *Consuming Passions*, eds. Sian Griffiths and Jennifer Wallace (London: Mandolin, 1998), 208.
2. Lolita Hernandez, Preface to *Making Callaloo in Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2014), ix.
3. See in particular the stories ‘Making Callaloo’ and ‘Making Bakes’.

4. Hernadez, Preface, ix.
5. Hernadez, Preface, x. Indeed, Hernadez writes, ‘These stories are not an attempt to capture my culture through food . . . This just happened. Call it gut memory. Stuff sticks in the craw, can’t expel, burping up the flavours of real peppa sauce, and my beloved bacalou buljol and bakes. Callaloo is not for everyone; it is a deep dark-green slime of unidentifiable flavours, a trip to the unfamiliar bush, a blending of surprises. A trip to another world right here in the D’ (ix–x).
6. Michelle Cliff, ‘Make It Your Own’, in *Land of Look Behind* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985).
7. Valérie Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), vii.
8. Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), n.187.
9. Marlon James, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (London: OneWorld, 2014), 16.
10. James, *Brief*, 17.
11. James, *Brief*, 17–18.
12. James, *Brief*, 17.
13. James, *Brief*, 17.
14. James, *Brief*, 302.
15. James, *Brief*, 682–83.
16. James, *Brief*, 682.
17. James, *Brief*, 682–83.
18. James, *Brief*, 683.
19. James, *Brief*, 684.
20. James, *Brief*, 686.
21. Even Usain Bolt is now directly associated with food, having recently set up a series of Jamaican restaurants, with a London-based restaurant opening in 2018.
22. Indeed, as this book was going to press, UNESCO announced that reggae was one of its fifty named intangible global cultures to gain protected status.
23. John Lyons, *Cook-Up in a Trini Kitchen* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2009), 8–9.
24. Shivi Ramoutar, Introduction to *Caribbean Modern* (London: Headline, 2015), 7.
25. See Sarah Lawson Welsh, ‘Jamie Oliver’s “Jerk Rice” Is a Recipe for Disaster —Here’s Why’, *The Conversation*, August 2018, <https://theconversation.com/jamie-olivers-jerk-rice-is-a-recipe-for-disaster-heres-why-101879>.
26. Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 9.
27. Eagleton, ‘Edible’, 204–5.
28. Eagleton, ‘Edible’, 205.
29. Nigella Lawson interviewed on BBC’s *The One Show*, 3 October 2018.
30. Eagleton, ‘Edible’, 208.
31. Roland Barthes, ‘Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption’, originally published as ‘Vers une psycho-sociologie de l’alimentation moderne’ in *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 5 (September–October

1961), in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 2nd ed., eds. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 21–22.

32. ‘They married the food. You can’t get onions without buying tomatoes nowadays my child’. Frederic Cassidy, *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language In Jamaica* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1961), 189.

33. Kamau Brathwaite, ‘Caribbean Cultures: Two Paradigms’, in *Missile and Capsule*, ed. Jürgen Martini (Germany, Bremen: University of Bremen, 1983), 52.

34. Brathwaite, ‘Caribbean Cultures’, 52.

35. Notably, ‘Name Tracks’ in *The Arrivants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 56–64.

36. Maureen Warner-Lewis, Central Africa in the Caribbean (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2003), 149.3207.

37. See, for example, Plasa 2011, and in a wider postcolonial context, Mannur 2009, Roy 2010, and Loichot 2013.

38. See Sarah Lawson Welsh, ‘Caribbean Cravings: Literature and Food in the Anglophone Caribbean’, in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food*, eds. Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 191–206.

39. Homi Bhabha, ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’ in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.

# *Chapter One*

## **Famine, Feeding and Feasting**

### *Slave Foods, Provision Grounds and the Planters' Tables*

In her otherwise full and painstakingly researched global history of Caribbean food, *Congotay! Congotay!* (2014), Candice Goucher makes the astonishing statement that ‘literate slave masters and colonizers rarely documented the food history of the African-Caribbean region beyond making lists of provisions’.<sup>1</sup> This is emphatically not the case, as the texts examined in this chapter demonstrate. To be fair, detailed histories of the African foodways which the enslaved brought with them to the Caribbean were rarely the key focus of early white accounts. However, these texts certainly document slave diets and the African-derived foodways of the enslaved from the earliest period onwards. This chapter considers early writings on the nature and origins of slave food, the foodways of the planter class and the dietary practices of other groups in the Anglophone Caribbean. Its focus on the ‘view from outside’—that is, white, European planter and travellers’ accounts of the Caribbean—is deliberate as well as necessary, since the overwhelming majority of these early reports were penned by this group.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of literacy amongst most slaves and, in many cases, its active prohibition by slaveholders, we have to look to a rich stream of African-derived cultural practices which are primarily oral rather than written to find the voices of the enslaved. These include work songs,<sup>3</sup> proverbs, Anancy tales and spoken and sung rhymes. Such sources are, in many ways, much more fragile and difficult to preserve, as the nature of oral tradition demands that only what is significant or useful to the community survives. Contemporary oral histories are the focus of chapter 4.

Since slave diets—and the diet of most West Indian inhabitants—were historically dependent on food imports from North America and Europe, conflicts (e.g., the American Revolutionary War, 1775–1783) or other factors (e.g., the ending of the slave trade in 1804) which interfered with trade and

the free movement of commodities could have devastating effects on food availability in the Caribbean. One consequence of this change was ‘the general inability of slave populations to reproduce themselves naturally until the closing years of the slave system’.<sup>4</sup> North America was the main exporter of salted fish and cereals to the West Indian colonies, and fresh imports of food were facilitated whilst the slave trade continued. Once this trade stopped, so did the regularity of such imports, and the slave diet was more vulnerable to shortages and the effects on food production of natural disasters. Certainly research on slavery has confirmed that ‘enslaved people were generally malnourished and preyed upon by a range of disease related to malnutrition. Not only did food availability fluctuate seasonally, but the slaves experienced long periods of hunger after hurricanes, during drought and major wars. Crop cycles in North America also affected food availability’.<sup>5</sup> As this chapter shows, a vital practice which mitigated this vulnerability and supplemented slave diets was the creation of provision grounds, small pieces of marginal land anything up to five to ten miles from plantations, where slaves could grow their own food crops. However, not all islands had the will or land to provide these for their slaves.<sup>6</sup>

Where they existed, the provision grounds represented a crucial site of resistance for the enslaved and engendered a vibrant internal economy where slaves could grow food and trade and earn money of their own to buy other goods. Jamaican critic Sylvia Wynter argued this to be the case in her seminal essay ‘Novel and History, Plot and Plantation’ (1971), and John Parry goes as far as arguing that the history of the Caribbean ‘should be the story of yams [and cassava] . . . no less than sugar and tobacco’.<sup>7</sup> Maria Christina Fumagalli makes a similar point, arguing that

If Plantations were central to Caribbean modernity, so were provision grounds, the horticultural equivalent of resistance, originally conceived as economically advantageous for the planter, provision grounds soon became a great opportunity for slaves who learned how to produce and distribute commodities, to manage their capital, to develop an economic life of their own, and to insert themselves into the marketing system. While combining indigenous crops with European and African ones, Caribbean proto-peasants also learned how to create and accept a different economy of being based on creolization.<sup>8</sup>

Other commentators have considered the role of the provision grounds from an ecocritical perspective, arguing that ‘while plantation monoculture drove the logic of the external markets and became the prime lens through which Caribbean historiography was initially written, the diversity of crop in the provision grounds was integral to the diets of all social strata of Caribbean slave states and provides a broader ground for cultural archaeology’.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter therefore looks in detail at the role and representation of provision grounds in supplementing slave diets, tracing it from informal beginnings to legislative changes in Jamaica and other West Indian colonies which made it the legal responsibility of slave owners to provide and maintain provision grounds for their slaves. The chapter also explores social hierarchies of food status (e.g., between indigenous, naturalised or imported foods), food attitudes and food practices, as they are recorded and mediated in these accounts. It shows how often they first reflected an (expatriate) European cultural and culinary identity, and gradually a more creolised identity through food and the recognition of island identity or a wider ‘Caribbeanness’. The analysis is divided into two chapters: one which looks at the earliest texts through to the end of the eighteenth century when ‘sugar’ truly was king, the most profitable cash crop in the West Indian colonies, and a second, which looks at the nineteenth century and the changes brought by the abolition of the British slave trade in 1804 and of slavery throughout the British colonies in 1834 to 1838.

### A NOTE OF CAUTION

None of the texts discussed in this chapter are straightforwardly representative. Nor are they neutral in their documentation of foodways and food practices. As historical documents they are rich and fascinating sources, but they are also problematised by their different agendas and biases and their varying degrees of reliability. Some of the earliest accounts bear all the hallmarks of the ‘Brave New World’ colonialist ideology of New World exploration, whilst later accounts such as those of historians Edward Long and Bryan Edwards are proslavery tracts which reflect a vested interest in the plantationocracy. Long, a colonial Whig, tussles with the ‘tension between his English liberalism and his attachment to the moral validity of slavery’<sup>10</sup> and falls back onto a series of longstanding and frankly racist stereotypes of African peoples which he deploys to justify slavery. The more educated and ameliorist Edwards starts his text with the claim that he is ‘no friend of slavery’; yet, whilst acknowledging aspects of the current system and social order are deeply flawed, he ultimately comes down firmly in favour of slavery as the best means to service the labour needs of the plantation economy. These and other tensions make claim to documentary truth and representativeness very tricky indeed. Later commentators such as Sturge and Harvey in the early decades of the nineteenth century were clearly motivated by a desire to show that the apprenticeship period after the abolition of slavery was not working, and their chief concern was to research and report on the welfare of the recently

emancipated blacks. Some sources such as the accounts of Lady Nugent and Mrs Carmichael might be termed ‘domestic histories’ as they focus mainly on the material culture and mores of daily life within the governing white creole and planter classes. All texts come with their limitations, but these are some of the most revealing sources that we have.

## THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE: EARLY EUROPEAN ACCOUNTS

Most of the earliest written accounts of food in the Caribbean are to be found in accounts by white settlers, overseers, plantation owners and European visitors of different kinds, whether visiting the Caribbean as government officials and bureaucrats or as travelling missionaries, botanists, philanthropists, writers or artists wishing to record their impressions of ‘The West Indies’. One especially rich source of these early accounts is *Caribbeana* (1999), an anthology of early literary texts from and about the Caribbean, dating between 1657 and 1777. *Caribbeana* brings together texts across a range of genres, from James Grainger’s long Georgic poem *The Sugar Cane* (1764) which details the cultivation and manufacture of sugar, to texts by free men of colour from this period.

## RALEIGH AND DUDLEY IN THE CARIBBEAN IN THE 1590s

It was the Spanish who dominated the conquest and control of the Caribbean for nearly two hundred years until the mid-eighteenth century. As early as 1595, Sir Walter Raleigh was commissioned to begin raids on the Spanish-controlled island of Trinidad and parts of South America, chiefly Guiana, where he sought to locate the fabled ‘El Dorado’ or City of Gold. After his first trip, Raleigh wrote that he had warmed to the Amerindians as great drinkers and ‘carousers’, and he noted how the women chewed soaked cassava and squirted it through their teeth in order to speed up the fermentation process. A year later he published his largely fantastical account: *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana*.<sup>11</sup> Raleigh is popularly remembered in Europe for introducing the potato and tobacco into England. However, this only happened at secondhand, via English settlers in the colony of Virginia, the first permanent English settlement in North America, established in 1607. Certainly, Raleigh was the first recorded person to cultivate potatoes in Europe, firstly in Ireland and thereafter in England.

Just before Raleigh’s commission, Robert Dudley had sailed to Trinidad to appropriate it for the English Crown. His is one of the very earliest eyewit-

ness accounts of food and drink in the Caribbean. He records how the Amerindians came abroad ship with offerings of 'hennes, hogs, plantains, potatoes, pinos (pineapples) and tobacco . . . [observing that] the country is fertile and full of fruits, strange beasts and fowle'.<sup>12</sup> Unlike other of the European powers, notably the British and the French, the Spanish did not seek to cultivate crops, preferring to conquer and trade. This was one crucial factor in the successful settlement of the Caribbean by the English and French from the 1620s onwards. The Dutch were much more interested in trade than settlement, although significantly, they were the first to introduce sugar cultivation to the Caribbean from Brazil. Sugar was then adopted in the French and English islands, starting first in Barbados, a decision which was to change the region and its future forever.

### 'EXCEEDING GOOD GROUND': EARLY ACCOUNTS OF BARBADOS

One of the earliest white accounts of Barbados is that of Captain John Smith in *True Travels: Adventures and Observations of Captaine John Smith in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629* (1630). Describing the island in its first few years of settlement, Smith writes in wonderfully evocative terms of its strange flora and more familiar fauna:

The Ile . . . (consists for) the most part (of) exceeding good ground, abounding with an infinite number of swine, some Turtles, and many sortes of excellent fish, many great ponds wherein is Ducke and mallard . . . The Mancinell apple is, if a most pleasant sweet smell, of the bignesses of a crab, but ranke poison . . . great store of exceeding great Locus trees . . . that beareth a pod full of meal, will make bread in time of necessity. A tree like a Pine, beareth fruit so great as a Muske melon . . . which will refresh two or three men . . . Plumb trees many, the fruit great and yellow . . . wilde figge trees there are many . . . Guane trees beare fruit so bigge as a Peare . . . Palmetas of three several sorts, Pawpawes; Prickle peares . . . sope berries, the kernel so big as a sloe, and good to eat; pumpkins in abundance; Goads [gourds] so great as will make two good bottles, and cut in two pieces good dishes and platters . . . Ginni [guinea] wheat, cassado, Pines [pineapples] and Plantaines . . . Tobacco; the corne pease and beanos.<sup>13</sup>

By 1627, more settlers and their largely Irish servants had settled on the island and established plantations, growing 'plantains, potatoes and cassava for local consumption, and tobacco and cotton for export'.<sup>14</sup> Captain Henry Powell and his thirty or so Arawaks arriving in Barbados from Essequibo, Guiana, in May 1627, brought with them the 'seeds and cuttings not only for staple crops but also for . . . cassava, maize or Indian corn, yams, sweet

potatoes, and pulses, plantains, bananas, oranges lemons, limes, pineapples, and melons to all which Barbados was naturally a stranger'.<sup>15</sup> The Amerindians came to help and teach the English to grow these crops and were the first cultivators of these particular crops in Barbados. In a letter from 1639, Thomas Verney notes that (sweet) potatoes were 'the best provision we have in the land, both for ourselves and servants, but chiefly for them, for they will not desire, after a month or two, noe other provision but potatoes boiled and mobby to drink with them—and this we call mobby is only potatoes boiled, and then pressed'.<sup>16</sup> This is an interesting reminder that shifts in tastes in foodstuffs amongst the new settlers were only gradual and often not one way. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh argue:

As in so many instances when the Europeans found themselves baffled by tropical limitations, they got the answer to their problems from the aborigines [Amerindians], though they seldom admitted that they owed their survival and ultimate adaptation to the new environment to the despised Indians. From the Caribs and Arawaks, the first whites of St. Christopher and Barbados learned how to make a drink called *mobbie*, derived from fermented sweet potatoes. Ligon thought it tasted much like new Rhenish wine. The juice of the mashed tubers had the great quality of working within a few hours and being ready for consumption the next day. With the monotonous diet . . . masters gave white servants 'mobbie and sometimes a little Beveridge'—the latter a concoction made of spring water, white sugar, and orange juice; the Negroes were given nothing but 'fair water'.<sup>17</sup>

Several commentators at this time, including Sir Henry Colt, noted the reckless and excessive slaughter of the island's wild hogs by the English settlers, who gorged on them and even fed it to their dogs, so unaccustomed were they to so much meat. This exacerbated a period of starvation on Barbados in 1630 to 1631.<sup>18</sup> As late as 1647, 'most planters did not have meat twice a week, and freedmen ate the same monotonous, unsavory, and poorly balanced meals they handed out to their servants'.<sup>19</sup> On the limited diets of the poor white servants in Barbados, Jill Shepherd comments, 'One is left to wonder why the servants could not have made use of what was obviously available, as well as what had become of all the fish, flesh and fruit described by Captain John Smith as having been so abundant some ten years previously'.<sup>20</sup> One reason why fresh fish was rarely used for plantation food was that it 'spoiled within six hours of being caught, and fishermen therefore hastened to sell them to the taverns at Indian Bridge rather than risk peddling them to the plantations that still could not be reached by path or road'.<sup>21</sup>

**'A TABLE OF PLENTY': RICHARD LIGON'S A TRUE AND EXACT HISTORY OF THE ISLAND OF BARBADOS (1657, 1673), FATHER ANTOINE BIET AND THE PLANTERS' TABLES**

One striking and recurrent feature of many of these early accounts are the descriptions of the lavish hospitality of the planters' tables. Larry Gragg argues that

As eagerly as they sought to recreate the family lives in England, Barbadian planters also embraced a hospitable lifestyle, similar to that of the Stuart gentry. They enjoyed amiable large gatherings and good food and drink, but they invested in this congeniality and friendship not only to display their generosity but also to enhance their standing and demonstrate their wealth and power. [In short] Entertaining helped planters lay claim to status in the social order. Conspicuous consumption befitted their place in society.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 1.1. Great House dining room at Tyrol Cot House and Heritage Village, Barbados. (Photo courtesy of Kaye Hall)

Many planters also had the money to indulge in such shows of status. Dunn argues that this enabled them to live ‘in a more showy fashion than persons of their station would do in England’.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, on islands such as Barbados, which saw an influx of English expatriates escaping the English Civil War in the 1640s, hospitality was a ‘way to cement friendships among the island elite’<sup>24</sup> across political divides. Refugee royalist Richard Ligon arrived in Barbados in 1647, twenty years after the first English had first arrived. He stayed for three years and purchased half of a functioning sugar plantation before returning to England and publishing his *True and Exact History* (1657 and 1673). Ligon recognised the crucial function to the planters of the lavish dinners to which he and others were invited. Planters in Barbados were especially keen to ‘impress visitors of substance like the titled Henry Colt . . . Ligon, and the highly regarded priest Antoine Biet’.<sup>25</sup> In his tour of the island in 1631, Colt encountered the following spread at the table of James Futter, a successful planter: ‘Pigs, capons, turkeys, chickens . . . Indian wheat, cassavi and cabidges’.<sup>26</sup> However, when Ligon dined at the table of James Drax, one of the wealthiest and most powerful planters on the island, the meal was much more luxurious:

The first course consisted of fourteen dishes of beef, boiled, roasted and baked. Once those ‘dishes are taken away’, the second course arrived and included ‘a potato pudding, a dish of Scots collops of a leg of pork . . . a dish of boyl’d chickens, a shoulder of a young Goat . . . a Loyn of veal, to which there wants no sauce being so well furnish’d with oranges, lemons, and lymes’, as well as a selection of turkey, duck, and rabbit. The next course included bacon, oysters, caviar, anchovies, olives, a variety of custard, creams, and cheesecakes, and fruit—bananas, plantains, pears, apples, watermelons and Pineapples. To wash it all down, Drax offered the local beverages, mobby and rum, as well as brandy, ‘Claret-wine, and Rhenish-wine, sherry, Canary, Red Sack, wine of Fiall, with all the spirits that come from England’.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to recognise that from the earliest period of European contact, Europeans in the Caribbean depended on imported goods from England, Ireland and North America. Although the Caribbean region would become synonymous with the export of molasses and sugar, the European and Euro-Creole elite would remain dependent on importing all kinds of comestibles, from those to feed their servants and their slaves to those to supply their own planters’ tables. Dunn argues that ‘the provision of food and drink posed a major problem for seventeenth-century English men in the West Indies. The food crops they were used to in England could not be grown in the Caribbean, for the most part, and those food crops that flourished in the Caribbean were generally unappealing to the English palate’.<sup>28</sup>

By 1650 or 1660, this dependency on imports became the norm on smaller islands such as Barbados, as there was less land for cultivation of anything other than the profitable sugar.<sup>29</sup> The rich planters also persisted in preferring ‘salted English beef and salted New England mackerel [to] fresh tropical produce’.<sup>30</sup> In Ligon’s example we can also see evidence of the transatlantic flow of commodities and culinary ideas, which was two-way. When Ligon visited Colonel Walrond’s plantation near the sea, he observed the paucity of fresh meat but noted the preponderance of fish at the table: ‘I shall name to wit, mullets, macquerals, parrat fish, snapper, red and grey, cavallos, terbums, crabs, lobsters and coney fish with divers sorts more for which we have no names’, as well as the easy access to imported foodstuffs: ‘all rarities that are brought to the island, from any part of the world are taken up and brought to home . . . wine of all kinds, oyl, olives, capers, anchovies, caviar’.<sup>31</sup> Gragg similarly relates that ‘Antoine Biet could not get over the seemingly endless bouts of convivial dining and drinking. Although he joined in some of the festivities, he took little “pleasure in this visiting because one has to drink in an extraordinary way”. Although he could not condone such excesses, Biet admitted that many of his acquaintances found this life extremely pleasant’.<sup>32</sup> Biet observed that ‘no nation fed its slaves as badly as the English, but except in a very few cases the blacks ate as well as, and sometimes better than, [because their diets were carefully rationed] the mass of white servants—and many freedmen’.<sup>33</sup>

Significantly, Ligon was not just a passive recipient of such bounty at the great houses he visited but also an active force in promoting new culinary practices to the Barbadian plantocracy. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh term Ligon ‘un gastronome véritable (and a very early one) and dietician combined [who] taught the richest planters and merchants the pleasure of appetizing and well-prepared food’.<sup>34</sup> They argue that ‘Colonel Drax was one of the very first planters whom Ligon induced to practice the “Art of Cookery”—to serve “fricases”, “Quelquechose”, “excellent Stews”, and other French dishes, by importing gourmet items from Holland and England, and by introducing luscious West Indian fruits and other viands at his board’.<sup>35</sup> At the other end of the social scale, Ligon showed white cooks ‘in the inns at The Indian Bridge, how to fry fresh fish in oil or poach them in vinegar in the absence of good butter; and he convinced many of the planters of the real benefits arising from feeding their servants and slaves some meat and fish to balance their rations of loblolly [a cornmeal mush] and plantains’.<sup>36</sup> Ligon also tried to improve the planters’ diets by trying to convince them ‘that their excessive consumption of spirituous liquors was harmful’.<sup>37</sup> He records how he ‘learned how to make acceptable . . . pie crusts’ from the locally available cassava,<sup>38</sup> and his greatest contribution to improving West Indian life was ‘in aiding both the

whites and blacks to adjust their tastes to New World foods'.<sup>39</sup> However, whilst imported food and drink were important status symbols, the change would only be gradual.

### 'A RARE SOOP THEY CALL PEPPER-POT': EDWARD WARD AND 'OF THEIR PROVISIONS' (1696)

The 'rankness' of Jamaican foodstuffs from an outsider's perspective was the subject of an account by English journalist Edward Ward in his wonderfully satirical travelogue *A Trip to Jamaica* (1696). This account of the Caribbean parodies the 'kind of promotional travel narrative that characterized reports from the settlements in the Americas'.<sup>40</sup> Ward constructs Caribbean food-stuffs and foodways as utterly bewildering, if not repellent, using tropes of exoticism and alienation rather than commensality, as was common in European accounts of the Caribbean of this time:

#### *Of their Provisions*

The chiefest of their provisions is Sea Turtle, or Toad in a shall, stew'd in its own Gravy; its Lean is as white as a Green-sickness Girl, its fat of a Calves-turd Colour, and is excellently good to put a stranger into a Flux and purge out part of those ill Humours it infallibly creates . . . they have Beef without fat, Lean Mutton without Gravy, and Fowles as dry as the udder of an Old Woman, and as tough as a stake from the haunches of a Super-annuated cart horse.

There are sundry sorts of Fish, under Indian names, without Scales, and of a Serpentine Complection; they eat as dry as a Shad, and much stronger than stale Herrings or Old Ling, with Oyl'd Butter to the sause as rank as Goose-grease, improv'd with the palatable Relish of a stinking Anchove.

They make a rare Soop they call Pepper-pot . . . Three Spoonfuls so inflamed my Mouth, that I devour'd a peck of Horse-Radish, and drank after a Gallon of Brandy and Gunpowder, (Dives like) I could not have been more importunate for a Drop of Water to coole my tongue . . .

They have Oranges, Lemons, limes, and several other Fruits, as Sharp and Crabbed as themselves, not given them as a Blessing, but a Curses, for eating so many Sower things, generates a Corroding Slime in the Bowels, and is one great occasion of that fatal And Intolerable Distemper, The Dry Belly-Ach; which in a Fortnight, or Three Weeks, takes away the use of their limbs, that they are forc'd to be led about by Negro's.<sup>41</sup>

Ward's strategy here is to separate himself from the white planter class whose culinary practices and tastes he satirises. Without exception, Caribbean foods and dishes are found to be inferior to that of Europe: too at vari-

ance with European norms; too tough,<sup>42</sup> oily, hot or sour for the more moderate and ‘refined’ European palate. However, if read against this dominant grain, Ward’s account also reveals the emergence of a counter-narrative, the story of a nation or a region being told through its food, an identity being formed based, in part, on what people eat. In this reading, food practices act to mirror wider patterns of social encounter and change in the Caribbean as both colonisers and, to a lesser extent, slaves adapted their food patterns to a new environment. Ward’s disgust can be read alongside other accounts which register curiosity, adoption, rejection, synthesis, transculturation and creolisation as different groups responded to each other and to foodstuffs and food practices both familiar and unknown. Indeed, read in this alternative way, Ward’s passage inscribes some instances of early markers of white Creole identity as culturally *Caribbean* rather than European: the taste for the indigenous meat of the turtle and for the Amerindian- and African-derived one-pot meal of Pepperpot. When Ward notes the turtle served in its shell as a favourite set piece or culinary performance of the most sumptuous plantation tables, he strikes on an early emblem of Jamaicaness,<sup>43</sup> a way in which early white Creole identity was defined and practiced.

Some seventy-five years later, a Scottish gentlewoman, Janet Schaw, wrote more approvingly of the West Indian turtle, which she encountered at the planters’ tables in Antigua and St Christopher. She compared this ‘noble dish’ favourably to the turtle eaten in England: ‘I have now seen turtle almost every day, and tho’ I never could eat it at home, am vastly fond of it here, where it is indeed a very different thing. You get nothing but old ones there, the chickens being unable to stand the voyage; even these are starved, or at best fed on coarse and improper food. Here they are young, tender, fresh from the water, where they feed delicately, and are as great Epicures, as those who feed on them’.<sup>44</sup> She notes that the Antiguans:

laugh at us for the racket we make to have [the turtle] divided into different dishes. They never make but two, the soup and the shell. The first is commonly made of old Turtle, which is cut up and sold at market, as we do butcher meat . . . The shell indeed is a noble dish, as it contains all the fine parts of the Turtle baked within its own body; here is the green fat, not the slabbery thing my stomach used to stand at, but far more delicate than it is possible to describe. Could an Alderman of true taste conceive the difference between it here and in the city, he would make the Voyage on purpose, and I fancy he would make a voyage into the other world before he left the table.<sup>45</sup>

As late as 1825, another visitor to the region, Henry Nelson Coleridge, compared the status of turtle at the table in the West Indies with its status as a prized rarity back in England: ‘In the West Indies, the turtle is generous food

certainly but honest and sophisticated . . . at a dinner in England, it must be as they say and do in the city, turtle once and turtle throughout. A man had no head or appetite for anything else after . . . it is more studied and elaborate . . . it is a rarity'.<sup>46</sup>

### HANS SLOANE'S NATURAL HISTORY OF JAMAICA (1707 AND 1725)

As the editors of *Travel Writing 1700–1830* note, ‘The eighteenth-century discourses of natural history and landscape aesthetics permeate Caribbean travel writing, often upstaging the region’s less attractive features, in particular slavery’.<sup>47</sup> This was certainly the case with Hans Sloane’s two-volume account of his travels to Madeira and the Caribbean as the physician to the new governor of Jamaica in 1687. Sloane was a keen naturalist who drew and documented many species of Caribbean flora and fauna and whose collection would form the basis of the British Museum in London. He was a well-respected figure and succeeded Isaac Newton as president of the Royal Society in 1727. His descriptions of the slave and creole populations he encountered ‘combine taxonomy with what we would call ethnography [and] he takes slavery for granted’.<sup>48</sup> His account of Caribbean foodways is interesting, not least because he gives accounts of slave diets on board the slave ships. Of one ship arrived from Guinea, he writes, ‘The ship was very nasty with so many people on board. I was assured that the Negroes feed on pindals, or Indian earth-nuts, a sort of pea or bean producing its pods underground [ground nuts]. Coming from Guinea hither, they are fed on these nuts, or Indian corn boiled twice a day, at eight o’clock and four in the afternoon, each having a pint of water allowed him’.<sup>49</sup>

In Jamaica, Sloane notes the importation from Europe of ‘all manner of clothing . . . flour, biscuit, beef, pork . . . [and] Madeira wine . . . from the island of that name’, whilst Jamaica exported ‘sugars, most part muscovados, indigo, cotton-wool, ginger, pimento, all-spice or Jamaica pepper’ and, from its private trade with the Spanish West Indies, ‘sarsaparilla, cacao-nuts, cochineal, etc’.<sup>50</sup> He observes the English colonists built their ‘kitchens, or cook-rooms . . . always at a distance from their houses, because of the heat and smell, which are not noisome and troublesome . . . there are no chimneys or fireplaces in their house, but in the cook-room, this word is used to signify their kitchen, and is a sea word, as others in that country’.<sup>51</sup> Of the enslaved, he notes they have ‘a pot of earth [clay] to boil their victuals in, either yams, plantains, or potatoes, with a little salt mackerel, and calabash or two for cups and spoons’.<sup>52</sup> Sloane saw that food was part of funeral rites of slaves,

'Rum and victuals'<sup>53</sup> being amongst the items thrown into graves. He also comments on the food preferences of different ethnicities. For Sloane, those 'from the East Indies or Madagascans [were] . . . too chaotic in their diet, being accustomed in their own countries to flesh meat, etc, and do not do well here, but often die'.<sup>54</sup>

Olive Senior notes that it is to Sloane that we owe the 'invention of the milk chocolate drink'.<sup>55</sup> Although the Aztecs used chocolate as a drink made from cocoa beans flavoured with capsicum peppers, and Columbus had introduced it to the Spanish Court as early as 1502, the drink was not well received in Europe, being considered too bitter. Sloane 'encountered chocolate in Jamaica but found the local drink "nauseous"'.<sup>56</sup> As an alternative, he made the drink by boiling cocoa beans in sugared milk. Back in London, he sold the product to an apothecary, who marketed it as 'Hans Sloane Milk Chocolate', 'light . . . on the stomach, and in great . . . uses in all consumption cases'.<sup>57</sup> After advancements in the processing of cocoa and the first manufacture of the chocolate bar in the 1840s, a global demand was created for this product. Sloane's original invention was bought by the English chocolate company Cadbury's and, between 1849 and 1885, marketed as 'Hans Sloane's Milk Chocolate'.<sup>58</sup> The term *chocolate* or *chaklata* is still used in Jamaica to refer not only to the drink but also to the first meal of the day, which would have traditionally been 'chaklata' tea or 'cocoa tea', meaning a hot chocolate drink.

### FEASTING AND FAMINE: THOMAS THISTLEWOOD'S JAMAICAN DIARIES (1750–86)

One especially significant early source from Jamaica are the diaries of Thomas Thistlewood, a young Englishman who arrived in 1750. Thistlewood gained employment as an overseer at Virginia Penn in Westmoreland, before moving in 1751 to Egypt Penn beyond Savannah la Mar. There he remained until 1767, having built up enough capital to buy slaves to hire out and finally a small property of his own. Thistlewood had a longstanding interest in livestock and horticulture and was to establish himself as the leading horticulturalist of his time in Jamaica.<sup>59</sup> Although he had already travelled to India, Brazil and parts of Western Europe, he arrived in Jamaica as a complete novice when it came to dealing with slaves or managing a penn. Nor did he know much about Jamaican planter society. Thistlewood's is an exceptionally interesting case in that he kept lengthy, detailed and regular diaries over nearly forty years of his life in Jamaica, from his first encounter with the island and its peoples to his rising success as a self-made man and his role as a wealthy plantation owner and horticulturalist. His social ascendancy was not unique in the Caribbean at

this time, but Thistlewood was unusual amongst the white elite in not having been born into the hereditary wealth of the landowning classes.

Thistlewood's writings are well known for their unflinching detail of the brutal physical punishments he meted out to slaves and his now notorious recording of each rape, assault and sexual encounter with his—and others'—female slaves. Indeed, Jennifer Brown goes as far as to suggest that images of consuming and being consumed are central to many of these parts of his diaries with his adoption of coprophagy as a punishment (i.e., forcing slaves to eat each other's faeces), prominent among the many horrors of the text.<sup>60</sup> However, his diaries are also full of details of food and drink as he records his visits to the dinner tables of other planters and his entertainment of these elite white men in his own house. In mid-eighteenth-century Jamaican society through to the early nineteenth century, such dinner parties were both frequent and important, as they were the main way in which the white elite and planter class displayed status, talked business and shared news of their respective plantations (including investment opportunities and news of slave revolts). Thistlewood's detailed commentary on the foods he encountered, consumed and cultivated on his own penn has been less fully examined than other aspects of his diaries, apart from in the context of his comments on food shortages and the privations visited on his slaves.<sup>61</sup> However, his diaries make it clear that, like other planters, his own table generally remained well (if not excessively well) stocked.

Trevor Burnard notes how 'Jamaica differed from Thistlewood's native Lincolnshire in both small and large ways'. Thistlewood thought it interesting that 'at dinner today, every Body took hold of the table Cloth, held it up, threw off the Crumbs and an Empty Plate, Jamaica Fashion'.<sup>62</sup> Beyond such recordings of his impressions of 'Jamaican' manners and mores amongst the island's elite, Thistlewood's diaries are illuminating, as he frequently itemises the food and drink at a particular meal and gives a context for their consumption. Shortly after his arrival in Jamaica, he lists the foods and dishes he has tasted: 'On 10th July 1750 have boiled goat's milk (which is very rich) every morning to breakfast; eat some Docono,<sup>63</sup> made of plantain, very good (17th July 1750); at dinner had pepperpot of callaloo and prickly pear with some ochro. Had for supper hominy, it eats like cracked oatmeal pretty much, made of Indian corn beat and crack'd; had some cayya<sup>64</sup> boiled for dinner to my beef'.<sup>65</sup> Thistlewood's adoption of local foods was probably a necessity at this stage in his life in Jamaica, but it is still interesting in that it shows how far dietary habits and foodways had become creolised. Indeed, in Barbados at this time, a young George Washington, in his one and only visit outside the States, noted in his diary 'what he called "Africanisms" adopted by Barbadian whites: "All homes, white and black, irrespective of socio-economic rank

used local forms such as the monkey jar (used for cooling and storing water) and the conaree jar (used for storing food)’.<sup>66</sup>

Thistlewood rarely specifies quantities, with the exception of his purchases for his penn or sometimes when listing the prodigious amounts of drink consumed at his and other’s tables when entertaining. So, for example, on 4 January 1755, he notes, ‘Returned through maroon grounds, by where Sarah Ward lives. Eat some breakfast of buttered toasted cheese and roast plantain with her. We got home about noon’.<sup>67</sup> On 5 April 1756, he notes, ‘I had a bottle of good ale at my supper which I mixed with sugar and water and grated some nutmeg over it. Roast beef, roast turkey, cold tongue, cheese [etc.] to my supper’.<sup>68</sup> Where his own slaves were concerned, however, food was a matter of strict economy. In December 1786, Thistlewood calculated the cost of feeding his [six] new slaves: ‘I give my negroes three pints rice each per diem . . . it is dearer than feeding them with plantains’.<sup>69</sup> Again, on 13 December 1786, he notes the purchase of ‘400 plantains . . . for my new Negroes’.<sup>70</sup> The next day (a Monday) they were put to the fields to work.

## GROUND PROVISIONS AND THE ‘PROVISION GRUNGS’

Slaves such as Thistlewood’s were generally given pieces of marginal land known as ‘provision grounds’ (or ‘polinks’, as they were known in Jamaica) in order to cultivate starchy roots and greens to supplement their diets. Like penn, ‘ground’ is a term ‘taken from the farmers and peasants of England into Jamaica talk, with its Jamaican equivalent “grung”. In Jamaica “grung” denotes a smallholding cultivated by the owner, as in “mi a go mi grung now”, or as in the folktale, “Bredda Puss was a he up him food fe leff him grung goh home”’.<sup>71</sup> There is certainly evidence that Thistlewood recognised the central importance of the provision grounds to his plantation,<sup>72</sup> each of his slaves receiving a separate allocation of one hundred square feet of land and time to work it.

Beckles argues that in Barbados, the provision grounds were initially seen as contributing to the estates’ ‘self-sufficiency’ in foodstuffs, and this included the taking of surplus crops to slave markets to trade for other goods. Concerns over slaves selling food stolen from plantations led to measures being passed in 1661 and 1685, although the 1685 act showed some sympathy for slaves whose masters failed to provide them with enough food.<sup>73</sup> In the 1690s, discussions were held in the Barbados House of Assembly, and eventually a series of laws were passed in 1708 and 1733, aimed at protecting the livelihoods of white small farmers and controlling the commercial activity of slaves.<sup>74</sup> Similar legislation was brought in Jamaica in this period, but eventu-

ally the government relented, as this system did more good than ill. Indeed, slaves continued to play a significant role in building a vibrant, internal mercantile system, and slave markets survived successive legislations throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>75</sup>

As already suggested, the provision grounds also had another important function beyond commerce and survivalism. For the slaves, working the provision grounds evoked memories of traditional African methods of agriculture and foodways (such as the cultivation, harvesting and storing of yams in ‘yam barns’).<sup>76</sup> The provision grounds were not just an economic necessity but also a symbolic link back to ancestral homelands. Such crops ‘made the provision grounds a part of Africa, the only places in Jamaica where Africans were free to make their own decisions, reap their own crops and enter into the money economy by selling the livestock and vegetables they produced’.<sup>77</sup> They were also significant spaces of agency creativity and potential resistance: spaces of plotting in both senses.<sup>78</sup>

Unlike on other plantations, the slaves’ provision grounds on Thistlewood’s penn provided no surplus for market, and there is no mention of a nearby Sunday market for the purpose of slaves supplementing their diets by trading in foodstuffs.<sup>79</sup> This meant that, at least initially, ‘Thistlewood had to learn to eat what the slaves ate, not the twenty-six capons, one young roast cock, twenty laying hens, three maiden pullets, sixteen young fowls, one laying duck, two squabs, one musk melon, nineteen sweetsops, that he sent by road on 12th December 1750 to the Vassalls [a nearby plantation family]’.<sup>80</sup> In 1755–1756, Thistlewood started to note the dearth of ground provisions and the movement of slaves beyond their allotted provision grounds in order to find food. The responses and reprisals of slaveowners who saw this movement as a betrayal of the slaves’ main function, rather than a necessary strategy for their survival as a healthy workforce, are recorded in his diaries. One such example of brutality occurred on 25 February 1755, when Thistlewood ‘rode over the plantation . . . at dinner-time . . . to see who would be eating canes [a common but prohibited activity, and especially so in time of hunger and food shortage]. Found Hector and Black. Had them whipped’.<sup>81</sup> By 12 and 13 June 1755, Thistlewood appears, at least superficially, to respond more humanely to his slaves’ hunger, noting, ‘I gave out Negroes a pint of Norward<sup>82</sup> corn each for a meal, three times per day, and a herring each day. Quaw, Cubbenna, Moll, Melia etc. have but three plantains or a pint of corn each per day’.<sup>83</sup> However, this entry was written at a time of food shortage and dry weather, with even the cattle grazing further afield in a desperate search for sustenance. In the previous entries, Thistlewood records that he visited the town several times but bought no food for his slaves since he regarded the prices as too high. This was the reality of food shortage on the

plantation: a desire on the planter's part for geographical containment of his slaves and the latter's overwhelming dependence on what they were rationed or could grow on their provision grounds. One crucial exception to this was the possibility of trade with other slaves and a network of internal markets between slaves from different parts of the islands and freed slaves, if—and only if—their owners permitted them to travel outside of the plantation for this purpose. In Jamaica, there is considerable evidence of this happening.

By 1775, Thistlewood was supplying other elite whites with food produced on his own penn. In February 1775, Thistlewood records that he supplied the following to John Cope, the new Custos of Westmoreland: 'Plovers, a mess of cuckold increase peas, fourteen carrots, twelve cucumbers, a large mess of broccoli, asparagus, six limes, a water-melon, ripe prickly-pear, and plenty of flowers'.<sup>84</sup> He was also entertaining others in considerable style, as his entry for 15 March 1775 reveals: 'John Cope, Richard Vassall, William Black, Esqr. Dined with me and stayed till about nine in the evening. Mr. Cope stayed all night. Had mutton broth, roast mutton and broccoli, carrots and asparagus, stewed mudfish, roast goose and paw-paw, apple sauce, stewed giblets, some fine lettuce which Mr. Vassall brought me, crabs, cheese, musk melon, etc. punch, porter, ale, cyder, madeira wine and brandy etc'.<sup>85</sup> By the late 1770s, 'as the American War [of Independence] progressed, people in Jamaica, as in the other British colonies increasingly suffered shortages of food and other essential supplies'.<sup>86</sup> Partly this was due to the interference with trade with Britain but also the loss of commerce with British colonial markets on the American mainland, including 'essential commodities such as . . . fish, (especially the salted cod), flour, and grains'.<sup>87</sup> Historian Bryan Edwards, looking back to the period before 1774, commented that this was 'not a traffick calculated to answer the fantastick calls of vanity, or to administer gratification to luxury or vice; but to furnish food for the hungry [referring especially to the slaves] . . . [and lumber] for supplying the planters in two capital objects, their buildings, and packages for their chief staple productions, sugar and rum'.<sup>88</sup>

Douglas Hall notes how the arrival of a shipment in June 1779 'seems to have at least temporarily allayed some of the food shortages'<sup>89</sup> which Jamaica was facing, but Thistlewood records only that he was initially sent some fresh butter then refused to buy any in town due to the high prices the shortage occasioned. In July 1779 he records buying considerable provisions: 'two half barrels mess pork . . . 9lb bacon. Two barrel flour . . . two firkins of butter (65 lb and 64 lb) . . . two and a half barrels mess beef . . . three loaves of Bristol style refined sugar 26 three-quarters lb',<sup>90</sup> and he received many types of vegetable seeds from North America, which he duly planted. By 1783, Thistlewood's plantation was more self-sufficient and food more plentiful.

He notes sales of produce from his estate as including ‘Veal. French peas. Mutton, kidney beans, wild fowl, turnips and other items’.<sup>91</sup> Thistlewood’s “flocke of sheep” now numbered 121; but he had not kept his cattle . . . So . . . no beef for the slaves at Christmas. He served them about 2lb saltfish each, and the usual rum, and went off himself to dine at Mr. Clement Cook Clarke’s in the Savannah: “An excellent dinner, plenty of claret, etc”<sup>92</sup>. In 1784 Thistlewood recorded more sumptuous dinners (21st November),<sup>93</sup> and in 1785–6 the planting of “broccoli, savoys, cabbages, cauliflower, lettuces etc.” [and] “mango, lichee, Madeira peach and breadfruit trees”<sup>94</sup>.

The year 1786 saw another period of food shortage and extreme hunger amongst Thistlewood’s slaves. On 20 July 1786, he recorded, ‘Abba’s Mary complains of hunger much. Gave Abba a dollar to assist them. I never saw such a scarce time before, that is certain. Nothing is to be had for money’.<sup>95</sup> By 31 July 1786, he recorded that ‘Abba is sick. She is starving. Gave her a dollar’. Only at the beginning of August (2) 1786 does he note the price and availability of various foodstuffs, though he does not say if and how much he bought, if at all: ‘Great corn is now sold a bitt a quart and rice a bitt a pint, four plantains a bitt, 6 or 7 ditto. Butter by the firkin three bitts per lb. Fine flour £5 per barrel. Beef £6 and pork £7 per barrel at Savanna la Mar’.<sup>96</sup> Shortly after the rains came and seem to have alleviated some of Thistlewood’s concerns about his slaves and food. However, in the context of extreme food shortage and continued slave hunger, his entry for 22 August 1786 seems grotesquely obscene: ‘About 10 am Wm. Beckford Esqr. and Mr. James Hay came, dined with me, and stayed till the evening. At dinner, stewed and fried mudfish, stewed crabs and boiled crabs, three plates of shrimps, a leg of boiled mutton and caper sauce, turnips, broccoli, asparagus, a roast whistling duck, a semolina pudding, cheese, water melon, pine [pineapple], shaddock, punch, brandy, gin, Madeira wine, porter, Taunton ale’.<sup>97</sup>

## FOOD ALLOCATIONS AND SLAVE DIETS

Hilary Beckles observes that in plantation accounts and other records of slave maintenance from the eighteenth century, ‘no differentiation was made between the sexes in terms of food allocation, only along lines of rank or status within the adult slave group’.<sup>98</sup> He points out the ‘irrationality’ of such a policy, given that more active field slaves might be expected to need more food than house slaves. Instead, ‘The dictates of plantation culture suggest that food intake among slaves was a major status symbol and that elite groups saw their status partly in terms of a better diet. Since less than three women per fifty on large estates were part of the laboring elite, women by

virtue of being discriminated against in job allocations were also at a relative disadvantage in food allocation'.<sup>99</sup> Beckles records that as early as Ligon's account of 1657, the 'pattern of allocating inferior and unhealthy food was established',<sup>100</sup> as it was thought that allocated food should match one's social status. Moreover, in the early days of the plantation economy, slave owners were 'as yet unaccustomed to the traditional dietary patterns of their African chattels'.<sup>101</sup> Slaves also competed with white indentured servants for 'scarce or unwholesome provisions'.<sup>102</sup> Ligon recorded that men were given two mackerels and women one mackerel per week as well as plantains. 'If any cattle died by mischance or disease . . . the [white] servants ate the body and the negroes the skin, head and entrails'.<sup>103</sup> This historical factor in part accounts for the prevalence of Caribbean dishes, such as oxtail stew, mannikin water, pudding and souse, chicken steppers (feet) and pig's trotters, which make use of virtually the whole animal, wasting no edible parts. If a horse died, then the tradition was that the whole carcass was given to the slaves for consumption.

By the mid-eighteenth century more reliable records of food allocations to slaves were kept on many plantations. However, Beckles argues that in 'most cases, these claims by masters were . . . overstated, especially in the amelioration period after the 1780s'.<sup>104</sup> Conditions varied between islands too, depending on space available. In Barbados slaves tended to receive no grain and less fish than on other islands. Only in the second half of the eighteenth century did the slave diet start to become more standardised across different British Caribbean colonies,<sup>105</sup> although seasonal variations in allowances continued. According to a late eighteenth-century source, written by Dickson, an Englishman who lived in Barbados from the 1770s to the early 1780s: the field slaves 'never do taste, at least they're not allowed butcher's meat, milk, butter, or any kind of fresh animal substance (flying dish sometimes excepted) which, when cheap they try to procure'.<sup>106</sup> However, Beckles argues that Dickson's estimates of quality and nutritional value of slave foods, as well as his documentation of a steady level of slave deaths (rather than a seasonal or cyclical one), suggest the need to treat the planter's claims with some scepticism.<sup>107</sup> Planters' 'claims could be affected by the receipt of adverse commentary back in the metropolitan centre and often contained a propaganda element'.<sup>108</sup> As a result of this system, 'On many estates during the hard time, when slaves did an excess of manual work in hoeing and weeding, women were left to forage for their own foods, and this forced many to rely upon theft as a means of survival'.<sup>109</sup> There is also evidence that on some plantations, slaves would only be given food during a time of scarcity and left to beg, steal or 'borrow' from neighbouring estates.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, the murder of an overseer in 1774 on St Philip Estate, Barbados, may have been occasioned by a refusal to give slaves their allocations.

Crucially, hunger and food shortage could have serious consequences on the slave body, as the seasonal shifts in slave appearance documented by some commentators demonstrated. Beckles records how on Codrington Estate, Barbados, in 1741 Charles Botton observed, ‘For want of proper food the negroes cannot have strength enough to undergo their daily task; this exposes them to the hurrying and lashes of their owners which tires, tortures and quickly wears them out. It makes them run away, it forces them upon robberies . . . it dispirits them and throws them into many distempers, which frequently prove fatal’.<sup>111</sup> As Beckles concludes, ‘This statement perfectly captures the three-fold of hunger, punishment and criminality within which plantations slaves were caught. Slave owners complained constantly of slave theft, slaves complained of dietary insufficiency, and legal officers of marronage<sup>112</sup> of insufficiently tight control’.<sup>113</sup> Overall, ‘The typical slave was poorly fed until emancipation in 1838 . . . with an average of 500 calories from imported food . . . and [was] deficient in animal protein’.<sup>114</sup>

### **SLAVE FOOD IN THE CITY**

In his study of slave society in Bridgetown between 1680 and 1834, Pedro Welch notes that ‘the slaves of the poor [in the city] were [especially] likely to be underfed and undernourished’.<sup>115</sup> Partly this was due to many poor whites owning only the land on which their dwellings were built with no room to create slave provision grounds. However, Welch concedes that ‘there must have been a wide variation in the conditions under which urban slaves operated’, so, for example, in urban areas ‘slaves probably had more access to imported fruit and fresh fish than their rural fellows’.<sup>116</sup> According to the contemporary accounts of Dickson, rurally based slaves were not allowed ‘any kind of animal substance whatsoever, flying fish excepted’.<sup>117</sup> Welch notes two supplementary sources of food for slaves: land crabs and food theft, and many whites believed there to be a thriving black market amongst slaves.<sup>118</sup> The immediate context for such beliefs was an attempt by government authorities to restrict the activities of huckster blacks or higgleries in the city’s market. Moreover, there is considerable evidence (as well as creative reimaginings) of food theft by both house slaves and white domestics.<sup>119</sup> Amongst other categories of slaves, such as those who hired out their labour to different plantations, there is likely to have been a great variance in diet and access to food supplies, usually to their detriment; certainly, white accounts which suggested that slaves were able to live ‘like a prince’ are likely to be much exaggerated.<sup>120</sup>

## BREADFRUIT, TARO, ACKEE AND OTHER IMPORTED FOOD PLANTS

The most famous of deliberate food imports to the Caribbean designed to provide sustainable nutrition for the slaves was the breadfruit. Originally ‘discovered’ by a Mendana de Nayra in 1598, it had already been recorded by buccaneers and, in 1685, the navigator William Dampier had seen it being grown and prepared as a kind of ‘bread’ on Guam and other of the Polynesian islands. As Sandra Barnes argues:

It was considered an ideal food crop to solve the famine and malnutrition problems of slaves in the British West Indies, decimated by a series of hurricanes in the 1700s which had destroyed the plantains, maize and root crops cultivated in their provision grounds. Additionally, because of the American War of Independence, their food supplies had been cut off, and only British ships were allowed to supply food. The ill-fated voyage of the HMS *Bounty*, captained by William Bligh on his first attempt to collect the Breadfruit in 1792, is well known. On his second attempt in the HMS *Providence*, Bligh was successful and introduce[ed] the Breadfruit into the British West Indies in 1793.<sup>121</sup>

Breadfruit was brought to St Vincent in January 1793 and to Jamaica in February 1793. Ironically, although breadfruit acclimated well and thrived in the Caribbean, the slaves rejected it as a strange foodstuff and fed it to their pigs instead. It was only after emancipation that it became an important source of food for communities of free peasants, particularly in the rural areas. Even then it was slow to gain acceptance and only consumed during ‘hard time’.<sup>122</sup> As Barnes suggests, it is perhaps not insignificant that St Vincent and Jamaica, the first two Caribbean islands to gain the breadfruit, both include roasted breadfruit with their national dishes: fried jackfish and ackee and saltfish. As the St Vincentian saying goes, ‘With a Breadfruit tree and a good wife, I won’t have to work for the rest of my life’.

## HIGGLERS, COOKS AND DOMESTICS

Much existing scholarship on Thistlewood’s diary focuses on his sexual relationship with Phibbah, a slave woman he met at Vineyard Penn and with whom he eventually had a son. However, Phibbah is important to this study in different ways, as she was not only an ‘expert higgler’, or market woman who traded foodstuffs with slaves from other estates (usually at a weekly or monthly Sunday market), but also Thistlewood’s head cook and thus responsible for the important matter of his diet and, ultimately, his survival.

The fact that she knew what her master and his acquaintances would eat also gave her an edge in trading at local markets. Sherlock and Bennett suggest that ‘the word “higgler” is related to the English “to hack” and “to haggle”, to argue with a vendor’ and that the ‘higgler [crucially] form[ed] the link between the isolated small farmers and the market, [a higgler being] usually a woman of the neighborhood or a nearby area, who walks and buys produce to take to the market’.<sup>123</sup> Trevor Burnard argues that ‘Phibbah’s sphere of influence was the cookroom and did not extend in [Thistlewood’s] opinion, to the fields. In the cookroom, however, Phibbah was able to punish slaves or forgive them as she saw fit’.<sup>124</sup> There may well have been a link between Thistlewood’s sexual interest in Phibbah and her key role in his household, as the kitchen was a crucial site of compliance or subversion within the disciplinary regime of the plantation house. Beyond evidence of regular food theft by slaves, something which Edward Long complained about in 1774, as did later commentators such as Mrs. Carmichael (1833) and Lewis (1834), there was a very real fear amongst plantation owners of being poisoned by their slave cooks.<sup>125</sup> At Codrington Estate, Barbados, in 1781, there were three cooks out of a total of sixteen women and three men who worked in the house: ‘Moll cooked for the white household, Ancilla and Quashebah for the “negroes and mulattos”’.<sup>126</sup> However, visitors to Barbados also noted that ‘the number of domestics in both urban and rural households, was far in excess of the work available, and this situation could be explained in terms of their social and sexual function’.<sup>127</sup>

Mrs Carmichael, writing about the black servants she encountered in St Vincent and Trinidad in the early nineteenth century, similarly observed, ‘I had heard so much at home of the luxury of the West Indies, and how clever black servants were, that I looked for something not only good, but neat and even tasteful; but I was astonished to see the dishes put down without the least apparent reference to regularity, and I felt a constant inclination to put those even, that were placed awry’.<sup>128</sup> Such signs of possible slave resistance were matched by the possibilities for theft of food and drink occasioned by multiple retinues of servants, brought by individual guests. Mrs Carmichael could discern

no arrangement, co-operation, or agreement among the servants, save only in one thing, and that was in stealing. For a bottle of wine was hardly opened, until some clever hand whipped it away, and without any apparent fear of detection or sense of shame, openly handed it out of the window to those waiting to receive it.<sup>129</sup> In short, the servants’ mouths were stuffed full the whole time; and so occupied were they all in making the most of a good opportunity, that the ladies’ plate would never have been changed, had it not been for the repeated and loud reproof of the gentlemen.<sup>130</sup>

**NATHANIEL WEEKES'S BARBADES, A POEM (1754)**

One striking, if idealised, account of the profitability and natural fecundity of Barbados, the first English Caribbean island to cultivate sugar on a commercial scale, is that by Nathaniel Weekes. Weekes had visited Barbados in the midcentury, and his long, descriptive poem was published in London in 1754. It was one of a growing number of locally written texts published from the 1740s onwards which acted to rewrite and to rehabilitate the white history and reputation of the island.<sup>131</sup> Before that, Barbados was often regarded as a place in economic decline, and most of all, as a place most injurious to the health of newcomers, after a series of fevers continued to plague the island well into the eighteenth century. The opening lines of stanza 15 of the poem demonstrate just how central food and drink are to his positive repositioning of the island within a rich network of trade links:

Tho' small this spot, import is its worth;  
What mighty sums dost thou still yearly yield?  
Incredible to tell! . . .  
Great is thy trade,  
And by thy Produce still increasing more.<sup>132</sup>

Significantly, the first of the commodities mentioned are foodstuffs and drink:

For Pickles, sweet-meats, cordial, and Preserves,  
The world resounds thy Praise;  
Without these Gifts,  
What Figure wou'd a British  
Side-board make?  
To mend the Appetite, the Mango's thine,  
The Rock-loving Sampier [samphire], the pepper green;  
And the far-famed cabbage [cabbage tree]; whose Parent Tree  
Lifts high in Air his tall majestic Head, . . .<sup>133</sup>

In stanza 16, after a paean to citrus and other 'exotic' fruits, Weekes turns to drink:

Of the fam'd Drams, (Barbados waters styl'd)  
Who has not heard? Let these who like, applaud.  
The sorrel, and the Guava's rich Preserve  
Unrivall'd; and may they still supply  
Thy cordial's place, and shame them from the world.<sup>134</sup>

In stanza 35, he rails against ‘drinks which “intoxicate the sense / elates the mind and Sets the Blood in flames”’ and concludes ‘I Loath them All and wish they ne’er had been’. Instead, he favours ‘the clear, pure, limpid stream’. Perhaps, most unusually, rather than simply praising foodstuffs indigenous and imported, he describes in stanza 38 the timely preservation and preparation of food, exhorting:

Prepare, ye housewives! Now your art prepare,  
To make your Pickles, and your sweet-meats cure.  
The citron large, the lemon, and the lime.  
E’re ripened into Growth, demand your haste,  
And call for all your care; the orange too,  
And pine, (not esteem’d) the best of Fruits.  
Must share your Toil; althou’, or green, or ripe,  
They still a dainty, noble sweetmeat makes,  
And not unworthy of a King’s applause.<sup>135</sup>

In turn, he praises ‘luscious sugar’, the cashow (cashew) and other fruits (stanzas 39–44) and, more extensively, in stanzas 55–61, the virtues of cane and sugar making. On savoury foods he also has much to say, mentioning the partridge, pheasant, snipe or wood cock and the fishes: snapper, mullet and chub, dolphin, conch, crayfish, turtle, and sea eggs, the latter still a delicacy in Barbados (46). In stanzas 39 and 47–48, he describes the killing, preparation and cooking of turtle, including the cooking (48) and the laying of the table (49). The description of cooking is especially intriguing, because it is described in almost recipe-like detail:

The Cook is call’d; from  
Various mouths, earnest  
Which first to speak, he learns  
Their diff’rent taste;  
And their last word, is still ‘to dress it well’ . . .  
On ev’ry side, Employment now, is seen;  
Some pare the lemon, some the onion cut,  
And some the cucumber to pieces mince;  
While others pour the strong madeira wine,  
And in one common Mess the Medley mix. (stanzas 48–49)

The diners are described as drinking fiery liquor, ‘their hungry stomachs now demand its food / The cook is teaz’d to Death with frequent calls / And frequent oaths to haste’ (49). When the cook finally appears, he ‘groaning bears’ a ‘sav’ry, smoaking Dish’, and the assembly are described in terms

of their preference for certain parts of the meat and cooking methods of the same. The moralising ending to this section could not be more explicit:

Let temp'rance be your Guide; nor drink nor eat  
Till nature gorges, and to sickness turns.  
The very Food we eat gives Life or Death  
Just as We Use it.

In short, what one eats and drinks is a matter not just of health but also of life and death.

### **EDWARD LONG'S *A HISTORY OF JAMAICA* (1774)**

A contemporary of Thistlewood, though from a rather different social background, was Edward Long (1735–1813). Long was born in England into an established plantation-owning family from Jamaica. Long resided in Jamaica between 1757 until 1769, when he moved back permanently to England on the grounds of ill health. He became a prominent member of British society, and in 1774 he published his controversial three-volume *A History of Jamaica*, at the core of which are beliefs in white racial supremacy and polygenesis (the belief that Africans were descended from a different origin and are a different species to whites). Long's *History* is important in many ways, but, for the purposes of this study, it is interesting for its detailed description of the islands' flora and agricultural crops and its descriptions of foodways amongst the white Jamaican elite, as well as other ethnic groups in the mid to late eighteenth century.

### **LONG ON JEWISH FOODWAYS**

In the second volume, Long comments on the Jewish community in Jamaica, in terms coloured by a creeping anti-Semitism:

The Jews here are remarkably healthy and long-lived, notwithstanding their diet is frequently salt-fish, and such kind of aliment, not generally esteemed very wholesome; and that the greater number of them deal in damaged salt-butter, herrings, beef, cheese, and in train-oil; a congregation of stinking commodities, which is enough to poison the air of their habitations. Their shops may be scented at a great distance; and, in what is called the Jew market in this town [Kingston], a whole street of their houses reeks incessantly with these abominable odours.<sup>136</sup>

For Long, the Jews' food is not only alien but also alienating. His words expose the unpleasant flipside to the exotic 'other': the unwholesome and abject 'other' which needs to be cast out as unhealthy and alien. Indeed, this close association of food with health is highly characteristic of white accounts of Caribbean foodways in this period, as discussed in chapter 3. And yet, paradoxically perhaps, the Jews of Kingston appear to Long to be healthy and long-lived. Long's mention of 'salt-fish' as the mainstay of this particular community's diet is important insofar as dried, preserved fish was often seen as of poor quality or associated with 'slave-food'; certainly it was regarded by the white creole as inferior to fresh fish, though not, interestingly, by the slaves who often preferred its stronger taste in their cooking.<sup>137</sup> Significantly, saltfish remains a perennial ingredient in many contemporary African-Caribbean recipes, including the Jamaican national dish of ackee and saltfish, though, equally, it also has a long pedigree in kosher cooking amongst Jewish communities in Europe (especially Portugal) and in the Jewish diaspora.

Only on one count does Long seem approving of the Jews: 'These people are abstemious and so temperate, that a drunken Jew is rarely seen. They are particularly nice in drinking the purest water, which most of them use unmixed; and others make only a very small addition of rum'.<sup>138</sup> He concludes that this particular community owes its 'good health and longevity' to a number of factors, among them their 'very sparing use of strong liquors':

They are exceedingly fond of garlic, which generally has a place in all their sauces, and is known it be a great antiseptic; and they indulge in chocolate [the drink]. The more luxurious among them gormandize chiefly on fish; and no doubt but their religious faiths, of which they are very rigid observers, now and then interposing, assist in freeing them from noxious redundancies. I think they may be supposed to owe their good health and longevity, as well as their fertility, too . . . their early rising, their indulgence in garlic and fish, their adherence to the Mosaic ritual in the choice of found and wholesome animal food, their free use of sugar, chocolate, and nourishing fruits, their religious purifications and fasts.<sup>139</sup>

Read in its totality, Long's account appears more measured, recognising not only the importance of the system of Jewish dietary laws, the *Kushrat*, but also the role of fish and garlic as health-giving foods. The inclusion of sugar in this list is to be expected given the premium and prestige status of this commodity at the time.

**'NOURISHING BROTHS' AND 'SPIRITOUS LIQUORS':  
LONG ON THE DIETS OF THE 'FREE NEGROES',  
MULATTOES AND 'NATIVE WHITES'**

Long also comments on 'The free Negroes and Mulattoes', whom he argues 'fare rather harder in respect of eating and are not so averse to spirituous liquors; for both men and women are frequently intoxicated'.<sup>140</sup> He explains this situation as follows: 'But their way of life is both more laborious; they are more abroad in the open air, which renders them hardier; and their occupations or amusements give them such constant exercise, as to keep them from suffering by repletion'.<sup>141</sup> Long's use of 'hardier' to refer to human beings is perhaps incongruous to modern ears and shows just how deeply influenced he was by the racist ideas and language of polygeny. However, he goes on to describe these groups as having a 'fondness' for certain foods and items which, paradoxically, renders them closer to his own ethnic group and the 'native whites of this island'. He describes the diets of the free blacks and mulattoes as 'consist[ing] chiefly of nourishing broths, in which pulses and vegetables are primary ingredients. They too are very fond of good water and chocolate; they indulge in smoking tobacco [and] devour large qualities of pepper such as this country produced'.<sup>142</sup> The 'native whites' become something of an afterthought in Long's description, but he notes, 'Such of them as are not addicted to drunkenness [are] equally healthy and long-lived'.<sup>143</sup> Long's view was that 'in the manner of living, the English here differ not much from their brethren at home, except in a greater profusion of dishes, a larger retinue of domestics, and in wearing more expensive cloaths'.<sup>144</sup> He notes:

In general, the mutton is much better, and the beef much worse, than in Kingston; the latter town being furnished with beeves from the rich pastures of Pedro's Cockpits, where the fattened cattle are inferior to none in America. The mutton consumed in Spanish Town is . . . small, but deliciously sweet, fat, and juicy. The market is likewise tolerably well-supplied with sea and river fish, black crabs, the Jamaican oyster, poultry of all sorts remarkably fine, milk, vegetables, and fruits, West Indian and North American.<sup>145</sup>

**'RACY AND PLEASANT . . . WHOLESOME AND  
STRENGTHENING': MESSING WITH THE MILITARY**

Jamaica, like other islands such as Barbados, had a sizeable military garrison during this period. Long notes the soldiers' tastes and diet, a combination of European-derived foodways and more creolised forms. On drinks, he comments:

The most wholesome beverage for [men, coming from a cold into a hot climate] would be sugar and water, with or without a moderate allowance of old rum; what is still preferable, is the *cool drink*, prepared here by many of the free Negroes and Mulatta women; who rend it cheap to the soldier. It is made with a mixture of sugar, guaiacum chips,<sup>146</sup> and ginger, infused together in hot water, and afterwards worked into a ferment with a piece of fresh gathered chaw stick;<sup>147</sup> which by the quantity of fixed air contained in it, soon excites a considerable froth, and imparts a slight bitter of a very agreeable flavor. This drink when cooled and depurated, is racy and pleasant, extremely wholesome.<sup>148</sup>

Long notes that native-grown and -prepared foodstuffs such as ‘plantains, yams, and cassava bread’ are not only ‘nutritious and wholesome’ but also, ‘after a little use, preferred by most of the soldiers to flour bread or biscuit at their principal meal’ and have the advantage of being ‘far cheaper’.<sup>149</sup> This shift in dietary habits is fascinating as it shows evidence of wider sectors of the population starting to eat creolised foods in favour of imported European or North American ones, not just the planter class. Long is clearly impressed by the health-giving and nutritious quality of this adopted diet, as he continues in some detail: ‘The potatoes and coco are not less nourishing. Half a pound of what is called in England makeweight beef, consisting of the coarser parts, with some of these roots, the esculent herbs of the country, such as the colalu [callaloo]. Ocra, etc. everywhere to be had in abundance, with a small seasoning of the country pepper<sup>150</sup> to correct their flatulence, would make a most wholesome and strengthening mess for one or two men’.<sup>151</sup>

### ‘OF THE PRINCE AND THE SLAVE’: THE SLAVE DIET

Long’s account of slave food is intriguing. It is more detailed than Thistlewood’s, but perhaps less reliable, as Long paints a picture of relative plenty. Conveniently flattening out the nutritional experiences of slaves and indentured labourers on the plantations, Long argued that ‘maize, palm oil and a little stinking fish, make up the general bill of fare of the prince and the slave [in Jamaica]; except that they regale themselves, as often as they can, with aqua vitae and palm-wine’.<sup>152</sup> He continued, ‘Where they have no fresh meat, they are allowed four barrels of beef per annum, with flour, or bread—kind in proportion; but, in general, their allowance is not limited; and the tradesmen and better sort [mess] with the overseer of the respective plantations, unless he thinks proper to keep a separate table for them, which is sometimes the

custom on very large estates, where they rarely eat any salt-meat, except for a forenoon luncheon'.<sup>153</sup>

Long observes that almost all the slaves kept and cultivated 'hogs, poultry, fresh fish, fruits, and roots'.<sup>154</sup> Whether the slaves were actually consuming all these foodstuffs, with the exception of fresh fish<sup>155</sup> or root vegetables, is less clear. However, it is well documented that root vegetables, or 'ground provisions', were the mainstay of the slave diet. As we have seen, slaves were generally allowed to cultivate food crops on their provision grounds, and many accounts describe slaves spending their Sundays tending them. In the third volume of his *History*, in which he painstakingly lists flora and fauna of the island, Long comments on the plantain: 'The negroes commonly boil it with their messes of salt-fish, beef, or pork-broth, and find it a very strengthening, wholesome food'.<sup>156</sup> Of the avocado pear, he relates, 'They are a favourite food with the Negroes, and often constitute the sole support of many of the lazier, who have neglected to stock their ground with other provisions'.<sup>157</sup> Such images of slave laziness are not necessarily reliable and should be questioned in the context of the long and arduous hours which the average (especially field) slave worked.<sup>158</sup> One of Long's most vicious and racially stereotyped attacks on the slave body is figured in terms of their diet, cooking methods and manner of eating. He reiterates the old myth of auto-ingestion or cannibalism (which dates back to well before Columbus's first meeting with the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean) in suggesting that 'Negroes have been known to drink the blood of their enemies with great apparent relish, and at Benin, Angola, and other kingdoms [all which he had never visited], they at this day prefer apes, monkeys, dogs' flesh, carrion, reptiles, and other substances, usually deemed improper for human food, although they abound with hogs, sheep, poultry, fish and a variety of game and wild-fowl'.<sup>159</sup> Here Long invokes a range of well-known European food taboos and deliberately 'others' the Negro as an alien and repellent 'other'; for Long, the African is not quite human in his/her appetites, a colonial anxiety which is often linked to stereotypes of the African as bestial and sexually threatening:

They are most brutal in their manners and uncleanly in their diet, eating flesh almost raw by choice, though intolerably putrid and full of maggots . . . [The smell of rotting fish] does not seem to affect the blacks with any other than the most delicious sensations. At their meals they tear the meat with their talons and chuck it by handfuls down their throats with all the voracity of wild beasts . . . they use neither table-cloths, knives, forks, plates nor trenchers and generally squat down upon the base earth to their repasts.<sup>160</sup>

## **FOOD HIERARCHIES: IMPORTED FOOD VERSUS THE LOCAL**

Interestingly, Long notes the seasonal variations in food supply and the continued dependence on imported goods in Jamaica, recording that ‘when the town is full of company here is a very good market; at other times of the year, it is but indifferently supplied’.<sup>161</sup> He notes that the market is ‘tolerably well supplied with sea and river fish, black crabs, the Jamaican oyster, poultry of all sorts remarkably fine, milk, vegetables and fruit, West Indian and North American. The flour comes for the most part from New York, inferior to none in the world; and the bread is excellent’.<sup>162</sup> However, he is displeased by the quality of some of the imported goods, commenting, ‘The butter is imported from Cork and North America, which cannot be much commended; the inhabitants, reconciled to it by custom, shew no dislike to it, although it is sometimes so rancid, that repeated washings will not sweeten it’.<sup>163</sup> Long suggests such butter could be manufactured locally but, as is frequently the case to this day, recognises that this shift to the local is effectively prevented by price and taste: ‘the cheapness of the imported butter . . . and great plenty of it, together with a long-confirmed habit of nursing no other, may be the reason why the inhabitants are not very solicitous about making any change’.<sup>164</sup> The taste of such imported butter was apparently less than appealing: ‘It is some time before a European plate can accommodate itself to the rank stuff served up at table here. On the other hand, I have known many persons, who, upon their first arrival in Britain from Jamaica, could not endure the taste of fresh butter; and I have heard of a lady who, for some years after her coming over to England, used to order some firkins of the Irish butter to be brought regularly to her from Jamaica: so different it is to relinquish what custom, *altera natura*, has been agreeable to us’.<sup>165</sup>

### **‘NOT A BISKET ON BOARD FIT FOR ANY THING BUT THE HOGS’: JANET SCHAW’S *JOURNAL OF A LADY OF QUALITY (1774–76)***

Jen (Janet) Schaw was a gentlewoman from Edinburgh who travelled to the West Indies and the British colony of South Carolina with her brother, Alexander, in 1774. Her anonymous account was only discovered much later and published in 1921. The text is of considerable historical importance as an account of life in the American colonies in the wake of the Revolutionary War, but also as part of a wider Scottish emigration to the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Schaw’s twentieth-century editor suggests, ‘Wherever these Scots found themselves . . . they . . . created centres

of Scottish life'<sup>166</sup> and extended their hospitality to other Scots. Schaw's account is fascinating, as she details the provisions and food shortages on board ship as well as the meals and manners of the white elite on the Caribbean islands that she visits. One particularly interesting aspect of Schaw's account is her description of the cooking of Robert, 'Mr. Schaw's grave East Indian servant, who almost magically made up for deficiencies in the menu when livestock and food had been swept overboard and the passengers were facing possible starvation'.<sup>167</sup> Rob (or 'Black Rob', as he is sometimes called) provides a glimpse of alternative (East Indian) foodways besides as an astonishing capacity to adapt and to improvise in his culinary service to the Schaws and their retinue. In Schaw's account of the journey out, Rob comes to the rescue with a 'good chicken broth': 'Rob stalked off, and it was not long before he made his appearance with a mess of the most charming chicken broth that ever comforted a sick stomach; and if ever you are again at sea, pray, remember Robert's receipt [recipe] . . . Rob dealt out his benefits in Tea cup-fulls, every one had a little, and every one had a desire for more, so that his broth went through many Editions'.<sup>168</sup>

Early in her account, Schaw recounts how they had 'unfortunately trusted the providing the bread to our [i.e., the ship's] owner, and there is not a basket on board for anything but the hogs'.<sup>169</sup> Whilst still near the Scottish isles they are promised by the captain 'poultry of all kinds . . . also eggs, fine dried fish and the best cabbages in the world',<sup>170</sup> but nothing materialises. Then the ship is hit by a severe storm, and the loss of 'our hen coops with all our poultry . . . the cabhouse or kitchen, and with it all our cooking-utensils, together with a barrel of fine pickled tongues and above a dozen hams'.<sup>171</sup> As a result, 'No victuals could be dressed, nor fire got on, so that all they had to subsist on, was some raw potatoes, and a very small proportion of mouldy brisket'.<sup>172</sup> Again, 'Our honest manservant' Rob comes to the rescue with 'a large ham, he had been wise enough to boil, when he observed the storm first begin, together with a little wine and basket'.<sup>173</sup>

As Schaw discovers, the reality of the provisions provided for the passengers is very different from what they had requested and were promised:

At last I prayed them to tell me what they really had on board, and had the mortification to find that the whole ships provision for a voyage cross the Tropicks, consisted of a few barrels of what is called neck-beef, or cast beef, a few more of New England pork . . . oatmeal, stinking herrings, and to own the truth, most excellent potatoes. Had our stock [not] escaped, we had never known the poverty of the ship, as we had more than sufficient for us all. But what must now become of us? Our cabbages, turnips, carrots all gone, except a few Turnips, which provident Robert had placed in such a manner as to spring and provide

us greens and sallad, a delicacy which you must cross the Atlantick, before you can properly relish as we do.<sup>174</sup>

To their good luck, they discover they still have some basic supplies, to which is added ‘a parcel of very fine tusk [cod fish], which [the captain] has *accidentally* stowed away’. Schaw notes how ‘of these materials Mary and Robert make us something wonderfully good every day’,<sup>175</sup> and that her ‘favorite dish’ is lobcourse ‘composed of salt beef hung by a string over the side of the ship, till rendered tolerably fresh, then cut in nice little pieces, and with potatoes, onions and pepper, is stewed for some time with the additions of a proportion of water’.<sup>176</sup> In contrast, Schaw notes how the diets of the poorer ‘Emigrants’ on board the ship, consisting of oatmeal, ‘spoilt pork’ and ‘mouldy . . . and crumbled down, wet . . . rotten . . . brisket’ are rationed alongside small quantities of ‘brackish bad water’.<sup>177</sup>

After further meals of lobcourse, as well as flying and pilot fish,<sup>178</sup> Schaw is appreciative of the ‘hospitality and politeness of the [Antiguan] natives, who . . . sent us whatever the Island could afford . . . pine apples, shaddocks, oranges, grapes, guinea fowls and excellent milk. This last was of all others . . . the highest treat. We drank tea and supped in luxury; that, you must be five weeks starved, before you can understand’.<sup>179</sup> Schaw also records being presented with a ‘glass of what they call sangaree, composed of Madeira, water, sugar and lime juice, a most refreshing drink’.<sup>180</sup> She describes her first dinner in the Caribbean as of

many dishes, made up of kid, lamb, poultry, pork and a variety of [flat] fishes . . . differing from each other in taste. The meat was well dressed, and though they have no butter but what comes from Ireland or Britain, it was sweet and even fresh by their cookery. There was no turtle, which [our landlady] regretted, but said I would get so much, that I would be surfeited with it. Our dessert was superior to our dinner, the finest fruits in the world being there which we had in profusion.<sup>181</sup>

On the matter of drinking, Schaw notes the custom of ‘hob and nob’ whereby the host drinks to everyone at the table, observing that though her landlady drank madeira and water, the young ladies drink only ‘lime-juice and water’.<sup>182</sup> In a moment of wonderful rebelliousness Schaw takes her landlady’s advice that the young ladies set a ‘bad . . . example’ and ‘that Madeira water would do no body harm’ and ‘resolve[s] to be a rebel to a custom to that did not appear found on reason, [and] pledged her in a bumper of the best Madeira I ever tasted’.<sup>183</sup>

On the island, Schaw observes the openness of parlours ‘directly off the street, and doors and windows constantly open’ and the ‘plentiful table[s]’ of

the people'.<sup>184</sup> On the issue of the white elites' luxurious diet, she expresses two opinions. She is censorious about the overseers of absentee planters, arguing that they 'enrich themselves, and live like princes at the expense of their thoughtless masters, feasting every day on delicacies, which the utmost extent of experience is unable to procure in Britain'.<sup>185</sup> On the legendary hospitality of those planters who reside in the Caribbean, she asks, playfully, 'Why should we blame these people for their luxury? Since nature holds out her lap, filled with everything that is in her power to bestow, it were sinful in them not to be luxurious'.<sup>186</sup> Schaw recognised the central role of the slaves to the internal market of higgleries and traders. They are 'the only market people. No body else dreams of selling provisions. Thursday is market day, but Sunday is the grand day, as then they are all at liberty to work for themselves'.<sup>187</sup> Slaves 'also keep the poultry. And raise the fruit and vegetables', and she looks forward to visiting 'a Negro town' in the country.<sup>188</sup> For Schaw, the sight of slaves going to market 'was one of the most beautiful sights I ever saw'.<sup>189</sup>

### 'THIS INFLAMMABLE PREPARATION': J. B. MORETON'S WEST INDIAN CUSTOMS AND MANNERS (1793)

Moreton travelled to Jamaica in the last years of the century and published his account in 1793. In the same year, a riposte entitled *The Lying Hero, or an Answer to J. B. Moreton's Manners and Customs* was published in London by Samuel Augustus Mathews. Moreton's account is heavily influenced by his Christian and ameliorist views. Significant parts of his text are given over to the technical aspects of sugar manufacture. However, he also observes the local foodways, including, like Ward before him, the centrality of the Pepperpot. His terms are both playful and idealised:

When pepper hot and wine his blood alarms,  
He takes Quashiba [a female slave] unto his arms,  
The melting object pleased, then takes her how,  
And works and sings till night—Tajo, Tajo.<sup>190</sup>

In his account, the 'inflammable' Pepperpot was seen by native West Indians as an aphrodisiac, but it also ultimately 'impaire[d] the constitution', a linkage between food and health which is very characteristic of early accounts of Caribbean food:

Both married and single ladies are very dexterous at the preparing of pots, as they call them, for husbands or lovers; a pot is a mess made of a small piece of salt pork or beef sliced, with a fowl dissected, some ocras, yams, plantains,

caliloo, and plenty of fire balls, or red pepper; this inflammable preparation is savoury, and a great provocative; they think it strengthens the back, and something else too, but in my opinion, though it stirs up the blood to force a lustful desire, it impairs the constitution; for nature when forced is impoverished; hence it is no way strange that her children are weak and sickly.<sup>191</sup>

However, Moreton was impressed by the abundance of good-quality food. Significantly, he is one of the early observers of jerked hog, and he recognised that the maroons had adopted and adapted the indigenous Amerindian practice of marinating and barbequing meats, a tradition which continues to this day:

The woods afford shelter for vast numbers of wild cattle and swine, and some deer: I have sometimes shot a fat cattle of this kind, and frequently wild hogs; the latter are excellent when barbecued maroon fashion. The country is exceedingly fertile, and produces an abundance of fruit and vegetables, such as citrons, pomegranates, Seville and China oranges, sweet and sour lemons, limes, grapes, granadilloes, pineapples, star-apples, neeseberries, cherries, plumbs, tamarinds, pears, canipes, cocoa-nuts, bananas, water and mulk [musk] melons, water lemons, guavas, etc. and various kinds of beans and pease, cabbage, lettuce, raddish etc. with Indian and Guinea corn, yams, plantains, caffavi, etc.<sup>192</sup>

Unlike Thistlewood's recording of food shortages over a century earlier, Moreton noted plenitude in the slave provision grounds and the success of the internal 'higgler' market system: 'There is not a slave upon the state who cannot raise an abundance of fruits, roots and vegetables—far more than he can use for himself—the majority have their grounds fully stocked—they barter these for bread, salt pork, corned fish, mackerel etc., they rear great quantities of fowles, duck, guinea birds and indeed many markets are almost wholly supplied by them'.<sup>193</sup> Moreton also noted the essential preservation technique of salting meat and fish, although most of the latter was in fact imported from North America, as the local fish did not salt well.<sup>194</sup>

In such early accounts we can see processes of creolisation and acculturation occurring as the enslaved adapted their African-derived foodways to a new Caribbean context and the whites adopted the classic soups and starchy dishes called the 'negro pot', often through the conduit of their black cooks. In the next century, new influences, spices and cooking utensils were to arrive with East Indian, Middle Eastern and Chinese indentured labourers.

## NOTES

1. Candice Goucher, *Congotay! Congotay!* (New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2014), 64.
2. There are a smaller number of slave narratives which are not included here since they tend to focus less on food. One exception is Mary Prince's *History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave Narrative, Related by Herself*, edited by Thomas Pringle (London: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1831). Prince describes an exhausting work regime and basic food, relying on a corn soup called 'blawly' for sustenance. She was also a talented 'higgler' who traded coffee, yams and other provisions to the captains of ships.
3. See, for example, the work song 'Guinea Corn' which is included in Paula Burnett, ed., *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin: 1989), 4.
4. Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. Kiple, 'Deficiency Diseases in the Caribbean', in *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), 784.
5. Kiple and Kiple, 'Deficiency', 784.
6. Provision grounds were widespread in Jamaica where there was ample peripheral, often hilly land which could be used for this purpose. On smaller islands such as Barbados, land was flatter and thus easier to use for large-scale cultivation and also space was at a premium. As a result, slaves in Barbados were much less likely to have provision grounds.
7. John Parry, 'Plantation and Provision Ground: An Historical Sketch of the Introduction of Food Crops into Jamaica', *Revista de Historia de America* 39 (1955): 1.
8. Maria Cristina Fumagilli, *Caribbean Perspectives on Modernity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 304.
9. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Yam, Roots, and Rot: Allegories of the Provision Grounds', *Small Axe* 15, no. 1 (2011): 58–59.
10. Gordon Lewis, 'Pro-Slavery Ideology', in *Caribbean Slavery*, 555.
11. The full title is *The discovery of the large, rich, and beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a relation of the great and golden city of Manoa (which the Spaniards call El Dorado)*.
12. Robert Dudley cited in Christine MacKie, *Life and Food in the Caribbean* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), 12.
13. Captain John Smith, *True Travels: Adventures and Observations of Captaine John Smith in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629* (London: John Haviland for Thomas Slater, 1630), 55–56.
14. Jill Sheppard, *The 'Redlegs' of Barbados, Their Origins and History* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1977), 9.
15. Carl Bridenbaugh and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 44, after Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions*, 67, 93 (1925).
16. Thomas Verney letter, cited in Sheppard, *The 'Redlegs' of Barbados*, 14.
17. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 50–51.

18. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 44–45.
19. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 116–17.
20. Sheppard, 'Redlegs', 36.
21. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 48.
22. Larry Gragg, 'Englishmen Transplanted': *The English Colonization of Barbados 1627–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 176.
23. Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 2000 [1972]), 264.
24. Dunn, *Sugar*, 264.
25. Gragg, *Englishmen*, 176.
26. Sir Henry Colt, 'The Voyage of Sr Henry Colt Knight to Ye Ilands of Ye Antlreas in Ye Shipp Called Ye Alexander' (1631) in *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana 1623–67*, ed. Vincent T. Harlow (London for the Hakluyt Society, 1925), 76, cited in Gragg, *Englishmen*, 176.
27. Richard Ligon, *True and Exact History* (London: Frank Cass, 1976), 38–39, cited in Gragg, *Englishmen*, 176.
28. Dunn, *Sugar*, 272.
29. Contemporaries Williams Hay and Powrey noted in a letter to Archibald Hay, dated 8 October 1646, that men in Barbados 'were so intent upon planting sugar that they had rather but foode at very dear rates than produce but by labour, so infinite is the profit of sugar works after once accomplish'd' (cited in Dunn, *Sugar*, 59).
30. Dunn, *Sugar*, 272.
31. Richard Ligon cited in MacKie, *Life*, 32.
32. Father Antoine Biet, *Voyage de la France équinoxiale en l'Isle de Cayenne, entrepris par les François en l'année MCDLII* (1664), cited in Gragg, *Englishmen*, 177.
33. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 119.
34. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 49.
35. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 138–39.
36. Ligon, *True and Exact*, 49.
37. Ligon, *True and Exact*, 49.
38. Ligon, *True and Exact*, 30.
39. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *No Peace*, 49–50.
40. Edward Ward, *Of Their Provisions* (1698) in *Carribeania*, ed. Thomas Krise, 88–90. Ward was an English journalist who developed the persona of the Trip in his later writings.
41. Ward, 'Provisions', 88–90.
42. M. G. Lewis also notes this in his *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1834]), 214.
43. B. W. Higson, *Jamaican Food: History, Biology, Culture* (Kingston: UWI Press, 2008), 6 and 8.
44. Janet Shaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, 1774–1776 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923), 95.
45. Schaw, *Journal*, 95.
46. Henry Coleridge cited in MacKie, *Life*, 52.

47. *Travel Writing 1700–1830: An Anthology*, edited by Elizabeth A. Bohl and Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 257.
48. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 258.
49. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 254.
50. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 261.
51. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 259–60.
52. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 260.
53. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 260.
54. Bohl and Duncan, *Travel*, 259.
55. Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (Jamaica: Twin Guinep, 2003), 116.
56. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 116.
57. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 116.
58. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 116.
59. Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle; Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener, 1998), 167.
60. Jennifer Brown, ‘Remembrance of Freedoms Past’, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 169.
61. See Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750–86* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).
62. Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5.
63. Duckanoo, or duckna, is a sweet pudding steamed in banana or plantain leaves. Variants of this snack include Conkie in Barbados.
64. Sherlock and Bennett comment that ‘this may refer to a condiment made of “Cyan pepper”, or, less likely, to a preparation of a healing weed now called “strong back” or to a type of root crop similar to eddo which is called taya’ (*Story*, 169).
65. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 169.
66. Howard Johnson and Karl Watson, *The White Minority in the Caribbean* (Germany: Marcus Wiener, 1998), 21.
67. Hall, *In Miserable Slavery*, 67.
68. Hall, *Miserable*, 71.
69. Hall, *Miserable*, 125.
70. Hall, *Miserable*, 125.
71. Frederic Cassidy and Robert Le Page, *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), cited in Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 164.
72. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 169.
73. Dunn, *Sugar*, 242.
74. Hilary Beckles, *A History of Barbados* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 60.
75. Beckles, *History*, 60.
76. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 170.
77. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 170.
78. Elizabeth DeLoughrey suggests this in ‘Yam, Roots’ (2011).
79. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 169, citing Hall, *Miserable*.

80. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 169.
81. Hall, *Miserable*.
82. That is, from the American mainland.
83. Hall, *Miserable*, 67.
84. Hall, *Miserable*, 236.
85. Hall, *Miserable*, 236–37.
86. Hall, *Miserable*, 248.
87. Hall, *Miserable*, 248.
88. Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, vol. II (London: John Stockton, 1807), 485.
89. Hall, *Miserable*, 265.
90. Hall, *Miserable*, 265.
91. Hall, *Miserable*, 296.
92. Hall, *Miserable*, 296.
93. Hall, *Miserable*, 302.
94. Hall, *Miserable*, 302.
95. Hall, *Miserable*, 308.
96. Hall, *Miserable*, 309.
97. Hall, *Miserable*, 309.
98. Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (London: Zed Books; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 43.
99. Beckles, *Natural*, 43.
100. Beckles, *Natural*, 43.
101. Beckles, *Natural*, 43.
102. Beckles, *Natural*, 43.
103. Ligon, *True History*, 3.
104. Beckles, *Natural*, 44.
105. Karl Watson, *The Civilized Island: Barbados, a Social History* (Barbados: Caribbean Graphic, 1979), 73.
106. Dickson, *Letters on Slavery* ([1789] 1979), 13–14.
107. Beckles, *Natural*, 44.
108. Beckles, *Natural*, 44.
109. Beckles, *Natural*, 44. This is fictionalized in Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010).
110. Beckles, *Natural*, 45.
111. J. Harry Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710–1833* (University of California, LA: 1958), 48.
112. Marronage was the act of running away and staying in flight. Escaped slaves who built up communities in the mountainous areas of Jamaica were known as maroons. They were an important source of military and cultural resistance to white colonial rule in Jamaica.
113. Beckles, *Natural*, 45.

114. Beckles, *Natural*, 47, after Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
115. Pedro Welch, *Slave Society in the City* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2003), 159.
116. Welch, *Slave Society*, 159.
117. William Dickson, *Letters on Slavery* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1979 [1789]), 13–14.
118. The Barbados House of Assembly received a complaint on May 7, 1811, ‘There has long existed a traffic beginning in plunder on the one side [rural plantations] and terminating inroad on the other [town]’. Dickson cited in Welch, *Slave Society*, 159.
119. Welch, *Slave Society*, 159.
120. Frederick Bayley, *Four Years in the West Indies* (London: William Kidd, 1830), 25.
121. Barnes, *Breadfruit*, n.p. Olive Senior reflects on the ramifications of Bligh’s voyages in ‘Breadfruit Thoughts’, *Controlling the Silver* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 79.
122. Barnes, *Breadfruit*, n.p.
123. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 170.
124. Trevor Burnard, 2004, 233.
125. See chapter 3 and 4 on the fictional treatment of this in contemporary Caribbean literature.
126. Beckles, *Natural*, 60.
127. Beckles, *Natural*, 60.
128. Mrs Carmichael cited in MacKie, *Life*, 57–58.
129. This activity appears in Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song* (2010).
130. Carmichael cited in MacKie, *Life*, 57–58.
131. Jack Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviours and Identities* (Charlottesville and London, University of Virginia Press, 1992), 42–43.
132. Nathaniel Weekes, *Barbadoes, a Poem* (Canada: Gale ECCO, 2012 [1754]), 15.
133. Weekes, *Barbadoes*, 15.
134. Weekes, *Barbadoes*, 16.
135. Weekes, *Barbadoes*, 37–38.
136. Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London, T. Lowndes, 1774), 28–29.
137. In Barbadian-American writer Paule Marshall’s novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969), a white American character, Harriet, has a slave-investing ancestor who keeps records of traded food and slaves (38). In the Caribbean, Harriet is reminded that the food she complains of is ‘food fit for a slave . . . Foisted upon us by our metropolitan masters . . . saltfish we call it. The damn, half-rotten rice . . . but do you realize that some people up your way made your fortune in the old days selling us these delicacies?’ (205–6).
138. Long, *History*, 29.
139. Long, *History*, 28.
140. Long, *History*, 29.

141. Long, *History*, 29.
142. Long, *History*, 29.
143. Long, *History*, 29.
144. Long, *History*, 29.
145. Long, *History*, 33–34.
146. Guiacum chips are wood chips from the lignum vitae tree.
147. In *Jamaican Food* (Kingston, Jamaica: UWI Press, 2008), Barry Higman identifies this as a vine Gouania lupuloides, sticks from which were used as tooth-brushes (an African-derived practice) as well as to ‘flavour and ferment drinks’ (121–22).
148. Long, *History*, 142.
149. Long, *History*, 314.
150. Higman notes that ‘peppers played a vital role in the food culture of the Taino, who appreciated them for their pungency. As many as twenty varieties of “capsicum peppers” were named in the eighteenth century . . . By the end of the century, the term “country pepper” had become common, initially relating to the peppers to the island and their indigeneity but over time referring more specifically to rurality and to those peppers defined as characteristically hot and spicy’ (*History*, 212).
151. Long, *History*, 314.
152. Long, *History*, cited in Howard 2005, 10.
153. Long, *History*, 292.
154. Long, *History*, 304.
155. Long, *History*, 36.
156. Long, *History*, 782.
157. Long, *History*, 808.
158. Indeed, a number of other accounts dispute this alleged characteristic of the enslaved. There are many eyewitness accounts of the aftermath of emancipation which record the freed blacks’ persistent hard work and entrepreneurial spirit, especially in relation to their own provision grounds. As Hilary McD Beckles and Verene A. Shepherd argue, ‘Enslaved people had certainly won a considerable victory over those who argued that they were not industrious’. *Liberties Lost: Caribbean Indigenous Societies and Slave Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 157.
159. Long, *History*, 382.
160. Long, *History*, 382.
161. Long, *History*, 33.
162. Long, *History*, 34.
163. Long, *History*, 34.
164. Long, *History*, 34.
165. Long, *History*, 34.
166. Evangeline Walker Andrews, Introduction to Schaw, *Journal*, 7.
167. Schaw, *Journal*, 4–5.
168. Schaw, *Journal*, 25.
169. Schaw, *Journal*, 32.
170. Schaw, *Journal*, 39.

171. Schaw, *Journal*, 48.
172. Schaw, *Journal*, 49.
173. Schaw, *Journal*, 49.
174. Schaw, *Journal*, 53.
175. Schaw, *Journal*, 53.
176. Schaw, *Journal*, 53.
177. Schaw, *Journal*, 53.
178. Schaw, *Journal*, 67.
179. Schaw, *Journal*, 76.
180. Schaw, *Journal*, 78–79.
181. Schaw, *Journal*, 80.
182. Schaw, *Journal*, 80.
183. Schaw, *Journal*, 81.
184. Schaw, *Journal*, 85–86.
185. Schaw, *Journal*, 92.
186. Schaw, *Journal*, 95.
187. Schaw, *Journal*, 88. This later became a Saturday after pressure from those who thought the Sabbath should remain a day of rest.
188. Schaw, *Journal*, 88.
189. Schaw, *Journal*, 107.
190. Moreton cited in MacKie, *Life*, 85.
191. Moreton cited in MacKie, *Life*, 85.
192. Moreton cited in MacKie, *Life*, 101.
193. Moreton cited in MacKie, *Life*, 102.
194. Moreton cited in MacKie, *Life*, 72.



## *Chapter Two*

# **White Accounts**

### *The Nineteenth Century*

The nineteenth century proved to be a century of tumultuous change for the Caribbean, with the abolition of the slave trade in the English colonies in 1807 and of slavery in 1833–1838. Between the two was a period of amelioration as both abolitionists and politicians attempted to ‘reform’ slavery—to balance the needs of the plantation economy with more humane conditions for slaves and promote an ongoing ‘civilising mission’ as part of a move towards wider emancipation. Absentee planter Matthew Lewis’s account is especially interesting in this respect, as it was written in the years between the two acts. Change was also afoot as thousands of East Indian migrants and Chinese were brought in as indentured labourers to work the plantations where the slaves had formerly laboured. The 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, prompted by poverty and harsh conditions amongst the freed blacks, was also a ‘wake-up call’ to the English government concerning its West Indian colonies, with Lord Eyre’s imposition of martial law being widely condemned back in Britain. It was this rebellion, more than anything else, which placed Jamaica firmly in the spotlight as a talking point, raising questions about the nature of colonial rule.

#### **‘HIGH, RICH AND SEASONED THINGS’: LADY MARIA NUGENT’S JOURNAL OF HER RESIDENCE IN JAMAICA FROM 1801–1805**

In the early 1800s, Jamaica was a highly prized British colony and ‘the world’s largest individual exporter of sugar’.<sup>1</sup> Maria Nugent was American by birth but had lived in England, where she had met her husband, George. In 1801, he was appointed lieutenant governor and commander-in-chief of

Jamaica, and she accompanied him to the Caribbean, keeping a diary of her life in the governor's household until her return to England in 1805. Her diary was first published in 1839 for private circulation.<sup>2</sup> Like Mrs Carmichael after her, Nugent notes the innumerable meals she had to attend in a personal or official capacity and has much to say about Jamaican society, especially the material culture and everyday life of the white elite in this era. Nugent was preoccupied with meals and meal times: 'The food of the island, from kitchen to table, preparation and consumption, frequently turned her stomach [and not only when she was pregnant]'. Even the timing and terminology of creole meals worried Nugent, above all the remarkable 'second breakfast; that the people so loved'.<sup>3</sup> Such concerns with food, contamination and health are not uncommon in this period, but Nugent's account is especially detailed. On 31 July 1801, she writes, 'I wish Lord. B would wash his hands and use a nail-brush, for the black edges of his nails really make me sick. He has, besides, an extraordinary propensity to dip his fingers into every dish, yesterday he absolutely helped himself to some fricassee with his dirty finger and thumb'.<sup>4</sup> On 4 February 1802, she again explicitly links diet and health when she remarks:

I don't wonder now at the fever the people suffer from here—such eating and drinking I never saw! Such loads of all sorts of high, rich, and seasoned things, and really gallons of wine and mixed liquors as they drink! I observed some of the party, to-day, eat of late breakfasts, as if they had never eaten before—a dish of tea, another of coffee, a bumper of claret, another large one of hock-negus; then Madeira, sangaree, hot and cold meat, stews and fries, hot and cold fish pickled and plain, peppers, ginger sweetmeats, acid fruit, sweet jellies—in short it was as astonishing as it was disgusting.<sup>5</sup>

Later that year, it was Nugent herself who was the host to 'forty guests and ten gentlemen to carve for us. General N. had three or four times that number with him'.<sup>6</sup> She noted, 'The loads of turtle, turkeys, hams, and whole kids, that crowded my table, and increased the heat of the climate. The room, too, was filled with black servants; and all the population, I believe, both white and black, were admitted to walk round the table, and stare at me after dinner'.<sup>7</sup> Higman suggests that, in part, 'the slave-owning creoles used these rituals to mark their status and distinguish themselves from their colonial rulers and British tradition'.<sup>8</sup> However, as has already been suggested,

Locally, eating to excess and eating rare and costly foods were prime markers of conspicuous consumption for whites in Jamaica's slave society. [They] set themselves apart from the enslaved most publicly and regularly by gorging themselves in late morning or middle of the day, while plantation workers toiled in the fields or subsisted on coarse foods. Nugent experienced this practice on a grand scale [but] she distanced herself from such unbecoming behavior.<sup>9</sup>

As Nugent records, often guests would be expected to eat several hearty meals even before luncheon, a second breakfast or breakfasts taken at any time between about 11 am and 2 pm, and then a vast dinner in the evening and sometimes a supper later on. As she remarked, ‘I now found the reason that the ladies here eat so little dinner’.<sup>10</sup> Accompanying her husband on his grand tour of the island, the party with which she was travelling got up early in the hope of missing more victuals, but when they reached Paradise Estate they found ‘a large party, breakfast ready’. That day the party consumed three breakfasts and a ‘profuse dinner’ around 6 pm, plus a supper and dance later that evening.<sup>11</sup> Higman records Nugent writing about sixteen breakfasts, seventeen second breakfasts, and forty dinners. Sometimes we are told what these second breakfasts consisted of, as on 24 March 1802, when it was ‘hot fish, all sorts of cold meats, pies, etc. abundance of cakes, confectionary, fruit, etc. and the greatest variety of wines’.<sup>12</sup> Nugent notes that the meal ‘must be eaten with the assistance of the fingers alone; for knives and forks are on this occasion proscribed’,<sup>13</sup> and also that it was the favourite meal of the day for many creoles. At other times, there is less detail. Once pregnant, Nugent stops mentioning second breakfast at all until the birth of her son. Despite insisting that ‘second breakfast’ or the ‘creole’ breakfast was actually luncheon, Nugent rarely uses the latter term.<sup>14</sup> As Higman suggests:

What is interesting about this list is that it reflects the eclectic mix of endemic, indigenous, naturalized and imported plants and animals that characterized Jamaican food culture more broadly. The process of naturalization paralleled the social creolization that Nugent often associated with these meals. Some of the ingredients, with roots far away across the globe, had already come to be thought of as Jamaican, and their creole status took on a rooted indigeneity. Other things such as breadfruit and ackee, were too new to the island to have acquired such a standing. The process was still working itself out at Nugent’s table.<sup>15</sup>

And at the centre of the ‘culinary creolisation’ taking place in these great houses was the crucial figure of the black cook, to which we will return.

### **BRYAN EDWARDS’S *THE HISTORY CIVIL AND COMMERCIAL OF THE BRITISH COLONIES IN THE WEST INDIES* (1807)**

Gordon Lewis argues that ‘Edwards, by contrast with [Edward] Long—whose help and friendship he acknowledged—is generally regarded as the “moderate” voice of the West Indian plantocracy’ in this period.<sup>16</sup> His stance towards slavery was both more critical and more humane than Long’s ‘unconditional

racism',<sup>17</sup> though he still supported slavery on a number of grounds.<sup>18</sup> His account of the generous character of the planter class, their ignorance of the realities of the slave trade<sup>19</sup> and their paternalistic attitude to their slaves was coloured by his particular pro-slavery stance, and we need to read his account with this in mind. In the second of the three volumes of *The History*, Edwards comments on 'the West Indian character',<sup>20</sup> noting that 'in no part of the globe is the virtue of hospitality more generally prevalent, than in the British Sugar islands. The gates of the planter are always open to the reception of his guests. To be a stranger is itself a sufficient introduction. This species of hospitality is indeed carried so far, that, as Mr Long has remarked, there is not one tolerable inn throughout all the West Indies'.<sup>21</sup> In a footnote, Edwards explains:

One of the peculiarities in the habits of life in the white Inhabitants, which cannot fail to catch the eye of an European newly arrived . . . is the contrast between the general plenty and magnificence of their tables (at least in Jamaica) and the meanness of their houses and apartments; it being no uncommon thing to find, at the country habitations of the planters, a splendid sideboard loaded with plate, and the choicest wines, a table covered with the finest damask, and a dinner of perhaps sixteen or twenty covers; and all this, in a hovel not superior to an English barn.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, dining was the prioritised site of conspicuous consumption. Edwards also records the incongruity of barefooted and irregularly dressed house slaves waiting at such sumptuous tables.<sup>23</sup> Like Janet Schaw before him, Long noted that the Creole women 'are . . . abstemious even to a fault. Simple water, or lemonade, is the strongest beverage in which they indulge; and a vegetable mess at noon, seasoned with cayenne pepper, constitutes their principal repast'.<sup>24</sup>

It is perhaps in his description of the Middle Passage that Edwards's account parts company most strikingly with the empirical reality of slave conditions on many transatlantic voyages, so much so that Gordon Lewis argues he makes it 'sound almost like a pleasant sea cruise'.<sup>25</sup> Edwards informs his reader of the care and feeding of slaves on board the slave ship thus:

Every morning, if the weather permits, they are brought upon deck, and allowed to continue there till evening . . . The first attention paid to them in the morning is to supply them with water to wash . . . after which they are provided with their morning meal: this according to the country from whence they come, consists either of Indian corn, or of rice or yams. . . . Their dinner is varied, consisting sometimes of food to which they have been accustomed in Africa, as yam and Indian corn etc and at other times of provisions brought from Europe, as dried beans and peas, wheat, shelled barley, and biscuit; all these are boiled soft in

steam, and mixed up with a sauce made of meat, with fish, or palm-oil; this last is a constant and desirable article in their cookery.<sup>26</sup>

He continues:

At each meal they are allowed as much as they can eat, and have likewise a sufficiency of fresh water; unless . . . the preservation of [water on] the ship compels the captain to put them to a short allowance. Drams are given them when the weather is cold or wet; and pipes and tobacco whenever they desire them . . . When . . . the ship touches at any place in her voyage . . . every refreshment that the country affords, as coca-nuts, oranges, limes, and other fruits, with vegetables of all sorts, are distributed among them; and refreshments of the same kind are freely allowed them at the place of their destination, between the days of arrival and sale.<sup>27</sup>

Edwards's account is particularly rich in details of the culinary and material cultures of the slaves once they were living on the plantations. For example, he notes the different field gangs and the manner of their feeding. After working in the field from sunrise to eight or nine o'clock, the first (strongest and most important) gang 'sit down in the shade to breakfast which is prepared in the mean time by a certain number of women, whose sole employment it is to act as cook for the rest. The meal commonly consists of boiled yams, eddoes, ocra, calalue and plantains, or as many of those vegetables as they can procure; seasoned with salt and cayenne pepper; and, in truth, it is an exceeding platable and wholesome mess'.<sup>28</sup> On the timing of breaks and meals he observes:

At breakfast they are seldom indulged with more than half or three-quarters of an hour; and, having resumed their work, continue in the field until noon, when the bell calls them [for] two hours of rest and refreshment. Their dinner is provided with the addition of salted or pickled fish, of which each Negro receives a weekly allowance. Many of them, however, preferring a plentiful supper to a meal at noon, pass the hours of recess, either in sleep, or in collecting food for their pigs and poultry, of which they are permitted to keep as many as they please.<sup>29</sup>

Like other commentators, Edwards notes the important function of the slaves' provision grounds and their ability to sell any surplus, and with the money 'gratify [their] palate[s] with salted meats and other provisions that otherwise [they] could not obtain'.<sup>30</sup> A second advantage of this system is that 'the proprietor is eased, in a great measure, of the expense of feeding [his slaves]'.<sup>31</sup> However, he notes that it is unfortunate that the slaves 'trust more to plantain-groves, corn, and other vegetables, that are liable to be destroyed by storms, than to what are called *ground provisions*; such as yams, edooes.

Potatoes, cassada, and other esculent roots; all of which are out of the reach of hurricanes'.<sup>32</sup> Edwards opines, 'prudence is a term that has no place in the negro vocabulary',<sup>33</sup> and he praises the 1792 Consolidated Slave Act of Jamaica for making it a legal obligation that slave owners regularly inspect, keep clear and cultivate an acre of provision ground for every ten slaves he holds.<sup>34</sup> He also records that

Sunday is [the slaves'] day of market, and it is wonderful what numbers are then seen; happening from all parts of the country, towards the towns and shipping-places, laden with fruits and vegetables, pigs, goats and poultry, their own property. In Jamaica it is supposed that upwards of 10,000 assemble every Sunday morning in the market of Kingston, where they barter their provisions, etc. for salted beef and pork, or fine linen and ornaments for their wives and children.<sup>35</sup>

During planting time, Edwards estimated that slaves worked ten-hour days (more during crop time and when working in the mill and boiling houses)<sup>36</sup> but not more than sixteen hours a month cultivating their provision grounds, most falling within the one day a fortnight which slaves were allowed for such purposes (except during crop time) and in addition to Sundays and holidays.

According to Edwards, proprietors commonly supplied their plantation sickhouse or hospitals with 'flour, rice, sugar, and oatmeal . . . and some gentlemen afford, besides fresh beef and mutton, more costly articles; such as spices, sago, and wine'.<sup>37</sup> For this reason alone, it should come as little surprise that some slaves were alleged by their masters to have abused the care of the plantation hospitals with prolonged stays and spurious illnesses, as Matthew Lewis and others also recorded. On the cooking utensils used by plantation slaves in their dwellings, Edwards notes the common use of 'an earthen jar for holding water,<sup>38</sup> a few smaller ones, a pail, an iron pot, calabashes of different sizes (serving very tolerably for plate, dishes, and bowls)'.<sup>39</sup> The slaves' 'cooking is conducted in the open air . . . fire-wood being always at hand'.<sup>40</sup>

Some of the most fascinating historical documentation in Edwards's text comes at the end of this third volume, where he includes practical advice, budgets and outlays for those wishing to establish a sugar plantation in Jamaica. For a six-hundred-acre estate, he recommends a start-up 'stock' of '250 negroes, eighty steers and sixty mules'<sup>41</sup> and in 'Annual Supplies from Great Britain and Ireland whole host of clothing, tools, miscellaneous supplies and provisions'.<sup>42</sup> The annual provisions list shows how much the West Indian plantation still depended on the import of foodstuffs from Europe (and also from Canada and Newfoundland). It included the following:

80 Barrels of herrings, or salted cod equal thereto,  
6 barrels of late beef.  
2 bottles of salted pork.  
4 firkins of salted butter.  
2 boxes of soap.  
2 boxes of candles.  
2 hogsheads of salt.  
6 barrels of flour.  
6 Kegs of pease.  
3 Jugs of Groats.<sup>43</sup>

Edwards calculated the total annual contingent charges as £2,150 sterling, an equal amount of profit to the planter, being about 7 per cent profit on his initial capital investment, and a mere £50 over for maintenance of buildings, insurance against hurricanes and other sundry taxes.<sup>44</sup> Setting up a new sugar plantation like this was a serious business and a significant investment, but Europeans continued to be tempted by the high returns promised on an initial investment.



Figure 2.1. 'Cultivation of Sugar-Cane, Jamaica'. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-6e76-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

**JAMES STEWART'S A VIEW OF THE PAST AND PRESENT  
STATE OF THE ISLAND OF JAMAICA (1823)**

By 1823, little had changed in terms of the plenty of the planters' tables and the 'decadence of [their] upper-class soirees'.<sup>45</sup> Stewart noted, 'On these occasions no expense is spared to render the entertainment costly and splendid; every luxury is catered up for that purpose, and copious libations of various wines and other liquors are poured forth to the jolly good of fellowship. Excess is commonly the order of the day, and that may be of serious consequence to this indulging it in such a climate as that of Jamaica'.<sup>46</sup>

Stewart came to the island from Scotland in 1754 to join a substantial community of Scottish planters. By 1756, he owned 167 acres of land. He built Stewart Castle, the ruins of which still remain in Jamaica, and established a sugar plantation which had 1,200 acres and three hundred slaves by 1799. His son James who took over the estate and converted it to a castle established Stewart Town, a community in Trelawny, and became custos of the parish in 1812.<sup>47</sup> The elder Stewart was a planter but with some liberal sensibilities. In his preface, Stewart claims he has tried to be 'just' and 'fair' on controversial issues and 'has anxiously endeavoured to steer clear of all prejudices and party opinions'.<sup>48</sup> The full title of this book gives a clue to its approach.<sup>49</sup> Stewart's relatively sympathetic tone can be seen in a passage in which he considers the aftermath of a hurricane: 'And nothing can be conceived more dismal than the aspect of the country desolated by one of those tropical blasts . . . Even the ground provisions . . . do not entirely escape the general devastation. The planter, in short, sees his crop destroyed; and, what is far worse, he frequently beholds his slaves perish around him for want of subsistence, or by diseases brought upon them by improper food, to which, in the extremity of hunger, they resort'.<sup>50</sup> He notes a specific example of the 'great hurricane' of 1780:

At which time the slaves were every day perishing in numbers, partly by diseases (chiefly dysentery) produced by unwholesome food, and partly by absolute starvation. The lowest price of a barrel even of old decayed flour was fourteen pounds Jamaica currency—it was indeed a great favour or to obtain it at any price. A universal scarcity of other provisions prevailed, and the miserable slaves were compelled to feed on the wild—yam (a bitter and unwholesome thing), or half-ripe fruits and other wretched vegetables, which to their craving appetites were yet sweet and gratifying. At this time of general misery and privation, there were some avaricious monopolisers, who, regardless of the sufferings around them, kept back their flour from the market, with a view of obtaining a still higher price for it.<sup>51</sup>

Stewart details ‘the various delicious fruit which this island yields in inexhaustible abundance’ and distinguishes between the older and more recent arrivals of the last thirty or forty years, including ‘the chirimoya, the ackee, the jack-fruit, and breadfruit, etc’.<sup>52</sup> Significantly, he verifies that the slaves did not take to the breadfruit imported to feed them: ‘The breadfruit is by no means so important in acquisition as was expected. The Negroes, who are good judges of the substantial benefits of vegetable production, regard the stranger with great apathy, or except as a novelty: they prefer the cultivation of the more productive plantain. The truth is, the breadfruit is an insipid and not very substantial food’.<sup>53</sup> Stewart approved of plantain as ‘a very substantial food . . . It is generally roasted, and used as a substitute for bread’ and the ‘avagato pear’ he calls ‘the vegetable marrow of the western world’.<sup>54</sup> His description of ground provisions is similar detailed, and he is one of the few to note that there are different species.<sup>55</sup> The advantage of these ‘roots, or ground provisions, as they are called here, [is that they] are not liable to sustain very serious injury from storms, and there is a very judicious law . . . By which the owners of all estates and other settlements are required to have ten acres of such provisions grounds . . . over and above the Negro grounds and the plantain walks’.<sup>56</sup> He notes the role of maize or Indian corn and Guinea corn as crucial to sustaining the enslaved and of ‘Indian Kale and callaloo, the last growing spontaneously in the fields’ as ‘also greatly esteemed as wholesome vegetables’.<sup>57</sup> By way of contrast, he recorded how many European transplants (such as the apple) did less well in the Caribbean.<sup>58</sup>

Like Moreton, Stewart provides an early account of the culinary practice of jerking, what he erroneously calls ‘barbecue’, and he recognises both its Amerindian origins and its African-Caribbean adaptation. This is a living example of food creolisation in practice:

Hunting the wild boar was a favourite diversion both of the hardy active white creole of the interior and of the Maroons. It is not now so often practiced, these animals having retired into the remote recesses of the woods, where it is difficult to come up with them: so that when their flesh is desired for what is called for a *barbecue*, (considered as a great delicacy here, being the hog’s flesh smoked with a certain odiferous wood [pimento], which communicates to it a peculiar flavour), negroes are usually sent in pursuit of them, or the Maroons, who still pursue this diversion, bring it occasionally to the white settlers.<sup>59</sup>

He noted regarding the native wild pigs that ‘hogs are very plentiful . . . and the great variety of fruits, roots, and other vegetable productions with which the island abounds, enables the inhabitants to raise, at a small expense, great numbers of these animals. They are all of a much smaller size than the

English hog . . . [but] Their flesh is far superior in sweetness and delicacy to the British, or North America pork, and can hardly be excelled by any in the world'.<sup>60</sup> However, 'strange as it may appear, the Irish pickled pork is sold to the negroes by the small retail dealers in provisions, at nearly double the price of the fresh pork of the country. This may in part be accounted for by the fondness of the negroes for whatever is highly-seasoned and calculated to give a zest to their vegetable broths'.<sup>61</sup>

Stewart gives a similarly detailed account of the slave diet:

The common food of the slaves is salt meat (commonly pork), or salted fish, boiled along with their yams, cocos, or plantains, mixed up with pulses and other vegetables, and highly seasoned with the native pepper . . . Pimento they never use in their food. They receive from their masters seven or eight herrings per week, a food which most of them who can afford better, despise; and they accordingly sell them in the markets, and purchase salted pork, of which they are exceedingly fond. They also get about eight pounds of salted cod-fish once or twice-a-year: this food is more a favourite with them than the herrings, for no reason that can be imagined, but because the former is a greater rarity. They cannot afford to indulge themselves with a fowl or a duck, except upon particular occasions . . . Some of the Africans eat the cane field rat, which they regard as a great luxury.<sup>62</sup>

Stewart's account of the relative industry or indolence of the slave is more measured and balanced than Long or Edwards before him, and he concludes that although

the lives of a proportion of the slaves, who belong to or are under the care of improvident or unfeeling persons, are no doubt shortened by an insufficiency of wholesome food: on all or most of the plantations there is a proportion of the slaves so indolent, improvident, and careless, that they would literally starve were they not regularly and duly fed by their masters; while the more active and industrious amply provide for themselves and their families out of their grounds, their small stock, etc.<sup>63</sup>

In line with more recent research, he was able to see that the former loss of slaves and especially of 'breeding women'<sup>64</sup> was directly linked to poor diet, overwork and inadequate housing conditions.

**MRS CARMICHAEL'S DOMESTIC MANNERS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE WHITE, COLOURED AND NEGRO POPULATION OF THE WEST INDIES (1833)**

Originally from Scotland, Mrs Carmichael travelled with her husband to St Vincent and Trinidad in the early 1800s. However, her account was not published until 1833 due to concerns it might fuel the abolitionist cause back home. *Domestic Manners* provides significant documentation of the material and culinary cultures of the groups she encountered. Carmichael also provides a more gendered account of the foodways of the white elite when she comments on the responsibilities of the planter's wife in managing food resources on the estate, and she notes the centrality of 'ceremonious dinner parties' as 'the only media of intercourse' for this group. The English novelist James Pope-Hennessey later noted how Carmichael 'confessed herself much disgruntled by being offered preserved English raspberries for her very first meal on West Indian soil. Where were the guavas and the Otaheite gooseberries? The pine-apple and the paw-paw for which she pined?'<sup>65</sup> Imported goods still had prestige, but Mrs Carmichael was keen to taste the local foods. She wrote of one dinner she attended shortly after arriving in the Caribbean as

like all West India dinners—a load of substantials, so apparently ponderous, that I instinctively drew my feet from under the table, in case it should be borne to the ground.

Turtle and vegetable soups, with fish, roast mutton (for in three days I had not seen or heard of beef, lamb, or veal), and turtle dressed in the shell, with boiled turkey, boiled fowls, a ham, mutton and pigeon pies, and stewed ducks, concluded the first course. Ducks and guinea birds, with a few ill-made puddings and tarts etc. formed the second course. The heat of the climate formed an excuse for the indifferent pastry, and experience soon taught me that it was impossible to make light flaky pastry, such as we see every day in England. However, it must be admitted that West India cooks do not excel in the art of making sweet dishes, if I except a dish yclept 'floating island', which they always succeed in admirably.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding drink, she commented:

The most general beverage, and by far the safest, is either brandy or rum and water, such as would be drank in England: the gentlemen in the West Indies make it extremely weak, about the proportion of one glass of spirits to three English parts of water: this beverage is often rendered more agreeable to the palate by being milled,—that is, beat in a large jug or glass rummer with a long three-fingered stick, somewhat resembling a chocolate stick; this being done quickly, the liquor froths up, and forms at once the most cooling and a safe beverage, whether before or after dinner.<sup>67</sup>

Carmichael gives a particularly detailed description of food consumed by different groups on the plantations:

the head people—that is, drivers, boiler-men, coopers, carpenters, masons etc. . . . have their breakfast boiled generally the preceding evening. The mess consists of green plantains, eddoes or yam, made into soup, with an abundance of creole peas or beans, or the eddoes leaf, the calialou, or perhaps a plant which grows indigenous, and particularly among the canes; it is known by the name of weedy; I never could learn that there was any other appellation for it: it most nearly resembles spinach. This soup is seasoned with salt fish, and occasionally . . . with a bit of salt pork. The soup is boiled very thoroughly, and forms a substantial mess, being of the constancy of thick potatoe soup. It is well spiced with country peppers, and cooked as they cool it, a most excellent dish indeed. In all the various soups, whether tanias, calialou, pigeon pea, or pumpkin, are to be found almost daily at the tables of the white population.<sup>68</sup>

These ‘Creole soups’, she observed, ‘are very much liked by everyone and are never made with fresh, only salted’.<sup>69</sup> She mentions souse, the pickled pork dish still enjoyed throughout the Caribbean (especially in Barbados),<sup>70</sup> and recognised the importance of the one-pot meal to the slaves and rural poor.<sup>71</sup>

Carmichael is perhaps less reliable on the matter of slave diets, despite some liberal sensibilities: ‘Negro children, in Mrs Carmichael’s view, did very well indeed. They were given provision grounds from the earliest age, and by seven years they had plenty of produce to sell . . . some of it to Mrs Carmichael, most of it in the country markets’.<sup>72</sup> She actively encouraged this activity, and ‘to her favourite negroes [gave] handfuls of English cabbage or carrot seeds, or a packet of good peas, but the bulk of the slaves’ produce consisted of eddoes (for eddoe soup), gourds, pineapples, grapes, alligator pears [avocados], sappadilloes, mangos and mangosteens—for by an old custom the fruit trees of a sugar estate were considered the property of the slaves’.<sup>73</sup> Pope-Hennessey imagines Mrs Carmichael’s response to this: ‘Where was

the hardship in all this? Why did not the London speech-makers [on slavery and abolition] understand these things?’<sup>74</sup> Carmichael compares the West Indian slave to the British labourer, as did others such as Edwards and Matthew Lewis: ‘The slave may be perfectly idle, and yet he is supported. The British labourer strains every nerve to live. The slave is provided for strains very without anxiety on his part; the object he has in view is not to live, but to save and get rich’.<sup>75</sup>

### MATTHEW LEWIS'S JOURNAL OF A WEST INDIA PROPRIETOR (1834)

Matthew Lewis's account of his two visits to his two Jamaican plantations in 1816–1817 and 1817–1818 were not published until 1834, sixteen years after his death. Lewis is best known as a gothic novelist and, in his time, a successful playwright and melodramatist. His first novel, *The Monk* (1796), published when he was just nineteen years old, propelled him into literary celebrity and earned him a certain infamy in public life. He counted amongst his literary friends Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. However, his West Indian journals show another side to him, as he recorded his experiences and thoughts concerning one of the biggest issues of the age: slavery and Caribbean plantation society. Lewis's writing in his *Journal* is fragmentary and sometimes contradictory, the only consistency being his inability—or refusal—to conclude on the matter of slavery. In addition, much of his text is given over to showcasing his own sense of his literary talent as well as his self-image as a benevolent and forward-looking plantation owner. Certainly, he appears enlightened in some aspects (if his account is to be relied upon), but, overall, the text reveals a subtext in which slave resistance and a vibrant slave culture continues in spite—not because—of his presence and that of the white plantocracy to which he belonged. Lewis's *Journal* is a fascinating document, historically sited as it is between the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1804 and the abolition of slavery in 1834. The former Act meant that slave owners had now to concentrate on the health, survival and reproduction of their existing slaves rather than being able to import new ones. The period in which Lewis was writing was also one of rising support for the abolition movement in England. However, the present focus is on what the *Journal* reveals about food in the plantation economy and its centrality to slave culture and slave resistance.

On his first journey out, Lewis comments, in suitably gothic terms, on a watermelon brought to the ship by a black pilot ('the seeds, being of a dark purple, present the happiest imitation of drops of clotted gore').<sup>76</sup> Shortly after

arriving on Cornwall Estate, he notes the slaves' request to have 'tomorrow [Monday] for themselves, in order that they might go to the mountains for provisions. For although their cottages are always surrounded with trees and shrubs, their provision grounds are kept quite distinct, and are at a distance among the mountains'.<sup>77</sup> He agreed to this on the basis it was an exceptional case; usually every other Saturday was given over to the slaves for this purpose, as Edwards also noted. Lewis observes, 'All the slaves maintain themselves in this manner by their own labour; even the domestic attendants are not exempted, but are expected to feed themselves, except stated allowances of salt fish, salt pork, etc'.<sup>78</sup> A few days later, Lewis notes the advantages of allowing his slaves every Saturday to visit their provision grounds:

It enables them to perform their task with so much ease as almost converts it into an amusement; and the frequent visiting their grounds makes them grow habitually as much attached to them as they are to their house and gardens. It is also advisable for them to bring home only a week's provisions at a time, rather than a fortnights; for they are so thoughtless and improvident, that, when they find themselves in possession of a larger supply than is requisite for their immediate occasions, they will sell half to the wandering higglers, or at Savannah la Mar, in exchange for spirits; and then at the end of the week, they find themselves entirely unprovided with food, and come to beg a supply from the master's storehouse.<sup>79</sup>

A few weeks into his stay, Lewis gave a dinner to 'my "white people", as the book-keepers, etc. are called here and who have a separate house and establishment for themselves'.<sup>80</sup> Reflecting on the legendary hospitality of the planter class, he commented:

Certainly a man must be destitute of the very spark of hospitality if he can resist giving dinners in a country where nature seems to have set up a superior kind of 'London tavern' of her own . . . even the Lord Mayor himself need not blush to give his aldermen such a dinner as is placed at my table, even when I dine alone. Land and sea turtle, quails, snakes, plovers, and pigeons and doves of all descriptions—of which the ring-tail has been allowed to rank with the most exquisite of the winged species, by epicures . . . excellent pork, barbecued pigs, pepperpots, with numberless other excellent dishes, from the ordinary fare; while the poultry is so large and fine.<sup>81</sup>

Like many of his predecessors, Lewis notes the plenitude of fruits: 'pine-apples make the best tarts that I ever tasted. There is no end of the variety of fruits . . . but the most singular and exquisite flavour, perhaps, is to be found in the granadillo'.<sup>82</sup> He was less keen on the starchy vegetables: 'yams, plantains, cocoa poys, yam-poys, bananas etc. look and taste all so much

alike that I scarcely know one from the other: they are all something between bread and potatoes, not so good as either, and I am quite tired of them all'.<sup>83</sup> Nor could he find any merit in the 'achie fruit' (ackee) though he 'liked very much the ochra, which tastes like asparagus, though not with quite so delicate a flavour'.<sup>84</sup> This is a typical Eurocentric comparison found in many of these early accounts. He also praised the island's fish and noted 'Savanna la Mar is reckoned the best place in the island for variety and safety',<sup>85</sup> as well as the dangers of local oysters, which 'I am told are not only poor and insipid, but frequently are so poisonous that had better not venture upon them,'<sup>86</sup> a rare moment when food safety, not just food accessibility, is noted. Later he observes, 'The variety [of fish] is endless; but I think it rather consists in variety of names than of flavour'.<sup>87</sup> Only the shellfish meet his exacting standards, in what he calls his 'almanac des Gourmands' of Jamaica.<sup>88</sup> Lewis even tried alligator and pronounced 'the taste of the flesh when broiled with pepper and salt, and assisted by an onion sauce, by no means to be despised; but the consistency of the meat was disagreeable, being as tough as a piece of eel-skin'.<sup>89</sup>

On the provision grounds, Lewis records the slaves' cultivation of 'plantains, bananas, cocoa-nuts, and yams: of the latter there is a regular harvest once a year, and they remain in great perfection for many months, provided they are dug up carefully . . . Calalue (a species of spinach) is a principal article in their pepper-pots: but in this parish their most valuable and regular supply of food arises from the coca-finger, or coccus, a species of the yam, but which last all the year round'.<sup>90</sup> He also makes explicit the diet of his own slaves: 'These vegetables form the basis of negro sustenance, but the slaves also receive from their owners a regular weekly allowance of red herrings and salt meat, which serves to relish their vegetable diet; and, indeed, they are so passionately fond of salted provisions, that, instead of giving them fresh beef, I have been advised to provide some hogsheads of salt fish, as likely to afford them more gratification'.<sup>91</sup> The preference for salted and strongly seasoned foods can be found in many Caribbean dishes to this day, and historians have argued that this is in part due to the need to 'season up' a repetitive vegetable-based diet low in protein, as well as a response to the scarcity of salt in some of the African kingdoms from which the slaves originated. Indeed, spicy and highly seasoned food features heavily in early accounts and is still prevalent across the Caribbean region.

Like Moreton before him, Lewis describes the Amerindian-derived practice of barbecue, adopted and perfected by the maroons or runaway slaves living as free men in the mountainous areas of the island:

We had at dinner a land tortoise and a barbecued pig, two of the best and richest dishes that I ever tasted; the latter, in particular—which was dressed in the true, maroon fashion, being placed on a barbecue (a frame of wicker-work, through

which interstices the steam can ascend), filled with peppers and spices of the highest flavour, wrapt in plantain leaves, then buried in a hold filled with hot stones, by whose vapour it is baked, no particle of the juice being thus suffered to evaporate.<sup>92</sup>

He states approvingly, ‘I have eaten several other good Jamaican dishes, but none so excellent as this’,<sup>93</sup> and records that he has sent ‘a large portion’ to the plantation infirmary as ‘with negros, I find that feeding the sick on stewed pork and fish, highly seasoned, produces the best effects possible’.<sup>94</sup>

**STURGE AND HARVEY’S THE WEST INDIES IN 1837 (1838)  
AND THOME AND KIMBALL’S EMANCIPATION  
OF THE WEST INDIES (1838)**

Whilst Mrs Carmichael’s account might be termed a ‘domestic history’,<sup>95</sup> Joseph Sturge’s and Thomas Harvey’s account of conditions on the islands, *The West Indies in 1837* (1838), had a much stronger social and political motivation. Sturge and Harvey travelled to different islands, including Martinique,<sup>96</sup> Antigua, Dominica, St Lucia and Jamaica, and witnessed firsthand the aftermath of emancipation. They note the social conditions of the emancipated blacks under the apprenticeship system as well as efforts to develop the islands’ economies and to establish new educational establishments outside of the plantations. In Dominica, they noted that the former slaves received ‘no allowances at all except of clothing, and presents of pork, flour and fish at Christmas’.<sup>97</sup> Instead, they supported themselves ‘by cultivating their grounds on the steep sides of the mountains, and by catching sea and river fish. At present all the money which the negros acquire, is earned by taking the surplus produce of their goods to Roseau and the other markets’.<sup>98</sup> In Antigua, they noted the dissatisfaction amongst the newly emancipated blacks caused by a recent Police Act ‘prohibiting country people from bringing their goods to market without a pass from the manager of the estate on which they reside’ on pain of confiscation of any ‘produce, poultry or stock of their own raising’.<sup>99</sup> Within this group they noticed the decline in the cultivation of ground provisions and their dissatisfaction with their former slave diet: ‘They become tired of yams and Indian corn. Eddoes (another farinaceous root) would almost create mutiny . . . Now, they provide themselves with what they like, and are thus better, if less abundantly fed’.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike other earlier commentators such as Edward Long, who argued that the blacks were ‘naturally’ indolent, Sturge and Harvey noted:

Striking proofs, from our own observation, of the industry of the Negroes, when working under a proper stimulus. We met several parties . . . coming down from the mountains with heavy loads of produce on their heads, from their own goods for the Kingston market. Some of them had mules loaded, besides the burdens they carried themselves. Many come a distance of twenty even thirty miles, and pass the night in the open air on the road. English carrots, cabbages, and artichokes besides yams, and other roots and fruits of the country were among their supplies.<sup>101</sup>

This sight was also recorded in Barbados by Thome and Kimball in 1837, whilst on a six-month-long tour of Antigua, Barbados and Jamaica to assess the impact of the apprenticeship system on the lives of the emancipated slaves. They noted

seeing the people coming into market. As far as the eye could reach there were files of men and women, moving peaceably forward. It was amusing to observe the almost infinite diversity of products which loaded [their heads]. There were sweet potatoes, yams, eddoes, Guinea and Indian corn, various fruits and berries, vegetables, nuts, cakes, bundles of firewood, bundles of sugar cane etc. etc. Here was one woman, the majority were female (as usual with marketers in these islands) with a small black pig doubled up under her arm. Another girl had a brood of chickens, with nest and coop, and all, on her head. Further along the road we were especially attracted by a woman who was trudging with an immense turkey elevated on her head.<sup>102</sup>

Among the sugar boiling men they encountered, Sturge and Harvey reported that many informed them of their interrelated poverty in terms of wages, time and food:

Every little they pay we, obliged to go for our belly. We have no grounds but a bit of garden about the house, and to this there is no fence; the cattle get into it night and day . . . Sunday we used to attend church; but now when we have nothing to eat, no Friday nor Saturday, what time else for to cook victual. On Sunday we take we hoe, and pick about a little, for we to eat through the week . . . we get our salt (herrings) very seldom; now we get none.<sup>103</sup>

Elsewhere in their Jamaican travels, they noted the time allowed to emancipated slaves to cultivate their own crops was woefully insufficient,<sup>104</sup> especially as they no longer received supplies from their former masters. On several estates they recorded, ‘Under the old system, the salt-fish and syrup which they [the slaves] received were worth more than their present wages’.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, the lack of watchmen had resulted in provision grounds



Figure 2.2. “Busy Barbados”: Going to Market with Poultry’. (Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-8d39-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

being overrun by cattle or plundered by others, ‘compell[ing] them to throw up their grounds, and to depend for subsistence on the most casual and insufficient resources’.<sup>106</sup> Most notably, they recorded that ‘on many estates, the negroes have been deprived of their field cooks, and thus compelled to labor throughout the day without food’.<sup>107</sup> This involved not just the loss of sustenance but also a rich source of culinary knowledge and ‘tradition’.

### ‘BEEFSTEAKS AND BAD ENGLISH POTATOES’: ANTHONY TROLLOPE’S *WEST INDIES AND THE SPANISH MAIN* (1859)

The English novelist Trollope travelled throughout the Caribbean and Central America in 1858 as an employee of the British Postal Service. Trollope describes meals and domestic manners in great detail in his fiction, and his nonfictional writing is similarly replete with descriptions of food. When Trollope describes his journey from Kingston to Southern Cuba, he notes that all ‘the marine people—the Captain and his satellites . . . have provided is yams, salt pork, biscuit, and bad coffee. I should be starved but for the small ham—would that it had been a large one—which I thoughtfully purchased in Kingston; and had not a kind medical friend, as he grasped me by the hand at Port Royal, stuffed a box of sardines into my pocket. He suggested two boxes. Would that I had taken them!’<sup>108</sup> Famously encountering a withered apple and rotten walnuts at dinner, Trollope laments—and complains loudly about—the poor food on board ship<sup>109</sup> and longs for soda water and legs of mutton.<sup>110</sup> In Jamaica he complains about the food at his hotel as being even worse than on board the ship<sup>111</sup> and describes St Thomas and Kingston as ‘ugly’, ‘odious’, disgraceful places.<sup>112</sup> Trollope mocks the locals, decries the city streets and habitations and complains about all manner of things in often explicitly racist terms. He comments on the hotel in Cuba run by Mrs Seacole’s sister as the best he had encountered in his travels but wishes ‘that the patriotic lady . . . could be induced to abandon the idea that beefsteaks and onion, and bread and cheese and beer composed the only diet proper for an Englishman’.<sup>113</sup> Significantly, he comments that the Jamaican whites and white creoles

are fond of English dishes, and that they despise, or affect to despise, their own productions. They will give you ox-tail soup when turtle would be much cheaper. Roast beef and beefsteaks are found at almost every meal. An immense deal of beer is consumed. When yams, avocado pears, the mountain cabbage, plantains, and twenty other delicious vegetables may be had for the gathering, people will insist on eating bad English potatoes; and the desire for English pickles is quite a passion.<sup>114</sup>

Clearly the English preference for a diet of beer, bread and potatoes persisted well beyond the seventeenth century in many Caribbean territories. Trollope observed the preference for imported goods: ‘Though they have every delicacy which the world can give them of native production, all these are nothing, unless they also have something from England’.<sup>115</sup> He termed it ‘one phase of that love for England which is so predominant a characteristic of the white inhabitants of the West Indies’.<sup>116</sup> Significantly, this preference for imported goods over the locally produced can be traced to the current day in many parts of the Caribbean, as the interviews in chapter 5 testify. The planters’ legendary hospitality was ‘maintained, perhaps not on the olden scale, yet on a scale that by no means requires to be enlarged’.<sup>117</sup> Trollope tells the story of a young planter who complained to him that English visitors go back home and say ‘these Jamaican planters are princes—the best fellows living . . . They swim in claret, and usually bathe in champagne’ when in reality ‘our common fare is salt fish and rum and water’.<sup>118</sup> Trollope’s suggested solution was to serve only this ‘common fare’ to future overseas visitors.

Trollope paints an idealised picture of the slaves’ provision grounds which foregrounds the exoticism (to European eyes at least) of Jamaican flora. To his eyes they are ‘very picturesque . . . not filled, as a peasant’s garden in England or in Ireland is filled, with potatoes and cabbages, or other vegetables similarly uninteresting in their growth; but certain cocoa-trees, breadfruit-trees, oranges, mangoes, lime, plantains, jack fruit, sour-sop, avocado pears, and a score of others, all of which are . . . of great beauty. . . . I know nothing prettier than a grove of oranges in Jamaica’.<sup>119</sup> He also recognises the centrality to the slave diet of the yam and notes the coplanting of small amounts of crops such as coffee, arrowroot and occasionally sugar.<sup>120</sup>

Like early commentators such as Nugent, Trollope recorded the timings of daily meals for the rurally based white elite and creoles, starting with morning coffee (or chocolate) in bed and breakfast at ten or half-past ten. His erasure of the working person and the indentured labourer is especially apparent in his observation that

At ten or half-past ten the nation sits down to breakfast; not to a meal, my dear Mrs Jones, consisting of tea and bread and butter, with two eggs for the master of the family and one for the mistress; but a stout, solid banquet, consisting of fish, beefsteaks—a breakfast is not a breakfast in the West Indies without beefsteak and onions, nor is dinner so to be called without bread and cheese and beer—potatoes, yams, plantains, eggs and half a dozen ‘tinned’ productions, namely meats sent from England in tin cases . . . then there are tea and chocolate upon the table, and on the sideboard beer and wine, rum and brandy. ‘Tis so that they breakfast at rural quarters in Jamaica.<sup>121</sup>

Dinner in Jamaica, notes Trollope, ‘is a matter of considerable importance, as indeed, where is it not?’<sup>122</sup> He observes the common zest for ever better food (‘we have reached the days when a man not only eats his best, but complains bitterly and publicly because he cannot eat better’<sup>123</sup>). The role of the cook ‘in the Jamaica country house is [thus] a person of importance’,<sup>124</sup> and he concedes that the white mistress ‘whom I have accused of idleness does during those vacant interlunar hours occasionally peer into her kitchen. The results at any rate are good’.<sup>125</sup>

Trollope also describes his visit to a coffee plantation in the Blue Mountains and the planter’s hospitality: ‘Beer, brandy, coffee, ring-tailed doves, salt fish, fat fowls, English potatoes, hot pickles, and Worcester sauce’, as well as the provisions he takes on his climb: ‘a companion . . . five negroes, a supply of beef, bread, and water, some wine and brandy, and what appeared to be ten gallons of rum!’<sup>126</sup> all carried by mule. Of the blacks he makes the racist generalisation that ‘they are greedy for food, but generally indifferent as to its quality’,<sup>127</sup> and he reiterates many times the even older stereotype of the ‘lazy black’<sup>128</sup> who apparently can ‘live without work and roll in the sun, and suck oranges and eat breadfruit’.<sup>129</sup> In this post-emancipation period, Trollope attributes the refusal of many former slaves to work on the plantations as sheer laziness, and he does so in the ugliest of racist terms. Whilst the black still steals his food ‘lying in the sun and eating yams’,<sup>130</sup> others (the white planters) suffer, argues Trollope, and the black has no right to be considered ‘a man and brother’.<sup>131</sup> This is racist discourse through and through and clearly shows Trollope’s affiliations. Trollope found the situation of the emancipated black in Guiana and Trinidad much the same, where ‘the negro can procure his food almost without trouble’,<sup>132</sup> but notes the greater productivity of sugar in these colonies, compared to Jamaica. That these colonies now exported more sugar than during slavery he attributed to their success ‘in getting labour’<sup>133</sup>—that is, indentured labourers from China, Portugal and East India. Surveying the Jamaican penns, Trollope notes the fine quality of the grass and guinea grass and of the cattle. His account supports later historical accounts in noting that ‘at present the island does not altogether supply itself with meat; but it might do so, and supply, moreover, nearly the whole of the remaining West Indies’. However, ‘Proprietors of land say that the sea transit is too costly’.<sup>134</sup>

In Demerara, British Guiana, Trollope notes, ‘Everybody has enough of everything’.<sup>135</sup> It is, for him, ‘a land . . . flowing with milk and honey—with sugar and rum!—a flat and fertile sugar colony, where commerce is thriving.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, he is much more approving of most things in British Guiana than in Jamaica and the smaller islands. In St Thomas, Trollope noted how the guests at his hotel ‘went through the long course of breakfast and long

course of dinner with admirable perseverance. I never saw eating to equal that eating'.<sup>137</sup> Despite the hot climate which should decrease the appetite,<sup>138</sup> Trollope noted with wry humor, 'Men eat there as if it were the only solace of their life, and women also. Probably it is so'.<sup>139</sup> He also found these meals strangely lacking in commensality, as diners habitually ate in silence. He observed, 'Soup, fish, and then meat is the ordinary rule at such banquets; but here the fashion is for the guests . . . to get their plates of food brought in and put round them in little circles; so that a man whilst taking his soup may contemplate his fish and his roast beef, his wing of fowl, his allotment of salad, his peas and potatoes, his pudding, pie and custard'.<sup>140</sup> With the eye of the domestic novelist, he records the guests' proprietorial guarding of their meals and other habits, such as the way they ate their cheese and guava jelly 'always together'.<sup>141</sup>

Trollope found Bermuda 'extremely fertile'<sup>142</sup> but terribly impoverished, a place of unfulfilled potential. He commented further:

One cannot but feel sad to see people neglecting the good things which are under their feet. Lemons and oranges there are none in Bermuda [after a blight] . . . I saw no vegetables but potatoes and onions, and was told that as a rule the people are satisfied with them. I did not once encounter a piece of meat fit to eaten, excepting when I dined on rations supplied by the Convict Establishment.<sup>143</sup> The poultry was somewhat better than the meat, but yet a very poor descriptions, both bread and butter are bad; the latter quite uneatable. English people whom I met declared that they were unable to get anything to eat. The people, both black and white seemed to be only half awake. The land is only half cultivated; and hardly half is tilled of that which might be tilled.<sup>144</sup>

Pope-Hennessy mentions Trollope as one of nine earlier visitors to the West Indies in his 1942 ficto-travelogue, *A West Indian Summer: A Retrospect* (1943).<sup>145</sup> Pope-Hennessy suggests, 'Like all his contemporaries who visited the West Indian islands, Trollope was disappointed by the food if pleased by the drink. . . . Like [Mrs Carmichael before him], Trollope was fed on tinned meats and tinned potatoes; beefsteak and onions for breakfast; oxtail soup; cheese after every meal. Nothing, he perceived, was of value in the West Indies that did not come from "Home", home being England, the Motherland'.<sup>146</sup>

### CHARLES RAMPINI'S LETTERS FROM JAMAICA: THE LAND OF STEAMS AND WOODS (1873)

Rampini was a Scots-Italian lawyer from Edinburgh who travelled to Jamaica to work as an advocate in the Supreme Court. He eventually returned to Scotland. In the preface to *Letters* he describes his account as ‘a truthful record of a traveller’s impressions of Jamaica and its peoples’. However, Rampini’s tone is often highly playful and his reliability difficult to gauge. He describes his first breakfast at his Kingston lodgings thus: ‘We had oysters from the mangrove trees at Port Royal, a brilliant scarlet “snapper”, an excellent fish, but, like all tropical fishes, soft and flabby in substance; brain fritters, a small biscuit called “crackers” soaked in butter, stuffed “garden eggs”, a most delicious vegetable, roasted plantains, a piled up plate of golden oranges and a pine-apple. Our drink was iced water, but tea and coffee were to be had for the asking. Such was our first meal in Jamaica’.<sup>147</sup> Rampini observed the higgleries in the market, who ‘were vigorously plying their trade’, including ‘Coolies with baskets of vegetables on their heads; girls with cedar boxes full of sugared cakes of every kind . . . vendors of tripe and “chickling”; men with trays of kingfish’.<sup>148</sup> He also makes an interesting reference to early refrigerated shipping when he notes a woman selling ‘a heap of rosy apples which the ice-ship had just brought over from America’.<sup>149</sup> Each higgler had ‘his or her specialty’. In Spanish Town, Rampini imagines the planters’ lives of the past and constructs Jamaica as both a frontier society and—in a rather prescient moment—a playground for the white elite:

Look in at these antiquated mansions . . . we can imagine the days when governors and bishops and judges held high festival within. What visions of jerked hog and black crab, of turtle-soup and old Madeira, does the sight of them produce! What pictures do they conjure up of those wicked old times when aides-de-camp used to ride alligators through the streets, when Admirals used to give balls to the brown girls of the town, when vice in every shape was more reputable than it is at present! Is there a single bottle of the old Madeira extant? . . . Is there anyone alive who has tasted Bath punch?<sup>150</sup>

Rampini was not impressed by the ‘creole cookery’, which he found ‘always bad’.<sup>151</sup> He complains of the ‘sinewy fowl’ which he is served in

an ‘old-time tavern’ and, in terms reminiscent of Edward Ward’s, details a typical meal:

You will sit down to dinner, of which the *piece de resistance* will be a sinewy fowl, not steeped in Falernian, alas! but floating in liquid grease, coloured a brilliant orange with ‘annatto’ . . . and highly seasoned with ‘Scotch bonnets’, or some other of the many varieties of the ‘country peppers’ (*Capsicum*). Flanking this will be a leathery boil of salt pork, all fat and rind, the green plantain roasted in the ashes, and a dish of yams or cocoas.<sup>152</sup>

However, he recognised that beyond the ‘bad food [and] extortionate charges’, the traveller would ‘be treated with the kindness which, though inclined to slip into familiarity, is the very essence of hospitality, and he will gain an insight into the ways of a class and persons who are fast dying out’.<sup>153</sup>

Rampini also found the planters’ food bad. In a passage which verges on the parodic, he writes:

Hospitality in Jamaica is a tradition which the poorest planter prides himself in preserving inviolate. Of course, there are planters and planters. In some houses he will find himself surrounded with all the comfort and refinement of an English country house. In others his fare will be even rougher than that of the tavern. ‘Beef’ soup, with the meat of which it has been cooked served on a plate beside the tureen, a ‘surprised’ fowl knocked down to as his buggy entered the gates, a dish of ‘Halifax mutton’, as the planters jokingly call salt fish, and a coarse mass of sodden and over baked ‘cow meat’—the whole washed down with copious libations of bad rum and brackish water—will probably form his repast. After dinner, the servant, as likely as not an illegitimate daughter of his host, with bare feet, and the universal bandana on her head, will hand him on a soup plate the freshly picked prickles of an orange tree for tooth-picks; and then island-made cigars will be introduced, which he will be shown how to light from a piece of live wood-coal, brought in by the same neat-handed Phyllis, stuck on the point of a fork. A breakfast-cupful of black coffee, sweetened with brown sugar, and another ‘long drink’ of rum and water will complete the evening’s entertainment . . . [but] . . . he would be a churl indeed who did not accept that hospitality in the spirit in which it was offered.<sup>154</sup>

We have already noted how Rampini distinguished between his preferred Jamaican Pepperpot and the ‘evil-smelling . . . Demerara pepper-pot’.<sup>155</sup> He observed that ‘with the negroes, pepper-pot is a compound of the most heterogenous description. Prawns or crayfish of some kind are *de rigueur*, but bamboo tops, cotton-tree tips, cabbage, pimpernel, pulse, and even the buds of the night-blowing cereus, occasionally find a place in its concoction’.<sup>156</sup>

He also approved of ‘the little glass of punch that followed it; lime juice and sugar, rum and water carefully compounded after the old Creole receipt: “One of sour and three of sweet, Four of strong and four of weak”’.<sup>157</sup> He records a moment of culinary rivalry when challenged by a Creole friend on the making of soup:

You English beat us in our cooking generally . . . but you can’t come up to us in your soup. Nasty watery stuff! Nothing but hot water coloured with onions and some little chips of carrot floating about in the tureen. Now this is what I call a good soup—something rich and substantial . . . he’ll require to come out to Jamaica if he wishes to learn to make soup to perfection! We found this delusion prevalent throughout all the country. Nobody could persuade a Creole that his soups, his minces and his stews, were not the *ne plus ultra* of excellence in cookery. There was a sufficiency of richness in good sooth. Salt butter was imparted with no grudging hand. Peppers and annatto were not stinted. The colouring was brilliant and the pungency intense. But where had all the flavour gone?<sup>158</sup>

Rampini also observes some characteristics of African-derived foodways: the drying of plantains to ‘pound . . . into flour (called conquintay) for porridge’,<sup>159</sup> and the superstition that ‘if, in some desolate country or region, you notice the faint smell of cooking, the negroes say, “it duppy pump-kin”—it is duppies preparing their food’.<sup>160</sup> He even includes versions of two Anancy tales, including a story ‘Why the John Crows Have Bald Pates’, which includes ‘Negro proverbs’ and involves an eating competition between different animals.<sup>161</sup>

Rampini’s description of a provision ground and its system of interplanting to maximise space is unusually detailed and unexpectedly beautiful.<sup>162</sup> He is also careful to describe the economic benefits of the provision grounds: ‘The rent of a provision ground of one acre is usually twenty shillings a year. With ordinary labour an annual return of something like £30 may be obtained’.<sup>163</sup> He describes how the ‘food of the negro chiefly consists of “bread kind” and “salt provisions”’:

The former embraces yams, plantains, bananas, cocoas, bread-fruit, and sweet potatoes. The latter includes salt pork, salt cod, ling, herring, and mackerel. Vegetables are chiefly used as ingredients in pepper-pot . . . The labourers on the sugar estates, both Coolie and Creole, hunt and eat the large rats which infest the cane-pieces . . . [and] say they resemble pigeons in flavour. In addition to his provision-ground the Negro often rents a piece of land as a Ginger ‘mountain’, a tobacco ‘field’, or a coffee ‘piece’, according to locality. Arrowroot and cassava are also extensively cultivated by the small settlers in various districts of the island.<sup>164</sup>

**'ABOMINABLE SWEETMEATS, STRANGE FRUITS AND JUKS OF SUGAR CANE': CHARLES KINGSLEY AT LAST: A CHRISTMAS IN THE WEST INDIES (1882)**

The final text examined here is Charles Kingsley's lively account of his travels in the Caribbean in 1882. Kingsley was an Anglican priest, chaplain to Queen Victoria (from 1859), sometime Regius Professor of History at Cambridge University (1861–1869), an important Victorian social reformer and an established English writer. His account was published after his death in 1882. On approaching St Thomas, Kingsley humorously describes the island as looking like 'a Dutch oven for cooking fever in'<sup>165</sup> and on arrival 'a fleet of Negro boats, and huge bunches of plantains, yams, green oranges, jucks of sugar cane'.<sup>166</sup> Kingsley appears relatively well informed and knowledgeable about West Indian flora. Thus, he observes the 'magic' paw-paw tree as 'the common accompaniment of a West Indian kitchen door' and describes the tenderising qualities of its leaves when 'rubbed on the toughest fruit'<sup>167</sup> and the excellent sauce and pickles which can be made with its fruit.

Moving on to St Kitts, Kingsley notes how 'Cuffy and Cuffy's ladies delight to gnaw [sugar cane], walking, sitting, and standing', adding, problematically, that it 'increas[es] thereby the size of their lips'.<sup>168</sup> He describes the fig (that is, the banana) as 'misnamed'<sup>169</sup> and the sweet-sop as 'a passable fruit [whose] pulp bears a startling likeness to brains'.<sup>170</sup> In St Lucia he recounts how 'we saw . . . for the first time, avocado, or Alligator pear, alias midshipman's butter; large round brown fruits, to be eaten with pepper and salt by those who list [wish]' in open baskets alongside 'bright scarlet capsicums, green coco-nuts tinged with orange, great roots of yam and cush-cush [taro], with strange pickles of various kinds and hues'.<sup>171</sup> He found the black population in 'rude' health, arguing for the 'exceeding ease with which . . . food . . . can be procured by light labour'.<sup>172</sup> As a result, 'The Negro woman has no need to marry and make herself the slave of a man, in order to get a home and subsistence. Independent she is, for good and evil, and independent she takes care to remain'.<sup>173</sup> Kingsley's reading of a largely matrifocal society is rather crude, but his documentation of this phenomenon is interesting.

In Port of Spain, Trinidad, he describes 'here and there a hugely fat Negress try[ing] to sell, abominable sweet meats, strange fruits, and junks of sugar cane, to be gnawed by the dawdlers in mid-street'.<sup>174</sup> More approvingly, he notes the island's ground provisions, especially the different varieties of yam which 'when properly cultivated . . . prove . . . wonderful food'.<sup>175</sup> Significantly, Kingsley engages with the food and culture of Trinidad's 'coolies'

or Indo-Caribbeans. He comments on the change in payment to indentured labourers over the previous two years so that they now receive ‘part-payment in daily rations’. This ration consisted of ‘a pound of rice, 4oz of dholl [*sic*] a kind of pea, an oz of coco-nut oil, or ghee; and half the same to each child between five and ten years old’.<sup>176</sup> He reasons that this is necessary as ‘they will, as a rule, hoard their wages, and stint themselves of food, injuring their powers of work and even endangering their own lives; as is proved by the broad fact that the death-rate among them has much decreased . . . since the plan of giving them rations has been at work’.<sup>177</sup> An advantageous side effect, according to Kingsley, was that this ‘has lessen[ed] the number of the little roadside shop [rice-seller and money lenders], which were a curse to Trinidad, and are still a curse to the English workman’.<sup>178</sup>

## CONCLUSION

These first two chapters have shown how early white writings can afford us a valuable insight into the early dietary habits of the planters and white elite as well as other social and ethnic groups in the Caribbean. It has explored



Figure 2.3. ‘Opening Cocoa Pods, Trinidad’. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-00d8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

the nature and origins of slave food and the crucial role of the provision grounds as sites of survivalism, agency and resistance for the enslaved. It has also demonstrated how imported foods were gradually adopted and adapted by both the planter class and the enslaved and how some dishes such as Pepperpot were able to cross social and ethnic boundaries to become thoroughly creolised: not English or African but ‘Caribbean’, in line with simultaneously emerging creolised identities and cultures. At the heart of this ‘call and response’ between food, text and culture was the tension between ‘home’ and abroad, however these were defined. Indeed, one of the longest standing issues in Caribbean foodways has been the dependence on foreign exports and the frequent privileging and high status given to imported foods to the neglect or undervaluing of local foods. This chapter ends with Charles Kingsley and a late nineteenth-century example of this tension.

Cocoa was a key crop in Trinidad at this time, and, of course, central to the making of chocolate. Kingsley records that he had heard the story of a German

who thought he could make chocolate in Trinidad just as well as in Paris . . . and he succeeded. But the fair [white] creoles would not buy it and, it could not be good, it could not be the real article, unless it had crossed the Atlantic twice to and from that centre of fashion, Paris. So, the manufacture, which might have added greatly to the wealth of Trinidad, was given up, and the ladies of the island eat nought but French chocolate, costing, it is said, nearly four times as much as home-made chocolate.<sup>179</sup>

As the end of the century neared and new pressures and challenges faced the Caribbean, this was to remain a perennial concern. Chapters 3 and 4 examine some literary responses to the privileging of imported foodstuffs (and other goods) over what could be locally produced in the Caribbean. Chapter 5 considers how this cultural narrative has been both embedded and challenged by different Barbadian cookery writers at various points in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Chapter 6 demonstrates how these issues are still very much to the fore in many contemporary Barbadians’ thoughts about food, as it documents and interprets a series of oral history interviews undertaken on the island in 2018. The final chapter flips the ‘foreign-local’ bias on its head to consider the wider travelling of Caribbean food with West Indians to diasporic locations, claims to authenticity and the problematic role of celebrity cooks and cookery writers as cross-cultural culinary advocates.

## NOTES

1. Lucille Mathurin Mair, ‘Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery’, in *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), 390.
2. It was published in edited form in 1907 and in two subsequent editions in 1934 and 1939. Philip Wright’s edited version was published 1966.
3. Barry Higman, ‘Lady Nugent’s Second Breakfast’, *Kunapipi* 28, no. 2 (2006): 116.
4. Lady Maria Nugent, *Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica*, ed. Philip Wright (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, [1839] 2000).
5. Nugent, *Journal*, 57.
6. Nugent, *Journal*, 13.
7. Nugent, *Journal*, 13.
8. Higman, ‘Second’, 116.
9. Higman, ‘Second’, 116.
10. Nugent, *Journal*, 79.
11. Nugent, *Journal*, 91–92.
12. Nugent, *Journal*, 7.
13. Nugent, *Journal*, 190–91.
14. Higman, ‘Second’, 121.
15. Higman, ‘Second’, 122.
16. Gordon Lewis, ‘Pro-Slavery Ideology’ in *Caribbean Slavery*, 552.
17. Lewis, ‘Pro-Slavery’, 553.
18. Bryan Edwards’s *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1807), 179–82.
19. Edwards, *History*, 148.
20. Edwards, *History*, 9.
21. Edwards, *History*, 9.
22. Edwards, *History*, 9–10.
23. Edwards, *History*, 9.
24. Edwards, *History*, 11–12.
25. Lewis, ‘Pro-Slavery’ in *Caribbean Slavery*, 553.
26. Edwards, *History*, 141–42.
27. Edwards, *History*, 142–43.
28. Edwards, *History*, 158.
29. Edwards, *History*, 159.
30. Edwards, *History*, 161.
31. Edwards, *History*, 161.
32. Edwards, *History*, 161.

33. Edwards, *History*, 162.
34. Edwards, *History*, 162.
35. Edwards, *History*, 162.
36. Edwards, *History*, 160.
37. Edwards, *History*, 166–67.
38. In Barbados these water containers are called monkey jars because of their distinctive shape.
39. Edwards, *History*, 164.
40. Edwards, *History*, 164.
41. Edwards, *History*, 295.
42. Edwards, *History*, 297–300.
43. Edwards, *History*, 299.
44. Edwards, *History*, 300.
45. David Howard, *Kingston: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford: Signal Books; Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2005), 10.
46. John Stewart, ‘A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica [1823]’ cited in Howard 2005, 10.
47. See <https://insidejourneys.com/stewart-castle-main-trelawny-jamaica/>.
48. Stewart, ‘View’, vii.
49. Stewart, ‘View’.
50. Stewart, ‘View’, 44.
51. Stewart, ‘View’, 44–45.
52. Stewart, ‘View’, 61.
53. Stewart, ‘View’, 61.
54. Stewart, ‘View’, 62.
55. Stewart, ‘View’, 62.
56. Stewart, ‘View’, 64.
57. Stewart, ‘View’, 66–67.
58. Stewart, ‘View’, 65.
59. Stewart, ‘View’, 74–75.
60. Stewart, ‘View’, 98.
61. Stewart, ‘View’, 98.
62. Stewart, ‘View’, 268. This was also observed by Charles Rampini in *Letters from Jamaica* (1873).
63. Stewart, ‘View’, 310. This stereotype of ‘the lazy negro’ was reiterated in much more pernicious terms by Anthony Trollope (1859).
64. Stewart, ‘View’, 311.
65. James Pope-Hennessy, *A West Indian Summer* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1943), 9. This is fictionalised in Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song* in the character of Caroline Mortimer.
66. Mrs Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, in MacKie, *Life and Food in the Caribbean* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 1987), 56–57.
67. Carmichael, *Manners*, cited in MacKie, *Life*, 57.
68. Carmichael, *Manners*, cited in MacKie, *Life*, 79.
69. Carmichael, *Manners*, cited in MacKie, *Life*, 26.

70. Mackie, *Life*, 57.
71. Mackie, *Life*, 70.
72. Pope-Hennessy, *West Indian*, 90.
73. Carmichael, *Manners*, 90.
74. Pope-Hennessy, *West Indian*, 90.
75. Carmichael, *Manners*, cited in MacKie, *Life*, 80.
76. M. G. Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, ed. Judith Terry (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2005 [1834]), 35.
  77. Lewis, *Journal*, 54.
  78. Lewis, *Journal*, 54.
  79. Lewis, *Journal*, 55.
  80. Lewis, *Journal*, 66.
  81. Lewis, *Journal*, 66–67.
  82. Lewis, *Journal*, 67.
  83. Lewis, *Journal*, 95.
  84. Lewis, *Journal*, 95.
  85. Lewis, *Journal*, 67.
  86. Lewis, *Journal*, 95.
  87. Lewis, *Journal*, 95.
  88. Lewis, *Journal*, 95.
  89. Lewis, *Journal*, 120.
  90. Lewis, *Journal*, 68.
  91. Lewis, *Journal*, 68.
  92. Lewis, *Journal*, 94.
  93. Lewis, *Journal*, 94.
  94. Lewis, *Journal*, 95.
95. Karina Williamson, ‘Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies, 1820–1826’. *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 4, no. 1.
96. At this time, the French colony of Martinique had not yet abolished slavery.
97. Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, *The West Indies in 1837* (New York: Cosimo, [1838] 2007), 100.
98. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 52.
99. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 28–29.
100. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 52.
101. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 176–7.
102. J. A. Thome and J. H. Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies* (New York: 1838), cited in Beckles 1988, 49.
103. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 256.
104. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 358–59.
105. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 359.
106. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 359.
107. Sturge and Harvey, *West Indies*, 359.
108. Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 2.
109. Trollope, *Spanish*, 3–4, 7.

110. Trollope, *Spanish*, 4.
111. Trollope, *Spanish*, 8.
112. Trollope, *Spanish*, 12–14.
113. Trollope, *Spanish*, 21.
114. Trollope, *Spanish*, 21.
115. Trollope, *Spanish*, 41.
116. Trollope, *Spanish*, 21.
117. Trollope, *Spanish*, 27.
118. Trollope, *Spanish*, 27.
119. Trollope, *Spanish*, 28.
120. Trollope, *Spanish*, 28.
121. Trollope, *Spanish*, 41–42.
122. Trollope, *Spanish*, 44.
123. Trollope, *Spanish*, 44.
124. Trollope, *Spanish*, 44.
125. Trollope, *Spanish*, 44.
126. Trollope, *Spanish*, 44.
127. Trollope, *Spanish*, 59.
128. See also Edward Long (1774) on this stereotype.
129. Trollope, *Spanish*, 65.
130. Trollope, *Spanish*, 91.
131. Trollope, *Spanish*, 91.
132. Trollope, *Spanish*, 124.
133. Trollope, *Spanish*, 124.
134. Trollope, *Spanish*, 43.
135. Trollope, *Spanish*, 170.
136. Trollope, *Spanish*, 178–79.
137. Trollope, *Spanish*, 239.
138. Trollope, *Spanish*, 239.
139. Trollope, *Spanish*, 240.
140. Trollope, *Spanish*, 240.
141. Trollope, *Spanish*, 241.
142. Trollope, *Spanish*, 370.
143. Trollope records these in scale of quantity and quality, *Spanish*, 384–86.
144. Trollope, *Spanish*, 371.
145. This text was based on Hennessey's own experience of spending six months in Trinidad in the summer of 1939 as the aide de camp to the governor of the island.
146. Pope-Hennessey, *West Indian*, 9.
147. Charles Rampini, *Letters from Jamaica: The Land of Streams and Woods* (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1873), 18.
148. Rampini, *Letters*, 25.
149. Rampini, *Letters*, 25–26.
150. Rampini, *Letters*, 45.
151. Rampini, *Letters*, 53.
152. Rampini, *Letters*, 53.

153. Rampini, *Letters*, 53.
154. Rampini, *Letters*, 54–55.
155. Rampini, *Letters*, 64.
156. Rampini, *Letters*, 64.
157. Rampini, *Letters*, 65.
158. Rampini, *Letters*, 65.
159. Rampini, *Letters*, 73.
160. Rampini, *Letters*, 83.
161. Rampini, *Letters*, 122.
162. Rampini, *Letters*, 90–91.
163. Rampini, *Letters*, 91.
164. Rampini, *Letters*, 91.
165. Charles Kingsley, *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 15.
166. Kingsley, *At Last*, 16.
167. Kingsley, *At Last*, 23.
168. Kingsley, *At Last*, 32.
169. Kingsley, *At Last*, 31.
170. Kingsley, *At Last*, 32.
171. Kingsley, *At Last*, 32.
172. Kingsley, *At Last*, 33.
173. Kingsley, *At Last*, 33.
174. Kingsley, *At Last*, 87.
175. Kingsley, *At Last*, 93.
176. Kingsley, *At Last*, 118.
177. Kingsley, *At Last*, 118.
178. Kingsley, *At Last*, 118.
179. Kingsley, *At Last*, 118.



## *Chapter Three*

# **Black Hunger and White Plenitude**

## *Food and Social Order in Two Historiographic Metafictions*

This chapter focuses on food and narrative in two texts from an important subgenre of literary texts known as historiographic metafiction. Historiographic metafictions are historical novels which imaginatively excavate hidden or silenced histories, giving voice and agency to characters whose real-life counterparts were denied representation—socially, politically and textually. In the novels which are the focus of this chapter—Carol Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010)—such characters are slaves. Historiographic metafictions also engage in a playful self-reflexiveness as they consider the processes of speaking and writing, and the unequal valencies of telling stories and recording histories of different kinds. Both novels feature doubled historical narratives, and both prove especially illuminating of the unfixed and shifting relationship between food and social order. Both feature black hunger and white Creole plenitude, different kinds of 'illiteracy' and authorship, and both stage fictional explorations and reworkings of white Creole and slave attitudes to food and foodways in a Caribbean plantation context. Moreover, Levy's bibliographic acknowledgements (which form a paratext to *The Long Song*) and comments made by Phillips and his critics<sup>1</sup> reveal that both novelists make extensive use of a (sometimes shared) archive of historical sources and writings from an earlier period in Caribbean history. However, the chapter shows how the two writers' use of this archive and their respective fictional 'revisitings' of this particular period in Caribbean history are neither unmediated nor unproblematic. As fictional texts produced by a diasporic Caribbean writer (Phillips) and second-generation Caribbean British writer (Levy), and published respectively in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first centuries, *The Long Song* and *Cambridge* are necessarily distanced from the historical sources upon which they draw.

Although both writers draw extensively on earlier writings, each writer's relationship to this archive is quite different and gives rise to very different degrees of narrative agency in the novels' key characters. Whilst the fictional characters of Phillips's *Cambridge* arguably remain somewhat constrained by the historical voices of the novel's source materials, Levy creates a number of characters, including her chief protagonist and narrator, Miss July, whose narrative voices exceed the bounds of these same source materials. Indeed, they present an interesting challenge to them, in the form of a playfully post-modern, metafictional framework which speaks from the interstices between Levy's sources and which decentre the hegemony of white Creole accounts as source materials for the novel.

### THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE: EUROPEAN ACCOUNTS AND FOOD CREOLISATION

As has already been shown, early writings from and about the Caribbean constitute a surprisingly rich source of accounts of early foodways and food practices. Importantly, they also register responses to food in the Caribbean, whether indigenous or naturalised, shifts in the status of food and its links to an emergent cultural nationalism. One especially relevant example is Edward Ward's *A Trip to Jamaica* (1696). Despite the satirical tone of Ward's text, and the litany of apparently revolting dishes he lists, when he notes the turtle served in its shell as a favourite set piece or culinary performance of the most sumptuous plantocracy tables, he strikes on an early emblem of Jamaicaness,<sup>2</sup> a way in which early white Creole identity was defined and practised. In *The Long Song* and *Cambridge*, both Levy and Phillips have their fictional characters note the turtle as the centrepiece on their lavish planter's tables,<sup>3</sup> and it is recorded by a number of earlier archival sources, including Matthew Lewis (1834).<sup>4</sup> The social ritual of the formal dinner party was an important part of the relationship between food and culture for the planter classes, since it was the main way in which they met socially and exchanged news, views, food and drink. In this context, the range, kinds and quality—as well as quantity—of food and drink offered to others in the same racial and social group became very closely freighted with particular distinctions of taste and associations linked to status, as Levy's novel, in particular, testifies.

It is significant that a text as early as Ward's 1696 account should mention Pepperpot. Pepperpot has both an important economic and a symbolic function. As we have seen, it originated out of the one-pot method of cooking in an iron vessel over an open fire, a practice originally necessitated amongst slave populations and favoured by the poor, and makes use of largely indig-

enous and naturalised ingredients which could readily be grown on the slave provision grounds. The knowledge required to make Pepperpot was primarily orally transmitted, and this factor created a symbolic function for Pepperpot in reconnecting plantation slaves to orally transmitted African culinary traditions and, in the post-emancipation period, in reconnecting West Indians to slave food on the plantations. Unlike the turtle, then, Pepperpot was primarily marked as ‘slave food’.

Quite when and why Pepperpot was first served to the planter class by slave cooks and appropriated by the planter class as part of its cuisine is uncertain, but one thing *is* certain: Pepperpot did successfully cross the social divide from slave to master, which is, in this context, also the division between the African or African-descended cook and the Euro-Creole consumer. Pepperpot, it seems, was one of the first thoroughly creolised dishes in the Caribbean and continues to be prepared and eaten in different forms to this day. In a 1965 cookbook from the Caribbean, the author notes the longevity of the dish and its potentially very old provenance in Caribbean cuisine: ‘Pepperpot can be kept going for several months and is almost passed on from generation to generation. Every evening it is warmed up and fresh meat or cold remains are added to it. Sir Algernon Aspinall declared in *The Pocket Guide Book to the West Indies* (1907) that he had partaken of Pepperpot said to have been one hundred years old’.<sup>5</sup> Pepperpot also has an important specific function within domestic economy as an efficient means of eking out available food (‘making do’) by adding to and boiling up the one-pot meal each day. This social phenomenon and characteristically Caribbean ‘cultural philosophy of food’,<sup>6</sup> born out of historical necessity rather than choice, has been documented by a number of sociologists and critics, including Olive Senior<sup>7</sup> and Lynn Marie Houston.<sup>8</sup>

Ilari Berti refers to this as a shift from an attitude of suspicion and/or ‘disgust’ towards food local to the Caribbean, accompanied by a discourse of ‘contamination’<sup>9</sup> to an attitude of ‘curiosity and appreciation’ as the colonisers adapted their food patterns to the new environment.<sup>10</sup> She notes how this clash between old and new foodways and patterns of consumption is explained by Mrs Carmichael through the figure of the cook, usually a Creole or African man, and the importance of the plantation house kitchen as a ‘site of creolization’: ‘consuming different foods was a common habit and not only gave rise to new practices of eating but generated dynamic spaces of transculturation’.<sup>11</sup> Mrs Carmichael noted that ‘creole soups [are] much liked’,<sup>12</sup> whilst Callaloo, ‘a principal article in their peppermorts’, makes a ‘soup [which] is excellent, wholesome and palatable to all—creole, white, free, colored or slave’.<sup>13</sup> However, as a number of studies demonstrate,<sup>14</sup> and

*The Long Song* fictionally stages, this shift was not necessarily permanent or exclusively one way towards greater creolisation, as will be seen.

## FOOD TABOOS AND HEALTH

Interestingly, in Ward's mention of the turtle which puts 'a stranger in a flux' and the various 'sower' fruits which causes a 'corroding slime in the bowels', Ward pathologises Caribbean food as unhealthy and related to illness, thus introducing a common trope which recurs in Lady Maria Nugent's accounts of her sojourn in Jamaica just over a hundred years later. Nugent was convinced that the planter class's overindulgence in rich food and good wine precipitated the onset of yellow fever, a significant killer in early nineteenth-century Jamaica. In this belief, Nugent also reflected a number of educational treatises on the relationship between health and diet, which circulated in the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Given Ward's satirical tone, it is difficult to assess how far he accepted the European-derived taboos and medical advice surrounding the eating of tropical foodstuffs of his time, but Nugent's views seem to be more clearly informed by, and in endorsement of, such public advice. Her account of early nineteenth-century Jamaican foods and planters' tables is a good example of the intersection of the personal and the public, the individual and the social. Nugent's account shows how, in matters of food preference, food practices and food taboos, a primarily individual and very primitive sense of taste is shaped into a more socially constructed concept of taste as informed by various discourses of colonialism, class, gender and medicine.

Significantly, however (as Matthew Lewis's account<sup>16</sup> also makes clear), such taboos and attitudes to particular foods were not usually shared by the slave population whose access to the range of foods eaten by the planter class was not possible, and who conducted their own dietary and medicinal (often herbal) remedies. Nor were such taboos fixed or unchanging. Phillip's novel *Cambridge* gives one such example. When the white English woman, Emily Cartwright, is travelling to her father's plantation in Jamaica, she notes how 'the "doctor" upon ship recommended as the "recipe for white survival . . . to avoid exposure to the sun, eat sparingly, avoid mixing wines and fruits, take no coconut water, malt liquor or cider, eat a fair proportion of animal food or fish, and take at least two to three glasses of Madeira each day"'.<sup>17</sup> Yet, at a luncheon out later in the novel, she reflects how 'we had thrust upon us baskets of fruit from which, according to our physician's maxim, one should eat as much as possible since "fruit never hurts"'.<sup>18</sup>

In *The Long Song*, Andrea Levy wryly comments on the extraordinary range as well as plenitude of foodstuffs grown, imported and eaten by the

white Creole and planter class in the Caribbean, as documented in texts such as Long (1774), Lewis (1834), Carmichael (1934) or Nugent (2000),<sup>19</sup> through the fictional character of the English woman, Caroline Mortimer. Caroline has lately arrived in Jamaica, to live with her brother, plantation owner John Howarth, who married into Creole society but has recently been widowed. When she first arrives, Caroline is keen to try and to taste local foodstuffs and West Indian dishes:

Her appetite, which she had feared she would never regain after her ravaging voyage . . . was now returning. And fresh and adventurous it was too. Why she thought the mango the loveliest of fruit—juicy and sweet. True, it did have the taste of a peach dipped in turpentine . . . but she was not a timid person, too scared to try these new experiences . . . She told her brother, ‘If turtle is considered fine food in this foreign place then I must taste it, even if only the once’. She wanted to try everything . . . Bring on the duck, guinea birds and jack fish, for Mrs Caroline Mortimer was eager to nibble upon their bones. Even bread-fruit destined for the slaves’ table.<sup>20</sup>

In this and related passages, Levy foregrounds her character’s prodigious appetite and ambitious social aspirations within Jamaican planter society—as evidenced by her sumptuously spread dinner tables and, in particular, her elaborate plans for a grand Christmas dinner—in order to stage some extraordinarily evocative, as well as funny, passages which explore both black and white attitudes to food and food consumption in a plantation context. Whilst we should always bear in mind *The Long Song*’s status as complex amalgam of contemporary historical materials and noncontemporary fictionalised text, this part of Levy’s novel usefully not only highlights vast discrepancies in patterns of consumption between planters and their slaves, the hunger and plenitude existing in close proximity in the plantation environment, but also dramatises the small but daily acts of resistance on the part of the slaves to the authority of their white masters and mistresses, through practices such as deliberate misdirection and pilfering.<sup>21</sup> Here again, food acts as a ‘volatile practice’ capable of filling a void and performing resistance to white Creole power.

## FOOD AND SLAVE RESISTANCE

Whilst Levy’s Caroline is busy listing the endless courses and individual items required for her Christmas dinner to her head servant, the novel’s mischievous third-person narrator interjects:

Perhaps, reader, you are familiar with the West Indian planters and their famed appetites. You may have had cause to entertain them at your own table and

watched your house servants dash and scurry to attend upon them. If this be true, then you will also know that the flesh of many a poor creature needed to be sacrificed in order to satisfy their greedy guts.<sup>22</sup>

This shift in narrative perspective is highly significant. Indeed, both Levy and Phillips use narrative strategies which deliberately decentre the hegemony of the white Creole accounts upon which they draw. Levy's novel starts with the orally based narrative and free indirect discourse of Miss July, and it is only within the frame of her narration that Caroline exists at all in the novel. Such decentring of the dominant discourse of the white planter class constitutes a familiar postmodern fictional trope of historiographic metafiction and also links the novel to various subaltern or 'history from below' movements in recent historical writing, both scholarly and creative. However, Levy's narrative strategy also, importantly, shifts the novel's axis away from the relative formality and abstraction of an archive of written documents on plantation life towards an adapted oral, idiom and communal reading of the same, including planters' and slaves' relation to food. In this respect, Levy's novel shifts the ways in which readers and writers such as Phillips have responded to an archive of written materials on plantation life. This is the chief originality and significance of Levy's novel: to disrupt the intertextual field and to realign our reading of all of these sources, historical and fiction thereafter. In contrast, when Phillips melds fact and fiction, historical reference, and creative licence in *Cambridge*, the effect is far less radical, and his characters are arguably much more constrained by the nature of their source materials.

The shift to the third-person satirical observer in the passage from *The Long Song* cited above, and the preeminence of Miss July's narrative voice in the novel overall, is important, not just in terms of the narrative strategy of Levy's novel but also in that it represents a shift in power in other ways. In short, *The Long Song* shows how, historically, the dynamics of food and social order were not only more complex than they might initially have appeared but also imbricated in wider, often quite delicate, networks of power. In a plantation context, food preparation for the planter class devolved to a relatively small house slave population which, in many cases, had just as much power to resist as to conform to the planter's instructions in the crucial matter of food preparation; in certain cases, as Lewis and others document, house slaves harnessed the possibilities they had to cause ill or to poison, despite the threat of severe punishments. Levy's novel imaginatively re-creates the power relations between the white Creole planter class and their black house slaves in the shared but hierarchical space of the plantation house. Arguably, nowhere was this more subtly played out than in the intimate area of food preparation and consumption.

## TROUBLE IN THE KITCHEN

Indeed, Levy's novel is peculiarly attentive to these nuances of power, subversion and resistance in her fictional slave community. In the Christmas dinner passage from *The Long Song* we find, in cook and house slave, evidence of clear resistance to Caroline's culinary direction and a deliberate transgression of the social niceties and proprieties of the planter's dinner table. Wilk and others note the widespread tension between employers and cooks in this and a later period<sup>23</sup> and argue that 'while these women cooked European dishes for their employers, they did not always follow orders to the letter, either from ignorance, lack of raw materials or their own resistance and unwillingness to give up what they had learned at home'.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Lewis records his frustration with a black cook who is seemingly unable to follow his requests for specific foods or dishes at dinner:

[Slaves] never can do the same thing a second time in the same manner; and if the cook having succeeded in dressing a dish well is desired to dress just such another, she is certain of doing something which makes it quite different. One day I desired that there might be always a piece of salt beef at dinner, in order that I might be certain of always having enough to send to the sick in the hospital. In consequence, there was nothing at dinner but salt beef. I complained that there was not a single fresh dish, and the next day, there was nothing but fresh. Sometimes there is scarcely anything served up, and the cook seems to have forgotten the dinner altogether: she is told of it; and the next day she slaughters without mercy pigs, sheep, fowls, ducks, turkeys, and everything that she can lay her murderous hands upon, until the table absolutely groans under the load of her labours.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas Lewis reads such behaviour as slave obtuseness and ignorance, an inability to follow simple instructions, we might read this as deliberate disruption, indeed as evidence of slave resistance to white authority on a small but daily basis.

## ACTS OF RESISTANCE: FOOD THEFT

Another well-documented example of slave resistance, reflected in both Phillips's and Levy's novels, is stealing the planter's food and drink. Indeed, Cambridge is tried for food theft among other charges<sup>26</sup> and eventually hung for the murder of his tormentor, Mr Brown, in Phillips's novel, although the evidence for murder is ambivalent at best. Levy shows Miss July pilfering from the dining room as a regular occurrence.<sup>27</sup> It is performed in collabora-

tion with other slaves and its ‘little deception[s]’ practised and passed on from slave to slave.<sup>28</sup> Psyche Williams-Forson argues that in an African American context, ‘stealing food was an act of skill and cunning outwitting the master and led to “African-American trickster heroism”. Stealing was deemed morally acceptable and necessary for survival while also functioning as a form of subversion’.<sup>29</sup> It was subversive as it ‘upset the order of slavery that was maintained through strict rations and control of food production and ownership; it therefore upset the racial order and the parameters of power’.<sup>30</sup> In the Caribbean the situation was very similar, with food theft commonly being seen by the enslaved as what Zobel Marshall terms an ‘Anansi tactic’. Andrew Warnes notes how the autobiographies of slaves ‘often . . . refer to acts of resistance—to moments of food theft and foraging, to surreptitious self-education, and to other individual rebellions that challenged [the] circumscription [of cooked foods and written words]. By characterizing cooking and writing as volatile practices that held out a promise to slaves and a threat to slaveholders, occasioning “stratagems” through which plantation codes could be transgressed and consolidated, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* furnishes a rich supply of such acts of everyday resistance’.<sup>31</sup> As Warnes observes, ‘If slaves could reassert their humanity by appropriating “white foods” and “white” books, then slaveholders could deny it by withdrawing such materials and so returning their property to what they saw as an animalistic diet and an animalistic illiteracy’.<sup>32</sup> In short, as Douglass’s account demonstrates, food opens up ‘possibilities for disciplinary control and defiance’,<sup>33</sup> and it is within such a regime that Cambridge is cruelly punished with his life. By way of contrast, his wife, the alleged obeah woman, Christiana, is so feared (and also possibly sexually available)<sup>34</sup> that she is allowed to sit defiantly at the table of the corrupt Mr Brown in Emily’s presence in Philip’s novel. This, as Caroline notes, is a transgressive act of the highest order since Christiana is neither a house slave nor a servant at the dinner table.<sup>35</sup>

Such a framework and this comparative context allow us to read several scenes in Levy’s novel as particularly significant. In a notable scene, Levy has the head servant, Godfrey, warn and then challenge his mistress over the cost of the provisions she wants him to purchase for the Christmas meal:

‘My brother says you cheat me. How can everything be so expensive?’ the missus asked.

And Godfrey, holding her gaze, unflinching, answered softly, ‘It is not that things be expensive, it is just that you cannot afford them’ . . .

‘How dare you question me’, Caroline Mortimer said, ‘I know you cheat me. Now, just get me good price or I’ll have you whipped’ . . .

From a small linen purse she counted out money into her hand. Then passing the coins to Godfrey, she said firmly, ‘And be sure to lay the best linen cloth upon the table. The Irish linen should raise Elizabeth Wyndham’s envy’.<sup>36</sup>

Godfrey’s insubordination earns him a blow to the ear, but his transgression goes much deeper; indeed, it speaks not only of Caroline’s only nominal control as a white woman over what is ultimately her brother’s money<sup>37</sup> and her fragile authority in the context of the particular domestic economy but also to a much wider encoded register of respectability which marks the family’s place in planter society and the fine gradations of status within the same.

In a later scene, having been left alone in the Great House, Miss July wanders freely through the rooms and peruses those of her mistress’s possessions which are usually out of bounds. Her transgression extends to liberating the missus’s best porcelain cups and plates from a high cupboard and, in a marvellously parodic scene, mimicking the crooked finger of her mistress on her tea cup.<sup>38</sup> July’s mimicry extends to calling to fellow house slave Marguerite to serve her tea, and then, when startled by the entrance of freed slave Nimrod (whose very name suggests both speed and rebellion), transferring her orders to him. In occupying the exclusively white space of the dining table, where usually slaves serve rather than sit, and in appropriating exclusively ‘white’ commodities such as wine, July overturns the codes and hierarchies of plantation society and delights in her open and flagrant resistance. That this scene is an example of the ‘world turned upside down’, of the inversion of social hierarchies and the revelry characteristic of what Bakhtin calls the ‘carnivalesque’, is suggested by the image of July looking at her reflection in the lid of the silver salver and ‘in the large serving spoon she, and the whole world, was reflected upside down, then back upon the ground in the spoon’s other side’.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, when Nimrod enters the house, July co-opts him into her subversive play, which exhibits all the hallmarks of classic inversion and colonial mimicry: he (the freed slave) is now enslaved and subservient; she (the slave) is now not only free but also the dominant party in the relationship, with recognised authority. But this is also a courtship scene in which domination and subjugation are the core elements in an unchoreographed ritual dance of mutual attraction. Both racial and sexual politics are interesting here, as July, mimicking the ‘missus’, takes evident pleasure in exercising her racial and gendered power over her ‘slave’ Nimrod, and Nimrod bows to his role as subservient to Miss July:

‘Bring me some tea and be quick’ . . .

The knife, fork, spoon and blue and white plate that Nimrod laid at the end of the dining table for July were placed well enough, but still she had to punish



Figure 3.1. 'The Barbadoes Mulatto Girl'. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-d5db-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

him. For he was too slow. He was a dull and indolent nigger. She took the spoon and hit it upon his head. He yelled—oh—at the sharp pain, then promised her he would do better. Yet he did not pull out the chair far enough for her to sit, nor push it close enough for her to eat.

‘You are a very stupid nigger and I will see you whipped’, July cried.

And Nimrod cringed, ‘Sorry, missus’, before her.

The orange upon the plate was not peeled. ‘How am I to eat this?’ July asked him. As Nimrod leant forward to splice the fruit with a knife, July hit him once more upon the head with her spoon. ‘You are too close to me, nigger’, she told him. And as he jumped back from her, she yelled, ‘What about this fruit? Am I to peel it myself?’ When he leaned over to attempt a second slice, she slapped him about the ear, ‘Are you disobeying me?’ she asked him.

‘No missus’, he said, breathless.

‘How dare you speak to me while I am at my table’, she said, before striking him again with her spoon.

The glass Nimrod filled with red wine overflowed, the dark-plum contents dribbling upon the table. ‘Be careful, nigger, that is our finest wine’, July was forced to yell.

Nimrod fell to his knees before her pleading, ‘No beat me, missus, no beat me’.

‘But I must’, July said, slapping his head, ‘or you will never learn’.<sup>40</sup>

In this passage, Miss July appropriates some stock tropes of colonial discourse within a recognisable, if thoroughly domesticised, disciplinary field. According to colonial constructions, Nimrod is a ‘dull and indolent’ and ‘very stupid nigger’ and therefore must be disciplined accordingly (with verbal chastisement, beating and the threat of the whip). However, he is also a suitor, as Miss July is well aware, and thus the coded politics of erotic dominance and subjugation are also brought into play. In an inversion of the dominant sexual politics of the plantation and the power relations of the European courtly love tradition, Miss July makes herself the active subject rather than the longed-for object of the liaison. That she actively appropriates tropes of dominance in both racial and gendered terms suggests another example of ‘the world turned upside down’ and makes for a powerfully transgressive scene.

### ‘EVERYTHING FOREIGN BEING BETTER THAN LOCAL?’

A different kind of hierarchy, yet one still linked to concepts of respectability, social status and taste, is revealed in Caroline’s list of foods for her Christmas dinner. It reveals an interesting tension between imported culinary traditions (the plum pudding, the roast beef and English jams) and the transformation of more indigenous foods such as ‘the turtle served in its shell’ into exoticised

culinary performance pieces which connote status and wealth. It is not just the imported or foreign foods and recipes which have particular value and high status in this context but also the more indigenous and local. This is a perfect example of the interplay of the local and the foreign at the same table, ‘how people produce both a sense of familiar locality, and exotic foreignness—often at the same time [or] in the same dish’.<sup>41</sup> And in this example, too, we see how the cultural value attributed to certain foods in terms of a hierarchy of taste and preference is itself malleable and unfixed as well as reversible. As her brother John predicts, Caroline soon tires of local dishes and foodstuffs in favour of a more ‘respectable’, largely European-influenced, diet.

Such a shift in an individual character’s taste also, importantly, reflects a wider trend in the white Creole or planter classes and upper middle classes, over a longer historical period, a shift away from indigenous or naturalised foods and dishes back towards imported goods as most prestigious and highly valued by those classes who could afford imported foods. Significantly, by this stage in her Jamaican residence Caroline’s culinary preferences have shifted away from embracing the exotic and the local to the safe, but also crucially, the prestige of imported and Eurocentric dishes: imported English preserves and instructions to cook plum pudding.<sup>42</sup> For Caroline, as an English expatriate and incomer to the Jamaican planter class, food—and this most visible of Christian feasts: Christmas—is closely linked with social status. Ceremonies such as formal dinners and parties were important precisely because they seemed to be the main means of social contact with other white Creoles, as Mrs Carmichael notes:

When I first arrived in the West Indies, there was little of what we call visiting ‘in an easy way’; family dinners, or a quiet cup of tea were unknown, ceremonious dinners were the only media of intercourse.<sup>43</sup>

Caroline’s choices of dishes may appear relatively random and haphazard, as a newcomer and relatively inexperienced housekeeper, but they are in fact encoded within a larger colonial register of respectability, a system ‘for expressing the myriad social distinctions in the colony’.<sup>44</sup> As Wilk (2006) and a number of other critics have shown,<sup>45</sup> Levy’s novel reflects a wider historical reality as the wealthy and powerful planter families are expressed in their ‘wealth, education, social status and position’<sup>46</sup> in highly codified ways. Writing of the nineteenth-century Belizean upper-middle classes’ close attention to the ‘practices of European upper classes and fashions’,<sup>47</sup> Wilk suggests:

Respectability demanded a constant flow of imports, and so did building reputations. While the daily diet of the poor was ‘plantain and salt fish’ supplemented by ‘ground food’ (root crops), any festive occasion demanded imported luxu-

ries. . . . Spending every penny to treat friends and relatives to expensive wines, liquor and foods was essential in building reputation . . . imports always trump local products, new is better than old, and expensive things are always better than cheap ones.<sup>48</sup>

The eager anticipation of the arrival of regular shipments of desirable imported consumables is noted by the English character Emily Cartwright in Phillip's *Cambridge*: 'I have adjusted myself to tolerate poorly dressed meat served without butter, unless a shipment from Ireland or England happens to have been freshly landed (although fresh it is unlikely to be after such a voyage)'.<sup>49</sup> As Wilk argues, a distinct hierarchy of foodstuffs is reflected here with imported food products (Irish or English butter) being perceived by Emily as of higher status than locally produced ones.

#### 'THE PUFF AND TWADDLE OF SOME WHITE LADY'S MIND'<sup>50</sup>

The writings of white Creole and English gentlewomen such as Mrs Carmichael, Lady Nugent, and Janet Schaw are referred to by *The Long Song*'s chief narrator, Miss July, as 'the puff and twaddle of some white lady's mind',<sup>51</sup> a nicely self-reflexive strategy which at once foregrounds the re-created residual orality of her narrative voice and distances the novel from its written historical intertexts. However, no such distancing strategy is used by Phillips in *Cambridge*; the fictional Emily Cartwright, who travels to the Caribbean to visit her absentee father's plantation in Jamaica, is far more fully an amalgam of a series of historical predecessors or ur-voices than is Levy's Caroline Mortimer. Indeed, as Lars Eckstein has shown (2001),<sup>52</sup> numerous passages from Phillip's novel bear direct resemblance to historical textual antecedents. Thus, for example, the meal laid on to welcome Emily to the plantation is strikingly similar to those described by Lady Nugent:

Of the meal itself there was little with which I could find fault, except perhaps its extravagance. The table is clearly one of wasteful plenty, in violation of all the rules of domestic propriety. I have never seen such rich and heavily seasoned food: land- and sea-turtles, quails, snipes and pigeons, doves and plover. Excellent port, pepperpot, and then heavy vegetables which bore some resemblance to potatoes and cabbage but were only near-cousin to these familiar staples of my diet. Dishes of tea, coffee, bumpers of claret, Madeira, *sangaree*, were all to be followed with citrus fruits and tarts of pineapple. I did enquire of Mr Brown if such a banquet were normal and he nodded as he pushed another stewed fish into his mouth, I could only imagine that he eats but once a day. For my part I must confess I found such excesses vulgar.<sup>53</sup>

And yet here the relationship to source material is quite unlike Levy's handling of the same. Gone are the mocking narrative voice and the complex narrative distancing strategies of Levy's novel. Phillip's narrative style seems to match the conservative discourse of his character. Thus, for example, when Emily refers to 'heavy vegetables which bore some resemblance to potatoes and cabbage but were only near-cousin to these familiar staples of my diet', she may well be referring to sweet potatoes, yam and callaloo; yet she is clearly struggling to define this gustatory experience. She has at her command only limited terms, chiefly those of the metropolitan centre from which she has come. Indeed, Bewes argues that Emily's journal is

saturated with 'colonialist' attitudes—not only politically . . . but also aesthetically . . . Emily is an aspiring writer and lecturer . . . But what we read in her journal are the outpourings of a stilted, derivative, and ideologically unreflective writer, inhabiting the literary discourse of a hegemonic, culturally dominant Europe. The level of overstatement in her narrative is so spectacular that many of her passages . . . read more like a satire of colonial speech than an attempt to achieve 'authenticity of voice', the quality for which Phillips's work has often been praised.<sup>54</sup>

Emily and Cambridge are unreliable narrators 'in different ways'.<sup>55</sup> Later in the novel, Emily can be seen to present a limited but more creolised sensibility, taking on the food names, processes and practices she encounters on her brother's plantation and feeling suitably 'at home' with its culinary traditions,<sup>56</sup> even complaining about the disappointing lack of culinary cosmopolitanism at a 'traditional West Indian dinner' held by a merchant in Baytown.<sup>57</sup> Yet Phillips's character never becomes completely creolised in the cultural world of the novel, nor, in narrative terms, does her voice ever break through the discursive 'comfort zone' of her real-life colonial predecessors to connect with Cambridge or other black characters in the novel. Cambridge remains an alien 'other', locked outside of her discourse and its terms of reference. Likewise, Phillips's narrative strategy locks Emily into a much tighter and constrained relationship to the novel's sources and 'precursory voices' than Levy's. This may reflect a relatively greater concern with representing a historical moment rather than privileging the fictional reshaping of such moments as, arguably, is the case with Levy's novel. Not only is Cambridge's narrative voice not allowed to dominate and to contain other narrative voices in Phillip's novel, as Miss July's does Levy's text, but Phillip's novel also never admits the re-created oral register and repertoire of narrative techniques, which mark Levy's novel as thoroughly creolised and transformative of the narrative she has to tell in *The Long Song*.

It is thus significant that the fictional ‘white ladies’ in both novels return to England in a muted and diminished state and that it is Levy’s feisty character narrator, Miss July, who has the last word on matters of food and survival. July’s *pièce de résistance* is a magnificent silver salver of insects, meticulously collected and served to the father of her baby and husband to Caroline, John Goodwin, as his ‘leaving dish’.<sup>58</sup> As such, July’s ‘dish’ functions not only to parody the planter’s sumptuous table and to provoke Robert’s particular fears and responses to abjection but also to raise a wider food taboo shared by many, but not all, cultures. Fittingly enough, after she leaves the Great House, July’s survival strategy, both economic and psychic, involves cooking: she sets herself up as the maker and purveyor of ‘the finest jams and pickles to be found anywhere upon this island’.<sup>59</sup> Such creative practice proves good grounding for her final role, which is to narrate the story we are reading. In this, Levy has July remain close to the oral creativity and communal life world of her slave beginnings, and she narrates her story as an oral storyteller: ‘a woman possessed of forthright tongue and little ink’.<sup>60</sup> Commensality is intrinsic to her telling, as if at a long meal, as she calls forth her story and notes the responses of her son Thomas, the book’s printer, as well as our own response to her story, teasingly seated at her window with a ‘cup of sweetened tea resting beside me’.<sup>61</sup> The next chapter examines the representation of sugar and other foods in a wider range of literary texts as it turns to the question of food and identity in Caribbean writing.

## NOTES

1. Lars Eckstein, ‘Dialogism in Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge . . .*’, *World Literature Written in English* 39, no. 1 (2001): 54–74.
2. B. W. Higson, *Jamaican Food* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2008), 6 and 8.
3. Andrea Levy, *The Long Song* (London: Headline Review, 2010), 23; Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge* (London: Picador, 1991), 31–32 and 80–81.
4. M. G. Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor*, ed. Judith Terry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1834]), 103 and 151. See also Henry Coleridge (1826), Lady Maria Nugent (2000) and Mrs Carmichael (1934).
5. Winifred Grey, *Caribbean Cookery* (London: Collins, 1965), 208.
6. Lynn Marie Houston, *Food Culture in the Caribbean* (Trenton, NJ: Greenwood Press, 2005), xxv.
7. Olive Senior, *Working Miracles: Women’s Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean* (London: James Currey and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 129–47.
8. Houston, *Food*, xxv–xxvii.

9. See also Richard Wilk, ‘Real Belizean Food’, in *Food and Culture*, 2nd ed., eds. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 308–26 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
10. Ilari Berti, ‘Curiosity, Appreciation and Disgust’, in *Caribbean Food Cultures: Culinary Practices and Consumption in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas*, eds. Wiebke Beushausen, Anne Brüske, Ana-Sofia Commichau, Patrick Helber and Sinah Kloss, 115–32 (Germany: Transcript, 2014).
11. Berti, ‘Curiosity’, n.p.
12. Mrs Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1934), 51.
13. Carmichael, *Manners*, 68.
14. Wilk, ‘Real Belizean Food’, 308–26.
15. Richard Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 110.
16. Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*.
17. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 35.
18. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 48.
19. Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774); M. G. Lewis, *Journal*; Carmichael, *Manners* or Lady Maria Nugent (2000).
20. Levy, *Long Song*, 22–24.
21. See also Lewis, *Journal*, 347–48, and Carmichael, *Manners*, on this subject.
22. Levy, *Long Song*, 57.
23. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 190–91.
24. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 109.
25. Lewis, *Journal*, 393–94.
26. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 166.
27. Levy, *Long Song*, 72.
28. Levy, *Long Song*, 73.
29. Psyche Williams-Forson, ‘More Than Just the “Big Piece of Chicken”’, in *Food and Culture* 11 (September 16, 2016).
30. Jennifer Brown, ‘Remembrance of Freedoms Past’, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food*, eds. Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 165.
31. Andrew Warnes, *Hunger Overcome?* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 2–3.
32. Warnes, *Hunger*, 3.
33. Warnes, *Hunger*, 2–3.
34. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 74–75.
35. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 77–78.
36. Levy, *Long Song*, 61.
37. Levy, *Long Song*, 60.
38. Levy, *Long Song*, 98.
39. Levy, *Long Song*, 97.
40. Levy, *Long Song*, 99.

41. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 113.
42. Levy, *Long Song*, 58–59.
43. Carmichael, *Manners*, cited in Christine MacKie, *Trade Winds: A Caribbean Cookery Book* (Bath: Absolute Press, 1987), 56.
44. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 79.
45. For example, Peter Wilson, *Crab Antics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973); Diana Austin, ‘Culture and Ideology in the English-Speaking Caribbean’, *American Ethnologist* 10, no. 2 (1983): 223–40; Jean Besson, ‘Reputation and Respectability Reconsidered’ in *Women and Change in the Caribbean*, ed. Janet Momsen, 15–37 (London: James Currey, 1993); Karen Olwig, *Global Culture, Island Identity* (New York: Harwood Academic Publishing, 1993); and Daniel Miller, *Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 1994).
46. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 79.
47. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 82.
48. Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, 83.
49. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 80–81.
50. Levy, *Long Song*, 8.
51. Levy, *Long Song*, 8.
52. See Lars Eckstein, ‘Dialogism in Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge*’, *World Literature Written in English* 39, no. 1 (2001): 54–74. Eckstein painstakingly maps Phillip’s use of specific passages from sources such as Carmichael (1934), Mrs Flannigan (1844), Lewis (1834) and Schaw (1923), alongside more generalised use of Henry Nelson Coleridge (1862), Bryan Edward (1807), Nugent (2000), J. B. Moreton (1790) and F. W. N. Bayley (1830). Phillip’s portrayal of his eponymous protagonist draws heavily on classic slave narratives such as James Gronniosaw’s *A Narrative of the Life of James Albert Gronniosaw* (1770), Ottobah Cugoano’s *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery* (1787), Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (1789) and Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of Ignatius Sancho* (n.d.). Timothy Bewes (2006) argues for a more problematised reading, in which Phillips’s narrators often ‘ventriloquize’ other discourses to the exclusion of any individual voice of their own and are seen to have a profoundly unsettled relationship to the materiality of the text of which they are part (33–60).
53. Nugent, *Journal*, 31–32.
54. Timothy Bewes, ‘Shame, Ventriloquy, and the Problem of the Cliché in Caryl Phillips’, *Cultural Critique* 63 (Spring 2006): 44.
55. Bewes, ‘Shame’, 44.
56. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 114.
57. Phillips, *Cambridge*, 114.
58. Levy, *Long Song*, 270.
59. Levy, *Long Song*, 279.
60. Levy, *Long Song*, 2.
61. Levy, *Long Song*, 8.



## *Chapter Four*

# **'You Are What (and How) You Eat'**

## *Food and Identity Politics in the Caribbean*

This chapter draws on a richly diverse body of Caribbean writings to show how the creation of food and the creation of narrative are intimately linked cultural practices in the Caribbean and its diasporas. Historically, Caribbean writers have explored, defined and reaffirmed their different cultural, ethnic, caste, class and gender identities by writing about what, when and how they eat. Images of feeding, feasting, fasting and other food rituals and practices, as articulated in a range of Caribbean writings, constitute a powerful force of social cohesion and cultural continuity. Moreover, food is often central to the question of what it means to be Caribbean, especially in diasporic and globalised contexts. As has been shown, the region has one of the longest histories of global connectedness and globalising processes in relation to food. But what happens when food 'travels', and how do diasporic writers negotiate their identities through and with food? How do contemporary Caribbean writers navigate tensions between the local and the global foodways of the past and of the present?

### **THE AMERINDIANS: THE CARIBBEAN'S FIRST COOKS**

The Caribbean's first cooks were Amerindian peoples (such as the Arawaks and Caribs) who navigated and settled in the region long before the advent of Europeans or enslaved Africans. The culinary tradition of *barbacoa* (what the Spanish later named *barbecue*), the practice of marinating and then roasting meats over open coals, is almost certainly Amerindian in origin, as are many culinary practices still found in the Caribbean today. These include the use of starchy cassavas (sweet or bitter) to make bambie cakes, bread or farina and the use of cassareep (the boiled juice of the cassava) to preserve meat and as

a key ingredient in the characteristically Caribbean one-pot dish of Pepperpot. As Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (1998), Andrew Warnes (2004) and, most recently, Valerie Loichot (2013) have shown, the idea of auto-ingestion or cannibalism had become closely associated with the indigenous peoples of this region even before Columbus's infamous encounter with Carib Indians, though there is little evidence to suggest that cannibalism was actually practiced by them in any regular or secular context.

The Arawaks' supreme male deity was called Yocanu, the giver of cassava, in keeping with the centrality of this foodstuff to their culture. Food features centrally in a number of Amerindian creation narratives, such as the story of 'The Tapir and the Tree of Life'. Philip Sherlock's *West Indian Folk Tales* (1966) includes a version of this story called 'The Coomack Tree'. It starts with hunger, as many other Caribbean folk tales do. Kabo Tano, the Creator, sees his people weak, miserable and 'dying of hunger' after they have descended from their sky home to clean up the 'dull planet earth'.<sup>1</sup> He therefore

create[s] for their comfort a mighty tree such as had not been before, each branch as huge as a forest tree, each heavy with fruit: this with oranges of rich gold, that with bunches of bananas ripening to a greenish yellow; here sapodillas ready for eating, there mangoes—with every kind of fruit growing and ripening on its own branch; and beneath the shadow of the tree grew all manner of plants that bear food: cassava, potatoes, yams, maize, and the like.<sup>2</sup>

In a later retelling of this story, the first creature to find the tree was the tapir:

The land they had arrived in had very poor soil and yielded little but they noticed that the tapir was living very well, so they set the woodpecker to follow him to discover the source of his food. However, the woodpecker gave himself away by the noise he made gorging on the insects on the tree. Then they sent a rat who bargained with the tapir and they agreed to share, but the rat was so greedy that the Indians found him sleeping with his mouth still full of corn, and so they forced him to take them to the tree. After many months, they felled the tree and each man took away a piece to plant for his own.<sup>3</sup>

In Jamaican Olive Senior's version of this story, 'The Tree of Life',<sup>4</sup> the tapir is named 'Mapuri the wild pig' (as he is in Sherlock's version), and it is the Creation God, or 'Mighty One', who demands the Amerindians cut down the tree and take 'slips and cuttings and plant them everywhere',<sup>5</sup> thus initiating the cultivation of crops and systems of agriculture we know today.

The poems of *Gardening in the Tropics* (1995) focus centrally on the Amerindians as the Caribbean's original, eco-sensitive 'cultivators' and their important legacies to the Caribbean whilst registering contemporary agricultural policies and practices in the Caribbean as a new form of colonisation. As

such, they are inherently ‘eco-aware’. This is especially the case in the title poem to the collection. In ‘Annatto and Guinep’, the poetic voice reflects on the yellow paste and black stain derived from these plants as culturally central to the Amerindians. However, these are lost traditions: ‘No one today regards annatto and guinep / as anything special / Country people one time used annatto / to colour their food, / these days you can hardly get it / not even at the market. / As for guinep: that’s worse. Big people / scorn it / (though they eat it). Only children confess / they love it’.<sup>6</sup> In ‘Guinep’, Senior similarly describes mothers warning of the staining quality of the fruit but also ‘secretly consuming it’.<sup>7</sup> As the repeated lines suggest, there is more than one meaning to ‘our mothers have a thing about guinep’. ‘Guava/2’ focuses on a woman making guava jelly ‘that time in Barbados’ but struggling to cook and preserve all the fruit from the fast-producing guava tree in her back yard. When she dies suddenly, the speaker reminds that the ‘Taino / Zemi of the dead is called Maquetari / Guayaba [or Coyaba] Lord of Guava’<sup>8</sup> because the Taino believed that the dead came back at night and feasted on the guava fruit. The speaker suggests that the ancient Amerindian god has instructed the tree to ‘speed up production so that / the incoming soul will have enough of / the fragrance of guava to feed on’.<sup>9</sup>

In other Amerindian narratives, food and eating are used as metaphors for copulation, often with animals acting as the animistic bridges between the human and the spirit world. Although Caribbean writers such as Wilson Harris, Pauline Melville, Grace Nichols and Senior have variously explored the mythical, cultural and culinary legacies of the Amerindians in their writing, actual Amerindian oral narratives have been much less widely anthologised, translated or studied in comparison to those of other ethnic groups in the Caribbean. Desrey Fox is just one among a growing number of Caribbean scholars who are redressing this relative neglect of Amerindian culture.<sup>10</sup> Explorations of Amerindian myth and culture can be found in the fictional and critical writing of Guyanese writers Wilson Harris and Pauline Melville, although their Caribbean-based writings rarely focus centrally on food. Melville’s short story, ‘Eat Labba [a kind of small deer] and Drink Creek-Water’, from her 1991 collection *Shape-Shifter* refers to the Guyanese saying that if you do as the title suggests, you will always return to Guyana.

### ANANCY AND HIS TRICKSTER TALES

The Caribbean’s first narratives, then, were oral. Early additions to this oral literature were the Anancy (Anansi) tales of the spider trickster figure (half man, half spider) which West African slaves brought with them to the Carib-

bean and continued to adapt and develop on the sugar plantations. *Anansi* is the Twi word for spider, and these oral narratives are thought to be mainly Asante (Ashanti) in origin. Anancy tales are often read simply as folk tales, but in fact they originated and functioned as carefully coded survivalist narratives amongst Africans in their own continent and then as slave populations in the Caribbean. They tell of how the wily, cunning, verbally dexterous figure of Anancy repeatedly survives by outwitting bigger, more ferocious or physically stronger foes (e.g., Alligator, Snake, Tiger) with his combination of adaptiveness, wit and guile; symbolically he thereby represents survival in the times of famine or dearth or slave resistance to an oppressive plantation regime.

Unsurprisingly, given the survivalist function of these trickster tales, such stories often feature food or, more accurately, food shortage. Anancy, ‘the trickster strategist of a series of oral stories dealing with food shortage and acquisition . . . eats while others starve’.<sup>11</sup> A significant corpus of stories from Wona’s *A Selection of Anancy Stories* (1899) contain tricks involving food. Marshall (2014) similarly notes a range of Anancy titles featuring food, as collected by different anthologists such as Beckwith (1924), Rattray (1930), Jekyll (1966), Bennett (1979) and Tanna (2000). All the stories in Philip Sherlock’s *Anansi the Spider Man* (1956) feature food and eating. James Berry’s stories for children, *Anansi Spiderman* (1986), also includes food-based tales such as ‘Anancy and Bad News to Cow-Mother’. In Beckwith’s ‘Dry-Head and Anansi’, Anansi manages to trick his wife into allowing him to eat a whole pig as a ‘cure’, whilst in Walter Jekyll’s ‘Annancy in Crab Country’ (1966) Anancy poses as a preacher in order to lure delicious-looking Crab to a ‘baptism’ in boiling water. In Sherlock’s version of this tale,<sup>12</sup> Anansi recruits his friends Rat, Crow and Bullfrog to help him get the crabs interested in his ‘preaching’. When the crabs see Anansi ‘baptizing’ his friends, they want to join in and are bundled away in a sack. Food in these stories is then, literally (and literarily), a matter of life and death as story and food come together in a functional but also fully realised and living cultural form.

In ‘How the Spider Got a Bald Head’ (Rattray 1930), ‘Anansi gets his comeuppance for eating at a funeral while he is pretending to be fasting in honour of the dead. He is about to be caught eating some hot beans, so quickly hides the beans in his hat but loses all his hair as the beans burn his scalp as a result’.<sup>13</sup> This is a tale which ‘reinforces Asante social structure by showing the problems that can befall those who defy customs’.<sup>14</sup> Marshall notes how ‘the majority of [Asante Anansi] tales start with the description of famine, with Anansi in desperate search for food . . . the prime focus of the[se] stories is the growing of crops and the desirability of meat’, especially as an offering to potential mates.<sup>15</sup> ‘Jamaican Anansi stories also start with a description of lack and suffering . . . Anansi, because he can always find ways

to overcome the most seemingly insurmountable challenges, is conjured in life-threatening situations when food and water are in short supply, and death is imminent'.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, 'The Jamaican Anansi, is obsessed with food' . . . motivated by his stomach and will steal from own children [as well as others] to feed his insatiable appetite'.<sup>17</sup> Candice Goucher mentions an Anancy story collected by Jekyll in which Anancy declares, 'Me go buy me little salt fish an' me little hafoo yam, t'reepence a read peas fe make me soup, quatty 'kellion [scallion], gill a garlic to put with me little nick-snack, quatty ripe banana, bit fe Gungo peas, an' me see if me can get quatty beef bone'.<sup>18</sup> She comments that Anancy's meal of saltfish, provisions, banana and red pea soup 'could have been served on either side of the Atlantic'.<sup>19</sup> Clearly Anancy survived the Middle Passage, and one of his guises (although he is more commonly the recipient of meals or a food thief) is as a cook.

That Anancy tales—like the food cultures of the Caribbean—are living and creolised rather than fixed, inherited forms is evidenced in the tale of 'Anansi and Sorrel' (Bennett 1979). Out of a context of lack (Anancy has nothing to take to the Christmas Eve Morning Grand Market), accident (he flings some red plants which he finds into a pot of boiling water) and improvisation (he tries adding sugar, ginger and cinnamon), Anancy inadvertently invents the classic Jamaican Christmas drink of sorrel, itself a symbol of Jamaican cultural identity. As Marshall observes, it is an innovative adaptation of African hibiscus drinks given a new form and context.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, gradually Caribbean creole food such as saltfish, scallions and banana replaced African foodstuffs such as fu-fu, palm wine and palm nuts in Anancy tales, thereby registering a new creolised Caribbean cultural identity.<sup>21</sup>

## ANANCY'S LEGACY

Anancy reemerges in later residually oral texts such as Trinidadian Fighter's calypso 'Indian Wedding' (1957), a satire on interracial conflict which leaves both sides looking ridiculous. This features an Afro-Creole protagonist disguising himself as an Indo-Caribbean in order to attend a Hindu wedding. His Anancy-like trickery is so successful that he is offered an Indian girl in marriage, another kind of 'consumption' which links food with sex, as so often in the calypso form. When is he finally exposed as an imposter and threatened with violence ('Hoota! Hoota! Black man, Hoota!'), he is still happy to remain, as all along his interest has been primarily in the food. He is like Anancy, an 'archetypal . . . gate-crasher, disguiser and trickster',<sup>22</sup> but in this calypso, importantly, both ethnicities are mocked through stereotyping:

the Indian is separatist, gullible, exotic and ‘other’ and the Afro-Creole is lazy, dishonest and greedy.

Anancy is also present in some of Jamaican poet and performer Louise Bennett’s early to mid-twentieth-century poems. Indeed, Bennett deserves to be read as a major figure in connecting traditional Caribbean cultural forms (e.g., the oral proverb, Anancy tales) and Nation language to Caribbean poetry more generally. Bennett continues to use oral proverbs, many relating to food and eating, in poems such as ‘Roas’ Turkey’.<sup>23</sup> Anancy’s spirit is very much alive in her voice portraits and poems of everyday Jamaican life, but more often than not, he now takes the form of a resilient and ‘cunny’ female figure, the most famous of which is Bennett’s ‘Jamaica Oman’. The poem opens, ‘Jamaica oman cunny, sah! / Is how dem jinnal [trick] so?’<sup>24</sup> Hers is the burden of budgeting and daily cooking for her brood, but she is subtle and cunning in sensing that if she ‘bite[s] her tongue’ Anancy-wise, in the long run she will get food and sovereignty over her man, for ‘Oman luck mus come’.<sup>25</sup> In poems such as ‘War Time Grocery’ and ‘Rice Gawn’,<sup>26</sup> Bennett describes the same situation of hunger and food scarcity which marks the start of many Anancy tales, now updated to a new context of wartime food shortage, price controls and the profiteering of shopkeepers and suppliers.

### **FROM FOOD IN THE CARIBBEAN TO CARIBBEAN FOOD: WHITE PLANTERS AND TRAVELLERS’ ACCOUNTS**

As surveyed in chapters 1 and 2, the other main sources from this early period are white planter and travellers’ accounts of life in the Caribbean. Many of these reveal interesting attitudes to new, exotic, familiar, imported and creolised foods as well as the ways in which food availability and food choices were linked to race, ethnicity and social hierarchies in the Caribbean colonies. If we return to Edward Ward’s ‘Of Their Provisions’, we find mention of ‘a rare *Soop* they call *Pepper-pot*’. This is one of the earliest references to what is arguably the best known ‘one-pot’ meal still eaten throughout the Caribbean. As Olive Senior suggests, ‘One thing that unites us in the Caribbean is food, especially melange: we all love pepperpot by any names—calalu or sancocho or “Saturday soup”’.<sup>27</sup>

Pepperpot has both an important economic and a symbolic function, as it developed from the one-pot method of cooking in an iron vessel over an open fire, a practice originally necessitated amongst slave populations and favoured by the poor. The first to make Pepperpot were almost certainly the Amerindians, ‘including the Taino who used cassava or yuca as staple’.<sup>28</sup> As

Senior outlines, ‘Into the pot would go fish or meat from the hunt, seasoned with peppers and a thick flavourful sauce called cassareep . . . European and Africans adopted the pepper pot which became popular as the mainstay of [plantation] cookery’.<sup>29</sup> It’s uncertain when Pepperpot was first served at the planters’ tables and adopted by the plantocracy as a regular meal, but it certainly crossed the social divide, probably through the conduit of the African or African-descended cook. Pepperpot is a good example of the adoption and adaptation of foodways in the Caribbean and continues to be prepared and eaten in different forms to this day. Senior describes current-day Pepperpot in Jamaica as a ‘thick, rich soup made with chopped greens, especially calalu [callaloo], okra and dasheen leaves, and corned beef, pork, or crab’.<sup>30</sup> Other contemporary recipes add different meats and vegetables according to budget and availability, but at the core is the key ingredient of cassareep and the ability to reheat and add to the dish for successive meals.

One nineteenth-century visitor to the island, Charles Rampini, especially approved of the Jamaican Pepperpot he tasted, in contrast to the Guianese version of the dish. He commented that it was not like ‘the Demerara . . . pepper-pot with its evil-smelling and still more evil-tasting cassareep sauce . . . but a rich succulent potage, a very Meg Merriliees broth of pork and beef and fowl, ochroes and callaloo . . . peppers, crayfish and negro yam; in colour a dark green, with the scarlet prawns appearing through the chaotic mess not unpicturesquely!<sup>31</sup> Pepperpot is also mentioned by Lady Nugent in her 1801–1805 journal and, at the end of the century, by Caroline Sullivan in one of Jamaica’s earliest written cookbooks.<sup>32</sup> Sullivan was the mistress of a large Jamaican household who could trace her family history on the island right back to the Cromwellian invasion. Her recipe for Pepperpot includes boiled eggs, and she recommends warming up and adding something new to the pot each day.

In Winnifred Grey’s *Caribbean Cookery* (1965), Grey notes the long history of Pepperpot as a dish and its centrality to Caribbean cuisine as a classic one-pot meal: ‘Pepperpot can be kept going for several months and is almost passed on from generation to generation. Every evening it is warmed up and fresh meat or cold remains are added to it. Sir Algernon Aspinall declared in 1907 that he had partaken of Pepperpot said to have been one hundred years old’.<sup>33</sup> As we have seen, Pepperpot also had an important role within domestic economy as a good way of stretching out available food (‘making do’) by adding to and boiling up the one-pot meal each day. This social phenomenon and characteristically Caribbean ‘cultural philosophy of food’<sup>34</sup> was created out of historical necessity and has been documented by writers such as Olive Senior<sup>35</sup> and Lynn Marie Houston.<sup>36</sup> Its use for the title of a recent collection of

Caribbean short stories (*Pepperpot*, 2014) is thus freighted with special significance; it is much, much more than a kind of shorthand for cultural diversity.

## THE BLACK COOK IN THE GREAT HOUSE

In all cases, the figure of the black cook was key in the adaptation and creolisation of foodways. In Caribbean literary texts, s/he is often figured as a nurturing figure but also as a subversive and potentially dangerous agent of poisoning the master and his family. This is hinted at in Grace Nichols's poem 'The Fat Black Woman Remembers'<sup>37</sup> and is central to Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads* (2003). Mrs Carmichael explained the clash between old and new foodways and patterns of consumption through the figure of the cook, usually a creole or African man. Ilari Berti (2014) has argued for the importance of the Great House kitchen as a 'site of creolization': 'consuming different foods was a common habit and not only gave rise to new practices of eating but generated dynamic spaces of transculturation'.<sup>38</sup> Caribbean texts which explore the role of the cook in this context include Andrew Lindsay's *Illustrious Exile* (2006), Diana McCauley's *Huracan* (2012) and Marlon James's *The Book of Night Women* (2009). The latter centres around Lilith, a house slave employed in the Estate House kitchen. Employment as a 'house slave' was often viewed as preferential to the harsh conditions endured by 'field slaves' (and carried the additional inducement of access to a wider quantity and quality of food in the form of leftovers and food pilfering), but it also made female slaves especially vulnerable to the brutal physical and sexual abuse of white male inhabitants and their guests. In Anthony Kellman's historical novel *Tracing JaJa* (2016), Becca is employed as a house servant to an elderly African king exiled in Barbados, and the two start an unlikely relationship based on companionship and Becca's excellent—and fortifying—Bajan cooking. Here Becca's cooking 'gives body'<sup>39</sup> both to the sick JaJa, who is revived by the meals she prepares for him, and to the text as language, corporeality, feeding and consumption are entwined.

## CARIBBEAN FOOD, WRITING AND IDENTITY: NATIONAL BELONGING, RACE, CLASS AND GENDER

Towards the end of his classic bildungsroman, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), George Lamming describes the preparation, cooking and eating of a final, special meal between G and his mother before the former departs from his home island of Barbados for Trinidad. This scene is characteristic of the



**Figure 4.1.** 'Guarapucu, Piracarba and Flying Fishes'. (Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-f5ba-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

ways in which food is used in Caribbean literature to explore and reaffirm particular national, cultural, gender, generational, ethnic and class identities in a Caribbean context. The mother comments to her son:

‘An’ when I think to myself’, she said, ‘that it is probably the last good meal I’ll give you in this life my heart hurts me to think that that vagabond [a black cat] nearly walk off with my fish. ‘Cause when you’ll get a meal like this again only God knows’ . . .

‘I think they cook in Trinidad’, I said. I was uncertain of the result, but the strain between us had passed and I took the risk of speaking frankly. ‘They cook all over the world’, she said, ‘but ‘tis how an’ how they cook. If you think cookin’ is putting a pot on the fire an’ leavin’ it till it tell you to come, you make a sad mistake. There be people who eat all sort o’ jumble up mess and they call it cookin’ too. An’ once they got a hole in their face to stuff, they couldn’t care less what an’ what they stuff it with. But if you think that’s cook’ you make a sad mistake’.

‘I suppose they have their own kind of cooking’, I said. ‘Those I see look quite healthy, and when they come here to play cricket sometimes they win’.

‘Tis a different thing’, my mother said, ‘as far as I gather they eat out in restaurant an’ cook shop and God only knows what. But when it comes to cookin’ a good an’ proper meal in their own home they don’t know how to start. An’ on the back of it, they . . . say they more modern than the others in the other islands.

‘Most o’ them, an’ particularly the young ones, don’t know what an’ what a home mean . . . they ask you to go to the Chinese restaurant, or this hotel or that hotel, an’ they eat their guts full. But yu never get one o’ them to say come home, let my mother or wife prepare you a meal . . . Here the first thing we do to a stranger is give him something to eat home, an no matter how bad the old home look, you want him to eat something you cook your own self. ‘Tis the opposite with them, an all because they got a generation of damn lazy young women who can’t do one God blessed thing but expose themselves in front of a mirror and go out like a cat baiting rat . . . they don’t know what the inside of a kitchen look like’.<sup>40</sup>

Here, as in many Caribbean literary texts,<sup>41</sup> food symbolises the nurturing power and guidance of the mother and the mother symbolises ‘home’ biological, cultural and national. The mother’s suspicion of other islanders’ cuisine (here Trinidadians) and their apparent embrace of modernity (eating out rather than cooking at home) is predicated on her own defence of small island ‘tradition’ and configured through a series of gendered, class, national and cultural signifiers. Appropriately enough, in a passage in which the mother warns the young G that ‘everything in a skirt ain’t clean’,<sup>42</sup> the mother closely associates female propriety with the ability to make home (‘know what the inside of a kitchen look like’) and to cook a ‘proper’ home-cooked meal. These are typically middle-class, colonially informed constructions of femininity and of the kitchen as a female gendered space which, in a moment of spectacular generational and inter-island rivalry, the mother suggests the bacchanal-loving young women of Trinidad cannot possibly live up to. The possibility that such women may offer something more alluring than maternal love and the pull of her ‘home food’ is one that the mother tries hard to repress but which G nonetheless detects.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, Lamming describes, in great detail, the preparation and serving of this meal of flying fish and cuckoo from G’s perspective, rather than the mother’s, and in not altogether positive terms. Rather mischievously (given that it appears on the Barbadian coat of arms as a signifier of national identity), the mother intimates that flying fish may be something even non-Barbadians can make. However, ‘turning cuckoo’—that is, making the accompanying ‘dry food’ dish of cuckoo (or cou cou/coo coo)—is designated a special status as a signifier of Bajan identity. Cou is a ‘one pan’ dish of cornmeal, water and butter, to which okra is often added and stirred with a

'coo stick'. It was almost certainly brought to the Caribbean by Africans, regularly eaten by slaves and promoted by Afro-Creole cooks and thus has a long and important heritage. Candice Goucher argues that 'Africans generally preferred plantain to corn', but through global exchange and trade with West Africa, they started to substitute corn (maize) for the starchy pounded yam and plantain of their native cuisines even before slaves were exported to the Caribbean. There 'the West African-inspired cook'—a crucial figure of culinary transmission and creolization—'learned to lovingly prepare the New World vegetable as *kenke* or *dokono*, *funghi* or *coo-coo*, by boiling or steaming it in banana or local *soharee* leaves'.<sup>44</sup>

That G finds the preparation of cou cou 'a very tedious undertaking'<sup>45</sup> could be interpreted as reflecting his separation from the maternally dominated world of his childhood and his embarkation on a wider journey beyond the confines of all that the island space represents to him. Fellow Barbadian writer Austin Clarke also discusses the significance to Bajans (Barbadians) of flying fish and cou cou in his culinary memoir *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit* (1999).<sup>46</sup> In Trinidadian Ramabai Espinet's (1994) short story 'Indian Cuisine', cou cou is marked as 'creole food' and is thus rejected by the Indo-Caribbean mother. Food and sex are linked, as 'eating cou cou' comes to represent the father's sexual transgressions with a creole woman who cooks him this dish. That the daughter 'transgresses' by adopting cou cou in her own culinary explorations thus marks her increasing distance from her mother's culinary narratives and the Indo-Caribbean traditions it represents, and a growing sense instead of an independent and creolised identity.

### CARIBBEAN FOOD, WRITING AND IDENTITY: THE INDO-CARIBBEAN

Ironically, one of the most famous depictions of a meal in Trinidadian literature is a home-cooked meal in the home of Tiger and Urmilla, the Indo-Caribbean protagonists of Sam Selvon's 1952 novel *A Brighter Sun*. Indo-Caribbeans are descended from Indian indentured labourers who were recruited to work on Caribbean sugar plantations in the post-emancipation period. Tens of thousands of Indians came (mainly to British Guiana and Trinidad) between 1838 and 1917, when indentureship was ended. Selvon's novel is set in 1940s Trinidad, where the United States established military bases during World War II. Early in the novel we hear of Tiger's arranged marriage and the centrality of food rituals and feasting to his rural Hindu wedding: 'The whole village turned up for it, Negro and Indian alike, for when Indian people got married it was a big thing, plenty food and drink,

plenty ceremony . . . He was only sixteen years old and was not in the habit of attending Indian ceremonies in the village. But he knew a little about weddings, that Indians were married at an early age, and that after the ceremony friends and relatives would bring him gifts until he began to eat; only then would they stop the offerings'.<sup>47</sup>

In Selvon's description, Tiger forgets himself and prematurely bites a piece of 'meetai',<sup>48</sup> thus ending the offerings. Later in the novel, he gains employment at one of the bases and invites two American colleagues home after work 'to eat Indian food'.<sup>49</sup> Urmilla is horrified by Tiger's demands and his request for ethnic and culinary authenticity: 'You have to cook like you never cook in you life before. The best things. Grind the masala yourself, don't buy curry powder from Tall boy. The achar, get dhal, and make dhal pourri, make metai. Fry channa. Buy two fowl from Deen wife . . . look you don't want me to tell you what to do! And girl, you better don't let anything go wrong, you hear. Them people is my boss, and if I please them good, I might get promotion'.<sup>50</sup>

Cooking is clearly demarcated as women's work within the Indo-Caribbean culture of this novel; indeed, 'very often the value of a man or a woman is intricately linked to the process of cooking and eating',<sup>51</sup> and Urmilla has been socialised into such gendered expectations of the need to be a 'good cook' for her husband. Moreover, the kitchen (unlike the rum shop or the store) is very much a female-gendered space affording a space away from men, as is the case in many Indo-Caribbean texts. Brinda Mehta has shown how the kitchen as a gendered space is turned to positive use to negotiate female agency in much Indo-Caribbean women's fiction, including Indo-Trinidadian texts such as Lakshmi Persaud's *Sastram* and *Butterfly in the Wind* and Rambai Espinet's short story 'Indian Cuisine'.<sup>52</sup> Lynn Marie Houston notes that 'cooking together affords women the opportunity to talk about their lives and discuss the problems they are having. The privacy for these conversations is provided because in traditional Caribbean architecture, the kitchen is located in a separate building in [the] back of the main house in order to reduce the heat transferred to the main house, and also the risk of fire'.<sup>53</sup>

However, what is interesting about this scene is the appropriation of unfamiliar received standards of culinary etiquette (Urmilla's borrowing of glasses, plates and cutlery from her [Afro-]creole friend Rita in the hope of impressing the American guests) alongside the insistence on familiar markers of cultural and culinary authenticity (Urmilla's insistence on using her wood fire rather than Rita's gas stove to cook on, as 'you can't cook roti and thing on stove').<sup>54</sup> As so often in Selvon's fiction, such expectations are comically upturned, as one of the American guests says, 'I'm very interested in your customs . . . I understand that some Indians eat with their fingers. We want to

do that too. We'd like everything to be as it always is. Hope you've not gone and made special arrangements'.<sup>55</sup>

The meal is uncomfortable—not just because of traces of exoticism and culinary tourism in the American's request but also due to the clash of cultural and gender expectations on both sides and the 'staged' nature of the dinner. Indeed, it is essentially a performance of ethnic identity and class aspirations constructed for the consumption of a particular audience through food. Selvon shows how both Tiger and Urmilla are obviously uneasy when Urmilla is asked by his guests firstly if she would like to share the bottle of rum and then to join them at the table rather than eating separately 'sitting on a box'<sup>56</sup> in the kitchen, as is customary. When she does finally join them, she unconsciously begins to eat with her hands and is unsure whether she has shamed Tiger in front of his guests. The meal is a 'success' but leaves in its wake a poignant and unresolved sense of difference and unshared experience as two different 'Trinidadian' experiences collide.

In Naipaul's early novel, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), the new bridegroom, Ganesh, holds out rather longer 'before the plate of kedgeree',<sup>57</sup> though he has previously promised his future father-in-law, shopkeeper Sri Ramlogan, that 'I go eat quick, not to shame you, not too quick, because that would make people think you poor as a church-rat'.<sup>58</sup> Ramlogan pleads poverty and even suggests that this traditional Hindu wedding custom is waning in 'some modern people'<sup>59</sup> in order to safeguard his money. Eventually, Ganesh sits it out and manages to get 'a cow and a heifer, fifteen hundred dollars in cash, and a house in Fuentes'.<sup>60</sup> Later in the novel, some of the contributing guests, including Ramlogan, deliver Ganesh his just desserts when they attend Bhagwat at his house, not for the prayers but for the 'free food'.<sup>61</sup> The feast is described as being cooked 'in great black iron pots [in which] simmered rice, dal, potatoes, pumpkins, spinach of many sorts, karhee, and many other Hindu vegetarian things'.<sup>62</sup>

Like Urmilla, Ganesh's new wife, Leela, is reminded of her place, required to serve guests at the house with iced Coca Cola, a status symbol of a drink from the equally prestigious refrigerator. As Ganesh tells Ramlochan, 'These modern girls is hell self. They does keep forgetting their place'.<sup>63</sup> Leela is suitably enough 'in the kitchen, squatting before the low *chulha* [traditional U-shaped mud stove], boiling rice in a blue enamel pot'<sup>64</sup> when he threatens her with physical violence. Her mode of escape and survival is culinary, as she retorts boldly: 'Man, if we start quarrelling now, the rice go boil to soft and you know you don't like it like that'.<sup>65</sup>

Veronica Gregg makes the important point that the construction of 'Indianness' in Caribbean literature and culture is often channelled 'through such

terms and tropes as cultural richness and depth, Brahmanical purity, family values, rigid patriarchy, female beauty, diligence, thrift, economic saviours of the Caribbean, fear of absorption, marginalization a result of envy, hostility or misunderstanding. What is most striking in this concept of Indianness is its reliance on synecdoche and the production of difference . . . the discursive regulation of the “Indian” woman is a key part of this project”.<sup>66</sup> Gregg discusses some of these reductive representations of Indo-Caribbean culture and especially of Indo-Caribbean women as unproblematic ‘preservers of the domestic culture’ in Lakshmi Persaud’s fiction, just as Ramabai Espinet comments on similar representations of Indo-Caribbean women in fiction by male Indo-Caribbean authors such as Selvon and Naipaul.<sup>67</sup> Rather, as Gregg reminds us, ‘Caribbeans of Indian ancestry do not speak with one voice’ and ‘the social and discursive construction of Indianness in terms of the Caribbean remains a dynamic and contested site’.<sup>68</sup>

By way of contrast, Gregg analyses the female protagonist of Espinet’s short story ‘Indian Cuisine’, who ‘omnivorously consumes cookbooks’; this ‘eventually allows her to become a “designer of cuisine” and [to] produce elaborate recipes. In this way, the cuisine of the Trinidadian woman becomes both Indian and something else’.<sup>69</sup> On one occasion she cooks the classic Barbadian meal of coo-coo from an old Caribbean cookbook she has found hidden away, but the rest of her family refuses to eat it, as it is marked as ‘creole’ (African-Caribbean) food. Only the father responds cautiously but ultimately more positively. When he asks his daughter, ‘Yuh know about coo-coo?’ the dish is signified as dangerous and taboo, as it reminds of the cooking of his African-Caribbean mistress. In this way food, sex and ethnic identity are linked through the story’s ‘detour into kitchens and bedrooms’.<sup>70</sup> However, ultimately the story shows how ‘the entanglements of everyday life, defeat the claims of “Indian” isolation and difference’<sup>71</sup> and open up a new chapter in the father-daughter relationship, empowering the latter to cook even more. One of key words in the story is *privilege*: ‘in varying contexts, “privilege” has different and competing meanings: [the protagonist’s vivid sense memory] of eating fruit cocktail at Christmas; [the name of] a Barbadian dish usually eaten by poor people; book learning, that is, reading some of the classics of Europe, but also swallowing a cookbook and reading the Caribbean cookbook that helps to expose her father’s gamble/gambol [with the creole lady].’<sup>72</sup> In an interesting image of meta-ingestion, she reflects, ‘When I was twelve years old I went through periods of excruciating hunger. So I swallowed the biggest cookbook I could find’.<sup>73</sup> The story ends with a lie, as she responds to a wealthy client’s question (‘Where did you learn to cook?’) with the words ‘I received most of my training at the School of Indian Cuisine in

la Plata. It was a real privilege to be there . . . so privilege it really was, fruit cocktail and all'.<sup>74</sup>

## CARIBBEAN FOOD AND IDENTITY: THE CHINESE CARIBBEAN

Chinese migrants were first bought to the Caribbean in the post-emancipation period to work as indentured labourers on the sugar plantations. However, the majority of Chinese arriving in Jamaica came as immigrants in the twentieth century.<sup>75</sup> Like the indentured labourers brought from India, they were mainly rural poor with primarily agricultural skills. Some grew rice or started market gardening, but the most significant contribution they made to Caribbean economies was as small shopkeepers. Senior argues that 'these shops were popular because the proprietors catered to the poor: they gave credit [or "trust"] and sold goods in very small amounts . . . some were willing to barter shop goods in exchange for local produce, a boon to the poor farmer without ready cash. Since the family dwelling was usually part of the shop, they could also be relied upon for purchases on Sundays, holidays and late at nights when the shops were officially closed'.<sup>76</sup> Later generations, such as the family of Chinese Trinidadian writer Willi Chen, established larger businesses in laundries, 'bakery, ice cream and bottling industries . . . catering and hardware'.<sup>77</sup> Chinese restaurants first appeared in Jamaica in the 1950s and are now a mainstay of many Caribbean territories. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the Chinese shopkeeper is a recurrent character in many Caribbean literary texts. However, many early depictions, such as that in Alfred Mendes's (1929) story 'Her Chinaman's Way',<sup>78</sup> stereotype the Chinese shopkeeper as a 'financial bloodsucker, preying off other Caribbean people',<sup>79</sup> or as opium-addicted gambler, smuggler and sexual exploiter. Later short stories, such as Trinidadian Michael Anthony's 'Many Things' (1973)<sup>80</sup> or V. S. Naipaul's wonderful story, 'The Baker's Story', ironising the divisions and pretensions of different ethnic groups and their food,<sup>81</sup> all feature non-Chinese characters approaching Chinese Caribbean life. These are also texts written by non-Chinese-identifying authors. Even the best-known Chinese Caribbean writers—Willi Chen, Easton Lee and Janice Shinebourne (with the notable exception of her 2015 novel *The Last Ship*)—focus less on Chinese Caribbean characters and seem more interested in examining wider, largely rural communities in their native Trinidad, Jamaica and Guyana, respectively. Lee's short stories 'The Berbice Marriage Match' and 'London and New York' start to offer a more detailed view of Chinese Caribbean life 'beyond the shop counter', but

it is to Kerry Young's series of novels, starting with *Pao* (2011), that we have to look for the richest and most nuanced exploration of this aspect of Chinese Caribbean culture.

## CARIBBEAN FOOD, WRITING AND IDENTITY: BEING 'IN-BETWEEN' TWO TRADITIONS

In Trinidadian Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970), the young protagonist, Tee, is torn between two cultural traditions: the rural Afro-Creole world of her grandmother (Ma) and aunt (Tantie) and the colonially influenced, aspirational, middle-class world of her Aunt Beatrice, with whom she is sent to stay in the capital. Towards the end of the novel, the extent of Tee's deracination and cultural alienation from the world of her happy early childhood with Ma and Tantie in the country is revealed through signifiers of clothing and food. Tee is surprised by a visit from Tantie and family. Through Tee, Hodge satirises Aunt Beatrice's 'ingestion of metropolitan values'<sup>82</sup> through middle-class, Anglocentric rituals, such as having 'Forther' Sheridan, the local priest, make his fortnightly visit to 'our drawing room, letting himself be pampered and fussed about with tea and cake and more than a drop of whisky or brandy'.<sup>83</sup> However, Tee herself is not immune to such damaging pretensions. She is now horrified by the vision of 'Uncle Sylvester coarse and repulsive, his over-fed stomach tipping over the top of his pants'.<sup>84</sup> Afterwards, Tee reflects:

The worst moment was when they drew forth a series of greasy paper bags, announcing that they contained polarie, anchor, roti from Neignb' Ramlaal wife, and accra and fry-bake and zaboca from Tantie, with a few other things I had almost forgotten existed, in short all manner of ordinary nastiness.<sup>85</sup>

When offered food by Tantie,

I declined in alarm: the very thought of sitting in Auntie Beatrice's drawing room eating coolie-food! And Accra! Saltfish! Fancy bringing saltfish into Aunty Beatrice's house! When I refused, Uncle Sylvester, to my disgust, leaned over and said familiarly: 'Awright, dou-dou, lemme help you out them', and reaching into a greasy bag drew out a thick spotted roti: he settled back with sounds of satisfaction and opening his jaws wide enough to accommodate Government House (this was dictum of Auntie Beatrice's in the context of table-manners) proceeded to champ away. A strong smell of curry assailed the drawing room. That was another thing I would pay for afterwards, I thought miserably. And I hoped Auntie Beatrice wasn't looking on too, with Uncle

Sylvester sitting on the sofa eating roti and curry with as much reverence as if he were sitting on a tapia-floor.<sup>86</sup>

Here, as with the meal in *A Brighter Sun*, what is eaten and how it is eaten are important. Tee disavows her relatives' gifts of Indo-Caribbean foods (such as roti and curry) not in and of themselves but as the markers of a class and ethnic identity which she has been indoctrinated against. She now sees them as 'nasty', 'smell[y]', 'coolie', peasant food ('tapia-floor'), completely out of place, not to say an affront to the Euro-Creole manners of the middle-class world she has been absorbed into. Antonia McDonald argues that 'Tannie's foodways [and] the simple sensuous pleasure of local food'<sup>87</sup> are part of what has been 'schooled out' of Tee. She no longer has a taste for 'the stewed cashews, pommescytheres, cerises . . . guava cheese and guava jelly, sugar-cake, nut-cake, bennay-balls, toolum, shaddock-peel candy [and] chilibib'<sup>88</sup> of Ma's house. Though once Tee wanted to eat Indo-Caribbean food off a banana leaf at Moonie's wedding, now she regards this food as 'ordinary nastiness'.<sup>89</sup> MacDonald suggests that 'the choice of the word "nastiness" betrays an association of food with sexual conduct, given that in Trinidadian parlance having sex is typically referred to as "doing nastiness" . . . [in this way] "culinary and sexual misconduct" are linked'.<sup>90</sup>

The use of food as a marker of class superiority is also found in Ismith Khan's short story 'Puran' from *A Day in the Country* (1994), as Pooran, a young Indo-Caribbean country boy, is mocked by his Port-of-Spain school friends for his lunchtime food of 'roti and fried spinach'.<sup>91</sup> However, at the end of the story, Pooran decides, unlike Tee, that his family's food, and the rural Indo-Caribbean Hindu community he is part of, are to be embraced rather than rejected:

Morning awakened with smells of eggplant frying in coconut oil and smoked herrings in the embers of the fireplace, and he could see Leela squatting in front of it, blowing gently into the embers . . . and Ramdath . . . with a hibiscus stem against his teeth, spitting out its juice and broken fibres. As he looked at Ramdath and Leela again, he knew how it was in the beginning, that Mr Hopkins [the teacher] was wrong. He knew that the little gods and the big gods had put the world together one morning . . . with the smell of smoked herrings, and the taste of hibiscus stem, and odours of eggplant frying in coconut oil.<sup>92</sup>

A similar situation is explored in Chinese Caribbean Willi Chen's short story 'Mas Is More Than a Creole Thing', which examines the creolisation of the predominantly African Caribbean practice of Carnival through so-called Chutney music and other cultural practices by Indo-Caribbeans. In Chen's story, Indo-Caribbean Alexander thinks about the taunting of him and others of his ethnic group at school as 'all "curry-mouth" classmates'. Yet the same

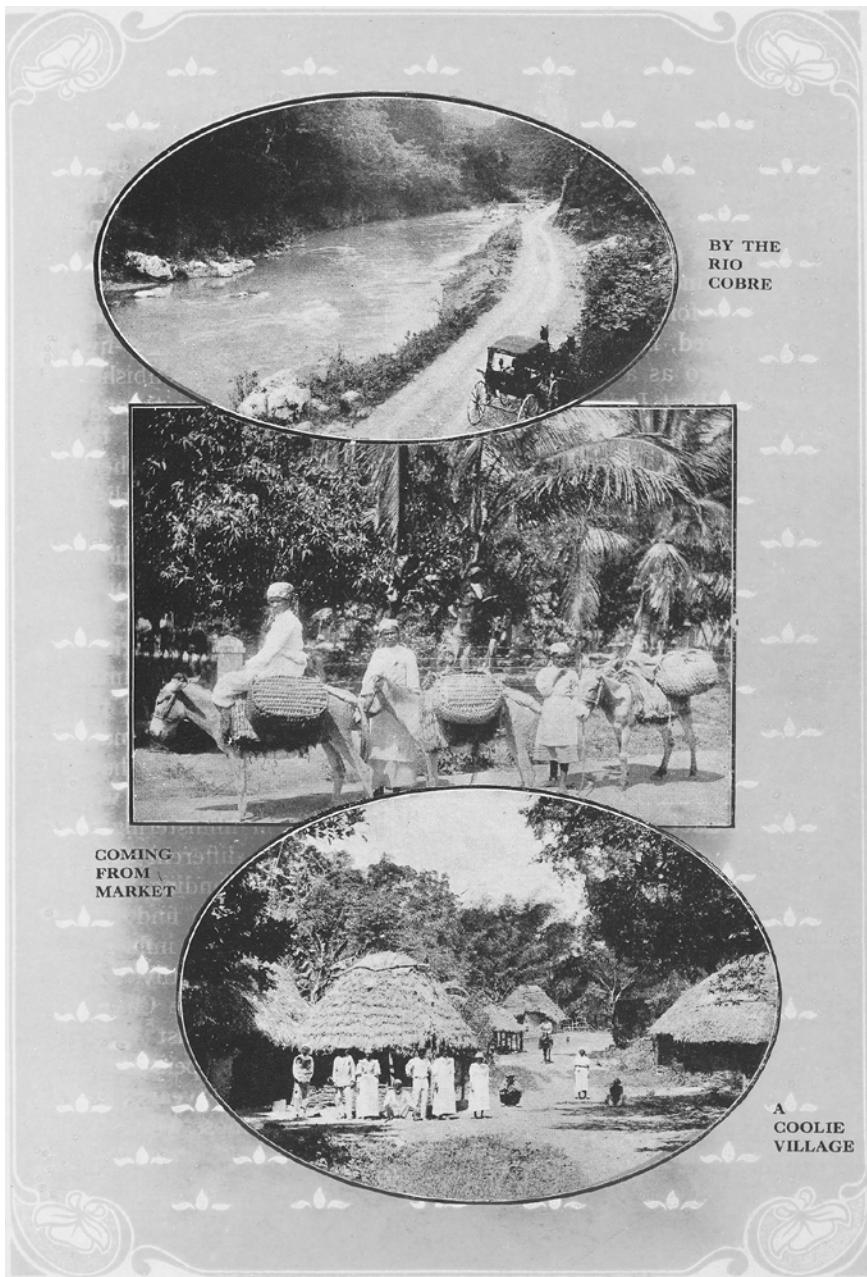


Figure 4.2. 'By the Rio Cobre—Coming from Market—A Coolie Village'. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-bc75-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

boys 'had left the fields, the salting of crops and working in the mule pens, to become successful businessmen',<sup>93</sup> and Alexander goes on to demonstrate that Mas (Trinidad Carnival) is a living and thoroughly creolised thing.

In Rooplall Monar's short story 'Massala Maraj' (1987), set on a Guyanese sugar estate, the Brahmin Maraj turns his culinary traditions to advantage by seducing the taste buds of the estate boss's wife with his 'coolie dal-purri'<sup>94</sup> and 'massala fowl-curry wrap up in lotus leaf'.<sup>95</sup> Anancy-like, he uses his culinary skills to get preferential employment as a carpenter rather than a field labourer but oversteps the mark when he is found stealing bigger and bigger items from the estate. What saves his skin and gains him reinstatement is the sweet taste of his cooking, which both the boss and 'Big Manager Missie' cannot do without.

### STORYTELLING IN THE KITCHEN/YARD

Many Caribbean literary texts feature food and conversation in communal spaces, spaces which are often but not always gendered female and which encourage intimacy and a particular kind of commensality. One such is Trinidadian C. L. R. James's early short story 'Triumph', which is notable in being one of the first texts to explore the lives of 'the folk': those working-class inhabitants such as 'the porters, prostitutes, carter-men, washer-women, and domestic servants of the city'<sup>96</sup> living in a communal barrack yard. The story shows how the day-to-day existence of such characters depends on oral rather than written communication, and it explores some similar themes of hunger and food shortage, which are to be found in traditional Anancy tales. 'Triumph' starts with a description of the yard and the lack of an indoor kitchen. Instead, we are told that 'each barrack-yarder cooks before her door . . . on a coal pot'.<sup>97</sup> The story centres around Mamitz, a mixed-race woman who finds herself destitute, having been beaten and left by her lover, Nathan. Unsuccessful in finding work, she has been 'kept . . . from starvation' by her friend and fellow tenant Celestine. However, Celestine cannot help further: 'As long as you livin' here an' I cookin' I wouldn't see you want a cup of tea an' a spoonful o' rice . . . But I carn' help with the rent . . . An' you have nobody here!'<sup>98</sup> Mamitz and Celestine are kept by their men, what fellow barrack yarder Irene calls 'sittin' down an' eatin' out the men all you livin' wid',<sup>99</sup> but it is a precarious existence, with female rivalry and the threat of domestic violence never far from the surface in this story. James notes how 'Sunday morning in barrack-yards is pot parade', a time of culinary rivalry linked to status:

Of the sixteen tenants in the yard twelve had their pots out, and they lifted the meat with long iron forks to turn it, or threw water into the pot so that it steamed to the heavens and every woman could tell what her neighbour was cooking—beef, or pork, or chicken. It didn't matter what you cooked in the week, it didn't matter if you didn't cook at all. But to cook saltfish, or ribs, or hog-head, or pig-tail on a Sunday morning was a disgrace. You put your pot inside your house and cooked it there.<sup>100</sup>

Such depictions of conversations in the context of food and shared or commensal spaces (such as kitchens or yards) are not just incidental moments in Caribbean writing but also key ways in which Caribbean identities, histories and cultures have been explored. Rather than kitchens always necessarily being figured as oppressive spaces, where women are effectively ‘trapped’ in a sexual division of labour and patriarchally imposed behaviours, this chapter argues, after Maria Claudia Andre (2001) and Brinda Mehta (2009), that in certain contexts kitchens can also constitute ‘self-empowering sites’ for women precisely because they are exclusively female or female dominated. Whilst chapter 5 looks at this in relation to oral history interviews in Barbados kitchens in 2018, this section surveys the *literary* representations of women in kitchens and ‘yards’ and considers the function of the ‘kitchen talk’ which takes place in such communal and frequently gendered spaces.

Brinda Mehta has conducted important research into the role of ethnically marked food and orally transmitted culinary matrilineages in Indo-Caribbean women’s writing (2004, 2009). In *Diasporic (Dis)locations* (2004), she analyses what she terms ‘the language of cookery . . . [as] an important script to facilitate . . . necessary negotiations of gendered identity . . . within both traditional and interracial models’ in Indo-Caribbean women’s writing.<sup>101</sup> Mehta argues that food is an important source of identity and a powerful force of social cohesion and cultural continuity (e.g., food culture promotes an attachment to an original and territorially based homeland). In her terms, certain characteristic spices carried by Indian indentured labourers to the Caribbean become ‘the necessary grains or markers of Indo-Caribbean immigrant history’.<sup>102</sup> They had a utilitarian culinary and/or medicinal role to play (and the two functions are closely linked in traditional Hindu aruydevic medicine), but they also served as ‘personal mementos of home to withstand the brutalizing forces of exile and enforced separation’.<sup>103</sup> Mehta also goes beyond this by arguing that the linked concept of “‘culinary belongingness’ [knowing what to do with such spices and other ingredients] is a type of oral transmission of culture’<sup>104</sup> which can be used, strategically, to ‘resist patterns of domination and acculturation’<sup>105</sup> in the new Caribbean environment. Crucially, the kitchen space is seen as an enabling and empowering space for women in a number of Indo-Caribbean women’s texts (unlike its role in

male-authored texts such as those of Sam Selvon) as it provides ‘a means of achieving culinary agency that provides women with a basis for cultural authority’.<sup>106</sup> Mehta emphasises the oral and gendered transmission of a resistant cultural and culinary ‘knowledge’ in the literary texts she examines as, ironically perhaps, returning to ‘kitchen-related duties’ is seen to empower and bring benefit to individual female characters and their wider communities.<sup>107</sup> According to Mehta, one of the main challenges faced by such Indo-Caribbean women characters is the adaptation to a new, hybridised ‘creole’ environment where culinary adaptation is also necessary. This, she argues, is often expressed as tenacious resistance to tradition and change but, in some texts, is also glimpsed and explored as a liberating opportunity to ‘indulge in subversive culinary makeovers, within both traditional food ideologies and postmodern culinary experimentations’.<sup>108</sup>

### PAULE MARSHALL AND THE 'WORDSHOP OF THE KITCHEN'

In ‘From the Poets in the Kitchen’, Barbadian American Paule Marshall writes about the formative role of listening to the ‘kitchen talk’ of her mother and her Caribbean friends in New York, congregating in her family kitchen for shared drinks and conversation after days of hired domestic work outside the home and before rushing home to make dinner for their own families. The act of drinking and talking in a commensal context was a kind of ‘therapy’ for the adult women and rich source material for the young Marshall:

I grew up among poets. Now they didn’t look like poets . . . Nothing about them suggested that poetry was their calling. They were just a group of ordinary housewives and mothers, my mother included, who dressed in a way (shapeless housedresses, dowdy felt hats and long, dark, solemn coats) that made it impossible for me to imagine they had ever been young . . . Nor did they do what poets were supposed to do—spend their days in an attic room writing verses. They never put pen to paper except to write occasionally to their relatives in Barbados . . . Rather, their day was spent ‘scrubbing floor’, as they described the work they did.<sup>109</sup>

Marshall recalls how

The basement kitchen of the brownstone house where my family lived was the gathering place. Once inside the warm safety of its walls the women threw off the drab coats and hats, seated themselves at the large center table, drank their cups of tea or cocoa, and talked. While my sister and I sat at a smaller table over

in a corner doing our homework, they talked—endlessly, passionately, poetically, and with impressive range. No subject was beyond them.<sup>110</sup>

They talked gossip but also of politics, of war, of home in Barbados and their new ‘home’ of America, of their hopes and fears for their families and for the future. Marshall observes:

There was no way for me to understand it at the time, but the talk that filled the kitchen those afternoons was highly functional. It served as therapy . . . Not only did it help them recover from the long wait on the corner that morning and the bargaining over their labor, it restored them to a sense of themselves and reaffirmed their self-worth . . . But more than therapy, that freewheeling, wide-ranging, exuberant talk functioned as an outlet for the tremendous creative energy they possessed. They were women in whom the need for self-expression was strong, and since language was the only vehicle readily available to them they made of it an art form that—in keeping with the African tradition in which art and life are one—was an integral part of their lives. And their talk was a refuge. They never really ceased being baffled and overwhelmed by America—its vastness, complexity and power.<sup>111</sup>

Crucially, far from being trivial, such ‘kitchen talk’ gave these women agency and a means to resist their ‘invisibility’ as poor, black migrants within American society: ‘Those late afternoon conversations on a wide range of topics were a way for them to feel they exercised some measure of control over their lives and the events that shaped them. “Soully-gal, talk yuh talk”! they were always exhorting each other. “In this man world you got to take yuh mouth and make a gun”! They were in control, if only verbally and if only for the two hours or so that they remained in our house’.<sup>112</sup>

Significantly, as a writer, Marshall salutes their style, not just the content of their talk:

For me, as a child . . . it was . . . the way they put things—their style. The insight, irony, wit and humor they brought to their stories and discussions and their poet’s inventiveness and daring with language—which of course I could only sense but not define back then. They had taken the standard English taught them in the primary schools of Barbados and transformed it into an idiom, an instrument that more adequately described them—changing around the syntax and imposing their own rhythm and accent so that the sentences were more pleasing to their ears. They added the few African sounds and words that had survived, such as the derisive suck-teeth sound and the word “yam”, meaning to eat. And to make it more vivid, more in keeping with their expressive quality, they brought to bear a raft of metaphors, parables, Biblical quotations, sayings and the like . . . Using everyday speech . . . they gave voice to the most complex ideas.<sup>113</sup>

She concludes:

When people . . . ask me who my major influences were, they are sometimes a little disappointed when I don't immediately name the usual literary giants. True, I am indebted to those writers, white and black, whom I read during my formative years . . . But they were preceded in my life by another set of giants whom I always acknowledge before all others: the group of women around the table long ago. They taught me my first lessons in the narrative art. They trained my ear. They set a standard of excellence. This is why the best of my work must be attributed to them; it stands as testimony to the rich legacy of language and culture they so freely passed on to me in the wordshop of the kitchen.<sup>114</sup>

Whilst Marshall's essay is illuminating of female creativity and is hugely inspiring, it includes no actual description of food preparation or cooking. 'Kitchen talk' in the context of this study is taken to include any conversation in which food and talk are closely linked in a culinary context. This is a definition flexible enough to contain Marshall's essay but also Ivory Kelly's more recent short story, 'This Thing We Call Love', in which the young female protagonist observes even closer links between female conversation and cooking: 'My mother and her friends' conversations were like boil-up, with plantains and cassava and other kinds of ground food and salted meat thrown into a pot of water, in no particular order, and boiled until it is a steaming, bubbling, savoury cuisine'.<sup>115</sup> Arguably, this close connection between 'cooking and storytelling as performative rituals'<sup>116</sup> is especially pronounced in a Caribbean context, where orality is still key to understanding literary and culinary cultures. As John Lyons has reflected, 'As Trinis [Trinidadians] we like our picong (piquancy) in both our food and our talk. If there is one thing we are serious about it is our pleasures'.<sup>117</sup> In *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit*, Barbadian Austin Clarke makes a similar link between cooking and speech when after one especially energetic example of his mother's 'kitchen talk' he is led to conclude that 'this woman is a poet'.<sup>118</sup> Culinary and verbal skills are intimately linked within this primarily oral culture, and Clarke's memoir, in particular, seeks to reproduce the rhythms, intonations and actions which accompany his mother's kitchen talk. As he notes, 'She has this habit o' talking . . . out loud, what she is about to do . . . she goes through verbally all the stages of each act, as if she is trying hard not to forget'.<sup>119</sup> Nor is kitchen talk necessarily exclusively female, as Lyons's book, Clarke's memoir, or the wonderful 'charlas culinarias' (culinary chats) in Barrow and Lee's Barbadian cookbook, *Privilege* (1988), testify.

## JEAN BINTA BREEZE AND 'KITCHEN TALK'

Jamaican British poet Jean Binta Breeze's 'Kitchen Talk' is an excellent example of a literary exploration of female homosociality in the kitchen. Like Jamaica Kincaid's genre-subverting text 'Girl'<sup>120</sup> before it, Breeze's text is a creole monologue delivered by a mother to her daughter. However, in Breeze's story the mother is Jamaican, not Antiguan, and the daughter is older and pregnant. The story shifts effortlessly between different forms of discourse including gossip and hearsay, frank autobiographical detail, philosophical reflection and life advice to a younger generation. It also includes cooking instructions, as the addressee is encouraged to help with the food preparation in the kitchen: 'Pas a cup a water mek ah rub up two dumplin. All a Nathan tribe love dumplin in dem soup. Is dem yuh bredda tek after'.<sup>121</sup>

Breeze's 'Kitchen Talk' utilises a particularly female form of discourse in this intimate and ultimately pliable space of the kitchen, and food has the important function of bringing women together in shared activity, which naturally encourages conversation. The beauty of Breeze's short story is its lightness of touch. That talking and cooking both have their particular rhythms, lulls and pauses, and that they mirror in some ways the wider rhythms of the female life cycles of the two women is merely suggested rather than laboured. Similarly, the link between food and sex is just present enough to signify (as in the associations of sweet food and sweetness with sexuality or the dumplings with kinship and pregnancy) but not to overpower the delicate balance of ingredients in the story. Indeed, it is not revealed that the two women are related until the very end of the story, and this is important: kitchen talk takes place between all kinds of women sharing moments in an intrinsically communal rather than privately and individually demarcated space together. When the mother in Breeze's story says, 'De meat an de pes cook now. Look yuh see a piece a yellow yam under the table. Pass it . . . an de big cookin knife',<sup>122</sup> she is not just instructing the younger woman in culinary skills but also measuring the time in terms of the meal cooking and the narrative coming to an end. In this way, Breeze's 'kitchen talk' perfectly introduces some of the concerns of chapter 5.

## CARIBBEAN FOOD, WRITING AND THE SPIRITUAL

In a short but insightful online essay on 'Food and Cooking', Jeremy Poynting reflects on the centrality of food in Caribbean literature: 'descriptions of food and eating in Anglophone Caribbean writing have so much to say about belonging and unbelonging, about identity, ethnicity, class, gender, migrancy, exile, food as a token and signifier of communicative exchange,

food as a passageway to sensuality and sex, eating as an external sign of inner feelings, food as sacrament'.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, in Hindu Indo-Caribbean foodways almost all food is spiritual, whether it be the communal consumption of consecrated food (*prasad* [the leftovers after an offering to the gods], *bhog* or *bhojan*) at weddings, funerals and temple services or the private consumption of fruit (*phalahar*), milk and more during daily worship at home, to religious fasts (*upavasa*) and vows (*vrata*).

## THE INDO-CARIBBEAN

Poynting cites Lakshmi Persaud's first three novels as showing different aspects of the central role of food in Indo-Caribbean culture. *Butterfly in the Wind* (2009) explores the Hindu world of food offerings<sup>124</sup> and *katha*<sup>125</sup> as a signifier of 'traditional Indianness' and, like *A Brighter Sun*, shows the gendered world of female cooks. However, its Hindu characters also try to enjoy creole (African-Caribbean) food, and Kamal's mother repeatedly invites her Muslim neighbour, Mrs Hassan, to sample 'her style of cooking'<sup>126</sup> in the *kathas* (communal Hindu prayer and traditional storytelling gatherings) she organises at her home. The slightly wary, mutual suspicion of Muslim and Hindu neighbours in Persaud's *Butterfly in the Wind* reflects wider, real-life tensions between different ethnicities and generations in the Caribbean. However, it is important to recognise that even back in India 'no community . . . has a monolithic culinary culture just as not all [upper caste] Hindu Brahmins are vegetarians or Muslims and Christians meat eaters . . . Diets are changing and culinary borders are being crossed by all communities in a rapidly changing country'.<sup>127</sup> Persaud's *Sastra* (1993) is more concerned with Hindu food preferences and 'correct' food preparation, especially in relation to Milly, the Christian Afro-Creole cook employed by an elderly Christian convert called Surinder Pande. Like the mother figure in Espinet's 'Indian Cuisine' (1994), *Sastra* articulates a suspicion of cultural and culinary change and modernity. *Daughters of Empire* (2012) offers a diasporic view of food as 'a bridge between cultures',<sup>128</sup> not just a nostalgic link to 'back home'. In Chinese Caribbean writing too, texts such as Jan Lowe Shinebourne's *The Last Ship* (2015) or Willi Chen's short story collection *Chutney Power* (1994) show how particular food markers and culinary traditions are used to police the boundaries of ethnic and generational identities or to break through them, as in Chen's 'Mas Is More Than a Creole Thing'.<sup>129</sup>

A suspicion of cultural and culinary change and modernity is also found recurrently in V. S. Naipaul's fictional and nonfictional writing. In *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1976), Naipaul recalls how his Brahmin (high caste)

'ancestors migrated [to Trinidad] from the Gangetic plain 100 years ago'<sup>130</sup> and reflects upon the lasting effects of childhood memories of food as ritual: 'I know the beauty of sacrifice, so important to the Aryans. Sacrifice turned the cooking of food into a ritual: the first cooked thing, usually a small, round unleavened bread, as miniature, especially made, was always for the fire, the God'.<sup>131</sup> In his semi-autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), Naipaul recalls arriving in a New York hotel room with his paper bag of bananas: 'Some remnant of peasant travel, with food for the journey; some genuine Hindu distrust of the food that might be offered by the aeroplane and then by the hotel in New York'.<sup>132</sup> Covering similar ground but from a gendered perspective is Brinda Mehta's (2009) critical study of Indo-Caribbean women's writing, which explores the 'associations between the secular habit of eating food and its spiritual connection',<sup>133</sup> what she terms the 'cultural sanctity of food'.<sup>134</sup>

### 'AFRICA IN THE CARIBBEAN'

In the African-derived religion of Shango (the deities of which are personified in Caribbean form in some of Kamau Brathwaite's poems), different gods are served specific foods. Thus, Shango, the god of thunder, is said to enjoy red palm oil, while Oblata, goddess of purity, prefers the white yam. Food ceremonies are also central to the African-derived Jamaican ceremonies of Kumina. A large table is carefully laid out in symbolic settings and includes specially baked hard dough loaves in the shape of crosses (for suffering) or doves (for peace), plus wine, cakes and soft drinks still in their bottles. After partaking from the table, members pour wine, plain and sugared water and cook curried goat and rice (without salt) as offerings to the nkuyu or ancestral spirits. Salt is never used in the cooking, in line with the African-derived elements of the ceremony (including the centrality of the drums and drumming) as many African peoples traditionally believed that salt lessened spiritual power and vitality. Offerings for the ancestors are always taken from the cooking pot first, and the ancestors may also be appeased with foods which they especially liked when living or of symbolic importance in relation to them. Indeed, the ancestors are treated as part of their extended families still, and inviting them to partake in everyday practices such as the sharing of meals is a mark of remembrance and respect. Maureen Warner-Lewis describes how 'the offering is placed on the ground before the drum, and the spirits are invited in words to come and eat'. After that, the ancestors' food is left untouched, and later is buried, as it is believed that the human consumption of food dedicated to the ancestors would have serious repercussions.<sup>135</sup>

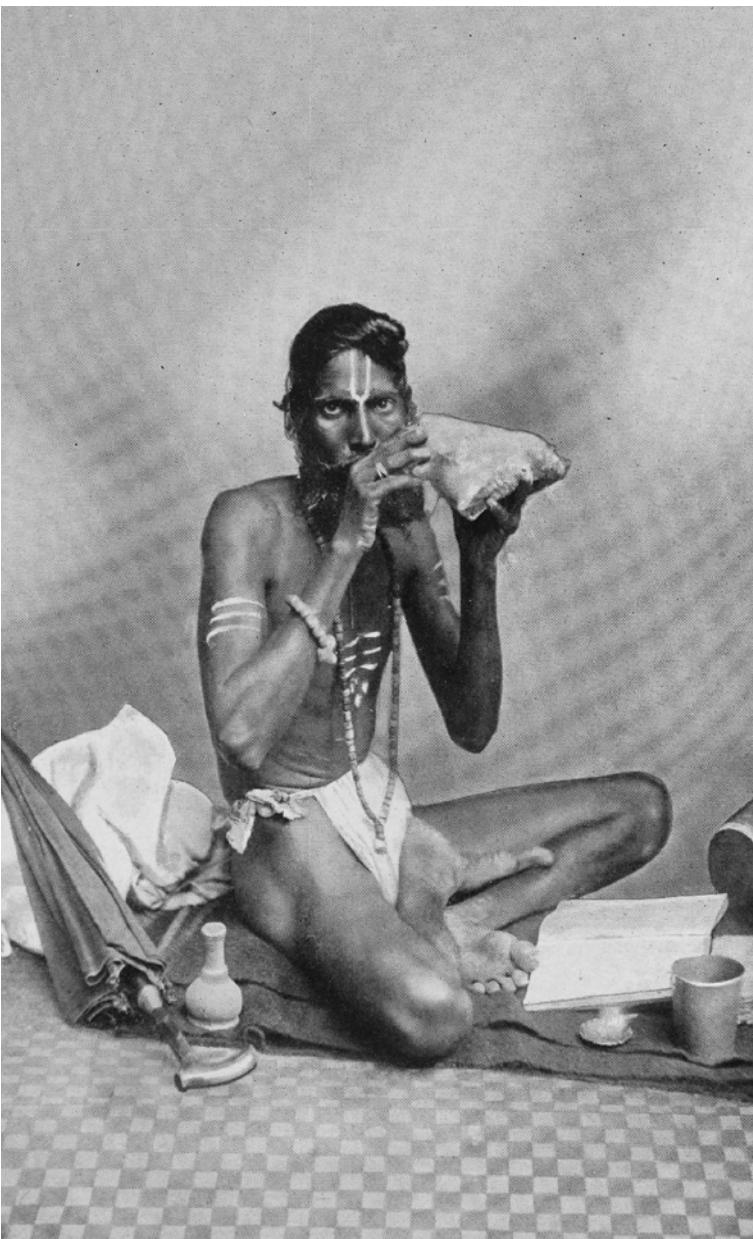


Figure 4.3. 'A Priest'. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-d753-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

## I-TAL FOOD AND RASTAFARIANISM

Like Kumina, Rastafarianism hails from Jamaica and has African cultural roots, but it is a much more recent movement, dating from the twentieth century. Like Kumina members, Rastafarians eschew the use of salt in food preparation and cooking, as it is similarly believed that salt lessens spiritual power and prevents the transmigration of souls back to Africa. Rastas follow a ‘livet’ (diet) of what they call I-tal food—that is, pure food, food in its essence or in its natural state. This is part of a larger belief in ‘livity’, a harmonious relationship among God, society and the natural world. Importantly, I-tal food is seen as intimately connected to health: physical, spiritual



**Figure 4.4. Rastafarian Menu, Temple Yard, Barbados, 2018.**  
(Photo courtesy of Sarah Lawson Welsh)

and sexual as well as wider harmony with one's natural environment. This is also a form of resistance insomuch as it promotes self-sufficiency over the rampant capitalism and dependency of Babylon's consumer society. Most Rastas follow certain dietary prohibitions (chief of which are not drinking alcohol or eating pork, scaleless fish and shellfish). I-tal food is founded on the principle of eating unprocessed and unadulterated food, with a preference for homegrown (or locally grown) produce as far as possible. Instead of other processed oils, Rastas often use coconut oil. Some of these prohibitions have Old Testament origins in line with the movement as a whole, but they have also been interpreted as cultural resistance to the dietary impositions of slavery and to the western way of life which was introduced to the African in the Caribbean.<sup>136</sup> In her memoir of her rural Jamaican childhood *From Harvey River* (2007), Lorna Goodison notes, 'The Dreads [Rasta] were capturing land all over Jamaica, seizing Crown land and building settlements and camps and sending smoke signals to young men in clouds of wisdom weed'.<sup>137</sup> She notes the contradictions of her Anglophile mother, who did not want her own son to become a 'Dread' but who nonetheless 'adopted' a young Rasta man called Phantom, whom she would 'feed [alongside her own nine children] from her bottomless cooking pot'.<sup>138</sup> 'Although he no longer ate her food, because Rastafarians preferred not to eat salt, he always came to visit her and be received as an honoured guest, as she was known to receive everyone'.<sup>139</sup> Food is clearly one of the central channels of resistance to Babylon or oppressive white power, historical and current, as Phantom explains to her. The historical centrality of the slaves' provision grounds as a site of resistance is here explicitly linked to more recent use of this kind of self-sufficiency to resist the power structures of Babylon and its toxic embrace of capitalism, which is viewed by Rastas as an unhealthy estrangement from the natural and the land:

'Mother Goodie' . . . Babylon don't like how I and I talk, Babylon don't like how I and I walk, for I and I mouth too big and I and I nose too broad and I and I skin too black. Everything about this kidnapped African is like poison to Babylon . . . I and I prefer not to eat no salt and I and I will touch no part of it, that is why the I cannot partake of that lovely plate of stewed peas that the I has offered the I, because I and I foresee a day will be coming when what sell in a shop will not have buyer, I and I will live close to the ground and grow the green herbs and eat the iron of the quick-springing ilaloo [callaloo], and build our structure with ground provisions.<sup>140</sup>

## CARIBBEAN FOOD, WRITING AND THE EROTIC

In *The Repeating Island*, Antonio Benítez-Rojo encourages critics and writers to ‘speak of the Caribbean that we can see, touch, smell, hear, taste; the Caribbean of the senses’.<sup>141</sup> Images of food and sex, bodies and consumption, the eroticism of eating and of stimulating the senses in different ways, have long been closely connected in a range of cultures, and the Caribbean is no exception. Indeed, writers such as Guyanese Grace Nichols and John Agard, Jamaican writers Opal Palmer Adisa and Anton Nimblett and Indo-Trinidadian poet Lettawatee Manoo-Rahming<sup>142</sup> have all explored sex and eroticism through sustained images of food and eating in their writing. Manoo-Rahming’s ‘Come Dine with Me’ invites and seduces by reconstructing ‘an edible woman’, ripe for consumption, in terms which are both erotic and characteristically Caribbean: ‘Spread my buns like dough over crab . . . My breast into johnny cake’.<sup>143</sup> In this respect, it is reminiscent of a number of Nichols’s poems in which food and the erotic are linked, such as ‘Invitation’.<sup>144</sup> In ‘Curry Flavour’, Manoo-Rahming invokes a specifically Indo-Caribbean culinary heritage, as body parts are scented with the exquisite scent of spices such as ginger, geera (cumin), turmeric, cardamom, achar masala, coriander and black mustard seed. These make the lover ‘cry in [their] coming / for your mama’s curry . . . back [in] Fyzabad’.<sup>145</sup> Fruit is also often linked to the erotic, as in John Agard’s ‘English Girl Eats Her First Mango’, or the exquisite detail of Anton Nimblett’s ‘Segments of an Orange’. These are all important articulations of Benítez-Rojo’s plea for a ‘Caribbean of the senses’.<sup>146</sup> However, not all of these writers use sensuous images of food without an awareness of the darker side of food cultivation and consumption in the Caribbean, especially sugar’s links to slavery, what Grace Nichols has called ‘the sweet crop with a bitter history’<sup>147</sup> and Carl Plasa has recently termed Caribbean writers’ need to revise ‘saccharine colonial vision[s]’.<sup>148</sup>

## EMBODYING THE EROTIC IN POPULAR CULTURE AND SONG

There is also a rich vein of Caribbean songs which link food, sex and the erotic. Such popular cultural forms are important since they form a kind of counter-narrative to official (and often ‘respectable’) accounts of food. Trinidadian calypso and Parang are particularly good examples of this. In the Parang staple ‘I want a piece of pork . . .’ we find the lines ‘when ah drinkin meh ba-bass / ah want pork in-front meh mout’, whilst in Pluto Shervington’s ‘Ram Goat Liver’, friends find a ram which has been run over and decide to

cook it by the roadside, as it is ‘good to mek mannish water’ (an aphrodisiac soup using the whole goat head) and ‘curried goat lunch [to] put de bite in your bark / It mek your daughter . . . walk and talk’. However, its reputed results are subverted by the actual effect of ‘a running belly’. Calypso or Kaiso is a satirical song with roots in both traditional African practices, and Caribbean slave resistance in the Caribbean and French colonial origins. It is traditionally associated with Trinidad’s annual pre-Lenten carnival. Gordon Rohlehr has explored the role of ‘images of men and women, food acquisition and survivalism’ in 1930s calypsos and suggests that, as in many Anancy tales, ‘we are never far away from the context of hunger, [as well as] unemployment, economic depression, worker militancy, desperation, struggle and sheer survivalism out of which the fictions of the thirties were shaped’.<sup>149</sup> This is important since it shapes the encounter between men and women which lies at the heart of many calypsos and presents a new level of challenge to the sexual tricksters, exploiters and freeloaders which people its lyrics. Alongside many calypsos from this period which document the hunger and shame of food dearth<sup>150</sup> are those which link food with sex. For example, in Caresser’s ‘Macafuchette’, the male persona ‘abandons pride and enters into arrangements with various cooks and housemaids in order to get the leftovers from rich households, without which he’d starve’.<sup>151</sup>

To these can be added many more recent calypsos, as well as other Caribbean musical forms which link food and sex. Vivien Gilman in a recent interview with The Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco) notes how Sparrow’s popular but controversial 1964 calypso ‘Congo Man’ sees him

taking a fantasy trip [to Africa] and . . . revealing his envy of a cannibal who has enjoyed eating two white American girls, one cooked and one raw. Despite the song’s popularity, it was banned from local radio till 1989. In my lounge, Sparrow sings the familiar verses and even enacts a typical audience reaction: ‘I never eat white meat yet, except’—a beat, eyes twinkling—‘all right, just one time in Canada!’ Cue the audience, corpsing. Well-versed in calypsonian double entendres, they understood that he was skewering not so much racism or cannibalism, but another taboo: oral sex.<sup>152</sup>

In Sparrow’s 1974 calypso ‘Saltfish’, the calypsonian’s innuendo depends on the overlapping sensory impressions of eating saltfish and the act of cunnilingus: ‘Saltfish stew is what I like . . . I like you food so don’t find me rude’. As Rohlehr argues, oral sex has been a ‘covert theme’ in calypso for decades.<sup>153</sup> This linkage of food and sex can be seen in other calypsos such as the Mighty Spitfire’s ‘Roast Corn for Rosie’, in which the corn cob represents the male phallus. Sparrow’s ‘Saltfish’ is not unusual in its objectification of women as sex objects and in its problematic sexual politics, at least to twenty-

first-century ears. This is even more apparent in ‘Sell the Pussy’ (1970), in which Sparrow urges his female partner to prostitute herself in order to raise money for food:

If you hear me sell the pussy and bring all the cash to me  
 love you baby but ah cyah remain hungry  
 This starvation it could finish just like that  
 But you got to sell the pussy, sell the pussy cat . . .

In David Rudder’s later ‘Carnival Ooman’ (1995), the woman is now more independent and sexually aggressive. Arguably she gets her own back for decades of male chauvinism and objectification of the female body by getting even young men ‘hot as pepper’ at Carnival and then walking away. In the female calypsonian, Calypso Rose’s ‘Sweet Pudding Man’ (1968) and ‘Pallet’, we find a female riposte to the objectification of the female body and a new assertion of female sexual agency. In ‘Sweet Pudding Man’, the calypsonian boasts that she has eaten from Indian, Chinese and Portuguese ‘pudding’, but it is ‘black pudding’ that she most craves. In ‘Pallet’, Rose takes on the persona of female ice cream seller who invites customers to ‘buy and suck her pallett’, a thinly veiled reference to cunnilingus. Both are important in placing female sexuality, agency and riposte at the centre of the calypso.<sup>154</sup>

In Jamaican dancehall music as well there is ‘an entire subset of . . . dancehall songs in which food is employed as a sustained metaphor in a way that it actually becomes . . . a tribute to Jamaican cuisine, even if that’s not really what the song is about’.<sup>155</sup> For example, ‘Vineyard Party’ (1985) by Jamaican dancehall deejay Super Cat (William Maragh), who gained widespread popularity during the late 1980s and early 1990s dancehall movement, lists the island’s homegrown vegetables in a ‘masterful parable for Jamaican society’.<sup>156</sup> ‘Big Belly Man’ Admiral Bailey’s controversial dancehall hit ‘Gimme Punany’ (1987) was later released as ‘Healthy Body’, a cleaned-up version which makes its point through double entendre, referring instead to common Jamaican foodstuffs such as yam and banana. Similar examples can be found in reggae, including the title song of Lee Scratch Perry’s 1978 album *Roast Fish, Collie Weed and Corn Bread*.

## CARIBBEAN FOOD, WRITING AND DIASPORA

Cooking and eating play an equally key role in the negotiation of Caribbean identity (what it means to be Caribbean) and culture in a global context.

Diasporic Caribbean subjects (writers and cooks) can be seen to attempt to reestablish a new cultural home by adapting their culture to novel conditions, fusing imported culinary traditions with resources in the new territory, and creating local versions of Caribbean cooking and eating. Indeed, literary texts do not merely reflect but sometimes also mediate a process of culinary deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Whilst poems such as Grace Nichols's 'Like a Beacon' (1984)<sup>157</sup> and Lorna Goodison's 'Hard Food' (2004)<sup>158</sup> articulate nostalgia for 'back home' through the lack of Caribbean food in a diasporic setting, other texts—such as Jamaican Kei Miller's autobiographical essay 'But in Glasgow There Are Plantains' (2013)—move towards negotiating new identities which are no longer purely or simply diasporan. Echoing Stuart Hall's notion of diasporan identities as always in process,<sup>159</sup> Miller reflects, 'What is happening to me in Scotland, as I establish a home, is what is happening to everyone in this world every day—we are still and always becoming ourselves'.<sup>160</sup> And for Miller, food is central to this process:

In Glasgow, I am learning how to cook the Caribbean . . . it is not really that some sudden wave of homesickness has come over me, or that I've never cooked before. I've always loved cooking, but in the Caribbean I had never tried to cook mackerel rundown,<sup>161</sup> Gungo peas soup,<sup>162</sup> or Escoveitch fish,<sup>163</sup> partly because so many people could do it better than I could ever attempt.<sup>164</sup>

Miller's essay moves beyond culinary nostalgia or what Poynting calls 'home food as cliché' in Caribbean literature by offering an example of a Caribbean writer's awareness of the more complex contemporary role of (re)constructed traditions, creolisation, deterritorialised and re-territorialised food cultures as well as a new phenomenon of pan-Caribbean food as an effect of the increasing commodification and globalised reach of Caribbean food. Crucially, Miller's cooking is both Caribbean *and* Scottish, creolising 'the Caribbean with Scottish ingredients'<sup>165</sup> in order to produce something new ('you must make it your own, with your own special touch'<sup>166</sup>). When his mother asks, 'Are there really plantains in Glasgow?' he is able to assure her that there are indeed and 'more consistently than you find in Jamaica—as if they import them from a place untouched by hurricanes'.<sup>167</sup> Hinting at the longer history of Caribbean-Scottish culinary connections, he also notes the easy availability of 'Scotch bonnet peppers', something 'I'd always thought of as Jamaican peppers, but which has obviously reminded someone, a long time ago, about something he saw in Scotland—a Tam o' Shanter hat'.<sup>168</sup> As Miller concludes, 'These connections go both ways'.<sup>169</sup>

## TOWARDS THE GLOBAL

Another good example of the commodification and globalised reach of Caribbean food is the dissemination of Caribbean ingredients, recipe books and branded products by UK entrepreneur Levi Roots. Through critical readings of Root's successive cookery books (which include recipes, song lyrics, autobiography, testimonies and oral proverbs), the final chapter demonstrates how far complex local and the global forces are at play in the marketing of food products and cookery writing as 'authentically' Caribbean. Roots's culinary story is fascinating, as despite the presence of a Caribbean diasporic population in Britain since at least the 1940s, Caribbean food and cooking has, as yet, not really permeated the culinary mainstream in Britain. Chapter 7 asks whether the Reggae phenomenon reflects a welcome trend in deterritorialising ethnic foods in Britain as part of a new culinary cosmopolitanism or whether it should be seen instead as a less positive reification of 'ethnic' food, a form of culinary tourism.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced the intimate relationship between food and narrative in the Anglophone Caribbean from the earliest period of its settlement by indigenous peoples to the present day. It has shown how the Caribbean has a long and multilayered history as a region of trade and encounter, colonial settlement, movement and migration, cultural admixture, syncretism and creolisation and how, in the region, the cultural practices of cooking, eating and storytelling have always been closely linked. A rich variety of Caribbean writings (of different styles, forms and genres) have been referred to in order to demonstrate the complex interconnections between food and writing, and especially between food and a wider oral culture in a Caribbean context. Placing literary texts in dialogue with other kinds of writings on food demonstrates their crucial connectedness to a wider oral culture and to important popular traditions in the Anglophone Caribbean, something which is often minimised or overlooked in Western accounts of food and literature. Drawing on Anu Lakhani's concept of the 'call and response' of culture as a useful critical paradigm for examining the relationship between food and literature in a Caribbean context, this chapter has explored different facets of identity politics: the ways in which Caribbean writers have explored, defined and reaffirmed their different cultural, ethnic, caste, class and gender identities by writing about what, when and how they eat. It has argued that images of feeding, feasting, fasting and other food rituals and practices, as articulated in

the writings, can constitute a powerful force of social cohesion and cultural continuity or, alternatively, can signal social divisiveness and separatism. It has also considered the relationship among food, body and soul (for example, the erotic and the spiritual) and, finally, the complex afterlives of Caribbean food in globalised diasporic contexts where questions of identity, culinary ‘tradition’ and ‘authenticity’ are to the fore. In the next chapter, we turn to oral history and the voices of contemporary Bajans talking about food, identity and tradition.

## NOTES

1. Philip Sherlock, *West Indian Folk Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 9.
2. Sherlock, *West Indian*, 9.
3. Christine MacKie, *Life and Food in the Caribbean* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), 25.
4. Olive Senior, *Gardening in the Tropics* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1995), 91–92.
5. Senior, *Gardening*, 92.
6. Senior, *Gardening*, 74–75.
7. Senior, *Gardening*, 73.
8. Senior, *Gardening*, 72.
9. Senior, *Gardening*, 72.
10. Desrey Fox in Dabydeen, ‘Teaching West Indian Literature in Britain’, in *Teaching British Cultures: An Introduction*, ed. Susan Bassnett (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 135–51.
11. La Vinia Delois Jennings, *Toni Morrison and the Idea of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 102.
12. Philip Sherlock, *Anansi the Spider Man* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 73–79.
13. Emily Zobel Marshall, *Anansi’s Journey* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2014), 23–24.
14. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 24.
15. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 27.
16. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 27.
17. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 77–78.
18. Walter Jekyll, *Jamaica Song and Story* (New York: Dover, 1966 [1907]).
19. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 65.
20. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 49.
21. Marshall, *Anansi’s*, 49–50.
22. Gordon Rohlehr, ‘Images of Men and Women’, in *Gender in Caribbean Development*, eds. Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 1988), 280.
23. Louise Bennett, *Jamaica Labrish* (Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster’s Bookstores, 1966), 199–200.

24. Louise Bennett, *Selected Poems* (Jamaica: Sangster's Book Stores, 1982).
25. Bennett, *Selected Poems*.
26. Bennett, *Jamaica*, 83–84 and 85–86.
27. Olive Senior, Preface to *Pepperpot* (Leeds and New York: Peekash Press, 2014), 11.
28. Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (Jamaica: Twin Guinep, 2003), 383.
29. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 383.
30. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 386.
31. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 386.
32. Caroline Sullivan, *The Jamaica Cookery Book* (Kingston, Jamaica: Aston W. Gardner & Co., 1893).
33. Sir Algernon Aspinall, *The Pocket Guide Book to the West Indies* (1907) cited in Winifred Grey, *Caribbean Cookery* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1965), 208.
34. Lynn Marie Houston, *Food Culture in the Caribbean* (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2005).
35. Senior, *Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press; London: James Currey, 1991), 129–47.
36. Houston, *Food Culture*, xxv–xxvii.
37. Grace Nichols, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (London: Virago, 1984), 9.
38. Ilari Berti, 'Curiosity, Appreciation and Disgust', in *Caribbean Food Cultures*, eds. Wiebke Beushausen et al., 115–32 (Germany: Transcript, 2014).
39. Brinda Mehta, *Notions of Identity, Diaspora and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 94.
40. George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (Burnt Mill, Harlow: Macmillan, 1983 [1953]), 260–61.
41. E.g., Goodison 1986, 2007, Clarke 1999, Nichols 1984.
42. Lamming, *Castle*, 263.
43. David Sutton suggests, 'In the past, one of the latent purposes of cooking's taking a long time was to prove women's fidelity and faithfulness to their families and their daily chores, as Hirschon (1998:150) notes, "proper food" took hours to prepare; food that could be prepared quickly was referred to as "prostitute food", because it implied that women were saving time in the kitchen to pursue illicit activities'. *Remembrance of Repasts* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 132.
44. Candice Goucher, *Congotay! Congotay!* (New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2013), 73.
45. Lamming, *Castle*, 266.
46. Austin Clarke, *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, [1999] 2000), 32.
47. Sam Selvon, *A Brighter Sun* (Harlow: Longman Caribbean, 1985 [1952]), 4–5.
48. Meetai is flour and sugar mixed with water and deep fried.
49. Selvon, *Brighter*, 160.
50. Selvon, *Brighter*, 160.

51. Gillian Richards-Greaves, ‘The Intersections of “Guyanese Food”’, in *Food and Identity in the Caribbean*, ed. Hanna Garth (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 88.
52. Mehta, *Notions*, 106–31.
53. Lynn Marie Houston, *Food Culture in the Caribbean* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 81.
54. Selvon, *Brighter*, 164.
55. Selvon, *Brighter*, 167.
56. Selvon, *Brighter*, 171.
57. V. S. Naipaul, *The Mystic Masseur* (London: Picador, 2001 [1957]), 44.
58. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 4.
59. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 40.
60. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 45.
61. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 191.
62. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 191.
63. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 53.
64. Naipaul, *Mystic*, 45.
65. Selvon, *Brighter*, 45.
66. Veronica Gregg, “‘Yuh Know Bout Coo-Coo?’ Language Representation, Creolisation and Confusion in ‘Indian Cuisine’”, in *Questioning Creole*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Glen L. Richards (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2002), 150.
67. Ramabai Espinet, ‘Indian Cuisine’, *Massachusetts Review* (Autumn–Winter 1994): 563–73.
68. Gregg, ‘Coo-Coo’, 150–51.
69. Gregg, ‘Coo-Coo’, 151.
70. Espinet, ‘Indian Cuisine’, 574.
71. Gregg, ‘Coo-Coo’, 159.
72. Gregg, ‘Coo-Coo’, 160.
73. Espinet, ‘Indian’, 574.
74. Espinet, ‘Indian’, 574.
75. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 107.
76. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 108.
77. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, 108.
78. Alfred Mendes, ‘Her Chinaman’s Way’, in *Trinidad*, eds. Alfred Mendes and C. L. R. James 1, 1 (Trinidad, Christmas 1929).
79. Anne-Marie Lee-Loy, ‘Identifying a Chinese Caribbean Literature’, *Small Axe*, Sx Salon (2014).
80. Michael Anthony, *Cricket in the Road* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1973), 66–71.
81. In V.S. Naipaul, *A Flag on the Island* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1967).
82. Mehta, *Notions*, 98.
83. Merle Hodge, *Crick Crack, Monkey* (London and Kingston: Macmillan Caribbean, 1985 [1970]), 105–6.
84. Hodge, *Crick*, 106.
85. Hodge, *Crick*, 106. Poolarie are deep-fried balls of split-pea or dahl flour, garlic and onion and sometimes masala; anchar is a spicy kohlrabi pickle; accra are

deep-fried fritters of flour, salt, yeast, black-eyed peas or saltfish; fry-bake are the traditional accompaniment of shorter, deep-fried dough balls; and zaboca is avocado.

86. Hodge, *Crick*, 107.
87. Antonia MacDonald, ‘Making Room for Tantie’, in *Feminist and Critical Perspectives in Caribbean Mothering*, eds. Dorsia Smith Silva and Simone A. James Alexander (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013), 202.
88. Hodge, *Crick*, 15.
89. MacDonald, ‘Making’, 106.
90. MacDonald, ‘Making’, 203.
91. Ismith Khan, ‘Puran’ in *A Day in the Country* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1994), 26. A similar situation is explored in Willi Chen’s ‘Mas Is More Than a Creole Thing’, which examines the creolisation of the predominantly African-Caribbean practice of Carnival by Indo-Caribbeans through so-called Chutney music. Indo-Caribbean character Alexander thinks about the taunting of him and others of his ethnic group at school as ‘all “curry-mouth” classmates’. Yet the same boys ‘had left the fields, the salting of crops and working in the mule pens, to become successful businessmen’ (*Chutney Power*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1994, 5).
92. Khan, ‘Puran’, 32–33.
93. Chen, *Chutney*, 5.
94. Roopal Monar, ‘Massala Maraj’, in *India in the Caribbean*, eds. David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo (London: Hansib & University of Warwick, 1987), 309.
95. Monar, ‘Massala’, 313.
96. C. L. R. James, ‘Triumph’, in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, eds. Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 84.
97. James, ‘Triumph’, 84.
98. James, ‘Triumph’, 87.
99. James, ‘Triumph’, 89.
100. James, ‘Triumph’, 87.
101. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 25.
102. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 25.
103. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 107.
104. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 25.
105. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 107.
106. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 107.
107. These include Guyanese British Lakshmi Persaud’s novels, *Sastrra* (1993) and *Butterfly in the Wind* (2009), and Trinidadian Canadian Ramabai Espinet’s short story ‘Indian Cuisine’.
108. Mehta, *Diasporic*, 108.
109. Paule Marshall, ‘The Making of a Writer: From the Poets in the Kitchen’, in *Merle: A Novella and Other Stories* (London: Virago, 1985), 3–12.
110. Marshall, ‘Making’.
111. Marshall, ‘Making’.
112. Marshall, ‘Making’.

113. Marshall, ‘Making’.
114. Marshall, ‘Making’.
115. Kelly, *Pepperpot*, 80.
116. Mehta, *Notions*, 98.
117. John Lyons, *Cook-Up in a Trini Kitchen* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2009), 9.
118. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 218.
119. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 217.
120. Jamaica Kincaid, *At the Bottom of the River* (London: Picador, 1983).
121. Jean Binta Breeze, ‘Kitchen Talk’, in *On the Edge of an Island* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1997), 75.
122. Binta Breeze, ‘Kitchen Talk’, 77.
123. Jeremy Poynting, ‘Food and Cooking’, <http://peepaltreepress.com/discover/cultural-forms/food-and-cooking>.
124. Lakshmi Persaud, *Butterfly in the Wind* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2009), 124–27.
125. Persaud, *Butterfly*, 132.
126. Persaud, *Butterfly*, 90.
127. Soutik Biswas, ‘Why India’s Food Police Are Kicking Up a Storm’, BBC, 2016, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-37335891](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-37335891) IPThisFB.
128. Poynting, ‘Food’, n.p.
129. Chen, *Chutney*, 1–9.
130. V. S. Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 10.
131. Naipaul, *India*, 10.
132. V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 102.
133. Mehta, *Notions*, 90.
134. Mehta, *Notions*, 90.
135. Maureen Warner-Lewis, Central Africa in the Caribbean (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2003), 104.
136. See Annika McPherson, “‘De fuud dem produus me naa go iit it!’ Rastafarian ‘Culinary Identity’”, in *Caribbean Food Cultures*, eds. Wiebke Beushausen et al. (Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2014), 279–98, for more on Rastafarian food and the debates surrounding it.
137. Lorna Goodison, *From Harvey River* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 238.
138. Goodison, *Harvey*, 239.
139. Goodison, *Harvey*, 239.
140. Goodison, *Harvey*, 239–40.
141. Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, [1992] 1996), 9–10.
142. Grace Nichols, ‘Sugar Cane’ in *I Is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983) and *The Fat Black Woman’s Poems* (1984); John Agard, ‘English Girl Eats Her First Mango’ (1983) in *Alternative Anthem* (2009), 21–23; Opal Palmer Adisa, *Caribbean Passion* (2004), and Anton Nimblett, *Sections of an Orange* (2009); Lettawatee Manoo-

Rahming, 'Come into My Garden', 'Come Dine with Me', 'Curry Flavour' in *Curry Flavour* (2000).

143. Lettawatee Manoo-Rahming, *Curry Flavour* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000), 76.
144. Nichols, *Fat Black*, 12–13.
145. Manoo-Rahming, *Curry*, 81.
146. Benítez-Rojo, *Repeating*, 9–10.
147. Grace Nichols, *English File* programme BBC 1997. See also John Agard's 'Sugar Cane's Saga' in *Travel Light Travel Dark* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2013), 35–36.
148. Carl Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 9.
149. Gordon Rohlehr, 'Images', 235.
150. E.g., Growling Tiger's 'Lazy Man' and 'Miss Marie's Advice' (1938) and Gorilla's 'Empty Belly' (1938). In Growling Tiger's 'Money Is King' (1935), an educated man in smart clothes is turned away by the Chinese shopkeeper ('de Chinee man'), as he has no 'penny'. He is so hungry even 'the worms start to jump in the man's belly' (236). Other calypsos such as Tiger's 'Workers' Appeal' (1934) and Ziegfeld's 'Depression' (1938) document the deep shame felt by many men who could not provide for their families.
151. Rohlehr, 'Images', 239.
152. Vivien Goldman, 'Mighty Sparrow: The King of Calypso on Freedom, Windrush and Oral Sex', Interview with the Mighty Sparrow, *The Guardian*, November 2018.
153. Gordon Rohlehr, 'I Lawa: The Construction of Masculinity in Trinidad and Tobago Calypso', in *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities*, ed. Rhoda Reddock (Mona, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2004), 368.
154. Rohlehr, 'Masculinity', 367.
155. Jesse Serwer, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, website.
156. Jesse Serwer, Guess, n.p.
157. Nichols, *Fat Black*, 27.
158. Lorna Goodison 'Hard Food' in *Controlling the Silver* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 78.
159. Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 392–401.
160. Kei Miller, 'In Glasgow There Are Plantains', 2013, 45.
161. This is a one-pot meal of meat or fish, vegetables, coconut milk and spices named after the separation of oil and meat juices which form at the bottom of the pot.
162. This soup is made with pigeon peas and often eaten at Christmas.
163. This is raw or lightly fried fish in a sauce made from vinegar, oil and spices, with water, onion, salt, sugar, carrots, chayote (christophene), hot peppers and all-spice.
164. Miller, 'Glasgow', 46.
165. Miller, 'Glasgow', 47.

166. Miller, 'Glasgow', 47.
167. Miller, 'Glasgow', 47.
168. Miller, 'Glasgow', 47.
169. Miller, 'Glasgow', 47.



# *Chapter Five*

## **KitchenTalk**

### *Caribbean Women Talk about Food*

That's how I do it and me mohda before that.

—Ntozake Shange<sup>1</sup>

The recipes are written into her hands, into the strata of her calluses.

—David Sutton<sup>2</sup>

This chapter takes the idea of KitchenTalk discussed in the last chapter and analyses qualitative data drawn from a series of interviews undertaken on the island of Barbados in 2018. Barbados has particularly strong culinary traditions linked to cultural nationalism and its sense of itself as an island nation. Unlike countries such as Trinidad and Guyana, it has a much smaller and less prominent Indo-Caribbean population, and this might be construed as a possible limitation. However, focusing on this small island community has the positive advantage of examining foods and attitudes to food which are less well known and less commonly researched. Most existing accounts of Caribbean food tend to focus on Jamaican foodways, and these are often problematically seen as representatively Caribbean. A key aim of this chapter is, therefore, to show the diversity and particularity of a single island's culinary traditions. There is also an urgency to conducting field research of this kind in Barbados, as many of the interviewees are part of an older demographic that potentially represents the last of traditional Bajan (Barbadian) home cooking. A younger demographic is now more likely (though not exclusively) to eat more prepared and fast food and not to look to oral tradition as the mainstay of their culinary practices. This represents a significant shift in both culinary practices and patterns of consumption.<sup>3</sup>

Eighteen interviews with Caribbean respondents were set up as *charlas culinarias* (culinary chats), utilizing Abarca's (2007) important research methodology.<sup>4</sup> It was important that these interviews were undertaken in person (rather than, for example, by Skype or email) due to the cultural context of the interviews and the need to capture nonverbal elements and the holistic nature of the subject matter (KitchenTalk needs to be undertaken in kitchens). Not only did some of the respondents not have access to the internet in their own homes, but interviewing them in other locations was also counter to the main objective of the interviews. Moreover, cultural protocols in a specifically Caribbean context necessitate being introduced and invited into a private individual's kitchen (or to be invited into the interviewer's) in order to undertake research. It was recognised that kitchens are also private spaces, and the interviews needed to recognise the specific parameters of interviewer conduct in this context.

### KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Interview questions were tailored to the varying contexts and backgrounds of individual respondents but were united by a focus on the idea of what culinary 'tradition' means in a specifically Caribbean context. Respondents were asked a series of questions including what 'traditional' Bajan food meant to them in terms of their culinary influences and practices in a Caribbean context, how far they draw on oral rather than written traditions, their use of recipe books, generational differences, 'tradition' and modernity, food and diaspora and the space of the kitchen in a specifically Caribbean context. Interviews drew on the concept of 'culinary matrilineage', an adaptation of the feminist concept of thinking back through one's mothers, most famously proposed by writers of colour such as Alice Walker (1983), Ntozake Shange and Paule Marshall (1985). Interviews sought to raise discussion about gender and kitchen spaces and to investigate how far they operated as important sites of female sociality, solidarity and sustenance (in the widest sense). The idea of 'oral tradition' was discussed and thoroughly interrogated, chiefly in terms of its porosity and plasticity as a set of discourses and the means by which it is able to act as a cultural repository and/or a conduit by which specific food practices and foodways are retained and reproduced, outside of written communication. Oral history research has been undertaken by Caribbean critics such as Rhoda Reddock, Catherine Shepherd, Patricia Mohammed and, notably, Olive Senior (1991), but the focus on women's lives has not generally included culinary considerations or been aligned to a literary/cultural studies paradigm. Other researchers such as Erna Brodber (1980, 1988) and Honor

Ford-Smith (1986) have chosen to incorporate their sociological research into Caribbean womens' lives into creative rather than critical outputs.

## ETHICAL ISSUES

For decades, feminists have been arguing that oral histories of women are empowering for all those involved. They provide a voice for women whose stories would otherwise go unrecorded and offer readers personal stories of, and insights about, groups of women they might not otherwise meet. They provide feminist researchers with a way to uncover significant information about women and to further political causes by weaving women's stories into a narrative. However, it is also important to question the ethics of oral history work, as, arguably, researchers have far more to gain in this process than respondents do. All respondents in the proposed KitchenTalk project were adults who gave full consent to the interviews and publication of the findings after full ethical monitoring and clearance. All names have been anonymised in the interviews which follow.

## METHODOLOGIES

The KitchenTalk research project utilises oral history as an important means of data collection which foregrounds female subjectivity and is grounded in the very medium (oral communication) being researched in this chapter. It considers the role of oral traditions in the preparation, cooking and consumption of home-cooked food in a time of uncertainty and change, as traditional gender roles continue to shift, fast-food outlets proliferate and fewer households home cook or cook 'from scratch'. The project drew upon the practices and insights of a range of feminist oral historians, including Geiger (1990), Armitage, Hart and Weathermon (2002) and Hesse-Biber (2007). The project was informed by Geiger's observation that 'there is nothing inherently feminist about . . . women's oral histories or women doing women's oral histories'.<sup>5</sup> Instead, 'The objectives of the researcher, the questions addressed in the research, the evidence against which oral data are verified or evaluated, the character of the research relationship, the intended audience for the "product(s)" of the research, and the potential beneficiaries of the transformation of oral into written history'<sup>6</sup> all need to be scrutinised and self-reflectively considered before and in all stages of the research project. Geiger provides a useful taxonomy of feminist oral history, and this informs the KitchenTalk project insofar as it recognised gender as a crucial analytical

tool in understanding women's lives as embodied and historically located within a nexus of specific social, cultural, national and racial or ethnic realities. Feminist oral history methodology serves to problematise androcentric assumptions and homogenising notions of women as an undifferentiated group (and vice versa). It foregrounds women's own experiences and ways of being in the world as valuable research data, containing important and valuable truths in relation to the larger research project rather than minor, anecdotal or merely subjective data. The personal and the individual are deemed important. In common with feminist oral history methodology, the research methods in the KitchenTalk project were thoroughly self-reflexive and questioning of all gender 'norms' and constructions, not just those affecting the female respondents.

David F. Sutton's influential study of oral tradition, memory and cooking on the Greek island of Kalymnos, *Remembrance of Repasts* (2001), also informed the methodology of this chapter. Sutton refers to Seremetakis's notion of 'counter-memory' as a resource which is 'under threat from the consumerisation of Greek society'<sup>7</sup> but also potentially a site of resistance to the same, and there are obvious parallels in a Barbadian context. For Seremetakis, the materiality of food culture involves body memory—'my body involuntarily knew what I consciously did not'—and this is a useful way of thinking about some of the embodied aspects of the oral transmission of culinary tradition in a Barbadian context. As some of the respondents note, 'cooking is an "embodied apprenticeship" in contrast to a formal learning mediated through cookbooks and written recipes'.<sup>8</sup> As Sutton observes of an elderly woman cooking, 'There are no index cards or folded stained papers. The recipes are written into her hands, into the strata of her calluses' (Sutton 2001).<sup>9</sup> Sutton also notes 'how food structures both daily routines, and more long-term rhythms represented by seasonal harvest, feasts and fasts, and life-cycle marker',<sup>10</sup> and this can be clearly seen in the discussion of special foods and meals (for example, at Christmas) in the following interviews. In this and other senses, food discourse in the Barbadian respondents I interviewed can be seen as phatic; that is, language used 'to maintain and to build social relations rather than to communicate new information'.<sup>11</sup> As Sidney Mintz has argued, 'Food talk [is important] . . . in creating a shared food community'.<sup>12</sup>

On the subjects of food exchange and food generosity, Sutton's insights are also useful. He argues that 'food generosity is . . . a key site for elaborating notions of group identity, in particular a "modern" identity that poses itself in contrast to a lost past in which generosity made up the shared substance of everyday life on [the island]'.<sup>13</sup> Again, several of the KitchenTalk respondents referred to 'old' or 'traditional' foodways and food practices in terms of the loss of something valuable. These memories of community through food can

be useful in tracking ‘changing mode[s] of food preparation and their implications of the generation of food-based memories’.<sup>14</sup> However, we also need to guard against interpreting respondents’ constructions of ‘tradition’ and the ‘traditional’ as unproblematically of greater value than modernity and the food practices of the present. This is a tension seen in many of the interviews, as modernity (in the form of burgeoning fast-food outlets) is viewed ambivalently as meeting new needs and lifestyles but also as involving the depletion or loss of ‘traditional’ home cooking and other more labour-intensive foodways.<sup>15</sup> Certain details in the interviews, such as Stella’s birthday egg, also show how ‘food detail has the potential to be highly symbolic’.<sup>16</sup> Sutton asks, ‘What kind of relations of cooking and “everyday life” accompany the traditional transmission of cooking knowledge from mothers and grandmothers to daughters and granddaughters, and what has come to replace this knowledge?’<sup>17</sup> Such questions were also at the heart of the KitchenTalk interviews. Sutton’s notion of cooking as a kind of ‘practical knowledge’ is also illuminating here, as cooks draw on ‘repertoires of memories and imaginations’.<sup>18</sup> In practice, this means drawing from memory and a recognisable stock of knowledge, but it also allows ‘considerable room for improvisation’.<sup>19</sup> This is observable in a number of the KitchenTalk interviews, as respondents speak of cooking Bajan specialties such as black cake or flying fish and cou cou in terms of the degree of individual improvisation which was deemed acceptable by close female relatives. One final point which features in a number of the interviews is a suspicion or ‘disdain for measurement and precision’<sup>20</sup> in cooking. Partly this is a characteristic of an inherited oral tradition and the scarcity of equipment in many kitchens until of late; partly it might be explained as what Sutton calls an ‘anti-sociality . . . memories of past cooking technique invoke a taken-for-granted materiality and physicality of everyday life that has been [or is perceived to have been] eroded by “modernity”’.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, in the mother-daughter interviews with Michelle and Merle, this binary is reversed, and it is the older woman who was trained to measure and the younger one who eschews this culinary approach. However, the notion of cooking as both material and physical (feeling up the produce at market, being shown how to handle food, touching and tasting food as it is cooked) is present in almost all interviews, and arguably this is something which recipe books cannot transmit as intimately or as memorably.

## THE INTERVIEWS

This chapter includes only a selection of the interviews in full rather than extracts from all interviews in order to give space to the rich evidence of

the ‘call and response’ between food and culture in the respondents’ stories. The interviews included are only lightly edited, and respondents’ use of listing, naming, hesitation and repetition are all retained as strategies which are important to the interview form within a socio-linguistic and oral theoretical methodology. David Sutton cites sociolinguist Deborah Tannen’s *Talking Voices* (1989) as theorising ‘the use of repetition and detail (among other devices) in creating conversational intimacy’.<sup>22</sup> Tannen argues that the use of repetition (such as set phrases or proverbs) acts as an ‘involvement strategy that draws the listener into the conversation’<sup>23</sup> and as a ‘resource for producing ample talk, both by providing material for talk and by enabling talk through automaticity’.<sup>24</sup>



**Grace is a university-educated professional in her forties. She has lived and studied in Canada but now resides in Barbados where she works with small businesses.**

*I have to ask you, especially as you kindly brought me lots of older and newer recipe books—do you use recipe books? Did your mother or grandmother use recipe books? What’s the role of recipe books?*

Let’s speak for me first. I just love cookery books because I love the layout, the pictures and I love to cook. Yes, I use my cookbooks. I use, it depends on one’s, what I want to do. The daily Caribbean cooking that I’ve been familiar with since, from growing up I don’t necessarily refer to a cookbook, um, but if I want to do something different, I reach for one of the many cookbooks on the shelf . . . I use their methods . . .

. . . and adapt?

And adapt. Um, so yes that’s how I use my cookbooks.

*So how did you learn to cook?*

Who knows? [Laughs] Um, I don’t think you could be a West Indian girl child, as they refer to us, and not grow up knowing how to cook. So, the line being between knowing when you learned and knowing it, is invisible. I was always, I was always in the kitchen with my mum. I’m the first and only girl, and that’s just what we did, so once mum was in the kitchen and I was there, you tend to pick up things and you get, you’re given activities, whether it’s

peel the onions, cut the beans, wash the lettuce. That's how, that for me, is the beginning of the journey of learning how to cook.

*So, it's not formal necessarily?*

No, definitely not formal. I would say it's informal and, um, you ask if my mum uses cookbooks—yes and no. We have this hilarious joke. She does not follow the recipe. Up to today when I was talking to her, she said her friend had given her a recipe, 'cause they have a lot of mangoes. She said, 'Well, save some of the mangoes. I'm never there'. She's not here during the summer months so she doesn't get the mangoes. So, I said, 'Well, what do you want me to save the mangoes for?' 'Oh, my friend Monica gave me a recipe for mango soufflé, mango mousse, and I want to do that when I come back so save the mangoes, put them in the freezer'. And I'm like 'Really?' So, I know her. She loves cookbooks as well. She will pick up, she reads cookbooks, but she does not follow the recipes.

*Are they aspirational for her?*

Or she's thinking about doing, she will certainly . . . okay, she doesn't have the ingredients, she just, on the spur of the moment, thinks 'I want to do such and such' and I say 'you don't have ingredients'. 'Oh well I can adapt'. And there are some things that you can't adapt and I'm saying, 'It's not gonna be the same thing' so that's, that's where we have the tête-à tête when it comes to following the recipe. She has a friend, a Caribbean friend from Antigua who does the traditional Christmas cake, the black cake. Now different households, different women do that cake differently. The one thing that is consistent in the preparation of the fruit, but then the baking and the execution of this recipe tends to be different. Here is why. Mum has been doing it and mum is like 'Well, mine doesn't come out like yours, and I can't get it to come out', so Aunt Mary is saying 'OK so here's the recipe. Do exactly what the recipe say!'

*But of course, improvisation comes in even when you've got, instructions . . . So, she's soaking in a jar and layering it down?*

So soaking, she soaking her fruit that, I have come along, and she has cut up all the fruit in the food processor, you put it in the big jar [conaree]. So, you have your raisins, your currants, your mixed peel, your prunes, whatever, whatever else goes in, rum—very important—rum, and then port wine. Those

are the two very important ingredients. Some people also use stout or Guinness in that mix. But whatever it is, it all of it goes into this jar. That's it and you can close the jar and leave it. Some people do it six weeks before they're gonna bake it, others do it right through the year. So, the jar that's been sitting on the counter in my kitchen has been turning over now four years. So last Christmas she baked a cake. The Christmas before she didn't, but she still has to add more fruit to that jar. So, you keep adding fruit . . . the fruit continues to steep and—what do you call it marinade? You're adding fruit, you're adding rum, you're adding fruit, you're adding rum. I might sometimes get an instruction over the FaceTime, over the phone, 'Did you check the fruit, look and see if it look a little dry and pour in some rum?'

*In Britain we do a similar thing; you make the cake and then 'feed' it with alcohol.*

You still have to bake the cake, you know, you know much rum went into the cake, into the preparation. It's baked and when it's hot you have to feed it more rum.

*[Laughs] Both you and your mum have spent time in Canada. If food is 'home', then what foods did you miss most? What did you associate with Bajan cooking?*

You mean living away?

*Yes. What were the foods that you craved, although you may not have missed home, there must have been moments?*

For me, I adapt quite quickly to different environments. So, I go with the flow of cooking. 'Okay, I'm not there, I can't get that, but I'm going to eat'. My cooking was adapted for our Canadian environment. Now one of the things that it is very traditionally Barbadian is pudding and souse<sup>25</sup> so that would be the one food that I would have to say was not available. Although I could make it if I really, really wanted it, but that would have been one of the foods that I would have to put on the list of, okay, what did you really miss?

*Traditionally made with the pig's blood in a pig's intestines or with the sweet potato stuffing?*

No, I would have done it with the sweet potato which we then call steam pudding. Um there's nowhere in Canada I'm going to find pigs' intestines! [Laughs] And that's too much work!

*Some older women insisted on that version wherever they were, but other people seem to have adapted and modernised.*

Yeah, but then I'm from a generation that is not necessarily going to have to have the traditional blood pudding stuffed into a pig's skin and, and don't talk about when they do the blood!

*Do you have any early food memories?*

Well, I got to cooking because the older I got, you know, you were involved in cooking. There were times I was the one in the kitchen cooking. I would have been about eleven or twelve, and I baked a cake, and never mind it was a box cake, it was a cake. Right so from there you continued by doing . . . No I would have done all the salads so I was the salad queen. To this day I go anywhere it is 'Grace have to make the salad', so I would have been doing that. You move to rice and peas, rice and chicken. You season the chicken. You put it in the oven. So, you're baking, you know, chicken parts, whole baked chicken, eggs etc. and because you been watching and observing you know these things. You don't have to have a 'to do' list to do it, you visualise.

*So, your mother and grandmother would have 'put so, put so'? There wasn't any measuring and would you taste?*

It depends. Yes, the tasting happened, you've got to taste. Now I, once I know the ingredients and I know my quantities I'm not tasting. So that's another bone [of contention] that we have with each other: 'You must taste it!' 'I didn't need to taste it!'

*So, were there other things that came into that space? I'm thinking of that kitchen space as often gendered female . . . kitchens are often occupied [exclusively] by women. Did they talk about local gossip? Tell stories? . . . or was it just what we're doing here, how we are doing it?*

I don't remember a whole lot of the conversation. It probably just happened so naturally that I . . .

*Some older ladies said it was an opportunity to talk amongst themselves without men. So there was something special about that inheritance from mother to daughter or from grandmother to daughter?*

I think, I think it's just an unconscious thing. I would have to sit down and go think about it, but yes, it was preparing Sunday lunch, preparing for an event, having friends over. You're preparing the meal and, you know, my role as I said for most of my living at home (and I didn't leave home until I was nineteen) was 'You fix the table', 'You take on all the dishes we need to use', 'You make all the salads'.

*Did men cook in your family, ever?*

My father cooked from time to time but that's not, that's not a standard thing. He would not have been cooking any of the main dishes etc.

*Is it shifting?*

And so, it depends on the family and the likes and dislikes of the male of the family. Um. My partner, for example, he just he loves cooking so it's not a gender thing, it's just 'Ok, I'm doing this'.

*It's a skill thing?*

It's a skill thing, yes. You gotta eat. Somebody's gotta cook [Laughs]. So, it's not a gender thing.

*But some Caribbean food is a male performance. I'm thinking of barbecue. It's not exclusively Caribbean. Men do it all over.*

Exactly. In my life in Toronto, in North America, barbecue is the man's domain. I've done barbecue, but predominantly that is a male space, yes.

*So, what is the archetypal Bajan dish? From the heart, not what the tourist might want to hear! Is there such a thing? In Britain we would probably say curry rather than roast beef or fish and chips.*

Really?

*Yes, because 'going for a curry' is one of our national pastimes. Of course, what we call 'curry' is misleading in that it masks all those regional dishes*

*in Indian food. We say ‘going for an “Indian”’, but the chefs who work in and the staff who set up the first ‘Indian’ restaurants in Britain were mainly Bangladeshi or Kashmiri Pakistani. So, there are all kinds of ironies in that, but absolutely.*

Well, if I say national, national Barbadian food, I would have to saying rice and peas and maybe pork. What's the other one? Cou cou and flying fish.

*Some women said it's been around forever, but others said it was a kind of construct around independence that the tourist board dreamt up, which [if true] is surprising.*

I don't agree. I mean, I'm sure you can trace it back, and I've seen in some cookbooks that talk about it, um, the actual cornmeal as one of the staple foods in the Caribbean, in the Americas.

*Yes, even pre-plantation.*

Hold on. In Africa and if you have, you know, part of our story, the transatlantic slave story, where you've got the slaves coming from West Africa: corn, corn, corn, corn.

*Millet, sorghum, but corn especially.*

Yes.

*And it's linked to fungee<sup>26</sup> and other sorts of cornmeal dishes.*

I had a cookbook . . . it was an African cookbook that my mother had bought for me, and in that book the dishes were so similar to the dishes that we grew up with so we have corn. I don't know how far back your study takes you.

*Right back to the Amerindians, yes, but certainly that period.*

I'm sure you found some corn in their cooking, and for me cou cou is Barbadian. When you go to Jamaica, they call it something else: turned or turn cornmeal. It's the same as cou cou, the same kind of methodology. In Antigua, my family in Antigua, my mum's friends, they call it cou cou, but they prepare it differently.

*Sometimes with okra, sometimes not?*

Yes, yes. I find that the okra mixture is predominantly, that is, I've not seen it elsewhere, that I would have to say from my growing up here, I would say it's Barbadian.

*And those African-centred foodways are everywhere in the Caribbean, including the ground provisions. Some older ladies felt the younger generation had different tastes . . . Do you agree? I could say cynically, as I've heard from the respondents, that Chefette is the food of choice for the under twenties. Is that true?*

But you also have to look at how life, society and all the other influences that has caused change away from the 'traditional' ground provisions or standard cooking. Who's cooking?

*Well, indeed. If you're working and not in the home.*

This is it, so the move towards fast food is, your lifestyle now has gotten into a stage where you're picking up kids, they're going to hockey. They're going to this, they're going to that. You gotta get home, turn around quickly and do something else.

*Do you think traditional foodways will die out eventually? . . . they'll just be left for special days, or for tourists?*

No, I think that there's, you know, a generation that appreciates, understands the nutritional benefits of certain foods, that they will live.

*That's possibly why you've got your centenarians. They worked hard, they had a very healthy diet.*

And every time you get one of those featured in the newspaper and you hear that, that is resonating with some people that maybe we should go back to the old ways. When the illnesses and symptoms set in, they're going to end up coming back to the old ways. That's my feeling, so the challenge now is that the generations now, or that same generation, will be smart enough to figure this out and to see it coming.

*What about the need to go back to the local? Historically, nearly all food has been imported into the Caribbean with the exception of the stuff that could be grown on the provision grounds and smallholdings. There's a whole history*

*of imports coming in. When I spoke to the FAO, to the UN, she said she'd like to see a return to the local and more hotels using local produce. That's all very well, but, as she acknowledged, you need the infrastructure to do that, and the consistency of the product and the amounts as well, you know. It's a small island.*

I think we've been hiding this for years, struggling to get that in place for years. I'm not sure [what's the solution].

*You've lived abroad. In your experience . . . in what ways was Caribbean culture present in Toronto? Did you see it in the little stalls, restaurants, street food?*

Toronto's a fairly big city, and what you find is pockets of ethnicities. So, you had your varying small spaces of the different communities. You would find what we call the West Indian shop. In the West Indian shop, you would find a lot of the products that you were familiar with from home, be that St Lucia and St Vincent, Jamaica, Barbados or Bermuda. So, the imported yam you get, your sweet potato—and Caribbean people are very clear to point out to you the difference between the U.S. yam and the sweet potato and the white yam or your yellow yam, you know, so and those are the products that you would find in the West Indian store. That particular store also stocked a lot of—how do I phrase that?—canned goods and products, that were produced and manufactured for export in the Caribbean region.

*So, like tinned ackee?*

Tinned ackee from Jamaica, the Grace canned fish like the mackerel, the peas, so the pigeon peas that you can. I think they also had canned sugar canes. I never tried it.

*So exports are going to diasporic West Indian communities but at a premium. Were these mainly shops patronised by West Indians?*

No.

*So, there's a wider interest in Caribbean food?*

It's primarily the Caribbean diaspora. However, you're my friend, you live next door to me, you've come over for dinner, you've tasted something and

you want to try it. where else are you going to go? To the West Indian shop. So that with the West Indian population and the fusing of cultures you will get those stores being patronised by non-Caribbean diaspora persons.

*I asked, not to draw any division, but because I'm curious as to why Caribbean food has not travelled as well globally as Indian food has, in Britain at least . . . because there are a couple of high-profile [Caribbean] chefs [in Britain]: Ainsley Harriot, Levi Roots . . . In many respects Roots has raised the profile, but you could argue it's done more ill than good because many people now think that's all there is to Caribbean food. Caribbean food is Jamaican food, and it's all just jerk. It's become this reductive 'add pepper sauce' kind of mentality with the promotion of particular products. Given this long history that we've shared, why has Caribbean food not been more widely embraced?*

Interesting.

*Was it because there was an earlier relationship with India and there's some weird kind of nostalgia? Perhaps the British palate—whatever that is—was introduced to spicy food primarily through India [although there were other spices used in British cooking earlier on].*

Very early.

*Yes, Madras curry powder and currying things and Mulligatawny soup and all of these kinds of things, which . . . are a kind of amalgamated and homogenised 'Indian' cuisine. These things Mrs Beeton, the Victorian cook, included in her famous cookbooks. Why is this still the case in the twenty-first century? In Britain we don't know much about Caribbean food.*

I don't know.

*So it's not just about access to the ingredients. It's something else.*

Is it that we don't want to share? I don't know.

*I don't think it's on your side. I think it's a lack of . . .*

Receptiveness on yours?

*Absolutely.*

But then would you not look at how the West Indians from the Caribbean diaspora were received in Britain? By the British?

*Yes, it's absolutely crucial. If you look at novels [by Caribbean migrants set in Britain] from the 1940s and 1950s, they often say 'We never saw the inside of a white Englishman's house. They never invited us to eat with them', and that is something that could never be said of Bajans here. So, I think that's part of the problem.*

Yes, how and whether they receive. You know I didn't have the English experience but I haven't heard a lot of great things for a lot of people that went to the mother country. You know, you heard the stories of the racism and how they were treated so I've no idea with respect to food. And North America, it hasn't been received in North America. I think it has been in some different ways though also the same. In Toronto there are Caribbean restaurants, there are . . .

*As distinct from soul food and African American food?*

Yes, you got the African restaurants, the West Indian, no, they're called Caribbean restaurants whether serving the curry, the jerk and other dishes, but I understand, the Caribbean food, there is a fusion with Indian?

*Absolutely. With Chinese, Middle Eastern food.*

The Guyanese, the Trinidadian both have sizeable Asian [Indo-Caribbean] populations. Asian and Southeast Asian.

*And that creolised, that Indo-Caribbean food has some similarities with what we call Indian food in Britain.*

Yes, some similarities, but also very different.

*And there are island variations to the food.*

Yes.

*The part of the cultures that have travelled is the idea of rum and the rum punch. But again, I sometimes think this is part of a peculiarly imperialist nostalgia, rum swizzles on the verandah, etc.*

[Laughs] And yet, so the rum exports, the rum exports, I think, have surpassed, as we know, many of the most of the other exports from the Caribbean region.

*Yes, and rightly so because this is rum of a quality that you don't find anywhere else in the world. It's similar with Jamaican coffee . . . it has a world reputation. So, it's certain things . . .*

And yes, I understand that, though somehow the flavour of Jamaican coffee does not do it for me, but it's up there.

*And also, it's a product with a provenance. We know where it comes from: particular areas, the Blue Mountains . . . In terms of imports I'm fascinated that when Captain Bligh brought breadfruit to the Caribbean to feed the slaves, they didn't take to it and fed it to the hogs, for nearly fifty years.*

I didn't know that.

*That they made the choice, had the agency . . . even in the midst of immense hunger to reject certain foods, is telling. Of course, the latest manifestation of foreign imports here are the obscenely expensive Waitrose imports in your supermarkets, presumably for wealthy expats. I wasn't expecting that, the persistence of the attitude that everything foreign, foodwise, is better than local. Is that here still?*

Somewhere in the society, yes, um, though I think it's less than you would have found twenty years ago. You do have some people still, you know, not willing to try the local produce because they're accustomed to a product that was on the market before, however long.

*But that goes both ways. Products such as Bovril and Cadbury's were imperial brands that were taken all across the world. They were part of your grandmother's generation just as they were part of my grandmother's.*

Yes.

*Are Barbados and the small islands of the Windwards becoming increasingly Americanised culturally? Is food is becoming more globalised?*

I see it more in the fast food than in any other area because the lifestyle, because the adaptation of the lifestyle. Again, the fast food follows. And I don't know how many women in their twenties and thirties that know how to bake a cake.

*You could say the same in the UK: there's a whole generation that don't cook.*

Yeah, because . . . but a lot of it is not that. It's not that they don't like food or they're rejecting food. I think a lot of it has to do with how our society and the world has changed. We are spending a lot more time in the office, a lot more time at home on computers. If we're not studying, we're working, so you're looking for quick and easy 'I don't have to stand up in the kitchen to prepare' meal.

*And what's happened to the stuff growing by the back door? My grandmother always used to grow rosemary there.*

You always have your kitchen garden. So even if it was a small patch, remember 'cause I was raised by my grandmother for a couple of years, my early years and the front to the house was the lettuce, the eggplant and the seasoning, the green onions. Those kinds of things: tomatoes, yam.

*Is that still going in many households, or has that suffered from people working all day?*

That has suffered. There are still people there will still do it, but I think, but I think all that has suffered. I mean, I've tried. I'll tell you honestly. I'd love to garden, but I can't keep things growing. When I get home from the office in the evening, I just, I don't want to go outside into the garden and battle with the heat. So, if I'm going to do any kind of gardening, I'm out there early in the morning—6.00—that is still cool. Because there are certain times of the year at 7.00 [it's so hot] you're going to die out there!

*Do you think the future of Caribbean food is a bright one, or do you think it's in crisis? As you say, we're waiting for the obesity and diabetes epidemic in Barbados.*

Well, I think we're already in an epidemic, but I still think there's a future for traditional Caribbean food. I don't think it's gonna die. A lot of us are going to carry on because I think the role of tradition within this culture and within this environment is still very strong, and I think we hold onto it. We like to talk about it or when you have friends like yourself and visitors you always want to share what is indigenous and what has been there so through all that I think that it will continue. I never did answer your first question. It was what is your first, your best food memory. It's fried plantain!

*Wonderful! No wonder your literature is full of grandmothers cooking, older women keeping the children in check and making sure that they're well fed.*

It is something that I think is the role of the grandmother. It's a role that has not been specified, a role that is innate: to share them, to pass on. And for those that don't have children or will not have grandchildren we find ourselves doing the same thing and sharing, you know, the maternal. So, storing the maternal methodology is there and all that stuff. So, I will try one day to stop buying a cookbook!

*[Laughs]*

About two years ago I had a yard sale and I purged out a number of them, but you can't help it because you always want to create your . . . you always want to try something new. I am one of a generation, I embraced different cultures and a big part of my experiences of living in Toronto was food or largely to experience different foods from different cultures.

*I think the thing you said about mothers and grandmothers is a beautiful thing because you don't have to be a biological mother or grandmother.*

No, you don't.

*To be a repository of that culture—that's so important.*

No, because you know I think I have benefited from a number of maternal figures, you know, friends of my mother's, aunts, godparents etc. and it's just a repetition of 'Here, this is what you do', knowing you're somehow supposed to do it this way.

*It's been said many times. There's a wonderful poem by Lorna Goodison, 'I Am Becoming My Mother', with the line 'fingers always smelling of onions'. There's also Grace Nichols's 'Praise Song for My Mother'.*

I know that one.

*Thank you. Is there anything that you wanted to ask me?*

What was your experience of Barbadian food in your time here?

*Absolutely wondrous: as warm and as diverse as the population. It would be very easy to overanalyze and be thrilled historically by the longevity of those starchy ground provisions that are still being cooked and celebrated here. It's also wondrous to see the plenitude of your oceans is being cooked in different ways, that people are still eating lots of fish. In England, we're an island nation too but we're generally so conservative when it comes to fish. We like our fish and chips . . . but we've kind of forgotten how to cook fresh fish. So that was a joy and really special.*

I'm glad that you experienced these things.

*It's also great that people light up when they see that you've enjoyed what they've cooked, that you're interested in it. That is clearly still absolutely central to the culture, not just the tourist industry. It's about daily life, the pleasure of living.*

Food is a big thing. It's one of the social elements. You're gonna have food if you're coming together, you know.

*Yes, that sense of conviviality, of coming together.*

[Laughs] So, I say, that's to say when we come together it's always some form of food to seal the union, to seal the celebration.

*It's a kind of secular communion isn't it? It really is.*

You gotta have it.

*Thank you.*



**Annette is her thirties and works for the Barbados Tourist Board. She has a church background, trained at a Hotel School in Barbados and lives with her husband, daughter, grandmother and great-grandmother.**

*How did you learn to cook, and do you cook at home? Who taught you to cook? Do you use recipe books? Did your mother?*

Um, I learned to cook by my grandmother with the help of my great-grandmother. My mother died when I was ten, so I lived with my grandmother.

*And she brought you up?*

Yes, she brought me up. That was where I was living. My mother, she only ever used a recipe book when she was doing cakes, but pretty much everything else she didn't.

*And did she taste?*

Yes, she would taste, with de spoon.

*[Laughs]*

And she would taste some and taste it to make sure if it wants something else, she would say, 'Oh I think it wants this and that . . .' She would say 'it wants something less' so she would cook but not with a recipe book. And, um, my grandmother had no recipe books. [Laughs] She just put in how much she feel like. The only thing she would measure, she wouldn't use a recipe book but she would measure like a gill of rice or a cup of rice or if she's doing, um, baking a coconut bread, how much flour and she would get the scale out and weigh it out. She knew it off by heart. She learned it from her grandmother.

*So how old is your grandmother?*

She's 86. She's going to be 87.

*She learned from her grandmother?*

She learned from her grandmother and mother in the 1930s.

*Her mother was born when?*

The early 1900s.

*So, did she ever talk about her own grandmother?*

Only the old things. She remembered her grandmother. Her mother too died at an early age when she was fourteen, so, and the grandmother, I don't know how long, but I think then she lived with her brothers. So, she was one of those persons who from early had to be on her own doing it, so that she would always remember the old sayings but not the cooking ways.

*What did she cook on?*

She cooked on, the first was, a kerosene oil [stove] or so she told me and then she used a cooker, the gas stove now. And then she, then she had certain days that she would cook. So on a Sunday would be rice and peas and [macaroni] pie and chicken.

*Another interviewee said that macaroni pie was a very recent thing, that Bajans adopted from America, but you're saying no, it is older.*

I don't know. I'm only thirty-eight. She did it Sundays, but really she did, on the Sundays you have, you call it the Sunday buffet, everybody sits at the Sunday table and you eat it.

*So everyone comes and smartly dressed?*

Yes, in the house, and we do it after church.

*So you are smartly dressed!*

Well, we would change our clothes. We can't eat in our finery! My grandmother would say 'Go change those clothes before you eat!' Before you come to the table you have to go change your clothes so you don't soil them. One of the things she liked too was, um, coconut water. Fresh coconut, would use the fresh coconut water. She'd have that, sometimes she would have a fruit punch and put a sprite in it or a soda water to make it refreshing, yeah, and she would set the table with the cutlery, the special cutlery and her crockery was only was used on Sunday. [Laughs] So you imagine how it was. You have your salads, you have your meat, your starch and then you have a dessert and usually, if she didn't bake her cake, it could be jello.

*Tell me a little more about your grandmother when she was younger.*

There was a kerosene shortage and you had to go to the shops and there was a ration. You had to have what they give you.

*During the war?*

Yes, during the war, you had to wait till the boat came in. Yes, it had to wait till the boat come into the Careenage and then it depends on where you lived

to get down there and transportation wasn't as good as it is, there was all this shortage. You had to go to the shop and tek the rations that they give you. They had a shortage so the guy would choose to [give it] to the regular[s].

*Was she a regular?*

Yes, she was.

*So, she got the kerosene?*

Yes, she got something, and at that time they didn't really have supermarkets, so it was shops, you had to go to the shops. So you had your sugar, your flour, your butter and then at the corner of the, the shop would be a rum table, so you'd have the person who owns this and opens the door, but children wouldn't be allowed over there. Because that's the rum area.

*They weren't allowed in there?*

No.

*So, the rum shop is an adult space?*

Yes, that's where the adults were, the men were. So, they would just go and get their drinks or whatever but during that time there was a shortage of food . . . on a national level.

*Do you have an early food memory?*

Well . . . We loved birthdays. I remember that for every birthday I had a cake.

*And specially made?*

Yes, specially made. Made for me or they would buy it. And then I always looked forward, when I was younger, we baked the ham, that you sliced, you know, when baked.

*The Yorkshire ham, with cloves in it?*

Yes, it has cloves in, sugar, some persons put beer over it. So, people they use different ones. And for the black cakes (the Christmas cake) you always buy the fruits in October and feed it in the rum. She did it in a big bucket.

*Like a monkey jar?*

Yes, but bigger. Keep adding rum until Christmas.

*So you keep taking from it and adding?*

Yes, so it would a soak up.

*So Christmas is a big deal?*

Yes, Christmas is a big deal. And Christmas evening you bake the ham and the turkey and the pork. So, the night before Christmas you bake it [the ham] and you can't eat that ham before Christmas morning. So, we go to church at five and so when you come back then you look forward for a Bajan salt bread and ham, and you add mayonnaise or ketchup or hot sauce and then you add lettuce then there's a Bajan dish at Christmas called Jug Jug. You've heard of Jug Jug?

*I have!*

So, with the peas and the different types of meats.

*Why is it called Jug Jug?*

I don't know. I just grew up hearing that name. And you have the corn, you know, the guinea corn. You know, and you mix it up. For me, growing up, that's all I wanted in Christmas . . .

*So, it was mainly women cooking in your family. Not men?*

My uncle, he did in recent years, He was doing, he used a recipe book, he uses the recipe. [Laughs] He does pizza. He makes the dough from scratch . . . Any dough left over he would do a little salt bread. If you have leftovers dough.

*It sounded as if it's mainly women doing the cooking.*

Recently no, not so much.

*So, it's changing, then, is it? In Jamaica the men do the jerk, for example.*

The boys in the village, when they're playing, like especially at summertime or sometimes one weekend, wants breadfruit 'cause it's in season and they do the roast breadfruit. You have the Roberts Mello crème butter. It's orange [laughs]—it's nice, kind of fatty but it goes nice with the breadfruit. It gives you the nice fat flavour or you can just use the margarine, but in the old days when they use to use a lot of Roberts Mello crème butter. It's still here in a little jar. It gives a different colour. It's a little salty.

*I've been talking to people in their seventies, and they said that young people don't like breadfruit, they won't eat breadfruit. What did your grandmother cook?*

Sunday would be buffet, Monday would be leftovers and Tuesday would be, um, ground provisions, or it could either be a yam pie—like today, actually I went over and had dinner with my grandmother before I came over [laughs] and she had . . . or my grandmother made creamed yam and steamed fish, steamed like marlin. I remember Friday was soup day. Soup had your ground provisions, your salt meat, a little bit, not a lot, your ground provision, your salt meat, and she make with potato and some chicken steppers—you know chicken feet—right, and some chicken feet it depends on if she was putting chicken, and the way she would do potato and put in lamb or she would substitute the meat.

*So that would be eaten the next day too?*

She would eat it the next day. At that time you had many people there were like six people living in one house. So it had to go. The soup would go. So, according to her she would have a plate for next day.

*So do you eat fish on Friday?*

Yes.

*And do you eat fish in Lent as in mainly Catholic countries, like Trinidad?*

Yes, in Lenten season, lots of fish and especially on Good Friday. But that tradition is changing, because, you know, Chefette.

*Oh, Chefette. [Laughs]*

The younger persons, I remember, we had a walk at church. So every Good Friday we would walk and then we would go to Chefette in Accra. I, that was like an hour or two-hour walk. I remember the older people would say don't go to Chefette. Don't go to Chefette. But we would go in and buy an ice cream. When we got older we would eat the chicken . . . There was a heavy tradition. Some people still keep to it. I find the younger generation, if you pass the fast food on good Friday, you will more find people in there. Once it was flying fish and so on but now. But on good Friday you had more time [to cook]. Once ago it would be flying fish but now some people do split peas and rice and fish or some people do cou cou and flying fish on Good Friday. . . .

*And two different kinds made from breadfruit or from cornmeal?*

Cornmeal cou cou, mainly cornmeal cou cou?

*Do you prefer that?*

Once the breadfruit is in season, yeah, I like eating breadfruit. Obviously anything organic will be better. I love, and then you have your cucumber, pickle cucumber to go with the breadfruit and saltfish.

*Are the old ways of cooking dying out because young people don't have time or they don't like to cook?*

Sometimes they don't have time because you have to leave home and take into consideration traffic, the congestion and that kind of thing . . . Yes sometimes it's hard. On Sundays for sure and then on Saturdays we're eating all during the week home cooked. But the traditions and persons still have, yes the older and some young ones will get up and cook. For me I get up and cook for my daughter. I mean, she likes her Bajan food 'cause they get school meals here, but, but she likes my home cooking.

*So do you teach her to cook?*

Yes. Me and her grandmother 'cause we live with her grandmother and her great-grandmother.

*Wonderful!*

So they tell her.

*So that's a whole generation of women?*

Yeah, yeah. Her dad will cook for us on Mother's Day, and sometimes he will cook for us on Sunday. Yes, so many are coming into the role of cooking especially you know some women have demanding jobs or just can't be at home all the time so they have to have some men who are stepping up but mostly women are still the dominant cooks in the home. My partner likes to cook. He likes to cook for us. Yes, so she's learned how to do bakes, a few bakes herself and . . . sometimes she doesn't like going out [laughs], so, so, so my grandmother would do fishcakes and bakes. So you would either eat the fish cakes and the bakes or you have some crackers along with them for the fish.

*What do you think are the biggest changes between the generations?*

The fast food, yes, the younger people love the fast food. So my daughter, if you put food in front of her, she will eat it, she will like it, but she don't like the mashed stuff. She don't like the creamed potato, creamed yam, anything like that. She will eat potato in chips.

*I'd heard that McDonald's came here too, but it didn't take off?*

Yes, Barbados is one of the most . . . we eat the most chicken in the world.

*[Laughs]*

But yeah, there's Burger King and, and so because there was so much burgers, I mean, Barbadians are not burger eaters . . . because they had so many burgers and meat things, the Bajans, they didn't like it. So after a while it just died out. It died a sudden death, but now Burger King has chicken options.

*I have some questions about tourism because you work for the Barbados Tourist Authority. What goes on in November when you have this annual food and rum festival? How is food being promoted here?*

This year is actually the year of culinary experience. When it started it was the food, wine and rum festival, and it attracted the high end, and they were targeting, you know, like external markets. Some top, top cuisine chefs in America, they would come down and then the prices they was high as well so you didn't have as much [local] patronage and they are doing their work

not marrying really to locals' food, the local food. But, but now they have changed it to the food and rum festival focusing more on rum and they are using much more local chefs. So before, the highlight would have been the international person and some of the chefs would come along, but now they're turning it into a more local thing.

*Are there any educational aspects or is it just a promotion?*

So we launched a pilot last year from February to March and the inaugural Barbadian sugar and rum season. What we wanted to do, on our island, sugar is the main, the mainstay of our island. The cultivation of sugar contributed immensely to the development of our island, the history of where we are today and the cultural heritage of the sugar cane, so we've been wanting to focus only on rum, liquors, and that has an educational aspect. So . . . you have lectures and . . . they have different areas. So like, for instance, this year we had, we had the Jewish community and their own contribution. We focus on sugar, the land that sugar bought, how it came in and the foreign exchange it earned. And also rum labels. We had someone looking at labels.

*Of course, sugar is all across your literature.*

Yeah, it is. We do, do cooking classes and with one of the chefs. He does cooking classes. So he would talk to you and say how you could use the rum to flavour the gravy or to put it on your pork or soak the raisins in rum for the dessert with the Barbados sugar. He shows you different areas that you can do and he gives you a historical background and so on. There's also chocolate classes to make the chocolate . . . So the aim of the rum festival is to get the tourists in, to engage with the visitors, and also to give you the, the history, the educational aspect of it. Also, we encourage the hotels to offer, they have events as well, and so they do their own events and have a rum menu. Somebody had a plantation dinner. So they had a tour of the house and a five-course meal . . . And, you know, links with the hotel school too.

*Thank you.*



**Michelle is a university-educated professional woman in her forties. She refers to the next interviewee, her mother, Merle, who is in her seventies and attended the Housecraft Centre in Bridgetown in the 1960s. They both love to cook but disagree about their approaches.**

*You've brought some fabulous recipe books here, many of which belonged to your mother, and I can see things dating right back to the 1960s and 1970s and earlier even?*

I'm not quite sure how early. It's probably back to the 1960s. My mum was born in 1950, and she would have gone to the Housecraft Centre in her teens, so the 1960s because I was born in '71 and by then she'd finished her qualifications so we're probably talking mid- to late 1960s.

*So, she's training to become a home economics teacher?*

Um, I don't think that was the plan initially. I think that was just opportunity, really. Um. When she finished her education, she did commercial subjects, which is like typing, shorthand, that kind of thing which is where a lot of girls went in those days and she also did what they would have called home economics and then she had this opportunity to study at the Housecraft Centre. I'm not entirely certain how that came about. But I know that even today, she will slip in stories, you know, 'when I was at the Housecraft Centre', 'I don't understand why you don't cook properly', 'cause she tried to train me but she never, but, I proved somewhat resistant.

*[Laughs]*

Not that I objected to following a recipe, but I don't think there is a recipe that cannot be improved upon once you taste it and decide how to customise it to your taste or what you know your family likes, or . . .

*Do you think she still thinks that was a privileged thing . . . it was high status to receive proper training?*

Yes, I think it was the timing. I think she very much thinks that it was an opportunity that she received and that it's served her very well in her life. When I was born, she was a home economics teacher at a secondary school and she remained a home economics teacher until 1981 or '82, so more than ten years. She was transferred within the teaching service . . . and then taught commercial subjects for ten to fifteen years and ended her career as an English teacher . . . My mother was a very organised, very systematic person. She had systems and routines for everything . . .

*You were saying that because of this, or perhaps because she was very organised anyway, she used recipes to . . .*

Yes. She is the only person I know that . . . [Laughs]

*And how old she is now?*

Um . . . she's going to be sixty-eight in December.

*Is there a shift away from home cooking in Barbados? Is it a dying art because people just go out and eat, what's it called, Chefette or . . .*

Chefette, Burger King, every roadside stand there's a big availability of fast food! My daughter doesn't cook as much as my mother and I do, and that may be our fault, to some extent. Um, my mother and I both love to cook, and my daughter has never really had to fend for herself in the kitchen. Um, my mother did the same things with Elizabeth that she did with me, um, my mother is a teacher down inside her soul so some of the vacation revolves around 'what am I teaching to you this summer'. [Laughs] So, Elizabeth does know how to cook. But for me, um, if I'm stressed but not too tired, or if I've got something on my mind, I invariably find myself in the kitchen cooking something. Sometimes I wander off in the kitchen and halfway through the meal I'm but 'What am I cooking this for?'

*And when you're cooking, do you think of your mother sometimes and remember she was trying to tell me how to do this? Because others have said there's something special about cooking in connecting them to mothers and grandmothers. And even if they're not with us any longer, they have that sense.*

Mostly yes, I remember my mother berating me for not measuring things behind her back. My mother is one of these people who, if it's a, you know, teaspoon, you're putting the teaspoon in there and you're getting the knife and you're leveling off.

*I'm not one of those. [Laughs]*

And she's, you know, systematic. And even now I do not know anyone who cooks like my mother. She's perhaps not as militant about it as she used to be twenty or thirty years ago when she was first teaching me to cook, but she's still very precise. I think part of that is the training, but whereas, you know, you and I would do so and so and we just dash it in so 'ok that looks like enough pepper' . . . And actually I don't do the tasting thing at all. A lot of the time I don't taste the food until maybe an hour or two after it's done cooking because I depend almost entirely on my sense of smell. I can tell

when it smells like how it should taste, if that makes sense. I can't tell you the last time I tasted something. People love my cooking, but I don't taste it.

*[Laughs] Do you think some of that was about economy with your mother? Was she very aware of economy and making the best of what was available . . . seasonal food?*

Oh yes, oh yes, oh very much so, and that harks back to my grandmother. My grandmother she did not grow things to sell to other people. As a matter of fact, selling to other people annoyed her because somebody would always say 'I'm going to come back and pay you later'. She didn't like the drama. So she'd just rather give it to you or don't give it to you. There are some things I can't bring myself to buy even to this day. There were moments in my life when if I could have gotten away with not eating just one single more . . .

*Can you give an example?*

Um, I do not buy breadfruit, I do not buy pears, I do not buy golden apples, I do not buy mangoes. I will buy plantains but not figs [bananas]. My grandmother had like six pear trees. Um. She had her grass, she had a golden apple tree, she had several breadfruit trees. She had limes, she had shaddock, eddoes, soursop. When I think about it, It was really not that big, but it was crowded with fruit-bearing trees. And any little extra land she was planting something that you could grow and eat. We bought maybe things like carrots and she kept sheep, and every time she started a new flock, my brother would have his sheep, I would have my sheep. And when it was sold the money came back into a bank account. So, my grandmother came from quite humble beginnings and she had this idea that you worked hard and you saved your money, and then, for all of us, even right now I cannot throw away any food. I really, really cannot because I can hear my grandmother talking about the people in Biafra. I did not even know where Biafra was. I thought it was a made up place! [Laughs] All this time, the thing is my grandmother was not a very educated person, but she read her newspaper, she watched the news. So it was only as an adult I got to understand that a lot of the things my grandmother told me were perfect and total truths and not actual stories.

*And she didn't depend on recipes?*

Oh no, she, I have no idea where my grandmother learned, because my grandmother had a sore tongue. When you talk to my mother, see if you can get her to give you a bit more family history.

[Laughs]

No, no, a lot of the stories my grandmother told me I would have gotten when I was in my teens. And maybe my tweens and it would have been bits and pieces stories because you're up late at night and you're talking and then she got into bed with you and you just talked until everybody fell asleep. Um, so the stories didn't have connectivity . . . I didn't have those types of conversations with my mother and my aunt really. And then in a random conversation I learned we come from Guyana and that my grandmother's grandfather had come over from Guyana as a pan boiler, somebody that worked on the sugar industry, and he brought his daughter with him. And when he was ready to migrate back to Guyana, she had taken up with a black Barbadian man and they would not leave with him apparently . . . I know that conversation was a sort of a taboo thing, so I never did find out very much about my grandmother's mother.

*What do you consider to be archetypal Bajan food? You're part Guyanese, which complicates everything, doesn't it?*

I don't know enough about Guyanese food to consider myself Guyanese!

*What about things like Pepperpot, which are characteristically Guyanese?*

Well, I have had Pepperpot. As a matter of fact, my boyfriend is Guyanese, but he was my boyfriend long before I discovered I had Guyanese roots. It was just coincidence. Um, I like some curry but not all. If you listen to him, it's all about curry.

*The Guyanese have a saying: 'If you eat labba [a small deer-like creature] and drink creek water, you will always return to Guyana'. I'm wondering if there's an equivalent Bajan dish because I was told that flying fish and cou cou was the national dish, but then it looks like Chefette is!*

[Laughs] In a way, it kind of is, you know. Every child that can barely talk but they can tell you about Chefette. Chefette has done a fantabulous job of marketing and Rhianna [the Bajan-born singer] is making it worse because Rhianna will tell everybody when she comes home and Chefette's got this service where you can pre-pack your roti so they're already ready for Customs and you can take them anywhere in the world. And now, and now, apparently, the Chefette roti is international, which is the scariest thing I've heard. [Laughs] Seriously, that is not a real roti. That's not the real thing.

*I hear that McDonald's didn't last very long here. Why do you think? Is it just you Bajans love your chicken or is it too American?*

Um, American things were not as acceptable then—that would have been in the early-mid 1980s—as they are now. There was a more militant anti-American feeling back then. My recollection of it, I would have been early secondary school when McDonald's came here . . . I remember the first couple of weeks the drive-through was blocked where you could not pass the road in Hastings. But what happened was that, generally speaking, people did not like the food, so they would try it once and then they would say ‘we don't like that’. I actually never got the opportunity to try it myself, but I've had it since then elsewhere around the world and did not like it. Maybe it's something that does not agree with the Barbadian palate.

*So the problem is not fast food per se?*

No. McDonald's failed, but Burger King thrives. And there are branches of Burger King everywhere. Burger King is thriving and KFC, that is chicken, but KFC has been here for as long as I have known myself, you know. And KFC does well despite people complain horribly about their customer service but it has not affected their sales . . . But they do do well and they're, like, one of the more expensive fast-food outlets in Barbados. But we do really like a chicken. The number of chicken places in Barbados is, like, roast chicken everywhere, and then there are what you call the modern popup shops. There's a place at the corner of Eagle Hall called Macs. They do rotisserie barbecued chicken. I cannot remember a time when Macs was not there. They are, like, right on the corner of what is perhaps one of the busiest crossroads in Barbados and certain times of the day in the evening the road's just simply blocked because everybody's double parking and, and they have no parking. They really have no parking!

*I have [Caribbean] friends at home and 'back home' food is a nostalgic thing, a comfort thing.*

Yes.

*And yet Caribbean food doesn't seem to have taken off very widely in Britain. We have a few chain restaurants and a few more established and newer Caribbean restaurants in London and Birmingham, places like that. But most British people don't know very much about Caribbean food and I don't know why, because recent polls show that we regard curry as the national dish. I*

*think it might have even overtaken roast beef with all the trimmings and fish and chips.*

I've heard that. [Laughs]

*Is it like this elsewhere in the West Indian diaspora?*

I think, I think so. I have friends that live in Canada and in the UK and in the United States, but a lot of the things that we like, say, for example, what we call souse is basically pickled meat. We do pigtails and pig ears, and I guess what you would call the waste parts of a pig, and the pudding is very similar to the Scottish black pudding.

*Like haggis?*

Right. I think part of it is may be some other things we do that we consider uniquely Barbadian to us are not necessarily uniquely Barbadian when you get outside the Barbadian context. Like a cou cou. Um, there are a number of similar dishes across the Caribbean with similar names and in West Africa, you know, you've got fu fu and your other things. There are variations, but basically we're starting with cornmeal and we're making a kind of porridge.

*And polenta in Italy is a similar kind of thing.*

Yes. So we're making it and the only thing very different is the sauce, I think it is, it lacks a differentiation for people too. I mean, curry is a very strong, I mean, you can't disagree about where it came from, but it's unique in a way that a lot of these dishes that we eating [aren't so much], I mean a Chefette roti is still a roti, which is again curry. Or pudding and souse, which we love on a Saturday and a Friday and even on a Thursday. In Barbados, food everywhere else suffers because of having pudding and souse.

*I've heard that. Maybe it's a kind of cultural taboo against eating the bits of the pig that others are averse to but you really should eat. In some respects it's very odd because the full English breakfast, as it is called, often has black pudding—that is, blood sausage.*

Right. Well, we don't do the blood sausage here anymore. That's another thing to a younger generation: how to explain this. Okay, when I was a child you could get the pudding with or without the blood. It's impossible to find it selling anywhere with the blood now and I think that has to do with what

people like and don't like. I have never, ever, ever made cou cou on my own from scratch. I've seen my mother do it. I've tried and didn't like it, so as an adult I wasn't very interested in learning how to make it.

*Why was that?*

Um, actually I think I just didn't like it as a child. I didn't like roast corn and I did not like cooked meal and I think the cornmeal was just an extension of that. We have a variation of cou cou which we call breadfruit, which, basically you serve it with the same kind of sauce that you would for the regular cou cou, but you make the porridge, if you want to call it that, from breadfruit. I will nyam [greedily eat] that! [Laughs]

[Laughs]

I will pretty much eat the breadfruit in any form or fashion but I love breadfruit. I would eat it with any kind of gravy, I will eat it in butter but my only thing is I cannot eat too lumpy when it's done. But, as to my daughter, now my daughter she started to like cooking but she has no clue how cou cou is made . . . I personally have never made it [cou cou]. For example, my mother makes cou cou, but her version of cou cou from her Housecraft Centre training, it involves a lovely bowl shape with an indentation in the centre and, you know, the carefully placed flying fish . . . It looks like it should be served in a restaurant and that either way is the one thing I've taken away from my mother and her Housecraft training: while we may not count measurements, I do a plate nicely. I do like to see a nicely plated meal . . . Which is not the West Indian way! The West Indian way is to dump everything on a tray. Yes I dislike that passionately.

*Have young people lost sight of historical foodways? We were talking about breadfruit. The reason breadfruit is such a staple is that it was introduced to feed the enslaved.*

I think that is a difficult question to answer. I think it goes back to where you are based in Barbados. If you grew up in the country, you're probably more likely to have a better appreciation of a wider diet 'cause people who have had the space and the land have always kept small livestock and they always kept ground provisions and their diet would probably have been less starchy than people who do have to live in the city, who simply bought what was cheap, because meat is expensive. If you're growing your own, then meat is more accessible, um, but like in my household, my grandmother, there

were certain things that she would dearly like. Um, I remember being very small and you would hear that a fish boat had come in and I would sort of rush down to the market and you'd be handling and my grandmother would really bring home two or three hundred flying fish and sit on a backstep and scale, bone and fillet these fish for my mother, for my aunt and there would be, because basically you buy when the prices are low and obviously by then everybody had a refrigerator and a freezer. There would be pre-packaged flying fish like these little packs of flying fish, and you are basically, taking that and frying in a pan, depending on the amount. And the season ended but we are still eating fish. We do things for different reasons, so, for example, um, while we don't practice our Lent as strictly as in, say, the Catholic countries like Trinidad, we do observe eating fish during the Lenten period. And you see, for example, even the commercial price you're paying for fish is in response to that. During Lent it is cheap.

*So fish is not just on a Friday? For many of those who have a strict Christian background Friday means fish.*

Um, there are some restaurants, I see them doing fish on Friday. A lot of the younger Barbadians are not necessarily connected with that. I know my daughter, for example, isn't. I don't think we practiced Lent in my family in that way but I see my mother eating fish more purposefully as she's become older and she's also going to church more often so there's some truth there. But, but, but a lot of the younger generation they, they, even talking to my daughter, there are some huge gaps in her knowledge and that kind of thing you see in the food as well. If she has a breadfruit . . . she can probably make that if she had to, but I don't think she's even seen corn meal cou cou turned. My mother makes it from time to time, but not very often anymore. My father is also retired and he likes to cook.

*Do you know men who cook?*

Yes.

*Because barbecue is quite a masculine thing to do across the globe. It's definitely so in Jamaica, this cooking on roadsides and beaches etc. But the everyday cooking, the 'sustaining of people' cooking, that's done by the women. Is that true?*

I do think that most households are female dominated in matters of cooking but I also think that it depends on where in Barbados you grew up. We have

a lot of single parent female households where basically, whether the oldest child is male or female, they needed to cook so, so men had to, some men had to learn to cook out of necessity. I think the ones that enjoyed it just kept doing it. My Uncle Winston really does not need to cook and he keeps on turning up at my house with food! My Uncle Winston is very, very self-sufficient. He is not one of those men who is hopeless in the kitchen, a situation where I think my mother would consider the wifely arts need to be done.

*Talking about gardens, I've heard many people say my grandmother had a few feet square but she still made it beautiful and grew stuff for cooking and healing and even some flowers.*

And my grandmother did that too. I don't know if other people have talked about this, but wherever she went, if there was a plant that she did not already have, she went, you know, she would take a cutting or like seeds, or you know, or she says 'can I have a piece of plant for my garden?' And she did have a fine garden. She had a lovely path leading up to the house and all the other stuff was in the backyard.

*Did she grow stuff for [herb] tea and so on?*

Not so much. She was a genuine believer in going to the doctor. [Laughs]

*I spoke to some of the Rastas at Temple Yard [in Bridgetown] and they were telling me about their I-tal food, what I should eat and drink to heal. They were so anti-[orthodox] doctors.*

She did use home remedies but she also believed in doctors. If you had a bit of gas, you know, she would give you ginger tea and lemon for a sore throat and things like that but basically, I shouldn't say she believed in doctors. I should say she believed in pharmacists. She was obsessed with pharmacists . . . On the other hand, I know that she grew up believing that herbal remedies work.

*Thank you.*



**Merle is Michelle's mother. She is a retired school teacher of home economics, commercial subjects and English, in her late sixties. She attended the Housecraft Centre in Bridgetown in the 1960s.**

*This is wonderful [pointing to notes an annotated cookbook Merle has brought along]. I've seen lots of your notes and the cookbooks. Tell me a bit about the course that you went on as a young woman?*

Okay, this was the Housecraft Centre.

*Was that your choice [to go]?*

It was my choice, actually, because, uh, growing up, um, they made something called domestic sciences at schools, but I was never exposed to it because my education was, the best thing is to tell you what really happened! At age ten I sat an examination for a private school, and I passed, and um, so that I didn't actually do primary school I only went to class one but then it wasn't the best of schools . . .

*So you missed out a bit?*

Yes. So special areas like the sciences and the physical education and, um, the domestic science . . . Those specialty areas I was never actually exposed to.

*But who taught you to cook?*

I would say my mother, although she didn't consider herself a very good cook. What she would do is, she would tell me what to do. But I didn't feel that, I wanted more, yeah. So if you were to cook a rice, um, she would tell you, well, you know the saucepan the water needs to be up to this level, so it was guesswork. I don't really like guesswork.

*That's exactly what your daughter said. I gather that you are very precise, you like to do things in a particular way?*

Haha, she would do this and this bit would fall off and everything would fall in but I don't do that.

*She says that she just puts it all in.*

Yes. [Laughs]

*Some of the women I've talked to say they have recipe books but they don't really use them: 'We do this so-so and we do this so-so and then we change*

*this, you know'. You're saying, 'no, I don't, I have my recipes, I do use them'. Do you see cooking as more of a science than an art?*

Maybe a bit of both. Because of course it's called domestic science, you know.

*So what is home cooking for you? I gather that some young people, they don't really do home cooking now, they just eat fast food.*

Before you do that, the recipe, what I find is with your recipe, is, what people say, is that you're guaranteed a result. Yeah, so my cooking now, mmm, so my cooking now I would follow a recipe now but I would adapt it. I might add this or that.

*Because you're an experienced cook?*

Yes, but even back then if some of the ingredients were things I wasn't familiar with or with things that were optional, so you would add in.

*So when you tweak your recipes, do you ever write them down?*

I don't really do that.

*What would you call really good Bajan cooking? You know, when you have the family over or on a Saturday. Is that a souse and pudding day?*

[Laughs] Well, yes, sometimes it's souse and pudding day. You see, you know the cookbooks are just part of it because when I did the course I thought it was about cooking. You know it really wasn't . . . we only cooked about two days a week you know. You know we had a whole morning for food preservation and then we did home management and we did laundry and then we did home nursing and did home therapy . . .

*I've been told that many younger people don't know how to cook and that they just eat fast food, rather than home cooking. Is it a dying art? Are they not learning to cook anymore? I know your daughter can cook . . . but she also said that she cooks in a way 'that my mother would not approve'.*

[Laughs] Well, the people I know they cook. You know, you need to cook.

*Are they all of the same generation?*

I would think that the younger generation, they cook, they've got to, even if it's only weekends, you know, but then I think that they, because they probably have more access to money to eat out you know. But not necessarily at the fast-food place, though.

*What is the most characteristically Bajan thing to eat?*

Oh, but coming back to the Bajan thing I have an uncle who is in his nineties and he cooks and, um, he would cook, um, the things that he can cook that I can't cook and I wish he would, I really should learn, are things I like, black-eye peas and rice and sauce and he would do the, you know, the cornmeal cou cou. With red herring or the same with saltfish or with flying fish.

*So, everyone does theirs differently. Is that the national dish then, cou cou and flying fish?*

Well, they say so. Flying fish and different kinds of cou cou.

*Yes, it's on your national crest or insignia.*

Yes, there's also the breadfruit cou cou.

*Not cornmeal?*

No, with salt beef in it you know . . .

*In Trinidad they have a big Indo-Caribbean population but you [in Barbados] have roti too. Is that traditional food too?*

The roti is not Barbadian.

*The 'doubles' is Trini.*

Aha.

*So, this is 'outside' food?*

Yes, well, but Bajans, they've adopted, and they can do the curries and so on too.

*How many people do you know that grow their own produce still, have a little bit of ground and they grow their own vegetables? Is that still happening?*

Not people that I know because I don't live in the country.

*So, it's more rurally based?*

Mmm, because when I first went to learn, where I'm living now, my husband kept a garden . . . I think he realised he needed something. I took some beans and I planted them. So much in trial and error he planted some too and they came out in spots. Then he had a lot of gentlemen who said he planted some beans too and he had the same problem and he got something you know from it. My mother she grew vegetables. She had space, she had space to grow things. At first it was I didn't pay attention I really don't have a green finger. At first my mother she had every kind of vegetable, cabbage, Swedes and afterward the favourite things there was two breadfruit trees, an apple tree, um soursop and peas, of course, peppers.

*Quite extensive, then?*

Yes, we had shaddock, passion fruit, you know, anything, she had sugar apple also. She had everything there.

*What's the main difference between how she cooked and how you cook? Was it just that different things are available now?*

Well, the truth is that after I started cooking, she stopped. [Laughs]

[Laughs] Funny!

I remember you can't even get it now, but I remember picking the paw paw for breakfast. The tree was right by the house.

*Do Bajans eat too much imported food? I know that you have to import some of the things that you can't get. Do you think they need to go back to eating local things, to eat what is in season?*

Sometimes.

*Your daughter says you remember the fishermen coming in as a place to go and get fresh fish for the family . . . whereas now they can be in the freezer*

*full time. You can eat fish at any time now. I also noticed strawberries in the supermarket here.*

They have been imported, yeah, imported. But apart from that what isn't really clear is what are local fruits? I don't know. You could make a meal of it. The only thing would be their bananas. We import bananas.

*You import bananas?*

Yes, we are not self-sufficient in these things. I think the bananas are the thing we'd miss.

*I talked to someone who works for the FAO at the UN and she said that we need to get back to local food. We need to teach children agriculture because people don't want to work on the land because they see it as low status and hard work.*

My, um, my memory right, um, we were kids, we didn't grow the food. I remember seeing the schooners coming in on the water from the islands from Dominica, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and they had brought in coal that kind of thing, the coals, they brought in coal they brought in coconuts, the plantains, you will see them on the . . . This always happens. We didn't grow things to sell as such.

*And do you have memories of sharing food: if you had a little something, you would give it to neighbours or family nearby and they would do the same?*

It still happens, it still happens in my, in my group. When we have mangoes that are in season, how much mangoes can you eat? [Laughs] . . . Those things were used, and we need to get back to these things. So even in my cooking those things were used and were natural so I remember guavas growing up and we made guava jelly and we made guava jam. I don't do these things now because . . .

*You can buy them?*

I don't use them because I try to stay away from those things you know and I don't know if she [my daughter] mentioned that I used to make [fruit] wine from eddoes.

*She didn't tell me. Tell me about this!*

Yes, I don't make it anymore because I don't really want to.

*How do you make it?*

Um, there's a good one. How do you make it? You follow a recipe.

*[Laughs]*

Put the fruit, and then you would add the boiling water and the yeast and the sugar.

*Is it good wine?*

*[Laughs]* Well, I used to give it away. I used to give it to people, people used to take it overseas, and the same with dried fruit. I'd use berries that you can use in your fruitcake and the passion fruit tea.

*That leads really nicely to the last thing I want to ask you, which is about Christmas. Do you cook special things? Is the cake a particular thing that you would eat at Christmas?*

When they were growing up, we didn't really. There are a lot of local things so you had for Christmas, and people in Barbados like pork, pork, pork. And, um.

*What about turkey?*

Well, not too much, really, though the turkey is creeping in now because I don't think the turkey is really Bajan.

*It's American?*

Yes, um, but then again Christmas in the fifties, things like ham you only had the Christmas Day, and now you have it like every day. What we do is we do the cake early. We mix up all the different kinds of fruit and pour on rum. Well, when I was growing up it used to be port wine. But then again when I used to make wines, we used to put that in there too.



**Edna is a retired home economics teacher who taught at the Homecraft Centre in Bridgetown in the 1970s. Between 1961 and 1970 she lived in**

**London. She is an active member of her church, a keen cook and is currently compiling a book of Bajan recipes.**

I've brought some of my own recipes which I'm in the process of compiling. So, these recipes, how I approached it, I was teaching so I got the ladies to develop their own individual recipes. And then I got them, and some of them are long since dead. And when I was writing the foreword I was tempted to name some of their names because you can, you still have relatives. You still have relatives here. So I think that in the end I will give credit to where these recipes are from and acknowledge all these people in the foreword . . . I have not had time to get back in it yet. I will do.

*Did you grow up with recipes or who taught you to cook? Was it by practice or watching other people?*

Recipes only came in after I went to school because coming up there was my grandmother, my maternal grandmother as well as my paternal grandmother, they were always cooking. So, I learned through them and it was like what we call 'yuh dump in', 'yuh dump in as you go'. There were no measures, spoons and measures, nothing. It was only when I went to formal school then, that, we started to measure, to use measuring cup, measuring spoon and a scale, you know. Because it was all 'dump in', 'dump in' and I don't know if they had, if it was committed to memory. Because some of the dishes that they, they turn out and my mind go back to wedding cakes: yuh pick up the egg and yuh pick up this egg and 'yuh dump in, yuh dump in' and it's then that you have this cake.

*Did you have to follow them or were they just trying to encourage you to know when things are just right?*

I guess I learned because I was inquisitive . . . I always liked using my hands.

*And did any of your grandparents have little plots or smallholdings or anything? Did they grow anything in the yard?*

Most, in those days most houses, most houses had a lickle plot, either in front or behind. You know, that they grew. Maybe they had curry [plant] and the thyme, and the marjoram, they grew sweet potatoes and yam and eddoes and all those things and what they didn't have they got them from the plantations. Yes dear.

*So there's a kind of trade going on. If there's a lot of something, would they share them with their neighbours?*

Exactly, because you would have the breadfruit today and then you'd have pumpkin so we exchange. Yes, so you have a bowl and you get what you didn't have. So when it came to cooking you would have a soup that have in all of these things. And I would cook fufu. You'd have a bowl or container that you'd send over something else, and I had a something in a container, and you understand you might not have had a full menu but there was still always something to eat.

*Well, it increases variety, doesn't it, you're getting a varied diet?*

Exactly. So then sometimes you're looking for a container and you would say 'Look at those containers', 'All they does mek my back ache'. And you'd accumulate all these containers you'd collected over the week, and then you'd say 'Oh that container is Miss Maddie's' or 'That container is Miss Marigold'. 'Oh no that's not Miss Maddie's but Miss Butcher!' Because that how they lived, that's how they lived.

*So what do you think the most Bajan thing to eat is?*

You know, I, what I think about dat is, flying fish and cou cou became a Bajan dish about fifty years ago. Before then it was cou cou and saltfish, saltfish or breadfruit cou cou and red herring.

*With a sauce on it?*

Yes, yes.

*I know you can make cou cou from corn or from breadfruit.*

Yes, or green bananas or whatever, as long as it is of the quality.

*You say fifty years then, do you think it's around independence, because that was 1966?*

Yeah, about then, when they started to promote tourism. They looked for something that the tourist would have gone for. But to me I always say flying fish and cou cou is not a Bajan dish to people like me, to older women. People

don't think so, the older ones, after all these years, after fifty years, I'm the only one who cares perhaps.

*So, the government or the tourist board constructed a menu that they wanted to represent Barbados?*

Exactly, exactly, yes.

*What's your favourite thing to cook and eat?*

I like food. [Laughs] . . . I like food and, um, for me, to sit down to cook, I can cook a nice soup and I can cook a soup . . .

. . . which lasts a few days.

Exactly. Because I would put in my meat and my peas and my, you know, and the ground provisions.

*I know that you were a home economics teacher, and then you had to teach using recipes.*

Yes, yes, I used to use one. I bought a big book, it was printed in Britain. I can't remember.

*Was it Marguerite Patten's?*

Exactly. It's still in the book press 'cause I don't use it now. I've, I don't look at it now so much but it had in a lot of British values, Yorkshire values. It went through Britain along with these recipes. The reason I had it was that I was doing preserving. So it had lots on preserving in it, and that had a lot of recipes for meat and so on. And I still have it.

*So it's an old one . . . from the 1950s?*

No, from the 1960s, younger than that, younger than that. It is in the book press and occasionally I refer to it because I still like to dabble, doing the thing . . . For Christmas I did a Yorkshire cured ham . . . I still have the same people here who go after me because that's one of the things I taught them, when I went off to do my studies, I did food practices, food practices as my major and then I taught food preservation—hams, jellies, pickles, relishes that sort of thing.

*That's even more important when you don't have refrigeration. I imagine your grandparents didn't have a fridge.*

No, they didn't. They used a lot of vinegar to preserve and this kind of things . . . they cooked on a coal pot. My maternal grandmother they had what they call a Dutch oven. It was built of bricks in the yard and so on. And on Thursdays the ladies who sold coconut bread and muffins and fish cakes to the plantation. She had a routine worked out that one body will come at one hour [to cook their bread or meal], because it was like the community open. And you would prepare your materials and materials [sharing it] and then you'd come.

*At what time?*

That would have been in the forties. You'd come at the time you were supposed to come. That would have been in the forties, the 1940s, because she died in the 1950s and I was privileged enough to go on Thursdays and the ladies would come at the time that you're supposed to come and you would bring your bread or anything and then you'd bake it and when you'd finish somebody else would bake and the oven would be open all day, you had the whole day. 'Cause everybody in a certain radius would come.

*Austin Clarke says that he grew up with all these women all making what he called a kind of magic in the kitchen, but they didn't do it silently. They were always talking. Is that an essential ingredient when you all get together?*

Yep. They . . . did, they did. Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Laughs]

*Tell me about that.*

Yes, anything that happened since the last time we met, it became the conversation piece and yuh may be talking about something and then somebody say, oh actually and so and so and so, and then someone says, oh we went to the . . . And so, there's conversation.

*And that is important, isn't it?*

Every kind of socialisation.

*Do women talk differently when they're alone . . . ?*

They do, they do.

*These things, food and storytelling have always been closely linked in the Caribbean. We've forgotten this a bit because more and more British people don't eat together around a table anymore.*

No, no, no.

*Is that the case here?*

Yes, you grab something, you grab something.

*There's something in this [sitting and eating together] that's not just about the food.*

Yes, the socialisation. I have a sister who lives in England, for the better part . . . for the better part of her life, thirty-something years past, she's been between England and Germany because the household was in the army and she made it an appointment that every Wednesday they sat down—she had three boys—every Wednesday she would dress up and make like they were going somewhere out. She would set the table with her finery and they'd have to sit together regardless what was going on. They had to sit and dine . . . those children are now older, all three of them are back in England in Birmingham and Dundee. Thereabouts. But the family, they still maintained that this is one evening where they have the family meal . . . when she was living in Germany she instituted that one evening a week. You put down everything and everybody does that. It's fifty minutes when you have dinner, you get ready and the table is set.

*So you say your grandmother's life was very different. What she could access was very different from the things you can get now.*

Oh, my paternal grandmother she was always a working woman. She worked, she worked at the post office . . .

*And she cooked?*

Aha, and everything else. Everything, everything. I think I was about eight years old and I started to go to her in the evenings after school. I think she

would leave work about half-past two or three and she would go home and she would, and after school I would go by her. She let me out in the open kitchen at the back. She could cook a sweet cou cou, boy! [Laughs]

*So you've just been in the States, you lived in Britain. I'm trying to understand why British people don't know much about Caribbean food . . . Eating curry is a kind of national pursuit, but . . . people know nothing much about Caribbean food. They think it's just jerk chicken and that everything Caribbean is Jamaican.*

Yes, they do, they do, they do. Even now.

*So why do you think 'Indian' food took off in Britain and not Caribbean?*

Whenever you go the Indians, I don't know if it's the kind of spices that they use that appeals, because for me, I found Britain's food was bland. Salt and pepper. When I was there it was bland.

*So, when was that?*

From 1961 to '67. Very bland. Lots of potatoes, boiled, um, cabbage, stewed chicken. Everything was bland. If you're going to roast things . . . the only thing I liked was Yorkshire pudding.

*Were you ever homesick for food? Were there things that you missed?*

No, no, because of the travels. To me if somebody goes to Rome, they eat what the Romans do!

*But here, do you think that cooking is mainly a woman's thing? Do you see men cooking? What do men do?*

It depends if they're liberated because some men are not liberated. To see themselves doing what they call a woman's job, basically a lot of men see cooking and housekeeping, mother and children as a woman's job, and if they have got to reverse the roles for some reason. Some of them, they do it reluctantly but there are certain places now I think that the younger generation, they call them the millennials, you know . . . they've got some terms! [Laughs] But there has been a marked change because my father, he didn't cook, he wouldn't cook.

*Your father?*

I never see my father cook, even when there were so many of us [in the family]. We would never see my father cook. And now the reason why I think he, my father, he never had to cook because my mother had a lot of sisters, and if for some reason, my mum had a young baby, say, one of the sisters would be there to cook. But in recent times I've found that that it's okay and that they can, they will. You just have to back off and leave them. My son is forty or something. You understand he's not sixteen, so the first week before I left and I went to the supermarket and stock the fridge and the freezer and so and so. At certain times then he got things down he went to the supermarket and he sent me a WhatsApp message 'Mum, you know I went to the supermarket on my own'. [Laughs]

*I'd be interested to know if it's different on other islands because there seems to be a really kind of macho jerk culture in Jamaican. Men will do certain kinds of cooking.*

Yeah, Jamaica is jerk, jerk, jerk, jerk man. Men do that. I know for sure.

*But the normal cooking that keeps everybody alive is the women.*

It's the women, yeah. The men will get out there and do the jerk chicken and the bakes, the festival, but when it comes to the house . . .

*That's really interesting, especially the thing about flying fish and cou cou.*

Yes, well they're blind to it. They have been pushing their, I'll keep maintaining, flying fish and cou cou for fifty years . . .

*And what about spice mixtures—would you grind your own spices?*

Yes, you make your own. You never getting shop-made. You get the cloves, allspice, cinnamon, those three and you put them in a little bag and then you hammer in it, before the mortar and pestle because they didn't have the mortar and pestle, that's what they had higher up, the high up, but the ordinary household: you put them here and do them so and you sieve it out and put it back in a container for the next time that you want. You make that but now it's come to that you go to the supermarket and you buy it, the made seasonings, ready-made seasonings. Everybody had a little herb garden with your

green onion, your thyme, your chives, your whatever . . . and those same flying fish that you're talking about would taste so good with the seasoning that you've just ground.

*And Christmas? Anything special which you'd cook and eat?*

Well, you make sure for Christmas you would have the turkey and chicken, and you would raise up the pig and the sheep and the rabbit. Most of those animals would have been raised.

*Did you make a black cake? With rum or port wine?*

Lord have mercy. [Laughs] I have a container and it's never empty. If I make a cake and put more, I keep putting it in so it never goes, it never goes out. So that's how I came up and would see how my grandmother would do it in the conaree. You can see in the museum what the conaree would look like. You have your dried fruit, right, you put your dried fruit in. You've got your raisins and your currants, your cloves and some people would use this to keep the meat, to salt the meat, the conaree. It's what you, it's the equivalent to your porcelain, but it's made out of ceramic, but it's made out of earthenware. And it was glazed. Very similar to the monkey jar that you would keep the water in, and it had a cover made in the same material and then they would salt the meat and put the meat and so and so. They would make the salt meat . . . So, you layer layer after layer, after layer and the same some people would have one for the meat and they would use that from time to time and then one for the fruit cake. So, they would be pouring wine, rum, whatever alcohol you put in.

*So, it's a continuous process?*

Yes, that that's how I did it.

*Thank you.*



**Stella is a university-educated woman in her early forties who has spent time living and studying abroad in Britain. She was born in Jamaica but moved to Barbados with her family as a small child. She works as a tour guide in the historical area of Bridgetown and has one daughter.**

*You told me that you collect old cookbooks, but do you use them? How were you taught to cook, if at all?*

It's quite, it's interesting, because my attitude to the cookbooks is, I think, in three categories. One, I think you mentioned in your talk, just the fact of loving a cookbook, loving how it looks, loving the possibility and it making you feel that you could achieve that thing, but sometimes you go deeper and you realise that, oh hold on a minute, that's not so easy or I'll just look at the picture, so, um, I just have a love of books anyway and I have a love of cookbooks because of the pictures, some of them are so beautifully designed that they are inspiring. The other one is my love of history, so that takes me there to the historical, the cookbook that centres and speaks to a time and again, what was so interesting in your [talk], in what we learned from your visit was that, um, yes, it said much more than just the cooking, which was kind of an eye-opener to the time, the period. And that also was interesting to me. As far as me using the cookbook that's interesting too, and you really did touch on a lot of these points because the class that I would fall into I suppose is really a wonderful mix of both attitudes, one passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter and the class appreciation of what is British and 'that way of doing things', um, and 'it's much better that way you know'. Um. [Laughs] So those three are, they're all there: the love of the book, the love of the history of the book and the actual, um, meaning of cooking in your family. So, I don't know if that answers that first question?

*It does and it's fascinating because you're saying . . . that the cookbook . . . is both an artefact, a commodity, but also a kind of conduit to something else whether that is enjoying pictures or trying recipes. Do you cook yourself and were you taught to cook?*

Again very interesting because, um, I am born Jamaican with a Barbadian father and even within that mix comes the two classes and that is very, I have to say, that's the whole mix of me. So my mother's side is very Eurocentric, very British-centric, very, you know, monarchy, and my father's side is pure country, teachers but living in the country and living at the country, so from both sides. Now because I am from daughter to mother, obviously it is the pull to the mother's side that is what's informing the original cooking and thinking. And that is interesting because my grandmother with her 'Euro' frame is having boarders and she doesn't, you know, there's servants. And there are people cooking these meals.

*So she's not cooking herself. She's telling the cook how to cook, is that right?*

Yes she is. But because she's coming from her own mother she has then passed down stuff, because they must be passed down. So, she has her own

knowledge of cooking and she has enough oversight of how the cooks are cooking it, they're doing the physical but she's still knowing what that thing is supposed to be. And she is not using recipe books. That is still, they are cooking off of what they know is Jamaican.

*Is she measuring anything? Tasting as she goes?*

No, 'Put this put that'. Definitely 'put this, put that'. But, because of that class system any respectable home would have a cookbook. That's for show, that's for show. But she knows her cooks know how to cook and she knows that they are cooking the Jamaican way. And she knows that they know through the passed down of their own, and she has the oversight. So it's all very interwoven, and that's still happening for her because her mother is coloured. So that's still the trace of what is the village cooking, even though her mother is mixed.

*But her father . . .*

Is, is, yes, is white and of European stock.

. . . and she said 'white as God', is that right?

Yes, and she did say 'my father was white, "whiter than God"'.

*As a term of approval?*

Yes, that was the highest thing that you could have. That is her status. To which, you know, I would laugh and say but grandma you know we're still discussing what colour God was. And we're trying to find out what Jesus, you know, he came from the middle of the Middle East.

*He was probably black!*

Yes. That would, you know, make her a little disgruntled. But the interesting thing is that there are recipe books there, yes, there are, but those are the show because what she is showing is that there is a British link here, we understand this but because I'm in Jamaica, because I'm in Jamaica, that's where I'm getting my first introduction to the kitchen. I went there because my mother is growing up in that, my grandmother is saying 'You don't cook. That's why we have servants', so she's at a remove from the kitchen and . . . And when

she marries my father, that's when she actually told me, she had to go into some kind of cooking lessons.

*When was your grandmother born?*

So that's 1912, sometime around there. And my mother is born in 1946. Um.

*So she is a baby boomer!*

She is a baby boomer, and when she gets married, she has to learn to cook. So she has some things that are passed down, but basically she has not been touching the kitchen, she never had to do it. So that her story. By the time she comes to me, by the time it comes to me, um, she, my mother, has the passed-downs come from grandmother to mother, she has, especially with the Christmas puddings. It's a very big deal and the things you're supposed to have: this is what we're supposed to have at meals, this is what you have at Easter, this is a family tradition and these meals you need to know how to do them. Because I, by the time it comes to me, our modern times, so to speak, so I'm not expected to cook, from the same family position we don't cook, we have a housekeeper. 'We have a cook so you don't have to worry'. But I'm expected to be in the kitchen and watching. So I'm expected to be there. What has happened is it has gone full cycle. Because I learned now to cook mainly by what I saw, so the dishes are heavily Jamaican, because of the mother association, so there are rice and peas with coconut and there are salt-fish, rundown, um, you know, johnny cakes, so those are very much the things I am doing. However, from the Barbadian side when I move here when I am ten and right into the countryside and in the countryside there is not a recipe book in sight and that's, that's . . .

*Is that to do with literacy at all or is it just cultural tradition?*

Oh, cultural tradition and, and that was [our family] in St Joseph. As a matter of fact, cooking was so important to them that my aunt went on to become a home economics teacher and she was revered. I mean, she's one of the top people from the 1960s.

*I interviewed another lady who also taught home economics. You see a very different approach. They were taught to use very distinct techniques.*

But so my memory, when we moved to Barbados in 1976 we would drive to the country, which was very much country in those days, and I mean that was

the definition of country, the smells of fruit. You knew you were hitting St Josephs when you would smell the smell of pork and guava cheeses, and it was just all food assailing you as you drove into the country. And my grandmother was known for it, so there wasn't an image I have of arriving at her house—um, my grandfather had passed away already—of her not being in the kitchen. That's where we always said 'Hello, Grandma'. In the kitchen.

*So it's heavily female focused, it's matrilineal?*

Very much so.

*Did men ever do any of the cooking? . . . Because in Jamaica there seems to be a masculine 'performance': you can do jerk, on the beach you can cook if you're a man.*

That's another thing, a fascinating topic 'cause you're right. As it goes outside it becomes male. [Laughs] So the roast breadfruit, that's male, and if they go to roast the breadfruit and the labour of digging the fire, that's male. And I go to that one because that's still going on today.

*In Jamaica?*

No, that was in Barbados. But you're right about the jerk pork. But it's interesting because that is still cooking. Full stop. Cooking for the, for the working-class community is outside right up until the 1960s. It was outside and then it was women with, with the coal pot. So that's kind of interesting. I suppose I'm speaking about what I remember, in my memory at the time of the 1960s they had moved away from the coal pot and the minute they do that it's women in the kitchen and men doing outside cooking. And as you say they may send pieces of that breadfruit into the house, but it really is a male sphere outside. Right, it's not like you're sitting around a fire either. It's men doing it and sending a few pieces in. But it's all about them drinking, having breadfruits outside and their social situation out there.

*So can you remember your first food memories?*

No, they're going to be, uh, in a way that I would still say, I mean personally it's going to be to Jamaica because that's where I am, but it is very much, yes, it is my grandmother, um, because her Sunday lunch was the highlight of one's life. Absolutely. And this is where you would find the creolisation

and the British, you know, these were things so the roast beef the centre of the space, occasionally Yorkshire pudding coming in, but also plantain was massive, baked chicken, plantain and roast beef, ackee and saltfish because you know they would have that more for breakfast, but at lunch roast beef was the big deal.

*And were you expected to dress smartly?*

Yes, so you are certainly expected to dress. And when my mother talks about the boarders because my grandmother had, again it was all status by English boarders, uh, Mrs Collier and there were certain ways that you said these names. Mrs Collier and Mr I can't remember his name but these were all and they would be expected and my mother tells how, you know, that they would be expected to come down in suits and tie.

*Did they have separate food, or did they have what the family was eating?*

Well, it was all prepared. The family ate more what the boarders were eating. It would still have it tended to be rice and peas that mix of English and Caribbean foods.

*What did the boarders do? Were they just working here?*

Mrs Collier was a teacher, from a certain kind of class, and the old gentleman I can't remember what he used to do but some consultant or something here . . . But the boarders, the food, it was standard, from what I've heard. It was a mixture at both meals.

*For some I've talked to, breakfast would have been, in part, cold servings of what was eaten the night before. Did that ever happen or was that frowned on? One lady said 'oh, it's a really working-class thing to do, to eat the burnt bits of rice from the bottom of the pan'.*

'Cause they wasted nothing. Again, certainly not from my mother's side. In my [paternal] grandparents family partly because they had eight children. My father was one of these and when you have that amount of children you better eat quickly 'cause otherwise someone ends up stealing your food. You turn your eye . . .

*'Eat quickly or someone else will eat it!'*

Exactly, and they made everyone eat together so I definitely heard stories. And again it is food that really brings the two grandmothers together and there are special, but it's amazing that it is food, I remember about both of them. The grandmother in Jamaica is giving me fabulous dresses for my birthday.

*Is she making them?*

Some of them, but I mean she is buying them as well, and I'm being, you know, glorified and sat on a fancy chair and I'm on a throne and I'm being treated, I'm the only girl and first grandchild. Big fuss is made of me really big fuss, big fuss. And I get to feel that kind of special and my grandmother here is, you know, not caring she is all country 'how I am is how you take it'. Nothing and you're not being glorified because you are one of the one hundred and eight and the 'I had eight children' and but they, you're part of a thousand grandchildren. And she's giving me an egg from the chickens at the back because she has a little farm, for my birthday, sorry, so that is the birthday present. No fancy dress, chicken egg because she knew I loved them and I'd go into the back and feed them, um, and that's what you give me, you know. Here's a chicken egg, it's your special egg, and I loved that just as much. It was wonderful, it was wonderful, both of them absolutely different, but I thought that was so special my boiled egg that I had, um, and then as I became fifteen she gave me the chicken as a kind of roast chicken and you know because of that and because I love food, um, there's no doubt about that but both of: one with all the thrilling things of the outer world and one with 'what's happening in the backyard' and, like I said, one that is not over the stove cooking but her cooks are supervising very heavily, and one whose hand is in the pot constantly and she's doing guava cheese, and she's doing guava jam and she's doing guava and she's giving it to the whole community. Everybody is getting some.

*I've heard that. Preservation was particularly important among the older generation, especially if they didn't have refrigeration, which would have been many people. And the importance of sharing: if you have lots of something, then you share it because then it comes back.*

Exactly and again you got there and she had never, I mean, this was big thinking. This was a plan, but she's passing food for Mrs Stone and Mrs Godmaster will give them to so and so. Big thinking and, um, and always giving and you know she giving a lime to this neighbour and to another I said once about Miss Joy, she used to say 'There's no Grandma here', but the Jamaican one is saying call me 'Grandmama, not Grandma, Grandmama' and one here is say-

ing ‘Call me Miss Joy’. So too totally different. This is it. So it is funny the two, so I’m saying to her [Miss Lou] ‘So why are you giving a breadfruit to Miss Hackett cos Miss Hackett has a breadfruit tree’ and she said ‘yeah but I’ve been watching the tree and she doesn’t have a ripe one’.

*So that attunedness to your neighbour and that kind of familiarity is really important?*

Very important and that’s how old Barbados, certainly completely different now but that’s how it was you would call there was no phone you would just hear ‘Miss Hackett’, you would hear the names called, all through the whole village just calling over a fence, so, um, that’s and I remember that that’s not a story and so that was fabulous, to a point where in thirty-five years or less Barbadians can say they don’t know their neighbour or they’ve moved out of the village to a completely different part of Barbados and they don’t cook. So I, now it comes to me here, so my grandmother is thinking we’re foreign ’cause that was the other thing, the foreign grandchildren from this Jamaican mother who doesn’t understand our Bajan ways, and my mother’s looking very kind of posh to her so she thinks, she’s not going to enforce cooking on me because perhaps I’m too great for that? Even as a child she is not, not doing it, my grandmother, you know so there’s a little attitude there but because of my own nature and my own interests she realises to be any self-respecting Barbadian woman I’ve got to learn this for myself. So I then I go to my aunt’s and I have what you call lessons and I say, Aunt Elizabeth, can I come and ‘Can I learn how to do this?’ and she is thrilled by this and so then I go and I am being taught in the formal way, but I’m still going to my aunt who is passing down the tradition.

*That’s tied in with all kinds of notions of feminine propriety and being a proper Bajan.*

Exactly.

*Which is why probably you were one of the people who laughed when I said in my talk [at the Barbados Museum and Historical Society], one of the measures of being a desirable wife or female partner was being able to turn a proper cou cou.*

Well, yes, because I would be devastated if someone asked me and I just couldn’t do this. Yes.

*Much of this has been about storytelling in different ways. Did you ever hear women tell stories or gossip in their kitchens?*

Well, this is a little bit vague and it's was not so much about the one in Jamaica because I'm young and I've been out of there for a long time, but I do remember the cooks in the kitchen talking about, not so much people and things, but they're talking about the actual things they're using and the food like the apple and the OTT (ottiose)<sup>27</sup> apple and the difference between the fruit because some of them have . . . some African connotations and some spirit and some story, and so I do remember those vaguely about the OTT apple and when you eat the seed it looks like, and, yes, in the different islands it has different names . . .

*So these are Africanisms; you're not just cooking to sustain, you're cooking for the ancestors.*

Yes, and with the stories of the tree you know some village. Sometimes the stories were about Anancy, they did mention Anancy, I'm not just hearing that from a book. I can't remember in any detail. But they were talking about things like that. I can't remember any detail, but they were talking about things like that and talking about the meanings assigned to particular trees or the rice and peas, what he does, and if you look down at reading cups, you know what they would say reading the tea leaves and there would be things with coconut, if you look at the coconut as it shakes or something, but those are that I remember standing in my grandmother's kitchen and the cook 'cause they were always nice, I remember them being very nice and wanting me to come in and of course how they spoke to you, you know, it was 'Miss Stella' or 'Mistress', never, you know, even at the age of six, you know. I have been told so, and then coming to Barbados where that's not the case, you're not Miss Stella, in fact, even that's different because here you didn't have cooks. The Barbadian was never to be called maid. By the time we got here it was never maid or cook, it was housekeeper. . . . I feel that there is a dilemma for Barbadian cooking because they're really not, um, they're really not cooking recipe or other. I mean Chefette. I mean, they're living in the fast-food places.

*Do you think people are forgetting the old food because . . .*

They don't even like it, I mean, they love chicken. Yes, I mean you put flying fish out, I mean, I've never seen anything like it. I can't believe how our whole identity can be so erased.

*And Americanised?*

They will not even eat flying fish. They do not like that and that's your national dish and . . . they will not cook it and I mean, you know, there isn't a girl, I'm telling you, if you bought twenty girls here and asked which one, you wouldn't find one [who cooks this].

*So what's going to happen to the old recipes? An older respondent told me that flying fish and cou cou was adopted as a national dish. It was very much about nationalism and independence and never considered a national dish until it was dreamt up by the tourist board.*

No, no, no. No, it's much older definitely, I mean, going by my aunt, that's not about tourism. I mean she's cooking it and it has passed down the generations so and so, yes, I'm sure that it's grounded in the past. What is cooked up, I'm sure, it is the macaroni pie. I've never seen anything like it. I mean I love it but that has got to be twenty years old, I mean I don't know where that came from. We have no idea where that came from.<sup>28</sup>

*Is it a kind of Americanism? It's slightly different here because you include tomato ketchup and cayenne pepper.*

And they take it very [seriously], I mean, we were always having macaroni pie, even in Jamaica. I mean it's in the Caribbean but there's a love of it that rises to the point of national dish which are almost one short of calling it that and they're beginning to. I mean, it's true, each household is very particular about their macaroni pie. I mean the Barbadian macaroni pie is an artery-clogging thing because they're full of oil and there full of not much good. There's no nutrients in the thing really.

*Was there a sense that 'everything foreign was better than local' or not really? Is there a sense in which you remember imported things being special or prestigious?*

Yes, well, not for my generation, but I've heard the stories of the parents. So apparently the apples, you know, the English apples coming in, that was a big deal they told me. They talked about special hams coming in.

*Yorkshire hams?*

Yes, so they thought that that was a big deal and that that then, that's the whole point. Barbados has always, as you heard, imported since the beginnings of time.

*Yes, since the beginnings of colonisation and slavery.*

But my brother talks about Waitrose or Tesco. You know, he's living in England but he doesn't see this, for example, they have supermarket brands and you maybe have two other alternatives. I mean in Barbados there are ten million jams from, from Bon Maman and they cost US\$40.00 \$30.00 \$25.00 \$20.00. I mean, who knows Barbadians who can afford them? So they keep saying it's for the expats, but the way they're bringing in all the selections for every single expat. So we have Bon Maman for the French, we have Waitrose here, we have [this and that] and we can't buy them anyway. Two weeks ago I took a picture of US\$15.00 for three tomatoes coming from Portugal; that's insane . . . Actually I made a joke to the guy putting them out, and I said I'm going to stand here and see who is buying this. I really do like to see who, for US\$15, is buying these three tomatoes and why are we bringing them in from Portugal? This is wrong, something's got to be wrong.

*You've lived in different places, including Britain. Why do you think the British have not adopted Caribbean food as they have 'Indian' food?*

Or even Chinese food.

*But so why do you think it's not taken off? There are Caribbean restaurants in London and other cities, but nationally it's never really taken off.*

That, isn't that an interesting question, um, wow, 'cause its true because there they're, but they're so scattered and just one, one, one, one and considering the relationship between these two places . . .

*Yes, it's a long, long relationship.*

And so it's integrated, you know it's fascinating . . . I'll bring it down to this . . . you have to start with the Windrush community that came to help.

*What do you mean?*

Well, it's because the only thing that was different was the colour of that skin. These are people that assimilated. I mean they assimilated, they wore

the clothes, they spoke the language. Maybe they were Jamaican at home, but when they went into the outside they tried to speak and to work and they tried to look and everything and yet other cultures come in who looked completely different and those are the cultures who are more embraced, their foods have taken on and everything of the West Indian has been slightly repelled. When I say repelled it's a harsh word, but he's been kept at a distance except maybe you could say the music and even then it has not really grown.

*Most people don't really know about Caribbean music beyond reggae and dancehall perhaps . . .*

I know exactly and you're pegged and kept there.

*Is the love of Indian food in Britain rooted in an older nostalgia for Crown and Empire? I mean the British occupied India for a long time and adopted and adapted certain foods. We know that Mrs Beeton integrated curry paste and curried recipes into her famous Victorian cookbooks, though not very adventurously.*

This is interesting and, yet again, you know, as you, you have mentioned, I mean, this thing with food that encapsulates everything, I mean, identity, respect, status, class. Because again but you see, for example, that's something else to look at 'cause in Jamaica even today, rich and poor, because my cousins there are very well off. In their household they start their morning with Jamaican breakfast, with ackee and saltfish one day, boiled down ground provisions on another, but they're eating yam, they're eating everything, no matter how rich they are or how poor, everybody eating that where, whereas in Barbados the ground provision is out. They don't touch a yam, they don't touch a sweet potato.

*Because it is still seen as slave food or poor peoples' food?*

I hope that it's not because they're too lazy. I think it just died out because of laziness . . . I just think that it's also to do with housing because they're just not planting fruit trees anymore. At the heart of it also is you've 'arrived' in Barbados when you have a big huge house on a lot of land and then you concrete over because you don't want to sweep up leaves.

*People are not even having a patch? Many women said my grandmother had a small patch or grew herbs by the door . . .*

Every house would have a banana tree, little herbs and some ground provisions growing with a thing of livestock up until the 1960s and early 1970s. Its changed completely and that's why I think a lot of people are feeling it, because the landscape of Barbados changed within twenty-five years. I am barely holding on to remembering how certain places looked. It has taken so quickly. My father has a better memory because it was because it was with him longer. I can't remember the road to the airport when it was there but now we have a highway I don't even know what roads ran through and I barely remember that sugar cane was everywhere and where Bussa [statue of rebel slave leader] is was sugar cane and that whole area was sugar, just sugar for miles and now it is tarmac.

*It's depressing.*

It is.

*Even on this trip I've seen trees being cut down at Codrington College . . . and I hear the last sugar factory on the island is closing together with a central part of Barbadian agriculture.*

And sugar fields, sugar fields are now depleting, and I've said 'sugar in the blood' is a great title because that's it, they talk about diabetes, about diabetes, we're supposed to be the diabetes capital of the world. That's what they refer to us as because it's all here and they keep blaming sugar and is not sugar's fault. So if Barbados wants to buy into that, then good luck to them. But we also have the most centenarians and so it's in the Guinness Book of Records. I mean we turn out a hundred-year-olds and they're shaking the governor's hand and they lived on sugar cakes, mauby and these things. But they were walking and they were exercising and they were walking from St John into Bridgetown selling pots. Very fit, very fit, hammering. You saw the video at Saint Nicholas Abbey, all those men doing the hammering and pulling off the fire. This was burning the energy, so this should be our goal again. This is the last thing I'll say on that, you know. The Caribbean has to be very smart. They're smart people [but there are] all kinds of objectives and agendas as to why they will not buy and continue to crush small islands and, you know, and one of them is West Indian sugar is bad, cut out West Indian sugar. It's all about exercising moderation too, nobody says you have to push the whole thing out.

*You can have 'good' [less refined] sugar and just have it occasionally?*

Exactly. Hawaii is pushing agave and telling everybody, promoting it as a healthy alternative, and all they're doing is, is trying to push their product. We have some agave, we want to make money, so we'll tell you it's healthy. And, of course, here we have not thought to push. Barbados could become a model state for health and we're all on bicycles and they could have turned it around and this is why sugar is having an effect. We're lazy. Everybody drives, they don't dare walk in the heat. It's all too terrible, and yet we we're supposedly named after a tree, the bearded fig tree, which became 'Barbados', and yet we were supposedly named after a fig tree, the bearded fig tree.

*Is this what you call a banana tree?*

Or, well, now a fig is a kind of banana but this is the one the roots hanging down. Los barbudia, Barbados, we're named after the beard of a bearded man. And yet we hate trees, we chop them down, and then we have the sugar which we now don't want, even though the whole suffering of the people whose *raison d'être* of being here was based on that sugar so and that Barbadian cooking is slathered in molasses, in mauby and sugar and yet produced hundred-year-olds, so, um, they're missing some kind of connectivity. And we have a potato which we turned our back on, the sweet potato named after Caroline Lee [a friend and fellow hotelier to famous brothel-keeper, Rachel Pringle]. She was a beautiful 'browning' and they called it this because of the colour of the potato. She was a big businesswoman with her hotel and they named a potato after her, the Caroline Lee, but yet, yet none of the people eat or buy it, the sweet potato.

*Thank you.*

## NOTES

1. Ntozake Shange, *If I Can Cook / You Know God Can* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).
2. David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 125.
3. Barbadian Glyn Murray notes in a chapter on 'Food as Bajan Heritage' in his book *Barbados—Customs to Treasure* (2014) that 'a positive change in cultural outlook has . . . come to embrace indigenous Barbadian cuisine, [especially] where it has involved fishcakes, bakes and pudding-and-souse . . . food items which for a long time had suffered . . . decline in popular appeal and usage to the point where they . . . stood in . . . danger of becoming . . . non-existent because of their perceived "low culture" origins and status. Such a worrisome state of affairs . . . stemmed from the fact that these items of food had come to be popularly regarded as belonging primarily to

the poorest of Barbadians stretching back to the days of slavery, and therefore deserving of being shunned as *infra dig* and totally unsuitable to the current lifestyles of the descendants of former slaves who have since emancipation in 1838 worked hard for and achieved upward social mobility. As a result . . . people . . . felt that they were socially and financially entitled to upgrade their tastes to more sophisticated fare, usually from overseas and which . . . they had been conditioned to see as being representative of a higher, more dignified, civilised, glamorous and modern standard of living. In the case of fishcakes and bakes, their resurgence in popularity and . . . greater social acceptance [was] . . . greatly assisted by the emergence in the late 1980s of a very popular calypso, ‘Fishcakes and Bakes’ composed and sung by Blackmailer (Winston Morris) and widely aired on radio and CBTV . . . In this way a new generation was socialised into becoming lovers of fishcakes and bakes, thereby ensuring that for . . . time to come these foods would be around and sought after’ (89–91).

4. Meredith E. Abarca, ‘*Charlas Culinaris*: Mexican Women Speak from Their Public Kitchens’, *Food & Foodways* 15 (2007): 183–212.
5. Susan Geiger, ‘What’s So Feminist about Women’s Oral History?’ *Journal of Women’s History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 169–82.
6. Geiger, ‘Feminist’, n.p.
7. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 14–15.
8. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 125–26.
9. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 125.
10. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 16.
11. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 111.
12. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 110.
13. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 17.
14. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 17.
15. Ian Cook and Michelle Harrison (2007) employ a ‘follow the thing’ ethnography ‘in which commodities and their biographies are the organizing principles of post-disciplinary research’ (40) to focus on similar issues in relation to the marketing and use of ‘West Indian’ hot pepper sauce amongst a younger generation in Jamaica and the UK (48). I’ve chosen not to employ a ‘follow the thing’ methodology here but recognise its value.
16. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 111.
17. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 125–26.
18. Schlanger 1990, 44, cited in Sutton, *Remembrance*, 127.
19. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 129.
20. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 133.
21. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 133.
22. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 113.
23. Sutton, *Remembrance*, 113.
24. Deborah Tannen, *Talking Voices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 48.
25. Murray also comments on this traditional dish’s demise, alongside a decline in Barbadians eating pork, and outlines its rehabilitation in the 1990s as a result of a ‘Proper Pork’ campaign (*Barbados*, 93): ‘along with the recent recovery in the

fortunes of pudding and souse there has been a nuanced but still noticeable shift in its consumption pattern in which providers of the dishes presently opted for the more conveniently and quickly produced steam [sweet potato] pudding as a stand-alone item or in combination . . . to make pudding and souse, as against the more time consuming effort required for *black* pudding-and-souse, with the souse being made from pork in both cases. As a result, there is now said to be a greater consumption of *steam* pudding and souse than of *black* pudding-and-souse, with the demand for and supply of them no longer being kept to the traditional Saturday of the weekend, but now obtainable during the working days a week as well' (96).

26. Fungee (or fungi, fengi) is another name for the corn meal and okra and dish known as cou cou. The term is most frequently used in the Leeward Islands and Dominica.

27. The full name of the apple is otiose, but Jamaicans call it the OTT apple.

28. Murray also notes this: 'The status of flying fish and cou-cou as the national dish seems . . . to be in danger of being taken over by the absolute mushrooming in recent years in the popularity of macaroni pie, if only on the basis of widespread usage especially among younger Barbadians. So rampant is this increase in . . . consumption . . . [that many of the] numerous visitors . . . have come to believe that in it, not flying fish and cou-cou, is the national dish of Barbados' (*Barbados*, 9).



## *Chapter Six*

# **Reading the Culinary Nation**

## *Recipes, Books and Barbados*

This chapter reads one island's identity through its cookbooks, as a 'culinary nation', with Barbados as the case study. It opens with a detailed analysis of one of the earliest Barbadian cookbooks to have survived a fragile archive: Mrs H Graham (EAC) Yearwood's 1911 *West Indian and Other Recipes* (re-published in a second edition in 1932). The rest of the chapter examines later Barbadian cookery writing with a focus on local cooking, the periodic social interventions of the government in Barbadian foodways and the sustained tension between local and imported foods, tradition and modernity.

### **MRS YEARWOOD'S WEST INDIAN AND OTHER RECIPES (1911, 1932)**

*West Indian and Other Recipes* (1911, 1932) is a collection of more than 2,300 written recipes from mainly female contributors, compiled by a prominent white creole woman<sup>1</sup> on the island in the early twentieth century. It is rare because, to this day, West Indians tend to eschew written or printed recipes in favour of individual culinary improvisation and/or family traditions which are, first and foremost, oral in transmission. As novelist Austin Clarke, born in 1934, recalls of his Barbadian childhood in the late 1930s and early 1940s, 'The word "recipe" did not exist in the Barbados of my youth. As a boy I was surrounded by women—mother, countless aunts, women cousins and all the neighbourhood women, my mother's friends—women who were all continuously involved in some confounding and miraculous feat in the kitchen. In all that time, and with all those women, I never once heard one of them use the word "recipe"'.<sup>2</sup>

Clarke's 'Barbadian memoir' *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit* (1999) traces his own early life and the history of his island nation through its food, not as 'hot-cuisine',<sup>3</sup> as his mother dismissively dubbed 'food cooked by foreigners', but as an African-derived cuisine which preserves many of 'the rituals of slave food'. In the opening pages he reflects:

It is ironical to be suggesting a book about food cooked in Barbados, because in every self-respecting Barbadian household the woman (who does most of the cooking whether she is wife, daughter or maid) would not be caught dead with a cookbook. To read a cookbook would suggest that she has not retained what her mother taught her; that she does not know how to cook; that she does not know how to take care of her man; that her mother had neglected to teach her how to 'handle herself' in the kitchen, how 'to do things' properly.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, to a Barbadian of Clarke's generation and his (African Caribbean) ethnicity, cookbooks do not belong to or in the world of women, kitchens and their cooking. Instead, orally transmitted culinary practices are to be found situated within a complex matrix of codes of tradition, taste—and, above all, respectability—determined by race, class and gender. Thus, when Clarke declares that 'there was never, and still is not, a cookbook in my mother's house', he does so approvingly and in a way which references and affirms a whole unwritten set of values and ways of conducting oneself in relation to others, not just a set of culinary practices.

Similar things can be said of *West Indian and Other Recipes*, though its respective values, tastes and codes of respectability are rather more explicitly represented through the printed text and accompanying advertising paratexts to its two editions. The very existence of this early printed recipe book is a testament to the energetic collation by its author but also, crucially, to her ease of access to existing networks of affluent or 'well-to-do' contributors and subscribers, as well as to the substantial cultural and economic capital of the white elite of the island, the group with which she most closely identified. Mrs Yearwood's recipe book was first published in 1911 by the *Agricultural Reporter*, St Michael's, Barbados.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the tentative tone of Yearwood's prefatory comments to the first edition of 1911, the cookbook survived until at least 1932 when it was published in a new edition by the local Advocate Press, itself established in Barbados in 1895.<sup>6</sup> As such, the text is exceptionally important in shedding light on an often-overlooked minority tradition of written recipes and cookbooks produced by and for a distinct ethnic group on this island: that of the 'white elite' Euro-Creole and colonial expatriate community of early twentieth-century Barbados. Crucially, although a printed text, *West Indian and Other Recipes* is also key in being one of the very first—if not the first—recording

and transcription of earlier Barbadian/Caribbean foodways and food practices, which hitherto had existed only outside of print culture, in the oral tradition.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in 2013, on the occasion of the book's eightieth anniversary, the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (of which Bessie's husband had been a prominent and supportive member) described the 1911 collection of recipes as 'the earliest if not the earliest compendium of Barbadian/Caribbean cuisine. The recipes described in the book represent centuries of epicurean heritage in Barbados and the Caribbean. The book is replete with recipes such as: Bread Fruit, Cocoanut Cakes, Corn and Oil, ginger beer, Sorrel Drink, Black Pudding, Bathsheba Pancakes, Conkies, Sponge Cake and Guava Jelly to name a few'.<sup>8</sup>

It reflected further:

Many of the featured recipes are still used today and variations of them would have been reinterpreted by Barbadian culinary experts such as the late Carmeta Frazer and Marion Hart who have advocated (and still advocates in the case of Marion Hart) the use of Barbados' culinary heritage not only to feed Barbadians but also to use it as a means to attract tourists to Barbados. Truly ironic especially in this new era where food independence and culinary tourism are being promoted as essential to Barbados' future!<sup>9</sup>

This chapter argues that as a written text from a primarily oral culture—a text which transcribes primarily orally transmitted culinary practices and includes paratextual advertisements for local businesses, *West Indian and Other Recipes* presents a fascinating early document which reveals much about the material culture, tastes and codes of respectability of a colonial society starkly divided along class, gender and racial lines. In particular, it sheds light on the Euro-Creole elite and the networks of a growing black and mixed-race middle class eager to gain cultural and culinary capital and to consume material goods as a sign of their upward social mobility. In this sense, the cookbook acts as both a 'missive and [a] commodity to be bought'<sup>10</sup> as well as signalling the close relationship of print culture in this period to the wider 'world of business'.<sup>11</sup>

The two editions of *West Indian and Other Recipes* (1911 and 1932) are approached in their entirety, which involves reading the prefaces, recipes and advertising paratexts in relation to each other, following the methodology adopted by recent critics of literary and material culture in the early twentieth-century Caribbean, such as Claire Irving (2015). The chapter suggests, following Irving's important scholarship on Caribbean literary magazines of the early twentieth century, that 'the paratextual elements of the [cookbook] provide a wealth of information about the material conditions of [cookery] writing, reading, printing and publishing in the West Indies, which in turn,

shape our understanding of the [culinary culture] of the [early decades] of the twentieth century'.<sup>12</sup>

That many of the recipes included in the cookbook are attributed to particular individuals, including several men and a named cook (Cook Harris), is in itself significant and provides evidence of a network of contributors and readers existing and developing across the island and beyond. It would be quite reasonable to assume that Mrs Yearwood's recipe book might be exclusively Euro-Creole in perspective, firmly in line with the social class and the ethnicity of both its author and the majority of the contributors and supporters. Yet, in her preface to both editions, Yearwood makes it clear that she has 'tried to compile a useful book, principally of old West Indian recipes, many of which were being forgotten in the rush for new things . . . it is not supposed to be in any way an up to date cooking book'.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, this emphasis on older culinary traditions in Barbados and the need to capture foodways which were 'being forgotten' makes it a very important source. This chapter argues that far from representing only a narrow version of Euro-Creole culinary cultures, the cookbook provides some evidence of an African-centred or African-derived cuisine and a more pluralistic Caribbean culinary culture coexisting with the colonially inflected Anglophilic recipes. Likewise, in the advertising paratexts to the two editions, an interesting reflection of wider cultural tastes and patterns of consumption emerges, as well as an interesting representation of the African Caribbean cook.

### CULINARY CATEGORIES, TASTE AND ETHNICITY

Mrs Yearwood's recipe book features multiple recipes for flying fish; fried, steamed and flying fish soups are all included in the fish and soup sections, but these are never connected to cou cou, which is unindexed and included in a late section called 'Other Breakfast Dishes'. Likewise, the classic West Indian dishes of Pepperpot and Souse are also, somewhat puzzlingly, classified as 'Other Breakfast Dishes', whilst a recipe for one of the most quintessential dishes of the region, 'Rice and Peas', is to be found in 'Breakfast and Luncheon Dishes'. Starchy staples such as roasted yam, breadfruit and the dumpling-like conkies are found in both sections. Yearwood's categorisation of her recipes throughout both editions is overwhelming Eurocentric rather than based on the traditional cooking or pairing of ingredients in a West Indian context, and she makes no attempt to give histories of particular dishes. Indeed, the most striking things about her cookbook is its almost total disregard for pairing dishes traditionally cooked and eaten together or for distinguishing the cuisines associated with different ethnicities. Thus, English-sounding dishes

such as ‘Sponge Cake’ or ‘Eggs and Ham’ are included alongside ones using characteristically Caribbean ingredients and foodways: the classic French ‘Onion Soup’ is placed without comment alongside the other more local ‘Turtle Soup’.<sup>14</sup> Only when it is absolutely necessary to distinguish European ingredients from local ones are any distinctions made, as in the reference to ‘English potatoes’ and, rather perplexingly, ‘English Haggis’.

There is also a conspicuous absence of Indo-Caribbean or Chinese Caribbean foods. Thus, there are no rotis or bhagees in Mrs Yearwood’s cookbook, which may suggest her contributors’ and her own lack of contact with Indo-Caribbean cooks and their more rurally based communities. The only nod to Indian-derived foodways is a recipe for ‘A Good Curry’<sup>15</sup> and ‘Madras Savoury’, which, like many Anglo-Indian recipes of the period, suggest the rather ‘safer’ (because known) addition of a teaspoon each of curry powder and chutney to a savoury topping for hot toast.<sup>16</sup> Such an omission may well be a matter of taste.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, colonial cookbooks from other parts of the globe focus on ‘plain cooking’ and plain food as a virtue (as opposed to the ‘tempting’ connotations of spicy food),<sup>18</sup> as well as the health-giving qualities of plain food for invalids and the convalescing. When Clarke notes his mother complaining about the tendency for bland food amongst ‘plantation people’, the Euro-Creoles, he stumbles upon an area in which the white elite could delimit their own identity in terms of taste via their use of certain seasonings and spices. ‘It was a well-known fact in Barbados that plantation people, most of whom were white, did not put “enough seas’ning, nor salt and pepper in their food!” my mother use do say, “their food too damn bland. Enough to give a person the belly! As if they’re suffering from *low* blood pressure!”’<sup>19</sup>

However, the lack of Indo-Caribbean recipes in Yearwood’s cookbook may also reflect the limits of Yearwood’s access to a network of cooks of different ethnicities. That African-derived recipes and foodways are represented in the cookbook is most likely due to access to the same via the figure of the African-Caribbean cook, employed in some of the white elite’s households and kitchens. Indeed, in the second edition of the text, a particularly striking half-page advert for cooking essences from Bruce Weatherhead’s pharmacy features a black-and-white cartoon of a black cook and her white ‘missus’ in a domestic, kitchen setting. The cook is obviously caricatured in both body frame and attire: she is sturdy and exaggerated, her muscular arms accentuated by her rolled-up sleeves, her head and her single eye in profile represented out of all proportion to the rest of her body. She wears a check dress and apron, but her headgear is ambiguous, somewhere between a chef’s white hat and a traditional African-style headwrap. However, it is her stance which is most interesting: she is holding aloft a sizeable rolling pin over her cowering white employer as if she is about to strike her. The tagline makes

clear the message: 'Inferior Flavouring ESSENCES reflects on COOKS, so They Demand WEATHERHEAD'S!' Here the Afro-Creole cook is in charge, although the white employer still holds the purse strings. Even the syntax of this advert retains traces of ostensibly Afro-Caribbean speech forms in the lack of subject-verb agreement between 'essences' and 'reflects'.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the accompanying advert on the same page suggests a different demographic, although race and ethnicity are neatly invisibilised when it addresses 'The HOUSEWIFE': 'The HOUSEWIFE who pays attention to detail in connection with the various Recipes in this splendid Cookery Book will earn the gratitude of those she is responsible for feeding. The gratitude will be everlasting if the ingredients are obtained from J & R [Johnson & Redman Modern Grocers, Bakers etc.]'.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 6.1. 'Bruce Weatherhead' from Mrs Yearwood's *West Indian Recipes*.

## 'EVERYTHING FOREIGN BEING BETTER THAN LOCAL': COLONIAL CONTEXTS, MATERIAL CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION

Both editions include identical prefaces by Yearwood herself and introductory guides to cooking. In a nod to the conventions of the European cookbook, Yearwood includes a detailed introductory guide to the principles of cooking, taken from Phyllis Browne's *A Year's Cookery: Giving Dishes for Breakfast, Luncheon and Dinner, for Every Day in the Year, with Practical Instructions for Their Preparation* ([1892] 1910). This includes 'rules' for cooking and getting the best use from your oven, detailed instructions for boiling, frying, puddings, grilling and even a nonculinary 'odds and ends' section. Such a strategy of including quotations from an earlier text was not uncommon in colonial cookbooks. Indeed, Charmaine O'Brien<sup>22</sup> in her study of nineteenth-century colonial Australian cookbooks notes the borrowing and incorporation of 'principles of roasting, boiling, stewing and baking' from classic English cookbooks such as the massively popular *Modern Cookery for Private Families* by Eliza Acton ([1845] 1858). In this way, colonial writers sought to legitimise their texts by stressing a thoroughly British pedigree, their culinary cultures grounded in a thoroughly 'historic understanding of English food and cookery'.<sup>23</sup> As O'Brien notes, the 'aspiration of most colonial cooks was the reproduction of English cookery . . . there is an evident canon of recipes and techniques across [colonial] works and their authors were all drawing from each other and from earlier works'.<sup>24</sup>

Both editions of *West Indian and Other Recipes* carry full and part-page advertisements—in the first edition at both beginning and end, and in the second edition at the beginning only. In the first edition, a greater number of adverts are directed at general goods and services—millinery, hosiery, dress goods and tailoring, 'fine apparel', 'postcards, curios and souvenirs', Kodak photography supplies, as well as holiday and leisure pursuits: garages, hotels, livery stables, steamship and packet tours as far afield as New York and Norway as well as advertising of a culinary nature—stoves, cleaning products, silver plates, drinks, essences, tea. Such paratexts, read alongside the recipes, suggests an affluent and cosmopolitan readership—perhaps even a touristic market—for the cookery book; indeed, Mr Graham Yearwood took advantage of opportunities to travel by sea, travelling to both England and New York.

What is most apparent in the first edition is the greater focus on imported foreign goods, a common colonial phenomenon as regards material culture and especially foodstuffs consumed by the white elite which is to be found the earliest period of settlement to the twentieth century. Thus, for example,

J R Bancroft emphasises the modernity and international reach of his business (as opposed to a narrow, small island provincialism) by announcing that ‘every steamer from Europe and New York brings us a shipment of the best productions of the best Drapery goods from England, Ireland, France, Germany, Switzerland. U.S., American and Peru’. Indeed, in this first edition, a number of advertisers address the audience of the cookbook as cooks and consumers. Thus, Bon Marche (‘For dry goods’) of Broad Street, Bridgetown, boldly declares ‘TWO THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW; HOW TO COOK AND WHERE TO BUY’. In smaller and lowercase text, it proclaims, ‘This book instructs you as to the first. We can instruct you as to the second’. The clear message is that cooks are also consumers and that cash payment secures ‘special discounts’. Codes of respectability and social ascendancy prevail in the none-too-veiled suggestion (after a small picture of a small, lace-trimmed, politely pointing female hand) that ‘our customers are our best Advertisements’. The suggestion is that only the best customers buy the best goods and that to be able to buy such quality goods suggests belonging to a certain privileged group of consumers.

Only two advertisers appear in both editions of *West Indian and Other Recipes*: Johnson & Redman Stores and Da Costa & Co. The 1911 advert for Da Costa & Co emphasises ‘economy in cooking’ in its advert for the ‘NEW revival or Caledonian stove’. Very few would be able to afford domestic stoves in Barbados at this time. Austin Clarke compares the simple stoves and fireplaces of the Barbadian poor<sup>25</sup> with the larger, better-equipped kitchens of the plantation houses and mentions the modernising of some kitchens on the island only as a much later post–World War II phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, making a virtue of economy is arguably a respectable middle-class virtue rather than the ‘making do’ or ‘eking out’ characteristic of the Afro-Creole working class and the rural peasantry of both Indian and African heritage. This is made most explicit in the detailed list of consumables which follows the advert for the Caledonian stove, subheaded ‘Real Comfort in the Home’: ‘Roast Fowl, Boiled Rabbit, Oysters, Lobsters, Sardines, Herrings, Tart Fruit, Gelatine, Cornstarch, peas, Haricot beests [sic], String Beans, Sweet Com [sic], Carrots, Lazenby’s Soups, Hams, Bacon, Cooking Prunes, Sauces, Cooking Wines, Pepper and Spices etc. Still and Sparkling Wines, liqueurs of the best quality, Fry’s Cocoa, Cadbury’s Cocoa, Van Houten’s Cocoa, Runkle’s Cocoa’.<sup>27</sup> It is followed by a list of sundry tonics and restoratives, described as having ‘health in every drop’: ‘Bovril, Brands, essence of beef, Valentine meat juice, Vibrona, Bovril wine, St Raphael Wine, beef, iron and Wine’.

This detailed list gives a fascinating insight into the dietary habits and commercial brands available to those with the money to buy them in Barbados at this time. Overall, this is a list of considerable variety and choice, not to say

luxury. Most interesting, perhaps, is the emphasis on English colonial brands that was often indicative of a wider privileging of foreign imported goods, then and now—what the Guyanese-British writer Grace Nichols (1997) has referred to as ‘everything foreign being better than local’.<sup>28</sup> They are a reminder that the Empire was primarily a commercial enterprise and that brands such as Cadbury’s, Fry’s or Bovril were as well known in the West Indian colonies as they were in Britain. Clarke similarly notes the important social status in buying food from abroad<sup>29</sup> and describes the imported items at his aunt’s house.<sup>30</sup> More pragmatically, he notes the importance of ‘shipments from Canada’: ‘in colonial times . . . practically all the foods we used to eat had to come from Away—from England, Canada and Australia. Since colonized people was considered second-class to the people from away, the food was also second-class, or of an inferior quality’.<sup>31</sup>

In the second edition of *West Indian and Other Recipes*, the connection between culinary and print cultures—and their consumers—is made most explicit in a half-page advert for the *Barbados Advocate*, the newspaper established in 1895 and hailed as ‘the only Medium of Effective Advertising In the Island’. A whole page advert for Da Costa & Co Ltd, Commission and General Merchants, Steamship and Insurance Agents and Ship Chandlers, shows how far Caribbean islands such as Barbados still depended on the importation of foreign foods, unlike other islands such as Grenada, where different agricultural practices based on a greater cultural acceptance of locally produced food crops (including ground provisions) led to a more robust degree of self-sufficiency.<sup>32</sup> Da Costa & Co Ltd declare themselves, in an advert in this edition, ‘shippers of choice Molasses and fancy Molasses (syrup) . . . importers of European, Canadian, American and East Indian Foodstuffs, Fish and other produce [and] universal suppliers of dry Goods, clothing, furniture, hardware and every household Requisite; Groceries, tobaccos, wines and other Spirits, ships stores, etc.’.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly overseas foodstuffs were in demand, and they were often regarded as prestige or luxury items, something which dates right back to the white, expatriate planters and their tables. Read against the wider context of the economic situation in the Caribbean by the early 1930s, this trade is even more exceptional. Many sugar plantations were failing as international sugar prices fell, and a worldwide depression hit certain Caribbean islands very badly indeed. Indeed, in the mid-1930s in Barbados, Trinidad and other British colonies, a combination of factors led to labour riots as islanders variously fought against poverty and hunger and for employment, a liveable wage and access to agricultural land traditionally owned and controlled by the colonial elite.

In this second edition, in another half-page advert for ‘Anchor New Zealand butter’, the buying public is significantly identified not as Barbadian but

British; J N Goddard & Sons promises 'British Butter for the British Public'. Nominally, all Barbadian subjects were British subjects as citizens of a British colony with strong links to the culture of the metropolis; however, this interpellation may also suggest that at least a minority of the Euro-Creole population of Barbados still regarded themselves as British rather than Barbadian or West Indian. Moreover, the introduction of technological changes which made possible the shipping of refrigerated goods such as this may also have consolidated a more colonial sense of self for the elite, rather than a West Indian or Barbadian identity, especially after World War I, an event which itself consolidated a notion of 'imperial togetherness'.<sup>34</sup>

### A CULTURE OF RESPECTABILITY

Despite its wonderful eccentricity when viewed from a twenty-first-century perspective, Yearwood's text reflects and affirms a set of clear values which were key to a culture of respectability for the white elite and attractive to an aspiring middle class in Barbados in the early years of the twentieth century.



Figure 6.2. 'British Butter' from Mrs Yearwood's *West Indian Recipes*.

These include values of economy and frugality, closely connected to a particular morality of parsimony and self-restraint. O'Brien argues that certain cookbooks in an Australian colonial context, such as Edward Abbot's (1864) *The English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the Many, as Well as for the 'Upper Ten Thousand'*, 'professed . . . to be for the "many" [but] largely reads as a representation of the lifestyle of the elite, or the 'upper ten thousand' of the book's title'.<sup>35</sup>

This was also likely to be the position of Yearwood's text. In the Preface, Yearwood professes a certain inclusivity, and, indeed, her text does include recipes for a number of characteristically West Indian dishes, in all probability accessed via the conduit of black cooks working in the kitchen of the white elite and by collection of other word-of-mouth recipes, but ultimately the recipe book is primarily an affirmation of the 'lifestyle of the [white] elite' of Barbados. O'Brien continues:

There were colonial Australians who aspired to ape the aristocratic mode of living but the majority of the population did not have the resources, leisure time, or servants to lead such a lifestyle and their ambitions were those of the growing middle class. They valued work and deriving success from personal effort, ensuring respectability through display of manners and morals and maintaining an earnest public façade. The middle-class colonial housewife seeking cookery instruction needed practical manuals focused on day-to-day concerns relevant to her life and the restraints of preparing meals for a family.<sup>36</sup>

In Australia, as in Barbados in the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, 'There was a prevailing idea that frugality and morality were connected and wasting food was considered immoral, the colonial housewife would have felt some social pressure to demonstrate parsimony in how she provisioned her family, but the cost of food took up more of the family budget than it does now making kitchen economy a necessary focus for the colonial cook'.<sup>37</sup>

It is likely that many of Yearwood's contributors and subscribers were in a rather more fortunate economic position, but the recipe book may well have also been bought as an aspirational text. In the case of the second edition of the text, the pressure to be frugal may well have been an even greater force as World War I affected imports to the Caribbean and in the early 1930s worldwide economic depression reached the Caribbean. Nonetheless, it seems that Yearwood's intended audience was rather different in terms of class and ethnicity from those Afro-Creole families Clarke describes in *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit* as 'making do' and valuing economy.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, his childhood memory of Hastings, Barbados, in the 1930s is of a place where such distinctions were made very clear: 'Black nursemaids walked huge blue perambula-

tors filled with white English children . . . the offspring of the local Barbadian whites, as well as those of the few foreigners, as we called them, who came to the island to rule over us, in school, in church, in the civil service, in the police force and in banks . . . Barbados in the late 1930s and 40s was a place of severe order and discipline and training, to make you know your place'.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Mrs Yearwood's cookbook is clearly an important early text. However, we do need to apply a few caveats when reading this as a historical document of culinary culture in Barbados in the early decades of the twentieth century. As O'Brien points out, individual cookbooks do not necessarily represent what the wider colonial population was eating at any given time.<sup>40</sup> As she suggests:

Recipe books are often aspirational and set out an ideal cuisine. What is contained within them can be the author's idea of what they think their audience should be cooking and eating to achieve some end be it gastronomic, health-related, social advancement, or to promote their own interests. Someone might purchase a cookbook because it contains instruction on what they think they should be cooking or what they want to be eating more than it mirrors what they are actually preparing and consuming, one will ever cook and eat. Yet the impermanent nature of food materials and the products of cooking mean that cookery books remain as the key source of information about the food of the past providing insight into the particular individual who put a work together, the intended audience, the cultural environment of the time, and the culinary evolution, or otherwise, of a society. Cookbooks can influence what people choose to prepare in their kitchens and serve at their tables, and over time this can shape a food culture.<sup>41</sup>

*West Indian and Other Recipes* is a key text in opening up greater awareness of the foodways, culinary mores and consumer habits (aspirational or not) of the 'white elite' Euro-Creole and colonial expatriate community of Barbados in the early decades of the twentieth century. Through this rare example, an early West Indian cookery book existing within a primarily oral culinary culture, we can glimpse some of the ways in which the white elite asserted its identity by performing a complex set of cultural and economic allegiances to Britain and Britishness, as defined through a nexus of colonial connections. Through a reading of its paratexts, we can also see how *West Indian and Other Recipes* reveals not only the networks of an established white elite but also a growing black and mixed-race middle class who aspired to gain cultural and culinary capital by consuming certain material goods as a sign of their upward social mobility. Such 'paratextual elements of the [cookbook] provide a wealth of information about the material conditions of [cook-

ery] writing, reading, printing and publishing in the West Indies, which in turn, shape our understanding of the [culinary culture] of the early decades of the twentieth century'.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, Mrs Yearwood's cookbook acts as both a 'missive and [a] commodity to be bought'<sup>43</sup> as well as signalling the close relationship of print culture in this period to the wider 'world of business'.<sup>44</sup>

### 'SHIPS ARE FILLED WITH GUNS INSTEAD': K E HODSON'S WAR TIME RECIPES FOR USE IN THE WEST INDIES (1942)

This rare early Barbadian cookbook originated from the specific economic pressures faced by those who cooked in the West Indian colonies during World War II. It was supported by the Ministry of Food, and all profits were donated to support the war effort. Contemporary Bajan cookery writer, Rosemary Parkinson, reproduces some of Hodson's recipes in her 'culinary adventure', *Barbados B'un B'un* (2015), and also, intriguingly, a biographical note. Referring to the copy of *War Time Recipes* loaned to her by Corrie Scott, she notes Scott's exhortation to 'protect with your life, my mother would kill me if lost'. 'Written by my grandmother, I understand she was the first woman to be allowed to lunch at the famous only-men Bridgetown Club!'<sup>45</sup> Hodgson, like Parkinson (and Yearwood before her), was a white creole, but the recipes she collected came from a wider demographic.

In her foreword to the cookbook, Hodson stresses the importance of economy and local availability of ingredients: 'I have compiled this recipe book with the aim of assisting housekeepers during present conditions when it is not always possible to obtain the things we were accustomed to use, so I have not put in any extravagant recipes'. With a firm focus on the local, she writes, '[The recipes] containing as far as possible only local produce . . . I hope it may be of help to visitors to the island who are not familiar with the West Indian produce'.

*War Time Recipes* starts with a witty parody of the children's song and Christmas carol 'I Saw Three Ships', but in this version the 'ships . . . are filled with guns instead / to bring us Victory'.<sup>46</sup> In the absence of regular shipments of food, the speaker boasts they are eating home-produced food to help beat the enemy. The tone is playful, but the message is deadly serious, a characteristic which is maintained throughout the book by the inclusion of a series of pithy maxims heading the different sections. Unsurprisingly at this time of contracted means, most of these maxims emphasise thrift and economy: 'Enough is as good as a feast' (Condiments); 'Eat to live; don't live to eat' (Poultry); 'Sow, grow and save shipping space' (Vegetables); and 'Remember the men who risk their lives to bring you food, and do not waste any' (Cakes).

Hodson's use of section headings is still overwhelmingly European in influence, as in Mrs Yearwood's *West Indian and Other Recipes* (1911 [1932]). As in Yearwood's text, some recipes are attributed (Mrs Cummins, Lady Philips, Mrs Bishop) and others not. *War Time Recipes* was published by the same publisher (Advocate Co Ltd) as the second edition of Mrs Yearwood's text, and similarly features a wide range of advertisements as paratexts. However, Hodson's text differs in including specially integrated adverts, as, for example, in the inclusion of an advert for C S Pitcher, vendor of kitchen tools and equipment, in the Condiments section. This advert's exhortation to 'Dig for Victory then Cook for Victory' is a direct reiteration of the British wartime slogan 'Dig for Victory', and shows how transnational was the reach of such wartime discourses. Advertisements as paratexts are also much more numerous in Hodson's 1942 text. They include cooking-related companies such as Harrison's of Broad Street for Oil Stoves, Electric Stoves at Garrison, Cave, Shepherd and Son Department Stores, Electric Fridges and Vacuum oils, T Herbert of Roebuck Street's kitchen supplies, Gardier Austin and Co export/import business, export sugar, molasses and other 'West Indian produce', Purity Bakery, Colonnade Rum and Cockade Fine Rum 'For Men of Good Taste', Martin Doorly and Co Ltd of Palmetto Street Rum ('There's no use Talking, Taste It'), Barbour's Acadia Baking Powder (from Canada), Da Costa & Co Ltd, Goddard's Restaurant, Collins Drug Store and Bruce Weatherhead essences. Significantly, the leisure and tourist industry, for those who could afford it, seems both more developed and more prominent amongst the advertising paratexts for this cookbook. Such adverts include the Barbados Aquatic Club and Cinema and Empire or Olympic theatres, the latter showing American and British films including Pathe newsreels, redeveloped and more prominent clubs such as the Manhattan and Club Morgan, and hotels such as the Marine and British West Indies Airlines for flights to take vacations in Trinidad.

In those adverts which include illustrations, such as Goddard's Restaurant, the clientele is pictured as exclusively white. In others, such as the whole-page advert for Ripley's dish (of pork, veal and sauerkraut), the black cook is stereotypically presented in their chef's headdress. Perhaps most interesting of all is the seeming disjunct between the image of wealthy elite touristic or white creole consumers presented by the advertisements and the image on the front cover of the cookbook. It features a simplistic black-and-white picture of a black female cook in an apron, long skirt and headkerchief pouring sauce from a bottle into a spoon over a saucepan on a characteristic cast iron fire. This is very much a reiteration of the Aunt Jemima figure, refigured perhaps as charming folkloric kitsch.

**THE BAJAN COOK BOOK (1964)**

This cookbook was compiled in aid of the Child Care Committee and printed in the Garrison area of Bridgetown by Letchworth Press Ltd. The foreword from Beatrice Slow at Government House explicitly links the text to Hodson's *War Time Recipes* (1942) and launches itself as an update with newly compiled recipes:

Many of us in Barbados are still using the West Indies Wartime Cookery Book compiled from recipes used by well-known housewives and cooks. This edition is now out of print but there has been an increasing demand from hotels and visitors for a Cook Book containing recoups of well-known West Indian dishes using ingredients obtained locally. It is hoped that this new and up-to-date edition will be useful both in hotels and in private houses.

Even the open pages suggest the juxtaposition of older traditions and modernity, as a half-page recipe for Bonavist or bean soup is accompanied by an advertising text for 'King Size Coca cola', bottled locally but still an imported commodity. As so often with advertising paratexts from this period, it features a white couple enjoying their super-sized soft drink. However, within the recipes themselves, there is a much more locally based and African-Caribbean representation with different recipes for cooking flying fish (including steamed and soused) and a particularly intriguing section of 'Recipes from old Barbados', including roasted kid, farcied crabs, accra, hot sauce and 'Twice Laid', a concoction of saltfish, English potatoes, onions, corned beef, and milk and eggs baked in the oven. It also contains a section on drinks and puddings, including the wonderfully evocative rum-based drinks 'goat hair' and 'pig whistle' and the beer and brandy-based drink 'Tewahdiddle'.

**THE HOUSECRAFT CENTRE BARBADOS AND RITA SPRINGER'S CARIBBEAN COOKBOOK (1968)**

Several of the interviewees for this book studied as young women at the Housecraft Centre in Bridgetown, which taught a variety of practical skills including Home Economics. Those attending between 1954 and 1956 may have encountered Rita Springer, now perhaps the island's most famous food writer, who served as visiting lecturer there at this period, as well as a supervisor of evening classes in home economics. Four years after moving to England she published her *Caribbean Cookbook* (1968), a classic which is regularly revised and is still in print. In her introduction, Springer acknowledged the oral and sensory nature of much Caribbean cooking:

The quantities of some popular dishes have never been written down, but handed on verbally from generation to generation. An original dish can thus vary greatly in flavour when prepared in different areas. In addition, many experienced and successful cooks have guided only by the reaction of their senses, as to the correct ingredients necessary for a specific recipe. This is often baffling to a young housewife, or anyone studying cookery in our Caribbean territories with a view to achieving an approved standard.<sup>47</sup>

Exactly who was doing the approving was not specified, but we can see in Springer's approach in her book something of the influence of the Housecraft Centre with its preference for precision over improvisation, for written quantities over orally transmitted and experiential knowledge.

Springer's cookbook was originally published in booklet form as 'Recipes from the Islands', compiled for the Roberts' Manufacturing Company, Ltd, Government Hill, Barbados. In the preface, Ivy A Alleyne, organiser of the Barbados Housecraft Centre, wrote, 'There has been repeated regret at the lack of a book giving guidance in Barbadian foods and their preparation. In an attempt to overcome this need, this booklet has been written by a capable and efficient person'. The cookbook includes sections on soup, fish (including flying fish in different guises, shellfish, saltfish), vegetables, savoury meat dishes, many starchy vegetable dishes, sweet potato and yam dishes, twelve types of cou cou, plantains, cheese and egg dishes, black pudding and souse, savouries and dressings, cakes, bread, and more and Rich Fruit Cake or Christmas Cake.

However, the sponsored nature of the publication is most explicit throughout. The booklet opens with a full-page advert for its sponsors 'Glow Spread and Mello Kreme margarine and, Velvo-Kri shortening for baking'. Like some of the advertisements in Yearwood's recipe books earlier in the century, the advert foregrounds quality but also economy, but it goes further in suggesting that culinary tradition and contemporary tastes are in tension and need to be carefully balanced: 'We WANT QUALITY'. These are the words on the lines of a sensitive generation growing up around us. But the experienced housewife who knows how to make ends meet adds, 'BUT WE MUST ALSO HAVE ECONOMY'. This, then, is the thrifty housewife: she buys the product that has a guaranteed quality and is yet economical: 'now that's what GLO-SPREAD margarine actually is'.



Despite having moved to Britain in 1964, Springer's market for *Caribbean Cookbook* (1968) was clearly primarily Caribbean. Indeed, in her introduction she discusses the history and cosmopolitanism of Caribbean foodways and has significant comments to make about the role of local produce, the importance of keeping alive culinary traditions ('Our grandmothers' favourite recipes') and of meeting the demands of a tourist market in the region. While the 'one-pot' meal of slave and peasant origin is rebranded as saving 'time, energy and fuel',<sup>48</sup> the 'present trend' for reviving traditional Caribbean recipes is explained as one encouraged by 'the increasing demand for Caribbean foods by visitors to our shores' and 'hoteliers constantly seeking ways and means of presenting local produce in attractive forms'.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps most interesting is Springer's emphasis on cosmopolitanism and a pan-Caribbean culinary perspective where the interchange, adoption and adaption of different ingredients and varying culinary methods are seen as a positive legacy for the complex ethnic mix and history of the region. This is also reflected in the subsections to the book. After some familiar subsections drawn from a tradition of European cookery writing, Springer includes sections on 'Traditional Dishes of the Caribbean' covering different territories, 'Exotic Dishes from our Asian Heritage' (Chinese and Indian), 'Adoptions from European Cuisine', 'Recipes from North America', 'Traces from our African Origin', a section on 'From Britain to the Caribbean' which maps mainly British retentions in the Caribbean rather than Caribbean food in the UK and a section on 'Popular Christmas food and drink'. Interestingly, Springer notes the different cooking methods used in rural and urban areas and the influence of cheap, locally sourced food on traditional dishes in rural areas.<sup>50</sup>

### **RITA SPRINGER'S CARIBBEAN COOKBOOK: A LIFETIME OF RECIPES (2007)**

In this more recent cookbook, well known throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, Springer retains many of the subsections from the 1968 original, including a 'Traditional Dishes of the Caribbean' section and a section on recipes of 'European heritage' and 'Asian heritage', but 'Recipes from North America' and from Britain have disappeared and the 'Traces from our African Origins' section has been subsumed into the preamble to the 'Traditional Dishes' section. Significantly, *A Lifetime of Recipes* is a retrospective of Springer's life,

not just her recipes, and thus information about her earlier books and work are included, giving a useful (if selective) sense of a growing Barbadian culture of cookery writing in the twentieth century.

### **THE NATIONAL NUTRITION CENTRE OF BARBADOS (1972–2001)**

The 1969 Government of Barbados National Survey included a Food and Nutrition Survey which identified a range of health problems linked to the national diet. A National Nutrition Centre was subsequently established in order to address some of these issues, highlighted by the survey, through education, training and outreach. Mrs M B Alleyne, the chairperson of the new Applied Nutrition Programme, noted how the survey had shown ‘that folklore and old wives’ tales passed through the generations, played a significant role in the diets provided to children and used by women. For example, in St Lucy [Parish] mothers did not give their babies or small children paw paw because it was not good for their blood pressure or eggs because it would make them too fertile [yet] both these food items were readily available in the backyards of almost all the residents in the survey’.<sup>51</sup>

She also noted that the social practice of privileging men’s diets ‘was often at the expense of adequate provision for the children and the mother/housewife’.<sup>52</sup> This bias even found its way into popular cultural forms such as calypso. Thus, for example, ‘A subsequent calypso “Endorse de cou cou” aptly describes the social attitude of some men in its verse: “endorse the cou cou and gi me another share, these children en wuk nuh way”. In other words, it was felt the breadwinner was “king” when it came to sharing the food, especially the proteins—meat, fish and eggs’.<sup>53</sup>

The staff of the National Nutrition Centre worked to develop recipes using primarily local food and demonstrated food preparation and healthy eating through a series of ‘polyclinics’ across the island, as one such worker and interviewee for this book recalls. Mrs Gloria Gooding joined the Centre as an agricultural aide in 1974, working there until 1989 when she became a volunteer. Gooding recalls that her work ‘entailed servicing community groups throughout the island . . . adult groups made up of farmers, housewives and in some instances whole families’ as well as ‘infant aftercare for this suffering from malnutrition’.<sup>54</sup> In her view, the Nutrition Centre’s activities ‘served as a motivating force . . . [in] propel[ing] backyard gardening’,<sup>55</sup> a traditional practice which had diminished in popularity.

## BACK TO THE LOCAL: CARMETA FRASER IN THE ADVOCATE AND COME COOK WITH US THE BAJAN WAY (1981)

Central to subsequent campaigns in the 1970s and especially the 1980s was Carmeta Fraser, perhaps Barbados's most well-known cookery writer, food campaigner and educator. Her mottos of 'Food Comes First', 'Eat what we Grow, Grow what we Eat!' as part of a campaign to get Bajans to grow more of their food and to cook and eat more of locally produced food (which she believed to be of higher quality than imported foods) are still familiar to many Bajans today. Fraser served as food promotion officer of the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) of the UN in the 1970s and, until the 1990s, acted as food promotion specialist at the Barbados Marketing Corporation (BADMC), now the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation. She was also as a regular writer on food for the *Advocate-News* in the 1970s and 1980s and reached a wider popular audience in this way. *Come Cook with Us* (1981) was published by the Fisheries and Agricultural Organization of Barbados to observe the first World Food Day in 1981. In his introduction to the book, the FAO representative, Giovanni Tedesco, writes, 'This collection of local recipes will no doubt widen interest in the use of foodstuffs produced in Barbados. Hopefully it will soon find its way into many of the kitchens on the island'.

*Come Cook with Us*, which included recipes for Bajan classics such as cou cou, black pudding, mauby and at least two kinds of Pepperpot, was clearly aimed at influencing culinary cultures in a domestic setting as part of a larger programme to increase self-sufficiency on the island. In a context of recurrent food shortages and documented evidence of poor nutrition, the book sought to promote local foods and foodways as healthy, accessible and economical but also, most crucially, to try to reposition local food as superior rather than inferior.

In the *Advocate-News* on Christmas Eve 1974, Fraser recommends celebrating Christmas with a locally based (rather than primarily imported meal) to include Jug Jug<sup>56</sup> and a carrot and sweet potato puree, guinea corn porridge, doved peas, baked ham, baked pork with mock apple sauce and sorrel and ginger beer to drink. In the same newspaper earlier that year in an article called 'Breadfruit at Its Best', Ann Bright similarly suggested the need for a cultural turn back to local and traditional foods. Recognizing that many of these ingredients and dishes had fallen out of favour, she addressed her article to 'us all—Bajan and visitor alike [for] there are many of us who are completely oblivious to the uses to which many of our foodstuffs can be put'.<sup>57</sup>

There was no danger of the message being lost in a piece published in the *Advocate-News* in May of that year, under the heading ‘We Must Use Local Food’.<sup>58</sup> In the context of food shortages in supermarkets across the island, an anonymous writer concluded, ‘We’ve just got to learn to utilize the products we have at hand—like them or starve. And it is really amazing the number of us who don’t even know what a “bake” is or what cassava tastes like with souse. It is an attitude that everything local must be inferior—how wrong they are. Prepared correctly our local dishes are as delectable as any found in any part of the world’.<sup>59</sup>

### **PEGGY SWORDER AND JILL HAMILTON’S THE BARBADOS COOKBOOK (1983)**

*The Barbados Cookbook* was originally published and sold in aid of the Barbados Military Cemetery Association, although it can now be seen as occupying a niche heritage touristic market, in part centered around Jill Hamilton’s famous illustrations of traditional Bajan chattel houses and ‘folksy’ everyday island sights. Its introduction consciously draws upon a longer culinary heritage, acknowledging the sumptuous food and drink of the seventeenth-century planter class (interestingly reglossed as ‘Barbadian’) and the mention of ‘early traditional recipes’, such that for cassava pone in accounts such as Ligon’s *True History* (1657). Others refer to it as one of those ‘spiraled cookbooks [which] culinary historians . . . consider [as] a bellweather of the food that people eat, especially if the book in question had been popular enough to sustain multiple editions, because cooks submit their families’ favorite recipes’.<sup>60</sup> The cookbook includes some non-Caribbean recipes, and ‘many dishes display a pronounced British pedigree’, but ‘adaptation is everywhere and [there is a] willingness to supplement original preparations with [local] spicing and ingredients’, such as a substitution of yam for potato in a ‘Bimshire Bubble and Squeak’. In this respect, ‘Many of the preparations are remarkably consistent with [Austin] Clarke’s narrative [*Pig Tails n’ Breadfruit*]’.

### **‘FOR MEN ONLY’: ERROL BARROW AND KENDAL LEE’S PRIVILEGE: COOKING IN THE CARIBBEAN (1988)**

One of the most iconic of Bajan cookbooks, especially when read as an aspirational or lifestyle publication (although it is also revered as a useable cookbook), is in fact written by two men: Errol Barrow, prime minister of Barbados between 1967 and 1971 and from 1986 until his death in 1987, and

his Chinese-Trinidadian friend and fellow cook, Kendal Lee. Barrow and Lee called their book *Privilege* after the classic one-pot meal called ‘Privilege’ ‘frequently cooked in agricultural areas’,<sup>61</sup> but also, as they explained, because the dish ‘is unusual . . . it is simple to prepare . . . and it is unique’. The book’s subtitle ‘for men only (and for women who care)’ playfully reminds us that women are not the only cooks in the Caribbean. Indeed, cooking outdoors is often conducted by men, and in certain territories such as Jamaica, particular cooking methods such as jerking are overwhelmingly conducted by men, often commercially at roadside stalls or in families and communities. On the subtitle to the book, Lee commented:

It is in no way attempt to demonstrate ‘men’s lib’ or rights in the kitchen, and it is hoped that the book will provoke constructive comment from the fairer sex, as well as appeal to them. The book is intended to reach the growing number of men like Errol Barrow and myself, who have full-time careers or professions, and who love to cook for the sheer joy of doing so . . . this should contribute to their sharing of family life . . . and improve the quality of their lives.<sup>62</sup>

In his introduction, Barrow explains that the cooking came before the cookery books and that he and Lee had certain ‘defined guidelines’ in writing the book:

Firstly, the recipes had to be ones the average man could prepare . . . Secondly, we were not interested in producing a duplication of recipes found in standard cook books whether North American, European or otherwise. [Instead] [o]ur book had to have a lot of Caribbean influence in content and flavour . . . [and] Thirdly, although our recipes cannot claim to be entirely unknown or original, they had to be . . . the result of our own experiences.<sup>63</sup>

The book is a hybrid mix of memoir, character sketches of particular cooks and influence kitchen tips, colour photographs and recipes. Thus the sections on different foodstuffs (fish, bacon) and cooking methods (steam frying) are interspersed with very different practical sections on lighting a fire and on topics such as kitchen comment, kitchen sense, kitchen stress and kitchen plans. In this respect, something of the function of verbal interchanges and of oral ‘kitchen talk’ are retained in the book, albeit in a more fixed and circumscribed (because printed) form. This is something which is considered in chapter 7 in relation to the writing of a more recent Caribbean ‘celebrity’ cook, Levi Roots, in the diasporic context of Britain. This is a feature very rarely incorporated into Caribbean cookbooks. In line with Rojo’s invocation to connect with a ‘Caribbean of the senses’—and like Rita Springer before them—Barrow and Lee emphasise the materiality, affective power and sensuality of food and of cooking, suggesting that their readers ‘enjoy and “feel”, not only the taste, but also the preparation, of good cooking’: *La Cuisine Sensuelle*—‘Sensuous Cooking’.<sup>64</sup>

### 'FOOD IS OUR CULTURE AND HERITAGE': LAUREL ANN MORLEY'S *CARIBBEAN RECIPES 'OLD & NEW'* (2005)

This lively and sumptuously illustrated text is penned by a white Barbadian seeking to reconnect contemporary Bajans to their culinary heritage. Morley writes in her introduction of her belief that 'food is part of our culture and heritage, one which we as West Indians should never forget'. She warns, 'Never get wrapped up totally in international cuisine and fast foods to the detriment of our traditions and legacies'.<sup>65</sup> In the context of encroaching international fast-food companies such as KFC and the Caribbean-based Chefette, Morley's warning is prescient. The British Food in America website suggests that this cookbook 'looks like a coffee table book with its full-page, full-colour food porn, rainbow page borders and lavish reproduction of original water-colors painted by [Morley's] father [but is in fact] a serious cookbook with interesting and accessible recipes'. Morley includes a range of different kinds of textuality and paratexts, including a tellingly named 'Pre Chat' on Caribbean foods, a eulogy to her father, chapters on one-pot meals and the black 'buck' pots (cast iron pans, pans and skillets) used by Bajan home cooks and a culinary glossary illustrated with Bajan lighthouses. The eclecticism of the text is part of its charm and fits its vernacular style and directness well. As the British Food in America website suggests, *Caribbean Recipes 'Old & New'* conveys 'a compelling sense of place' and a 'discernable [Bajan] cuisine emerges' from this and other books.

### ROSEMARY PARKINSON'S *BARBADOS B'UN B'UN* (2015)

In many ways, Rosemary Parkinson's books exemplify the intimate link between food practices and storytelling which lies at the heart of this study. After the success of her pan-Caribbean *Culinaria the Caribbean: A Culinary Discovery* (1999) and her well-received *Nyam Jamaica* (2008), Venezuelan-born Parkinson published *Barbados B'un B'un*, a paen to the food and people of her adopted island. The use of 'B'un B'un' in the title is itself characteristically Barbadian. Austin Clarke explains that bun-bun 'is a term used in all strata of Barbadian society': 'The bun-bun is the layer of food stuck to the bottom of the pot. It contains, in coagulated form, all the ingreasements [ingredients] that went into the "seas'ning" of the food: the oil, the pieces of meat that fell to the bottom, all the good things. And the present day popularity of bun-bun suggests its culinary delectability, or sweetness. It is kept back and served to honoured guest or close friends'.<sup>66</sup>

*B'un B'un* is a compendium of writings, including oral histories, gossip, legends and superstitions, Barbadian popular culture, sport and seasonal traditions, at the heart of which lie the food-related stories and recipes of chefs, restaurateurs and other small businesses as well as those of ordinary Bajans, their families and friends. This hefty two-volume book, with its many prominent colour photographs, can seem joyfully chaotic in its structure (and is sometimes reminiscent of the publication of multivolume magazine parts in a single binding, so common in the 1960s and 1970s). However, this is not a coffee table book designed for the homes of tourists alone, and the book's unique structure has an important function in allowing it to be inclusive of different voices, genders, classes and ethnicities, and is nonhierarchical in the way it approaches them. It is Parkinson's equitable view that they are all equally deserving and all Bajan. *B'un B'un* is also highly significant in including Nation language or 'Bajan talk' texts, such as proverbs and longer first-person oral narratives which preserve something of the speech patterns of the speakers. Not only does the book consciously make space for these practices, but it also records traditions which are primarily orally transmitted and thus precarious. One fine example is Jeff Cobham's wonderful paean to the culinary skills of his four maiden aunts in Barbados.<sup>67</sup> Parkinson also reproduces blog chats such as that on Barbados Underground (July 2012), 'where men using pseudonyms to allow freedom of speech, talk . . . about the old days with food and recipes'.<sup>68</sup> The use of these new technologies to facilitate the sharing of recipes and discussion of traditional foodways is not unique to Barbados, but it does present an interesting updating of the commensality and 'Kitchen talk' of shared kitchen and other spaces where food and drink were traditionally made and/or consumed.

As the previous chapter has evidenced, recipe books are still used by some in contemporary Barbados, and not just in the form of tourist texts. How they will shape and record future culinary traditions remains to be seen. The next chapter turns to the cookbooks of Jamaican-British celebrity cook Levi Roots and considers the role of the Caribbean 'ethno-advocate' in promoting Caribbean food in the West Indian diaspora.

## NOTES

1. Mrs Bessie Yearwood (1849–1915) was married to Mr Graham Yearwood. He and his brother were member of the Barbados Assembly in 1914 and were living at Friendship Hall in St Michael's Parish. Mrs Yearwood's family came from St George's Parish, Barbados, although her paternal grandfather, Mr Jasper M Manning, had been born in England and her father, Mr Charles Jasper Manning, had been educated at Oxford University in the 1860s.

2. Austin Clarke, *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 1999), 5.
3. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 1.
4. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 1.
5. It originated as a fundraising publication for a Children's Home for 'poor and destitute children' set up in 1876 with donated land. As an early social welfare project, it is also significant as an early act of women's organisation on the island. Jill Hamilton, *Women of Barbados: Amerindian Era to Mid-Twentieth Century* (Barbados: Self-published, 1981), 44.
6. The *Advocate* newspaper was also established in this year. It is the longest continuously published newspaper in Barbados.
7. In Jamaica it is preceded by *The Jamaica Cookery Book* by Caroline Sullivan (Kingston, Jamaica: Aston W. Gardner & Co., 1893). This was republished in Kingston in 1897 and in London by the Gamage building in 1908. Sullivan was a cook for a mistress in a great house.
8. 'Mrs Graham Yearwood Cookbook', Barbados Museum website, <http://www.barbmuse.org.bb/web/?portfolio=mrs-graham-yearwood-cook-book>.
9. Barbados Museum website, n.p.
10. Claire Irving, 'Printing the West Indies: Literary Magazines and the Anglophone Caribbean, 1920s–1950s', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2015, 178.
11. Irving, 'Printing', 204.
12. Irving, 'Printing', 203.
13. Yearwood, Preface, n.p.
14. Yearwood, 1932, 7.
15. Yearwood, 1932, 24.
16. Yearwood, 1932, 24.
17. It might also reflect the relatively small Indo-Caribbean population in Barbados at the time.
18. Charmaine O'Brien, *The Colonial Kitchen: Australia 1788–1901* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 144.
19. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 19–20.
20. I am indebted to Dr Ross Forman for this observation.
21. Yearwood, *West Indian Recipes*, 1932, n.p.
22. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 142.
23. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 142.
24. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 142.
25. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 16–19.
26. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 21.
27. The first three of these brands still exist. Van Houten's was established in Holland in 1828, whilst Runkle's is American in origin and dates from the early twentieth century.
28. Grace Nichols, 'Icons' in *Sunris* (London: Virago, 1997), 24.
29. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 37.
30. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 15.
31. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 62.

32. David Omowale Franklyn, 'Grenada, Naipaul, and Ground Provision', *Small Axe* 11, no. 1 (2007): 67–75.
33. Yearwood, 1932, n.p.
34. I am indebted to Dr Ross Forman for the basis of this final point.
35. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 138.
36. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 138.
37. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 138–39.
38. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 24.
39. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 7.
40. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 136.
41. O'Brien, *Colonial Kitchen*, 136–37.
42. Irving, 'Printing', 203.
43. Irving, 'Printing', 178.
44. Irving, 'Printing', 204.
45. Rosemary Parkinson, *Barbados B'un B'un* (Barbados: self-published, 2015), 26.
46. K E Hodson's *War Time Recipes for Use in the West Indies* (1942), n.p.
47. Rita Springer, *Caribbean Cookbook* (London: Evans Brothers, 1979 edition [1968]), 8.
48. Springer, *Caribbean Cookbook*, 8.
49. Springer, *Caribbean Cookbook*, 8.
50. Springer, *Caribbean Cookbook*, 162.
51. Elaine Yarde and the National Nutrition Centre, *Memories of the National Nutrition Centre, Ministry of Health, Barbados, 1972–2001* (Barbados: National Nutrition Centre, Ministry of Health, 2006), 59.
52. Yarde and National Nutrition Centre, *Memories*, 59.
53. Yarde and National Nutrition Centre, *Memories*, 59.
54. Yarde and National Nutrition Centre, *Memories*, 43.
55. Yarde and National Nutrition Centre, *Memories*, 43.
56. Jug Jug is a dish comprising pigeon peas, onions, guinea corn, salted meat and pork or chicken. It is particularly associated with Christmas in Barbados and may partly have its origin in haggis, brought to Barbados by Scottish immigrants in the 1600s. See also chapter 5 for discussion of this dish.
57. *Advocate-News*, February 20, 1974, 8.
58. *Advocate-News*, May 23, 8.
59. *Advocate-News*, May 23, 8.
60. British Food in America website, <https://www.britishfoodinamerica.com/>.
61. Errol Barrow and Kendal A. Lee, *Privilege: Caribbean Cooking* (New York: Macmillan Education, 1988), 81.
62. Lee in Barrow and Lee, *Privilege*, xiv.
63. Barrow and Lee, *Privilege*, xi–xii.
64. Barrow and Lee, *Privilege*, xvi.
65. LaurelAnn Morley, *Caribbean Recipes 'Old & New'* (self-published), 2005, v.
66. Clarke, *Pig Tails*, 17.
67. Parkinson, *B'un B'un*, vol. 1, 28.
68. Parkinson, *B'un B'un*, vol. 1, 29.



## *Chapter Seven*

# **‘Put Some Music in Your Food’**

## *Caribbean Food and Diaspora*

### **TRAVELLING FOOD**

West Indians have always migrated, from the original Amerindians who moved across the region in pre-Columbian times, to much later on in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when West Indians travelled to Panama to build the new Panama Canal, or when they migrated to Britain, the United States and Canada throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Wherever they have ended up, they have brought their food preferences and food practices with them. However, Caribbean food has arguably travelled less well than other cuisines due to a number of factors. In his foreword to Riaz Phillips’s *Belly Full* (2107), a hugely significant oral history of Caribbean food in the UK, Wade Lyn (founder of Cleone Foods, the biggest producer of Jamaican patties in the UK) reflects, ‘It’s been over five decades since Jamaican independence and the UK’s Caribbean community is stronger than ever, so it will always remain a mystery why Caribbean food was such a slow burner to take off especially when we in Britain adopted Thai, Indian, Mexican, Italian, Chinese and Japanese cooking . . . and [have] taken them to our hearts (and more importantly our stomachs)’.<sup>1</sup> He continues: ‘It was always good to see events like London’s Jerk Cookout, and the incomparable Notting Hill Carnival of London, but historically it was still difficult to find a Caribbean restaurant in most of our major cities, let alone our smaller towns’.<sup>2</sup> Lyn also notes the domination of Jamaican food within Caribbean food outlets in the UK, something which this chapter also explores, although unlike Riaz<sup>3</sup> he does not go as far as to consider the potentially damaging effects on diverse Caribbean cuisines of such a dominant and potentially homogenising narrative of Caribbean food in diaspora. Lyn reflects on possible reasons for this ‘slow take up’ and asks, ‘Was it the lack of restaurants? Was the Caribbean

community not selling itself enough? Perhaps it was a bit of both'.<sup>4</sup> Part of the problem may have been the lack of readily available ingredients in the earliest period and the British public's confusion about some of the ingredients in some signature Caribbean dishes. For example, rice and peas contain no peas in the English sense but beans, and curried goat in Britain is often made with mutton or lamb if goat meat is not freely available. Lyn suggests that the British may have found the idea of eating goat problematic. All this notwithstanding, Wade notes in 2017 a significant shift in Caribbean food's commercial success and visibility. This has been aided by Olympian Usain Bolt's success in international athletics and the emergence of celebrity cooks such as Levi Roots, who Lyn argues 'has made a big impact on the British psyche'.<sup>5</sup>

In 2012, as part of a British Library online oral history project on food, Guyanese-born British cookery writer and restaurateur Rosamund Grant commented:

I think Europeans tend to see Caribbean food in a particular way, and they would say it's ackee and salt fish, rice and peas or curried goat and mutton and . . . they've got particular things. Or people say to me 'oh, you know, I like spicy food' and by that they mean pepper really, or they don't like spicy food, and I say 'but you can have the spice without the pepper and separate'. I like people to be clear about, you know, how they think about it because they stereotype it and 'all Caribbean food is spicy' and . . . 'all of it is ackee and saltfish'. You know, and so I try and broaden out people's way of thinking. So if I'm going to cook for a European crowd, or people who want to eat Caribbean food, you know, some of what I've got over the years is kind of like . . . 'don't put so much pepper in it' or 'can we have Caribbean stew?' Well I say ok well what is Caribbean stew? Caribbean stew is not a generic you know thing, it's kind of like it can be lots of different types of ways of doing things. [This] is important to me because I hate stereotyping, I hate being put in a box, I hate being limited, and I hate being seen through the eyes of Europeans. . . . I have my own definition of myself and I think that is really important for me, you know, as a black woman to make an impression in that field 'cause this is my field . . . and I just think, you know, ok it's time to speak for ourselves. And so I will define who I am and I will define therefore what I'm cooking, and it's not that I'm closed about that but I feel we have been put into a box and we have been closed in, and hello folks you know we're here and this is really what this is about. And so it does irritate me when people talk about 'exotic food', you know, exotic through whose perspective, is it mine or is it yours?<sup>6</sup>

This final chapter addresses some of the issues Grant raises in the form of a case study of Jamaican-born British entrepreneur Levi Roots, his cookbooks and his Reggae Reggae brand. The chapter examines the commodification of diasporic Caribbean food culture and unravels the complex local and global

forces at play in the marketing of food products and cookery writing as ‘authentically’ Caribbean. The Reggae Reggae story is fascinating, as despite the presence of a distinct Caribbean diasporic population in Britain since at least the 1950s,<sup>7</sup> Caribbean food and Caribbean cuisines have still not permeated the culinary mainstream in Britain. This chapter asks whether Levi Roots and the Reggae Reggae phenomenon reflects a welcome trend in deterritorialising ethnic foods in Britain as part of a new culinary cosmopolitanism or, conversely, whether it needs to be read as a less positive reification of ‘ethnic’ food. Does Roots’s Reggae Reggae brand of food products, cookbooks, phone apps and restaurants construct a version of Caribbean cuisine which travels well in the global marketplace but which also overwrites the geographical variables and historical complexities of Caribbean foodways with a new homogeneity and new constructions of ‘authenticity’?

## PRELUDE

In November 2011, a story broke in the British press concerning contested claims to the original recipe for ‘Reggae Reggae Sauce’, a commercial product introduced to the UK market by Roots (Keith Valentine Graham). Four years earlier, Roots had pitched his product to the judges of the BBC TV programme *Dragon’s Den* and successfully gained some £50,000 worth of investment for his sauce. His pitch was unusual in that he performed it in song, guitar in hand. Roots’s flagship product was quickly adopted by Sainsbury’s, one of the UK’s major supermarkets. In a remarkably short period, Roots became a hugely successful businessman. However, Roots was sued by his former business partner, Tony Bailey, who claimed that the recipe for Reggae Reggae Sauce was, in fact, not Roots’s but his own, created by him in Jamaica in 1984 but never written down before. Bailey lost his case, but not before Roots was called ‘a bare-faced liar’ by his own QC and forced to admit that his claim (on TV and on his sauce bottles) that the sauce recipe had been handed down to him by his Jamaican grandmother was untrue and had actually been fabricated by Roots for ‘marketing purposes’. The judge ruled that the sauce came from a basic, generic recipe and that Bailey and another associate, Sylvester Williams (both of whom had previously worked with Roots at the Notting Hill Carnival selling their hot pepper sauces), had no rights in the brand or the business. The case ultimately did little harm to Roots’s brand, and he went on to market a range of well-known ‘Caribbean’ food products under the Reggae Reggae brand name, accompanied by celebrity appearances, several dedicated BBC TV series, cookery book tie-ins, websites and phone apps, all of which have helped to cement his reputation as

the best-known proponent of Caribbean food in Britain to date. This series of events might seem rather ephemeral were it not for their connection to some more enduring debates surrounding the role of food as a marker of cultural identity in a diasporic context and, in particular, the challenge to a politics of authenticity, enacted very publicly in this contemporary context. These are the focus of this chapter.

Using this case study as a starting point, this chapter argues that Roots's cookery writing reveals the complex and often problematic politics of popular cross-culinary discourse and the conflicted role of the cookery writer as 'ethno-advocate'. Using insights from Arjun Appadurai's (1988) writing on cross-cultural culinary discourse in an Indian context, and from Ashley, Hollows, Jones and Taylor's (2004) examination of food writing and TV chefs, Roots's first five cookery books, from *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* (2008) on, are examined in terms of their early use of residually oral characteristics (proverbs, testimony and song lyrics) and their shift towards an increasingly orthodox and blandly Eurocentric format and style. The latest and most stylised of these five, *Sweet* (2012), incorporates a 'retro' or 'vintage' styling which includes double-page colour reproductions of European food labelling, food advertising and food miscellanea, including historical images of colonial food crops and food preparation from a variety of Caribbean and European sources. In including such visual texts, *Sweet*'s format opens up some interesting questions about food histories and food provenance in a Caribbean and diasporic context. However, in terms of its recipes and the nature of the written text, this latest publication is much more standardised and Europeanised than the early books. Indeed, Roots's earliest cookery writing seems to *deliberately* combine recipes with autobiography, photos and other paratextual elements as well as an apparently informal, but in fact carefully constructed, first-person testimony in order to invoke a particular version of the cookery writer as 'authentic' transmitter of culturally specific culinary knowledge, the holder of 'tradition' as well as, on occasion, the purveyor of exotic 'otherness' to a non-Caribbean audience.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, Roots's cookery writing is mired in contradiction, as may well be the plight of all those who write not only in a cross-cultural context but also in our contemporary globalised economy of food and media presence: it promises specificity (Jamaicaness) but simultaneously reifies and homogenises Caribbean cooking through the branding of both Roots and his sauce as marketable commodities. Similarly, Roots's invocation of a poetics of Caribbean exile, nostalgia and loss in his first book, *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, is both exposed as partly fabricated and shown to be challenged by a contradictory imperative in Roots's later books to show Caribbean food as not only experiential but also emphatically transferable and adaptive in a

British Caribbean diasporic context. That is to say, the nature of the recipes in consecutive books shifts from a showcasing of a version of Caribbean cooking as exotic ‘other’, to an element of improvisational fusion or creolisation, what Roots himself calls ‘dubbing it up’, to a more superficial ‘spicing up’ of familiar dishes to, in the latest book, a Caribbean ‘twist’ on some British culinary stalwarts. What emerges is a complex, compromised, but nonetheless arresting, culinary version of the Caribbean nation in the multicultural context of the UK.

### ETHNIC ADVOCACY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL CUISINE

Long before this court case came to public attention, I had started working on Roots’s cookery writing, fascinated by Roots’s career trajectory from carnival and street food provider to high-profile celebrity cook and food entrepreneur. I was interested not so much in Roots’s meteoric rise to fame and commercial success after his appearance on the BBC TV programme *Dragons Den*—something which seems depressingly firmly located in our popular cultural zeitgeist here in the UK—but in the fact that Roots’s promotion of Caribbean food was yoked with a strong commercial brand identity from the very outset. This high brand profile afforded Roots the role of business entrepreneur but also allowed him to assume the mantle of what Arjun Appadurai’s terms the cook as a kind of ‘ethnic-advocate’.<sup>9</sup> Appadurai notes how the proliferation of regional and ethnic cookbooks in the post-1960s period in India had two effective functions: ‘like tourist art . . . they begin to provide people from one region or place a systematic glimpse of the culinary traditions of another, and they also represent a growing body of food-based characteristics of the ethnic Other’.<sup>10</sup> Against this trend towards diversification, Appadurai shows how the ‘textualization of culinary traditions’<sup>11</sup> was crucial in ‘constructing the idea of a national or “Indian” cuisine’.<sup>12</sup> He notes a ‘few standard devices’<sup>13</sup> in those modern-day cookbooks which attempt to construct a conception of an Indian national cuisine. ‘The first is simply to inflate and reify an historically special tradition and make it serve, metonymically, for the whole . . . Another strategy . . . is inductive rather than nominal: the author assembles a set of recipes in a more or less subjective manner and, then, in the introduction to the book, gropes for some theme that might unify them. In many books this theme is found, not surprisingly, in the spices and spice combinations’.<sup>14</sup>

How far might these ‘few standard devices’<sup>15</sup> Appadurai notes in those modern-day Indian cookbooks be applied to Roots and the construction of a particular conception of a culinary nation in his cookery writing? Has

the thorough branding of Roots and his flagship product, Reggae Reggae Sauce, opened up or closed down possibilities for a real understanding and wider adoption of Caribbean cuisine in Britain? How far has it acted to fix or homogenise our understanding of Caribbean cooking in Britain, much as the constructed term *curry* both popularises and obscures the rich and varied culinary traditions that contribute to what we (inaccurately) call ‘Indian’ food in the UK? My initial hopes that the Reggae Reggae phenomenon might raise the profile of Caribbean cooking in the UK have been balanced by my growing misgivings about a product which seemed to encourage a reductive version of ‘Caribbean cooking-lite’ (i.e., one adds it to chicken and, hey-presto, it ‘Caribbeanises’ your cooking) with all the problems of ‘authenticity’ and exoticising the Caribbean this invokes. Graham’s chosen sobriquet of ‘Levi Roots’, his musical pitch to the Dragons, the naming of his brand Reggae Reggae, and the use of the tag line ‘put some music in your food’ were interesting, not only insofar as they signaled Roots’s multiple affiliations as a Rastafarian, a reggae musician and a food entrepreneur via the operation of a series of metonymic links joining together food, music and a certain sort of reggae aesthetic in Jamaican cultural production,<sup>16</sup> but also as they began to operate as a metonym for Caribbean cooking more generally.

One factor in Roots’s success, arguably, has been the relatively low profile of Caribbean food in the UK to date, and thus the ‘novelty’ value of his brand for many British cooks and consumers. Why has Caribbean food not enjoyed the popularity of South Asian food in the UK? There are a growing number of studies of South Asian food<sup>17</sup> which argue that the lengthy and close colonial association between Britain and India, and the emergence of a body of Anglo-Indians who brought ‘Indian food’ home with them, might be one explanation, but even this cannot account for the fact that most of what we call ‘Indian’ food in the UK is in fact Bangladeshi and Kashmiri-Pakistani in origin, in line with those migrants who set up restaurants here in the 1950s and 1960s. ‘Indian’ food has undergone its own adaptation and reinvention in the UK. Indeed, the appropriation and assimilation of ‘Indian food’ in the UK has been so total that one might argue it is now marked as a truly British dish, an ubiquitous cuisine rather than an exotic and minority taste. The transmission and reception of culinary traditions *matter*, and arguably no more so than when those traditions have never enjoyed the high profile and mainstream culinary influence that, say, South Asian food does in Britain. Indeed, to date there have only been a handful of British TV cooks of Caribbean descent—Rustie Lee, Ainsley Harriott, Andi Oliver (of Antiguan descent) and Lorraine Pascale—and none of these have been particularly successful in raising the profile of Caribbean cooking in the UK. This is why

Roots's intervention into the culinary fold of UK cookery writing and TV food programmes was so striking and, perhaps, adventitious.<sup>18</sup> More recently, Riaz Phillips has argued:

Whilst in no way failing to celebrate the overabundance of individuals and families who contributed to pushing Caribbean food culture forward in Britain throughout the years, many claim the cusp of change was brought about when an unsuspecting man named Keith Valentine Graham aka Levi Roots, summoned his guitar and began singing a humble melody dedicated to Reggae Reggae sauce (a seasoning for jerk chicken) on the BBC's business investment TV show *Dragon's Den*. Many owners of Caribbean establishments mark this as a pivotal moment when national awareness toward one of the Caribbean's pivotal meals of jerk chicken increased. Through this, many were able to introduce people to the wealth of other dishes that derive from the islands.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, at the end of his first book, *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, which is part cookbook, part memoir, Roots writes, 'Reggae-Reggae Sauce has changed my life . . . My mission now is to promote Caribbean food and make it as popular in Britain as Indian food is. We West Indians have a strong affinity with Britain and the food is great, so it's a match made in Heaven'.<sup>20</sup> Here Roots's explicit advocacy of Caribbean cuisine invokes a seemingly straightforward narrative of culinary discovery and consumption, a culinary 'ethno-advocate' openly sharing his Caribbean cultural capital with an appreciative and already cosmopolitan UK audience. However, I argue that Roots's cookery writing and his TV programmes can be seen to tell a more complex story and reveal something of the often-problematic politics of popular cross-cultural culinary discourse and the conflicted role of the ethnic minority cookery writer as ethno-advocate.

## ECONOMIC VERSUS CULINARY CULTURAL CAPITAL

Roots's high profile as a TV celebrity and the aggressively marketed visibility of his Reggae Reggae brand raises some pertinent questions about the tension between economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1971, 1993) in his cookery writing. Often, as Ashley, Hollows, Jones and Taylor note,

The attempt by television chefs to dissociate themselves from both the medium in which they have achieved celebrity, and the economic profits they have gained from it, is an attempt to assert their cultural legitimacy within the culinary field . . . chefs are people who have invested heavily in the culinary field . . . in what Bell (2002) calls 'culinary cultural capital': their legitimacy as arbiters of culinary taste come from the cultural capital they possess within a specific

field. However as [Pierre] Bourdieu (1971 and 1993) argues, cultural capital does not have the same stable value as economic capital and there is a pressure to convert culinary prestige into economic wealth. Yet at the same time, if the chef shows too much desire for economic profit [i.e., ‘sells out’], this can lead to cultural delegitimization.<sup>21</sup>

This raises some interesting questions about Roots’s whole Reggae Reggae project: How, for example, is Roots’s apparent ease with celebrity and his commercial success, as witnessed by the growing Reggae Reggae empire—to coin a deliberately provocative phrase—of products, books and TV appearances, to be squared with Roots’s self-professed role as ethno-advocate, a prominent practitioner and spokesperson for Caribbean cuisine in Britain? What are we to make of the successful businessman who is valued firstly for his entrepreneurial spirit but also for his Caribbean culinary cultural capital?

This chapter argues that Roots’s promotion of Caribbean cooking foregrounds Caribbean tradition and origins, on the one hand, but, on the other, in common with many of his TV chef peers, simultaneously emphasises Caribbean cooking’s possibilities in a globalised/cross-cultural context as a leisure pursuit, or lifestyle choice, now largely freed from the link between cooking and repetitive or onerous labour, let alone the slave origins of some of his recipes.<sup>22</sup> We might argue then that Roots’s cookery writing is, then, both concerned and not concerned with origins; his writing freighted with a series of tensions and contradictions in the construction of a Caribbean cultural identity via culinary practices.<sup>23</sup> At times, especially in the later, glossy Mitchell Beazley-published cookbooks, the writing and presentation veer dangerously close to what Doris Witt terms *culinary tourism*, part of a rise of interest in food from other cultures facilitated ‘in virtual form via the Food Channel or as a result of the . . . middle class’s increasing ability to travel widely’.<sup>24</sup> As Witt suggests, ‘Such cookbooks are, paradoxically, both complicit with and resistant to the global traffic in the iconography of ethnic multiplicity that Paul Gilroy, among others, has identified as a distinguishing and problematic feature of the late-capitalist marketplace’.<sup>25</sup>

To return to Bourdieu and the tensions between economic and cultural capital, as an ethnic minority chef in Britain, Roots has never been purely and simply what Bourdieu terms the cultural intermediary, the ‘new intellectual’.<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu’s theorizing fails to take into account these important variables and is, in this sense at least, culturally homogenising. Using the insights of critics who write about food and cultural difference in a national, regional or cross-cultural context, such as Arjun Appadurai, is an important corrective here. Even then, the case of Roots does not quite ‘fit’ this critical framework; unlike other prominent ethnic minority TV chefs in Britain—say, Indian cookery writer Madhur Jaffrey in the 1970s and 1980s—the basis of his culinary

discourse has been primarily commercial and brand orientated and not really interested in regional difference. Instead, just as the Reggae Reggae brand has become metonymic of Roots's whole enterprise, might his largely Jamaican-based cookery writing be read provocatively as a metonymic representation of Caribbean cuisine, made accessible to an Anglophone and cross-cultural audience?

### RESIDUAL ORALITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CARIBBEAN CULINARY 'TRADITION'

Doris Witt argues provocatively that literary scholars and critics working in food studies have much to learn from each other. Indeed, she goes as far as to suggest that 'literary scholars interested in foodways might do well to follow the lead of the compilers of the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* by incorporating vernacular and musical traditions into their analyses . . . excerpts from cookbooks, including recipes, should [also] be included in texts such as the *Norton Anthology*'.<sup>27</sup> As she wittily notes, 'Sermons make the cut, yet it is not hard to find evidence that in many black churches the post-sermon meal is no less an art form than the sermon itself'.<sup>28</sup> We might productively think through the implications of this recommendation in a Caribbean context too. Consider, for example, the following, but with 'African-American' replaced by 'Caribbean':

Granted, for the editors of the *Norton Anthology* to include recipes as part of the vernacular tradition would raise several fascinating but vexed questions regarding the relationship of African American performative [i.e., oral] culture to written texts, question which have long been asked of efforts to transcribe oral renditions such as song lyrics. As feminist scholars have demonstrated, however, cookbooks and recipes are not just transcriptions of performative culture. They are complex rhetorical structures that can be decoded using the sorts of tools literary critics typically bring to say, a novel.<sup>29</sup>

This chapter takes up this challenge by discussing Roots's five cookery books to date in terms of the use in the early books of residually oral characteristics (proverbs, personal testimony, riddles and song lyrics) coupled with an arresting performative style both on the page and on screen. This style is retained in the television and online performances where Roots maintains his persona as charismatic cook, musical performer and one-man brand. However, in the cookery writing there is a more discernible shift, as later texts appear to become more orthodox and blandly Eurocentric in format and style, compared to the earliest ones.<sup>30</sup> How do such oral and performative

elements construct a version of Caribbean cultural ‘tradition’ and affect our reading of the cookbooks? Does the reduced prominence of residually oral characteristics in his later books constitute some kind of cultural dilution, or does it, in fact, open up possibilities for different strategies and approaches to the subject of Caribbean cuisine? One possible reading of this shift is that, as the oral performative elements of Roots’s cookery writing become more muted, his interest in cross-cultural culinary discourse develops in sophistication, until he is able to articulate a new ‘dub-it-up’ aesthetic, based partly on the Caribbean practice of ‘making do’ and partly on a kind of cross-cultural discourse of culinary cross-fertilisation or fusion for his Caribbean cooking in his 2010 cookery book, *Spice It Up*.

### **REGGAE REGGAE COOKBOOK (2008)**

Roots’s earliest book, *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, might be most accurately termed a cookbook-memoir as it deliberately combines recipes with autobiography, photos and other paratextual elements. Roots’s ‘life-story’ is threaded through the text in episodic fashion and draws on his Jamaican childhood and family, notably his mother and grandmother, and thereafter his experiences of school, prison, food, music, Rastafarianism and carnival in Britain. This in itself is interesting, as it represents an inversion of male-authored cookery books where the focus tends to be on the recipes and the public profile of the cook rather than the cook’s personal life.<sup>31</sup> In this case, the discursiveness and memoir-driven narrative of Roots’s first book, *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, is more reminiscent of a number of other male-authored Caribbean texts which integrate different genres of cookery writing, such as Austin Clarke’s *Pig Tails n’ Breadfruit* (1999) or John Lyons’s *Cook-Up in a Trini Kitchen* (2009), all of which interestingly challenge expectations that it will be primarily female-authored writing which utilises this approach.

In *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, bold colours and graphics vie for attention with colour photographs and large-font Caribbean proverbs and song lyrics in a way which suggests an apparently spontaneous and informal register and a relaxed organising principle. Most interesting, perhaps, is the insistence on the dual careers of Root as musician and cook—which was integral to his winning pitch on the *Dragon’s Den* programme—and the permeability of discursive borders between different art forms and kinds of writing throughout. Whereas in his earliest book, this context is manifest throughout in textual juxtapositions and visual motifs of guitars and musical notes, in Roots’s 2011 book, *Spice It Up*, it is restricted to the introduction and reduced to a more formal textual statement: ‘I always say that cooking is like making a piece

of music. You lay out the ingredients like an orchestra or a band. The choice that you make is down to what flavors work together and what will complement the main ingredients. The music vibe is the merging and the mixing of these spices'.<sup>32</sup>

In *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, oral proverbs and creole make their way into recipes,<sup>33</sup> and a number of recipes are prefaced with personal reflections on family members' methods of cooking the dish.<sup>34</sup> Many of these oral proverbs are food, consumption or cooking related in line with the oral life-world of their largely African-Caribbean origin, but such signifiers of traditional wisdom and conviviality are also, importantly, the deliberately cultivated subtext of Roots's book. Interestingly, in the first instance when an oral proverb is included,<sup>35</sup> no gloss is provided, but all later proverbs are glossed in standard English suggesting a largely British/European rather than Caribbean audience for his book. Even the song lyrics for Roots's investment-winning pitch are included,<sup>36</sup> which contributes to the reggae aesthetic and 'performative' dimension of the text. Elsewhere, in this first book, especially when Roots writes about his stall at the Notting Hill Carnival and his music career, elements of grassroots and street discourse enter the text and mark a more recent and urbanised residual orality. Traditional oral proverbs and aphorisms are joined by the creation of new myths of personal success, narratives of overcoming adversity, now couched in ironically inflected terms of 'slaying dragons' rather than taking more Caribbean traditional forms, which might also be regarded as residually oral, part of 'street-talk'.

In this way, markers of residual orality are introduced into the printed text and the formality and orthodoxy of the single-voiced Euro-American 'mainstream' cookbook disrupted. Not only do these personal reminiscences break up the text and challenge certain gender expectations we may bring to the text, but they also introduce a multigenetic perspective and, by moving away from the monologic, singular voice, repeatedly remind us of the wider Caribbean oral communal world to which cooking and the transmission of culinary wisdom and lore fundamentally belong. To adapt the grandmother's adage in the prologue to another Caribbean text, 'It takes more than one life to make a person': 'It takes more than one person to make a meal'.<sup>37</sup>

*Reggae Reggae Cookbook* is dedicated to Roots's maternal grandmother and mother and might be read positively in terms of its gender politics, in terms of seeking to reconnect Caribbean cooking in a British diasporic context to Caribbean female agency and creativity. The peculiar formal features of this cookery book act to 'preserve . . . female . . . tradition' by the deliberate use of 'orality, [mother-tongue] and the [oral] discursiveness of [the] writing'.<sup>38</sup> The inclusion of autobiographical texts interspersed with recipes suggests a kind of interpersonal, and perhaps even 'intergenerational script'<sup>39</sup>

based in the shared love of cooking and ‘gastrophilia’ of grandmother and grandson. Roots acknowledges this himself in his introduction to *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*:

My gran taught me the magic of cooking: how to mix Caribbean flavors and the subtleties of traditional herbs and spices. She loved cooking and I would watch, transfixed, happy to be with her and to help her. She never gave me proper instructions—that wasn’t her style. I learned all that I know about the wonderful West Indian food I have been cooking and eating all my life just by observing her. She would be so happy to know that many of her recipes are now here for you in my cookbook.<sup>40</sup>

What is elided here—crucially—is how the transmission from the grandmother’s oral culture to Roots’s written text alters or affects the content and frame for reading this culinary ‘wisdom’. Roots tells us that Gran never gave ‘proper’ instructions, but by the end of this selection, he calls them ‘recipes’. This is one of the many locations in *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* where the residual orality of the text strains against the confines of the cookery book’s written format. Aren’t recipes *by definition* ‘proper’ instructions, and at what point is the improvisational practice of simply ‘cooking’ (without a book to guide you, as Gran surely did in her mythic Caribbean kitchen in the sun) translated into the ‘proper’ rhetoric of the recipe, in which the text standardises and coerces the reader into re-creating an ‘original’ or authentic, or proper dish? These too, are postcolonial questions which the literary critic is especially well placed to ask, given the related concerns with orality, literacy, the role of language, the figure of the ancestor, constructions of ‘tradition’ and issues of cultural authenticity which are staples in much postcolonial literary criticism.

Roots’s inscription of the grandmother figure in the *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* as connected to older, ancestral female traditions (including the figure of Nanny of the Maroons [Roots 2008: 29]) is fascinating. The intermittent references to wider aspects of Jamaican and Caribbean culture in this and Roots’s later cookbooks might be read as cynically contrived, a nod to cultural exoticism for an overseas audience rather than a genuine raising of cultural awareness of Caribbean history, but here the reference achieves something quite different, however clumsily executed. Despite the male-transmitting voice of Roots himself, the reinscription of the grandmother figure through highly personal paratexts such as this—as well as the recipes themselves—reconnects Roots’s cookery writing to a wider Caribbean oral communal world of which the grandmother is part, but also locates respect, power and agency in both female figures—familial and historical.

## LOST ORIGINS: THE GRANDPARENT'S HOUSE

Interestingly, despite the many written tributes and colour photographs of family, friends and other inhabitants of Roots's home village of Content, Jamaica, there are no photographs of his grandmother in his cookery books. Intriguingly, early on in *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* we find a double-spread colour photograph of a rural Jamaican scene with no people or habitation save a crudely superimposed white crayon outline of a simple, one-storey house. The picture is entitled 'my grandparents' house'. It serves as a perfect illustration of one of the most contentious and thorny issues surrounding culinary ethno-advocacy: the construction of tradition and the perception of the authentic. In this picture, which is both photograph and graphic, we find a perfect metonym for lost origins and reconstructed tradition. The ghostly outline of the grandparents' house with its childlike simplicity and naïve styling suggest both absence and presence, nostalgia for something irreversibly lost and the construction of a new but artificial 'presence' upon the palimpsest of loss. The cartoon-like superimposition of the graphic and word *home* on a photograph also suggest different modes of representation and the complexities of 'home' in this cross-cultural context. Of course, the photo of the grandmother's house as flimsily built upon absence takes on another level of meaning and even greater pertinence given the outcome of the 2011 court case between Roots and Bailey.

Like the superimposed house in the photograph, the residual orality of the *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* is only ever a pared down and approximate version of the original. *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* is, at the end of the day, a *written* text, and the residual orality of the text is deliberately re-created. Similarly, the carefully constructed first per/son narrative voice, which may well be in large part Roots's own, is ultimately a rhetorical device designed to invoke a particular version of the cookery writer as 'authentic' transmitter of culturally specific culinary knowledge, the holder of 'tradition' as well as, on occasion, the purveyor of exotic 'otherness' to a non-Caribbean audience. Cookery writing is, we are reminded, a commercial enterprise.

In his later cookery books, most of which are arguably so similar as to be virtually indistinguishable, the freshness and idiosyncrasies of *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* are lost with a change to a more mainstream 'lifestyle' publisher and as commercial pressures become more apparent. The invocation of a poetics of exile, nostalgia and loss, which is relatively prominent in the earliest two books, cannot be sustained in the next two books. Instead, what becomes increasingly important is the contrary imperative to show Caribbean

food as emphatically transferable and adaptive in a cross-cultural context, to be experienced by the widest audience in a contemporary UK setting. Roots adapts other cooks' commercial recipes, includes an increasingly number of crossover recipes, and the writing moves towards a more confident articulation of a cross-cultural aesthetic which Roots calls his 'dub it up' approach. Arguably, something is lost here, but something is also gained.

### **CARIBBEAN FOOD MADE EASY (2009)**

The introduction to Roots's second cookery book, *Caribbean Food Made Easy* (2009), published as a spin-off from the BBC TV series which saw Roots take to the great Jamaican outdoors as well as featuring Roots cooking for family and friends in his home community of Brixton, London, opens with a reminder of Caribbean oral tradition. It starts with the words 'Yu tan deh call' yu wuddah never get come!<sup>41</sup> which is the young Roots's response to his grandmother's call to him to go fetch something for her cooking and acknowledges her culinary skill and inspiration: 'What she taught me I now want to bring to this book, and she's still watching me go'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the entire introduction acts as a paean to the grandparents, especially the grandmother figure as authentic transmitter of culinary tradition and wider life inspiration to Roots.

Yet beyond the highly autobiographical introduction, this is a very different book from *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*. For example, personal reflection still prefaces some recipes, though the figures are usually more celebrity than familial. Residual oral forms, such as riddles, still make it into the recipes,<sup>43</sup> but there is much less discursiveness and inclusion of residual oral or performative techniques in this text. Concomitantly, the emphasis is much more on adapting Caribbean food in a new cross-cultural setting, although the rationale and methodologies for this shift are not yet fully explained or realised. In this second book, Roots seems much more at ease with his celebrity status, and the writing is much more assured in its representation of Roots as ethno-advocate for Jamaican cookery and wider culture. However, *Caribbean Food Made Easy* also seems much more driven by commercial concerns, primarily the need to expand his repertoire and potential audience beyond what might be construed as a rather narrow audience interested in exotically 'other' food.

### **FOOD FOR FRIENDS (2010)**

It is only in his third book, *Food for Friends*, that Roots starts to articulate, in his introduction to the book, a more sophisticated aesthetic for his cookery,

drawing on the characteristically Caribbean practice and cultural philosophy of ‘making do’<sup>44</sup> and suggesting a ‘dub it up’ approach to cooking as his style.<sup>45</sup> On ‘making do’, he comments on his Jamaican childhood: ‘Everyone was really poor back then, so what we ate would depend on who had something to cook. If my grandfather had harvested that day—dug some yams, or got some callaloo and cabbages—we’d know we had food in abundance. And if you had too much, you’d give it away. People didn’t have money to buy local food. It was just given. You’d put out what you couldn’t eat and people would take it’.<sup>46</sup>

The ‘dub it up’ approach he outlines here is a more developed and explicit explanation of something which has featured in all his cookery books, starting in very limited ways with recipes for Reggae Spiced-Up Beans on Toast or Cheese on Toast in *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*. In *Food for Friends*, Roots explains its origins:

[When touring as a musician] I’d be in the dressing room, cooking up whatever local food we could grab. I always carried my seasonings . . . my *Sunshine kit* . . . so even if we found a place where there was nothing but a sweet potato I could still nice-up the ingredients . . . This is how I developed my dub-it-up approach to cooking. Dub in music originated in Jamaica. You’d make a piece of music with ten musicians and instruments and the engineer would get it afterwards and start to work. He’d take the guitar out and bring it in later with a reverb put on it or add a bit of echo, creating a fusion of sounds that became a piece of music. And you can do the same with food. I can take a typical brunch recipe or Christmas dish that is traditionally done, say, in Italy or Britain and dub it up by adding something that turns it Caribbean.<sup>47</sup>

There is a much more explicitly cross-cultural appeal to the recipes in this book and an emphasis on cross-culinary fusion or hybridisation.<sup>48</sup> However, one hesitates to term this a truly creolised cookery writing, as nothing truly new is being created in the mix.

### **SPICE IT UP (2011)**

In *Spice It Up*, the focus is on spices, and in particular, Roots’s spice cupboard, which the dust jacket text declares excitedly—and with no trace of irony—Roots ‘plunders . . . to create exciting new dishes with everyday ingredients’.<sup>49</sup> Roots’s cooking is, then, predicated on ‘plunder’, an especially interesting metaphor when used in a Caribbean context, given its history of piracy and plunder of different kinds, colonial and otherwise. Spices are still, predictably, tropes of the exotic invoked and used to ‘spice up’ known and ‘everyday’ British dishes such as shepherd’s pie (9), pork chops (29–32) or

toad in the hole (26). The gesture towards cross-culinary fusion which began in *Food for Friends* continues in *Spice It Up* but arguably never quite moves beyond a rather superficial ‘marrying’ of ingredients. Roots describes this in the introduction to *Sweet* (2012) as an aim to ‘explore the typical flavors of the Caribbean and how they marry with those recipes and ingredients we know and love in the UK’ (6).

The introduction to *Spice It Up* is fascinating in relation to the branding of the Levi Roots/Reggae Reggae food empire and its relation to Caribbean cuisine in Britain more generally. This branding reaches its apotheosis with Roots’s incredible statement that in terms of chili, ‘if you want something that is “Levi Spice”—it’s best to use Scotch bonnet’.<sup>50</sup> Here the use of the term *Levi Spice* connotes a multitude of things, conflating the qualities of the Scotch bonnet chili pepper (potent, strong, authentic, the ‘real-deal’ of Caribbean cuisine) with the Roots brand. One might applaud such verbal playfulness were it not rooted quite so firmly in marketing discourse, another transparent example of the Reggae Reggae empire’s promotional machinery; however, it is slightly disquieting that the placeholder term or substitution ‘Levi-Spice’ is here invoked to represent a whole chain of referents which reduces the complexities of Caribbean food, from chili, to spice, to Levi Spice. Here, metonymically at least, Roots does not even have to use his moniker—he *is* Caribbean food in Britain.

## SWEET (2012)

*Sweet* is something of a departure for Roots, since it focuses exclusively on cakes, puddings and desserts. In his introduction, appropriately enough, Roots riffs on the multiple meanings of the book’s title for himself, as a cook of Caribbean origin and for his largely British-based audience as well as ‘the many sources of sweetness in the Caribbean that I explore in the recipes in this book’ (9).<sup>51</sup> As in his very first book, *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, a sense of longing and nostalgia for ‘back home’ is conveyed through recognisable tropes such as the recollection of childhood memories,<sup>52</sup> the paratextual placing of touristic photographs, old postcards and ‘retro’ style illustrations of Jamaica and Jamaican icons (prominently, of course, Bob Marley) which convey a wider reconstructed ‘vintage’ provenance to his text.

*Sweet* is the most stylised of Roots’s cookery books to date. It incorporates a ‘retro’ or ‘vintage’ styling which include double-page-spread colour reproductions of European food labelling, food advertising and food miscellanea, including historical images of colonial food crops and food preparation from a variety of Caribbean and European sources. These include double-page colour spreads of old maps (106–7), engravings of Amerindians (106–7), recipe

book covers (12–13), food marketing materials such as excerpts from an old Jamaican Information Service magazine (154–55), drink labels (60–61, 124–25, 128–29, 166–67, 197, 204–5), drink coasters (204–5), cigarette cards (12–13), illustrated playing cards (82–83, 166–67) and food-related miscellanea such as swizzle sticks (106–7), printed sugar sacks (12–13), vintage cooking utensils and children's toys (12–13). Often the focus in these double spreads is on particular colonial crops or food products associated with the Caribbean, such as cocoa and chocolate (38–39), coffee (38–39, 188–89), bananas (154–55), pineapples, rum (188–89, 197) and, of course, sugar (12–13), as well as other 'exotic' fruits (60–61, 82–83) and fruit drinks. This, too, is a deliberate construction of 'tradition', though one which aligns much more readily to current trends in retail and marketing design in the UK. There is notably only one spread of colour photos of contemporary Jamaica, all snapshots of urban graffiti and brightly painted wooden and galvanised buildings (216–17). Significantly, though, despite the scrapbook aesthetic of the book's design, which suggests 'found' scraps of recipes carefully presented and preserved for posterity, the register of Roots's written text is altogether more formal and less improvised than in his first book and more orthodox and Eurocentric in orientation. Roots's once foregrounded cultural capital, his knowledge of Jamaican culture and culinary tradition, is here commodified even further, as it is represented in the historical context of a rich but selective archive of material cultural and visual artefacts which arguably speak more to current European tastes in 'lifestyle' publications than they do to any recognisably Caribbean aesthetic. The recipes too are overwhelmingly British with a Caribbean 'twist', a 'celebrat[ion] of Caribbean flavours'<sup>53</sup> as Roots puts it in his introduction, though Roots still insists on a Caribbean provenance for communal cooking and conviviality: 'It's very Caribbean for everybody to get involved in making a meal . . . Food brings people together and gives them a reason to want to come round and visit each other'.<sup>54</sup> The role of the cook as ethno-advocate seems much less significant here.

***GRILL IT WITH LEVI: 101 REGGAE RECIPES  
FOR SUNSHINE AND SOUL (2013)***

The marketing copy for this cookbook summarises Roots's commercially branded trajectory as 'our nation's best-loved West Indian chef' in the following excitable, not to say repetitive, terms:

More than a hundred sunshine-infused recipes for the barbecue or grill from our nation's best-loved West Indian chef. He's back and hotter than ever! Levi is

getting back to his Roots with over a hundred Caribbean- and sunshine-infused recipes for the barbecue and grill. From his first appearance—guitar in hand—in the *Dragons' Den*, Levi's winning personality and sunny food has brought a taste of Caribbean joy to our dinner plates. In this book, Levi gets back to his Jamaican influences with over 100 recipes to conjure up those lazy, hazy summer days. He cooks up feasts for the barbecue and grill with fresh, healthy ingredients that have been given his special West Indian twist—think Chicken with Molasses, Sugar and Lime; Calypso Burgers with Tropical Salsa; and Jamaican Snapper Parcels—all washed down with a Sunshine Smoothie. 'Grill it with Levi' brings together all Levi's passions: healthy, quick and flavourful food, cooking outside and eating with friends. All the recipes can be cooked on a barbecue—or, if the weather's not so sunny—you can bring the summer inside. Shake that Reggae Reggae Sauce and let's get some soul back into our food!

In many ways, this is the apotheosis of the Reggae Reggae brand, tracing as it does a developmental trajectory from Roots's flagship product and first cookbook through to the similar linkage of food, music and Caribbean heritage ('soul') in the current text. The marketing copy also reaffirms certain terms which have been key to the branding of Roots himself as synonymous with the health-giving properties of outdoor cooking and the good life outdoors: his 'winning personality' is inseparable from his 'sunshine' ingredients and 'sunny food'. Depressingly, perhaps, the terms used to promote Roots's book are not so far removed from some of the exoticised and reductive terms of which Rosamond Grant complained in her 2012 interview for the British Library, nor are they so distant from the stereotypical terms used of the Caribbean and its food, with which this book opened. The exoticisation of Caribbean food continues—and will continue—it would seem, as long as there is a market ignorant of the diversity of Caribbean cuisines and accepting of these two-dimensional descriptions.

## CONCLUSION

The approach to Roots's cookery writing in this chapter has been one which takes up Doris Witt's challenge to read 'cookbooks and recipes [as] not just transcriptions of performative culture [but as] complex rhetorical structures that can be decoded using the sorts of tools literary critics typically bring to say, a novel'.<sup>55</sup> The chapter has also sought to foreground in its analysis post-colonial notions of 'authenticity' as a contested term, Bourdieu's concepts of commercial and cultural capital (1971, 1993) and, after Bourdieu, Bell's notion of 'culinary cultural capital' (2002). We might conclude that ultimately, Roots's cookery writing is mired in contradiction, as may well be the plight of all those who write not only in a cross-cultural context but also in a globalised

economy of food and mass media presence. It promises specificity (Jamaicaness) but simultaneously reifies and homogenises Caribbean cooking through the branding of both Roots and his range as marketable commodities. Roots's performances in his TV appearances and cookery writing as well as the social media and wider online presence of his brand have allowed him a kind of ascension to representative 'Caribbeanness' for many of his audience in the UK. In this, Roots is a performer and a metonym/performance of Caribbeanness. Arguably, this is problematic precisely because the performance is so singular, so commercially motivated and so nonheterogeneous (most of the recipes draw upon Jamaican dishes and culinary traditions rather than wider Caribbean ones and Caribbean microcuisines, for example, and his invocation of a kind of reggae aesthetic similarly fails to take account of the wider diversity of musical traditions from and in the Caribbean). And yet, as Riaz Phillips notes, Roots has done more than any other Caribbean cook to raise the stakes and status of Caribbean cuisine in Britain.

In late 2018, as I complete the writing of this book, the most historically informed and woman-centred Caribbean cookery book to date has just been published. It is called *Provisions: The Roots of Caribbean Cooking* and is by Kingston-based Jamaican sisters and restauranteurs Michelle and Suzanne Rousseau. *Provisions*, with its historically resonant title, combines a scholarly history of Caribbean food from slavery to the present day and, movingly, pays tribute to the matrilineage of those many unnamed women who passed on Caribbean culinary traditions to their daughters and women. As this and the Rousseaus' book show, the 'call and response' between food, text and culture is neither straightforward nor one way; the responses of cooks and writers of different kinds have been rich and capacious enough to allow for hybrid reinterpretations, for adoptions and adaptations, for immense creativity and subversiveness in both a textual and a culinary dimension. The relationship between food, culture and writing is (and always has been) a dynamic, fluid (and therefore ever changing) one in which the notion of the Caribbean itself as a distinct geo-political place/space is also decentred. Instead, in Benítez-Rojo's words, the Caribbean and its foodways can be seen as constantly reinvented, reconstituted and 'endlessly repeating'. As demonstrated in a variety of different ways and across a range of different texts, notions of Caribbean identity and what constitutes the Caribbean can be seen as deriving from a fluid space of plurality, difference and discontinuity, in keeping with the plurality, diversity and discontinuous history of the region itself. Caribbean food has always been globally connected and a 'moveable feast'. In the twenty-first century there is every sign that it is well on the way to gaining unprecedented recognition and momentum as a world cuisine.

## NOTES

1. Wade Lyn, Preface to Riaz Phillips, *Belly Full: Caribbean Food in the UK* (London: Tezeta, 2017), 6.
2. Lyn, Preface to *Belly Full*, 6.
3. Riaz Phillips, *Belly Full* (London: Tezeta, 2017), 8–11.
4. Lyn, Preface, 8, 11–12.
5. Lyn, Preface, 6.
6. Rosamond Grant, British Library website, 2001, <https://sounds.bl.uk/related-content/TRANSCRIPTS/021T-OH1CD0300453-0004A0.pdf>.
7. As Riaz notes, some of the earliest Caribbean food outlets are earlier and date from the 1920s in Britain (*Belly Up*, 120).
8. By ‘authentic’, I mean, in this context, ‘the idea of an authentic culture . . . [as] present in many recent debates about post-colonial cultural production’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1998: 21). Ashcroft et al. sum up the problematic nature of this much contested term by noting how ‘the demand for rejection of the influence of the colonial period in programmes of decolonization . . . invoked the idea that certain forms and practices are “inauthentic”, some decolonizing states arguing for a recuperation of authentic pre-colonial traditions and customs. The problem with such claims to cultural authenticity is that they often become entangled in an essentialist cultural position in which fixed practices become iconized as authentically indigenous [or as authentic markers of a certain imagined community or national collective] and others are excluded as hybridized or contaminated. This has as its corollary the danger of ignoring the possibility that cultures may develop and change as their conditions change’ (21). They go on to note the strategic advantages of assuming a culturally essentialist position, what Spivak terms ‘strategic essentialism’, as ‘certain kinds of practices are peculiar to one culture and not to others, and these may serve as important identifiers and become the means by which those cultures can resist oppression and oppose homogenization by global forces’ (21). However, they conclude that ‘the emergence of certain fixed, stereotypical representations of culture remains a danger. The tendency to employ generic signifiers for cultures that may have many variations within them may override the real differences that exist within such cultures. Markers of cultural difference may well be perceived as authentic cultural signifiers, but that claim to authenticity can imply that these cultures are not subject to change’ (21). This chapter argues that Roots adopts some of these markers of cultural difference, sometimes to an extreme and reductive level, but, ultimately, his cookery writing gives way to a more creolized and thoroughly hybridized aesthetic. Moreover, his claims to authenticity can be seen to be carefully constructed, rather than ‘natural’ givens, especially in a more distanced, diasporic context.
9. Arjun Appadurai, ‘How to Make a National Cuisine’, in *Food and Culture*, 2nd ed., eds. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 289–307 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 300.
10. Appadurai, ‘How to Make a National Cuisine’, 299.
11. Appadurai, ‘How to Make a National Cuisine’, 297.
12. Appadurai, ‘How to Make a National Cuisine’, 301.

13. Appadurai, 'How to Make a National Cuisine', 302.
14. Appadurai, 'How to Make a National Cuisine', 302.
15. Appadurai, 'How to Make a National Cuisine', 302.
16. In this respect, Roots embodies quite a few common stereotypes of Jamaican culture within Europe, what Ashcroft et al. call 'markers of cultural difference' (1998, 21).
17. Collingham (2006); Taylor Sen (2009).
18. More recently in the UK, a rival to the Roots empire has emerged in the person of chef and restaurateur Barrington Douglas. (See <http://www.examiner.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/huddersfield-chef-barrington-douglas-launches-5166843>.)
19. Phillips, *Belly Up*, 19–20.
20. Levi Roots, *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* (London: Collins, 2008), 184.
21. Ashley et al., *Food and Cultural Studies* (London and New York, 2004), 179.
22. A good example is his 'sunshine box' and motto: 'Put some sunshine in your food'. However, in *Sweet* (2012) there are some interesting exceptions, including detailed references to his ancestry in the preamble to a recipe for the dessert 'Caribbean Cranachan': 'My real surname is Graham, a legacy of the Scottish slave masters in Jamaica who passed their name to their offspring. Cranachan is a classic Scots pudding, but this version, like me, is a mixture of Scottish and Caribbean, as it uses rum instead of whiskey' (102). Here the hybridity of the dish is linked to the hybridity of the cookery writer, an interesting twist on ethno-advocacy in action.
23. Doris Witt, 'From Fiction to Foodways', in *African American Foodways*, ed. Anne Bower (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 118.
24. Witt, 'Fiction', 118.
25. Witt, 'Fiction', 118.
26. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984), 371.
27. Witt, 'Fiction', 104.
28. Witt, 'Fiction', 104.
29. Witt, 'Fiction', 104.
30. This shift seems mainly commercial, as a new Levi Roots cookery book has been published each year since by the mainstream 'lifestyle' publisher Mitchell Beazley. The 'orthodox and blandly European format and style' includes more subdued page colours, the lack of paratextual elements, greater use of standardised page layouts and fonts and predominant use of the classic double spread (one-page colour photograph, one page of text). *Sweet* is a slight departure in its 'vintage' styled scrapbook feel, comprised of photographed fabric backgrounds and collages of food-related images, but even this is highly constructed and falls very squarely within current Euro-American marketing and retail trends in glossy 'lifestyle' publications.
31. Witt notes this phenomenon in African American cookery writing of the early twentieth century: 'cookbooks of this era by black men . . . largely reflect the authors' experiences as cooks in the public domain . . . [they] are reticent about personal information; the focal point is the recipes, not the cook'. 'Fiction', 108.
32. Levi Roots, *Spice It Up* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2011), 8.
33. For example, 'Fry big fish first, little one after', glossed as 'take care of the important things first', appears under a recipe for Oxtail and Butterbean Stew (51);

'Wha' sweet goat, a go work im belly', glossed as 'The things that give you most pleasure may also harm you', appears under a recipe for Brown Stew Chicken and Yard-Style Gravy (53); 'Pot full, pot cover get some', glossed as 'Good fortune spreads to those close to you' under a recipe for Stew Beef (111); and 'Empty bag can't stand up', glossed as 'You can't work on an empty belly' (128).

34. Roots, *Reggae*, 72.
35. Roots, *Reggae*, 22.
36. Roots, *Reggae*, 153.
37. Pauline Melville, *The Ventriloquist's Tale* (London: Picador, 1997), 2.
38. Brinda Mehta, *Notions of Identity, Diaspora and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 185.
39. Mehta, *Notions*, 187.
40. Roots, *Reggae*, 8.
41. 'No matter how much you shout I ain't gonna come!'
42. Levi Roots, *Caribbean Food Made Easy* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2009), 10.
43. One example is the creole riddle: 'How water walk to ah pumpkin belly?' Answer: 'The long vine that leads to the pumpkin' as a prefatory note to a recipe for Pumpkin Rice (123).
44. Levi Roots, *Food for Friends* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2010), 8, 11–12.
45. 'Making do' has an important specific function within domestic economy as an efficient means of eking out available food by adding to and boiling up, for example, a one-pot meal each day.
46. Roots, *Food*, 8.
47. Roots, *Food*, 12; my emphasis.
48. Examples include Levi's Baked Beans (38) and Caribbean Spiced Shepherd's Pie (95).
49. Roots, *Spice It Up* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2011), n.p.
50. Roots, *Spice*, 8.
51. This is also discussed by Austin Clarke in *Pig Tails 'n Breadfruit* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), 4–5.
52. These include memories of being shown how to harvest honey by his grandfather (9) and the figure of 'Fudge Man, who sells ice cream and sweeties [and] drives around on a moped with a little refrigerator' (8).
53. Levi Roots, *Sweet* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2012), 302.
54. Roots, *Sweet*, 9.
55. Witt, 'Fiction', 104.

# Bibliography

- Abarca, Meredith E. ‘*Charlas Culinaris*: Mexican Women Speak from Their Public Kitchens’. *Food & Foodways* 15 (2007): 183–212.
- Abbot, Edward. *The English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the Many, as Well as for the 'Upper Ten Thousand'*. London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1864.
- Acton, Eliza. *Modern Cookery for Private Families*. London: Longman, [1845] 1858.
- Adisa, Opal Palmer. *Caribbean Passion*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2004.
- Agard, John. *Alternative Anthems: Selected Poems*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 2009.
- Albala, Ken, ed. 2009. *The Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Andre, Maria Claudia. *Chicanas and Latin American Women Writers Exploring the Realm of the Kitchen as a Self-Empowering Site*. Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2001.
- Anon. *Recipes: The Cooking of the Caribbean Islands*. New York: Time Life, 1970.
- Anon. ‘We Must Use Local Foods’. *The Advocate*, May 23, 1974, 8.
- Anon. ‘The West Indies: The Lure of the Islands’. *Times Literary Supplement* 1584 (29 December 1972).
- Anthony, Michael. ‘Many Things’. In *Cricket in the Road and Other Stories*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1973.
- Appadurai, A. ‘How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India’. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (1988): 3–24.
- Appadurai, Arjun. ‘How to Make a National Cuisine’. In *Food and Culture*, 2nd ed., edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 289–307. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Armitage, Susan, Patricia Hart and Katherine Weathermon. *Women's Oral History: The Frontiers Reader*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

- Ashley, Bob, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones and Ben Taylor. *Food and Cultural Studies*. London and New York, 2004.
- Aspinall, Algernon. *The Pocket Guide to the West Indies*. London: Sifton, Praed & Co., 1907.
- Barbados Museum and Historical Society. ‘Mrs Graham Yearwood’s Cookbook’. June 19, 2013. <http://www.barbmuse.org.bb/web/?portfolio=mrs-graham-yearwood-cook-book>.
- Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen. *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Barnes, Sandra. ‘The Breadfruit in the Caribbean’. St Augustine, Trinidad: University of West Indies Library, 1993.
- Barrow, Errol, and Kendal A. Lee. *Privilege: Cooking in the Caribbean: For Men Only and Women Who Care*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988.
- Bayley, F. W. N. *Four Years in the West Indies*. London: William Kidd, 1830.
- Beckles, Hilary. *Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados*. London: Karnak House, 1988.
- Beckles, Hilary McD. *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados*. London: Zed Books; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989.
- . *A History of Barbados from Amerindian Settlement to Nation-State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Beckles, Hilary McD., and Verene Shepherd. *Liberties Lost: Caribbean Indigenous Societies and Slave Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Beckwith, Martha. *Jamaica Anansi Stories*. New York: American Folklore Society, 1924.
- Bell, D. 2002. ‘From Writing at the Kitchen Table to TV Dinners: Food Media, Lifestylization and European Eating’. Paper presented at Eat Drink and Be Merry? Cultural Meanings of Food in the 21st Century Conference, Amsterdam, June 2001. <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/research/asca/themedia-reader.html>.
- Benghiat, Norma. *Traditional Jamaican Cookery*. Hammersmith, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. 2nd ed. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, [1992] 1996.
- Bennett, Louise. *Anancy and Miss Lou*. Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster’s Bookstores, 1979.
- . *Jamaica Labrish*. Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster’s Bookstores, 1966.
- Berry, James. *Anancy-Spiderman*. London: Walker Books, 1988.
- Berti, Ilari. ‘Curiosity, Appreciation and Disgust: Creolization of Colonizers’ Food Pattern Consumption in Three English Travelogues’. In *Caribbean Food Cultures: Culinary Practices and Consumption in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas*, edited by Wiebke Beushausen, Anne Brüske, Ana-Sofia Commichau, Patrick Helber and Sinah Kloss, 115–32. Germany: Transcript, 2014.
- Bewes, Timothy. ‘Shame, Ventriloquy, and the Problem of the Cliché in Caryl Phillips’. *Cultural Critique* 63 (Spring 2006): 44.

- Bhabha, Homi. 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse'. In *The Location of Culture*, 85–92. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Biet, Antoine. 1664. *Voyage de la France équinoxiale en l'Isle de Cayenne, entrepris par les François en l'année MCDLII* (Paris), 268–95.
- Biswas, Soutik. "Why India's Food Police Are Kicking Up a Storm". BBC News, 2016. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-37335891](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-37335891) IPThisFB.
- Bohl, Elizabeth A., and Ian Duncan, eds. *Travel Writing 1700–1830: An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Booker, Malika. *Pepper Seed*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2013.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 'Intellectual Field and Creative Project'. In *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, edited by M. F. D. Young. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
- Brathwaite, Kamau. *Folk Culture of the Slaves*. London: New Beacon Books, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Arrivants*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mother Poem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Caribbean Cultures: Two Paradigms'. In *Missile and Capsule*, edited by Jürgen Martini, 9–54. Germany, Bremen: University of Bremen, 1983.
- Breen, T. H., and Timothy Hall. *Colonial America in an Atlantic World*. New York: Person Longman, 2004.
- Breeze, Jean Binta. *On the Edge of an Island*. Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1997.
- Bridenbaugh, Carl, and Roberta Bridenbaugh. *No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean 1624–1690*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- 'British Food in America'. <https://www.britishfoodinamerica.com/>.
- Brodber, Erna. *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*. London: New Beacon Books, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Myal*. London: New Beacon Books, 1988.
- Browne, Phyllis. *A Year's Cookery: Giving Dishes for Breakfast, Luncheon and Dinner, for Every Day in the Year, with Practical Instructions for Their Preparation*. London: Cassell, [1892] 1910.
- Burke, Virginia. *Eat Caribbean*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2005.
- Burnard, Trevor. *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Carmichael, Mrs. *Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies*. London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1934.
- Cassidy, Frederic G. *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1961.
- Cassidy, Frederic, and Robert Le Page. *Dictionary of Jamaican English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Chen, Willi. *King of the Carnival and Other Stories*. London: Hansib, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Chutney Power*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1994.
- Clark, E. Phyllis. *West Indian Cookery*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1945.

- Clarke, Austin. *Pig Tails n' Breadfruit: Rituals of Slave Food, A Barbadian Memoir*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, [1999] 2000.
- Cliff, Michelle. *Land of Look Behind*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985.
- Coleridge, Henry Nelson. *Six Months in the West Indies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1826].
- Collingham, Lizzie. *Curry*. London: Vintage, 2006.
- Colt, Sir Henry. 'The Voyage of Sr Henry Colt Knight to Ye Illands of Ye Antleas in Ye Shipp Called Ye Alexander' (1631). In *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana 1623–67*, edited by Vincent T. Harlow. London for the Hakluyt Society, 1925.
- Cook, Ian, and Michelle Harrison. 2007. 'Follow the Thing: West Indian Hot Pepper Sauce'. *Space and Culture* 10, no. 1 (2007): 40–63.
- Counihan, C., and P. Van Esterik, eds. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Dabydeen, David. 1997. 'Teaching West Indian Writing in Britain'. In *Teaching British Cultures: An Introduction*, edited by Susan Bassnett, 135–51. London and New York: Routledge.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. 2011. 'Yam, Roots, and Rot: Allegories of the Provision Grounds'. *Small Axe* 15, no. 1 (2011): 58–75.
- Dickson, William. *Letters on Slavery*. Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1979 [1789].
- Donaldson, Enid. *The Real Taste of Jamaica*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers Ltd., 1993.
- Dragon's Den*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQTzLJCUTjk>.
- Dunn, Richard. *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1972.
- Eagleton, Terry. 'Edible Écriture'. In *Consuming Passions: Food in the Age of Anxiety*, edited by Sian Griffiths and Jennifer Wallace, 203–8. London: Mandolin, 1998.
- Eckstein, Lars. 'Dialogism in Caryl Philips's *Cambridge*, or the Democratisation of Cultural Memory'. *World Literature Written in English* 39, no. 1 (2011): 54–74.
- Ecott, Tim. *Vanilla: Travels in Search of the Luscious Substance*. London: Michael Joseph, 2004.
- Edgell, Zee. *Beka Lamb*. London: Heinemann Educational, 1982.
- Edwards, Bryan. *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*. Vol. I. London: John Stockdale, 1807.
- Espinet, Ramabai. 'The Invisible Woman in West Indian Fiction'. In *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, edited by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, 425–30 (New York: Routledge, 1989).
- . 'Indian Cuisine'. *Massachusetts Review* (Autumn–Winter 1994): 563–73.
- Fitzpatrick, Joan. 2012. 'Food and Literature: An Overview'. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, edited by Ken Albala, 122–34. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Flannigan, Mrs. *Antigua and Antiguans: A Full Account of the Colony and Its Inhabitants*. London: Saunders & Otley, 1844.

- Ford-Smith, Honor. *Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women*. London: The Women's Press, 1986.
- Franklyn, David Omowale. 'Grenada, Naipaul, and Ground Provision'. *Small Axe* 11, no. 1 (2007): 67–75.
- Fraser, Carmeta. *Come Cook with Us the Bajan Way*. Bridgetown, Barbados: Barbados Marketing Board, 1981.
- Frazier, E. F. *Race and Culture Contacts in the Modern World*. New York: Knopf, 1957.
- Fumagalli, Maria Cristina. *Caribbean Perspectives on Modernity*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.
- Garth, Hanna, ed. *Food and Identity in the Caribbean*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Geiger, Susan. 'What's So Feminist about Women's Oral History?' *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 169–82.
- Githire, Njeri. *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women's Writing*. Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014.
- Goodison, Lorna. *I Am Becoming My Mother*. London: New Beacon, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Controlling the Silver*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her People*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007.
- Goucher, Candice. *Congotay! Congotay! A Global History of Caribbean Food*. New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2014.
- Gragg, Larry. 'Englishmen Transplanted': *The English Colonization of Barbados 1627–1660*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Grainger, James. *The Sugar Cane*. London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1764.
- Grant, Rosamund. *Rosamund Grant's Caribbean & African Cookery*. London: Virago, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Caribbean*. London: Annness, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. <https://sounds.bl.uk/related-content/TRANSCRIPTS/021T-OH1CD0300453-0004A0.pdf>.
- Greene, Jack P. *Imperatives, Behaviours and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992.
- Gregg, Veronica. "Yuh Know Bout Coo-Coo?" Language Representation, Creolisation and Confusion in "Indian Cusine". In *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture*, edited by Verene Sheppherd and Glen L. Richards, 148–60. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002.
- Grey, Winifred. *Caribbean Cookery*. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1965.
- Hall, Douglas. *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750–86*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Caribbean, 1989.
- Hall, Stuart. 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora'. In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 392–401. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Hamilton, Jill. *Taste of Barbados: The Handbook of Local Food and Drink*. Barbados: Letchworth Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women of Barbados: Amerindian Era to Mid-Twentieth Century*. University of California, 1981.

- Hamilton, Jill, and Peggy Sworder. *The Barbados Cookbook*. T.M.C.A., 1998.
- Hammond, Barbara. *Cooking Explained*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1967 [1963].
- Hanna, Ed. *Food and Identity in the Caribbean*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Harlow, Vincent T. *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623–1667*. London: Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, No. LVI, 1925.
- Harris, Jessica B. *Sky Juice and Flying Fish: Traditional Caribbean Cooking*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.
- . *Beyond Gumbo: Creole Fusion Food from the Atlantic Rim*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.
- Harrison, Michelle. *King Sugar: Jamaica, the Caribbean and the World Sugar Economy*. London: Latin America Bureau, 2001.
- Herskovits, M. J. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1941.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. London: Sage, 2007.
- Higman, B. W. *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica 1807–1834*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1998.
- . ‘Lady Nugent’s Second Breakfast’. *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 28, no. 2 (2006): 116–27.
- . *Jamaican Food: History, Biology, Culture*. Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008.
- Hingston, Caroline. *Jill Walker’s Cooking in Barbados*. Barbados: Best of Barbados Ltd., 1983.
- Hingston, Caroline. *Jill Walker’s Caribbean Cookbook*. Barbados: Best of Barbados Ltd., 1990.
- Hodge, Merle. *Crick Crack, Monkey*. London and Kingston, Macmillan Caribbean, 1985 [1970].
- Hodson, K. E. *War Time Recipes*. Bridgetown, Barbados: n.p., 1942.
- Hopkinson, Nalo. *The Salt Roads*. New York: Warner Books, 2003.
- Houston, Lynn Marie. *Food Culture in the Caribbean*. Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2005.
- Howard, David. *Kingston: A Cultural and Literary History*. Oxford: Signal Books & Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2005.
- Huggan, Graham. *The Post-Colonial Exotic*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Irving, Claire. ‘Printing the West Indies: Literary Magazines and the Anglophone Caribbean 1920s–1950s’. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2015.
- Jackson, Peter and the CONANX Group. *Food Words: Essays in Culinary Culture*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- James, C. L. R. ‘Triumph’. In *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, edited by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, 84–90. London and New York: Routledge, [1929] 1996.
- James, Marlon. *The Book of Night Women*. London: Oneworld, 2009.
- . *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. London: Oneworld, 2014.

- Jekyll, Walter. *Jamaica Song and Story: Annancy Stories, Digging Sings, Ring Tunes, and Dancing Tunes*. New York: Dover, [1907] 1966.
- Jennings, La Vinia Delois. *Toni Morrison and the Idea of Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Johnson, Howard, and Karl Watson. *The White Minority in the Caribbean*. Germany: Markus Wiener, 1998.
- Keller Brown, Linda, and Kay Mussell. *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.
- Kellman, Anthony. *Tracing JaJa*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2016.
- Khan, Ismith. *A Day in the Country*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1994.
- Kingsley, Charles. *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies*. London: Macmillan, 1882.
- Kiple, Kenneth F., and Virginia H. Kiple. ‘Deficiency Diseases’. In *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, edited by Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD Beckles, 785–94. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000.
- Krise, Thomas, ed. *Caribbeana: An Anthology of English Literature of the West Indies 1657–1777*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Lakhan, Anu. ‘Consider the Camel, a Review of B. W. Higman’s *Jamaican Food: History, Biology, Culture* (UWI Press; 2008)’. In *Caribbean Review of Books* (18 November 2008).
- . *Caribbean Street Food: Trinidad & Tobago*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2009.
- Lamming, George. *In the Castle of My Skin*. Burnt Mill, Harlow: Macmillan, [1953] 1983.
- Laurie, Peter. *Caribbean Street Food: Barbados*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2009.
- Lawson Welsh, Sarah. “‘A Table of Plenty’: Representations of Food and Social Order in Caribbean Writing: Some Early Accounts, Caryl Phillip’s *Cambridge* (1991) and Andrea Levy’s *The Long Song* (2010)”. *EnterText* 10 (2014): 73–89. [https://www.brunel.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/345520/SpecialIssue\\_2013.pdf](https://www.brunel.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/345520/SpecialIssue_2013.pdf).
- . ‘Performing Cross-Cultural Culinary Discourse: The Case of Levi Roots’. In *Caribbean Food Cultures: Performances of Eating, Drinking and Consumption in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas*, edited by Wiebke Beushausen et al., 153–74. Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2014.
- . ‘Jamie Oliver’s Jerk Rice Is a Recipe for Disaster—Here’s Why’. *The Conversation*, August 2018. <https://theconversation.com/jamie-olivers-jerk-rice-is-a-recipe-for-disaster-heres-why-101879>.
- Lee, Rustie. *A Taste of the Caribbean*. Epping: Hand E Publishers, 2007.
- Levy, Andrea. *The Long Song*. London: Headline Review, 2010.
- Lewis, Gordon. ‘Pro-Slavery Ideology’. In *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, edited by Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles, 544–79. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000.
- Lewis, M. G. *Journal of a West India Proprietor*, edited by Judith Terry. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1834].
- Ligon, Richard. *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*. London, 1657.

- Lindsay, Andrew. *Illustrious Exile*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2006.
- Loichot, Valérie. *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Long, Edward. *The History of Jamaica, or a General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of the Island*, 3 vols. London: T. Lowndes, 1774.
- Lyons, John. *Cook-Up in a Trini Kitchen*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2009.
- MacDonald, Antonia. ‘Making Room for Tantie: Mothering and Female Sexuality in *Crick Crack, Monkey*’. In *Feminist and Critical Perspectives on Caribbean Mothering*, edited by Dorsia Smith Silva and Simone A. James Alexander, 183–210. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013.
- MacKie, Christine. *Trade Winds: A Caribbean Cookery Book*. Bath: Absolute Press, 1987.
- . *Life and Food in the Caribbean*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991.
- Magnus, Kelly. *Caribbean Street Food: Jamaica*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2009.
- Mair, Lucille Mathurin. ‘Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery’. In *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, edited by Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles, 390–97. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000.
- Mannur, Anita. *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009.
- Manoo-Rahming, Lettawatee. *Curry Flavour*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000.
- Marshall, Emily Zobel. *Anansi's Journey: A Story of Jamaican Cultural Resistance*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2014.
- Marshall, Paule. *The Chosen People, the Timeless People*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969.
- . ‘The Making of a Writer: From the Poets in the Kitchen’. In *Merle: A Novella and Other Stories*, 3–12. London: Virago, 1985.
- May, Robert. *The Accomplish't Cook*. Totnes, UK: Prospect Books, 1990 [1660].
- McAnuff, Craig, and Shaun McAnuff. *Original Flava Caribbean Cookbook*. London: Caradise, 2017.
- McCauley, Diana. *Huracan*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2012.
- McPherson, Annika. 2014. “‘De fuud dem produus me naa go iit it!’ Rastafarian ‘Culinary Identity’”. In *Caribbean Food Cultures: Performances of Eating, Drinking and Consumption in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas*, edited by Wiebke Beushausen et al., 279–98. Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2014.
- Mehta, Brinda. *Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani*. Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2004.
- . *Notions of Identity, Diaspora, and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Melville, Pauline. *Shape-Shifter*. London: Picador, 1991.
- . *The Ventriloquist's Tale*. London: Picador, 1997.
- Mendes, Alfred. *The Beacon*. Trinidad: Christmas, 1929.
- Miller, Kei. ‘But in Glasgow There Are Plantains’. In *Writing Down the Vision: Essays & Prophecies*, 42–48. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2013.
- Miller, Sally. *Bajan Cooking in a Nutshell*. Barbados: Miller Publishing, 2010.

- Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. London: Viking, 1985.
- . *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Mintz, Sidney, and Douglas Hall. ‘The Origins of the Jamaican Internal Marketing System’. *Papers in Caribbean Anthropology* 57 (1970): 3–26.
- Mintz, Sidney, and R. Price, eds. *Caribbean Contours*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1976.
- Monar, Rooplall. ‘Massala Maraj’. In *India in the Caribbean*, edited by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, 309–14. London: Hansib & University of Warwick, 1987.
- Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night*. London: Granta, 1999 [1996].
- Moreton, J. B. *Manners and customs in the West India Islands. Containing various particulars respecting the soil, cultivation, produce, trade, officers, inhabitants, &c. &c. with the method of establishing and conducting a sugar-plantation; in which the ill-practices of superintendents are pointed out. Also the treatment of slaves; and the slave-trade*. London: W. Richardson, 1790.
- Morley, LaurelAnn. 2005. *Caribbean Recipes ‘Old & New’*. Barbados: Self-published, 2005.
- Murray, Glynne. *Barbados—Customs to Treasure: Early Gems of Bajan Creativity*. Barbados: Spooner’s Hill Ventures, 2014.
- Naipaul, V. S. *The Mystic Masseur*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1957.
- . *India: A Wounded Civilization*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
- . *The Enigma of Arrival*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987.
- Nichols, Grace. *I Is a Long Memoried Woman*. London: Karnak, 1983.
- . *The Fat Black Woman’s Poems*. London: Virago, 1984.
- . *Sunris*. London: Virago, 1997.
- Nimblett, Anton. *Sections of an Orange*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2009.
- Nugent, Lady Maria. *Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801–1805*, edited by Philip Wright. Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2000.
- O’Brien, Charmaine. *The Colonial Kitchen: Australia 1788–1901*. London and Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
- Ortiz, Fernandez. ‘Los factores humanos de la cubanidad’. *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 21 ([1940] 1963): 161–86.
- Parkinson, Rosemary. *Culinaria the Caribbean: A Culinary Discovery*. Cologne: Koneman, 1999.
- . *Nyam Jamaica*. Self-published, 2008.
- . *Barbados B’un B’un*. Self-published, 2015.
- Parry, John. ‘Plantation and Provision Ground: An Historical Sketch of the Introduction of Food Crops into Jamaica’. *Revista de Historia de America* 39 (1955): 1–20.
- Pepperpot: Best New Stories from the Caribbean. Leeds and New York: Peekash, 2014.
- Persaud, Lakshmi. *Sastrra*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1993.
- . *Butterfly in the Wind*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2009.
- . *Daughters of Empire*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2012.
- Phillips, Caryl. *Cambridge*. London: Picador, 1991.

- Phillips, Riaz. *Belly Full: Caribbean Food in the UK*. London: Tezeta Press, 2017.
- Plasa, Carl. *Slaves to Sweetness: British and Caribbean Literatures of Sugar*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011.
- Pope-Hennessy, James. *West Indian Summer: A Retrospect*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1943.
- Poynting, Jeremy. ‘Food and Cooking’. <http://peepaltreepress.com/discover/cultural-forms/food-and-cooking>.
- Pringle, Kenneth. *Waters of the West*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1938.
- Ramoutar, Shivi. *Caribbean Modern*. London: Headline Home, 2015.
- Rampini, Charles. *Letters from Jamaica: The Land of Streams and Woods*. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1873.
- Rattray, R. S. *Akan-Ashanti Folk-Tales*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930.
- Richards-Greaves, Gillian. ‘The Intersections of “Guyanese Food” and Constructions of Gender, Race, and Nationhood’. In *Food and Identity in the Caribbean*, edited by Hanna Garth, 75–94. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Richardson, Bonham C. *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492–1992: A Regional Geography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Rohlehr, Gordon. ‘Images of Men and Women in the 1930s Calypsos: The Sociology of Food Acquisition in the Context of Survivalism’. In *Gender in Caribbean Development*, edited by Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd, 235–309. Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 1988.
- . ‘I Lawa: The Construction of Masculinity in Trinidad and Tobago Calypso’. In *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities*, edited by Rhoda Reddock, 326–403. Mona: University of West Indies Press, 2004.
- Roots, Levi. *Reggae Reggae Cookbook*. London: Collins, 2008.
- . *Caribbean Food Made Easy*. London: Mitchell Beazley, 2009.
- . *Food for Friends*. London: Mitchell Beazley, 2010.
- . *Spice It Up*. London: Mitchell Beazley, 2011.
- . *Sweet*. London: Mitchell Beazley, 2012.
- . *Grill It with Levi: 101 Reggae Recipes for Sunshine and Soul*. London: Ebury Press, 2013.
- Roy, Parama. *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Schaw, Janet. *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal, in the Years 1774–1776*, edited by Evangeline Walker Andrews. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923.
- Scranton, Philip, and Warren Belasco. *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Selvon, Samuel. *A Brighter Sun*. Harlow: Longman Caribbean, [1952] 1985.
- Sen, Sharmila. ‘The Saracen’s Head’. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36 (2008): 407–31.
- Senior, Olive. *Working Miracles: Women’s Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press and London: James Currey, 1991.
- . *Gardening in the Tropics: Poems*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1995.

- . *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage*. Jamaica: Twin Guinep, 2003.
- Shange, Ntozake. *If I Can Cook / You Know God Can*. Boston: Beacon, 1998.
- Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Sheppard, Jill. *The 'Redlegs' of Barbados, Their Origins and History*. Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1977.
- Sherlock, Philip. *Anansi the Spider Man*. London: Macmillan, 1956.
- . *West Indian Folk Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Sherlock, Philip, and Hazel Bennett. *The Story of the Jamaican People*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle; Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener, 1998.
- Shinebourne, Jan Lowe. *The Last Ship*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2015.
- Smith, Captain John. *True Travels: Adventures and Observations of Captaine John Smith in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629*. London: John Haviland for Thomas Slater, 1630.
- Springer, Rita. *Caribbean Cookbook*. London: Evans Brothers, 1968.
- . *Caribbean Cookbook: A Lifetime of Recipes*. Barbados: Miller Publishing, 2007.
- Stuart, Andrea. *Sugar in the Blood*. London: Portobello Books, 2012.
- Sturge, Joseph, and Thomas Harvey. *The West Indies in 1837*. New York: Cosimo, [1838] 2007.
- Sullivan, Caroline. *The Jamaica Cookery Book*. Kingston, Jamaica: Aston W. Gardner & Co., 1893.
- Sutton, David. *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.
- Sworder, Peggy, and Jill Hamilton. *The Barbados Cookbook*. Bridgetown, Barbados: Self-published, 1983.
- Talburgh, Tony. *The Food of the Plantation Slaves of Jamaica*. Canada: Trafford, 2004.
- Tanna, L. *Jamaican Folk Tales and Oral Histories*. Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Jamaica, 2000.
- Tannen, Deborah. *Talking Voices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007 [1989].
- Taylor Sen, Colleen. *Curry: A Global History*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009.
- Thome, J. A., and J. H. Kimball. *Emancipation of the West Indies: A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbados and Jamaica in the Year 1837*. New York, 1838.
- Trollope, Anthony. *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968 [1859].
- Walcott, Derek. *Beef, No Chicken*. In *Three Plays*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1988.
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.
- Warner-Lewis, Maureen. *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures*. Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2003.
- Warnes, Andrew. *Hunger Overcome? Food and Resistance in Twentieth-Century African American Literature*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

- Watson, Karl. *The Civilized Island: Barbados, a Social History*. Barbados: Caribbean Graphic, 1979.
- Welch, Pedro L. V. *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680–1834*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2003.
- Wilk, Richard. *Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists*. Oxford: Berg, 2006.
- . ‘Real Belizean Food’. In *Food and Culture*, 2nd ed., edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 308–26. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Williamson, Karina. ‘Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies, 1820–1826’. *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 4, no. 1 (2008): 1–17.
- Witt, Doris. *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- . ‘From Fiction to Foodways: Working at the Intersections of African American Literary and Culinary Studies’. In *African American Foodways*, edited by Anne Bower, 101–25. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- Wolfe, Linda. *The Cooking of the Caribbean Islands*. New York: Time Life Books, 1970.
- Wona. *A Selection of Anancy Stories*. Kingston, Jamaica: Aston W. Gardner, 1899.
- Wood, Beryl. *Caribbean Fruits and Vegetables: Selected Recipes*. Trinidad and Jamaica: Longman Caribbean, 1973.
- Wynter, Sylvia. ‘Novel and History: Plot and Plantation’. *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95–102.
- Yarde, Elaine, and the National Nutrition Centre. 2006. *Memories of the National Nutrition Centre, Ministry of Health, Barbados, 1972–2001*. Barbados: National Nutrition Centre, Ministry of Health, 2006.
- Yearwood, Mrs Graham. *West Indian and Other Recipes*. Barbados: The Agricultural Reporter, 1911.
- . *West Indian and Other Recipes*. Barbados: The Advocate Press, 1932.
- Young, Kerry. *Pao*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

# Index

- Abarca, Meredith E., 138  
Abbot, Edward, 213  
abolitionism, 43, 53  
accra, 110, 131n85  
Accra, Barbados, 161  
achar masala. *See* spices  
ackee. *See* fruits  
Acton, Eliza, 209  
Adisa, Opal Palmer, 124  
advertising, 205, 206, 209, 211, 216, 217, 232, 244  
*Advocate-News* (Barbados), 221, 222  
Advocate Press, 204, 216  
African American culture, 84, 237  
African American food, 151  
African cultural retentions, 1, 2, 11, 16, 19, 34, 46, 67, 79, 97, 99, 101, 104, 105, 116, 120, 122, 125, 148, 194, 204, 206, 207, 219  
Africans, xviii, xx, xxiii–xxiv, 3, 5, 19, 29, 52, 57, 79, 95, 97–98, 101, 102, 104, 105, 120, 122, 125, 147, 169  
Agard, John, 124  
agave, 199  
*Agricultural Reporter* (Barbados), 204  
agriculture, xxvi, 16, 96, 177, 198  
Alleyne, Ivy A., 218  
Alleyne, Mrs M. B., 220  
alligator, 54, 57, 65  
amelioration, 19, 43  
Amerindians, xv, 4–6, 95–97, 100, 147, 229, 244  
Anancy/Anansi, 97–100, 113, 125, 194  
ancestors, xxiii, 120, 194  
Angola, 29  
annatto, 67, 97  
Anthony, Michael, 109  
Antigua, 32, 58–59, 118, 143, 147, 234  
aphrodisiacs, 33, 125  
Appadurai, Arjun, 232–33, 236  
appetite, 12, 23, 29, 50, 64, 81, 99  
Arawaks, 5, 6, 95  
aruydevic medicine, 114  
Asante/Ashanti, 98  
Aspinall, Sir Algernon, 79, 101  
Aunt Jemima, 216  
Australia, 209, 213  
authenticity, xiv, xv, xix, xxvi, 70, 90, 106, 129, 231–32, 234, 240, 246, 248n8  
autobiography, 128, 232, 238  
auto-ingestion. *See* cannibal/cannibalism  
avocado (alligator pear). *See* fruits  
Aztecs, 13  
Babylon, 123  
bacon, 8, 17, 223  
Bailey, Tony, 231

- bakeries, 109, 216  
 bakes, 162, 185, 199n3  
 Bakhtin, Mikhail, 85  
 baking powder, 216  
 bananas (figs). *See* fruits  
*Bangladeshis*, xviii, 147, 234  
*Barbados*, xviii, xxii, xxv, 5–9, 14, 15,  
 19–20, 22, 23–26, 27, 35n6, 36n29,  
 54, 59, 60, 72n38, 97, 102, 114–16,  
 122, 137–99, 199n3, 201n28, 203–25  
*Barbados Advocate*, 211, 226n6  
*Barbados B'un B'un*, 215, 224–25  
*Barbados Cookbook*, 222  
*Barbados Food and Rum Festival*,  
 162–63  
*Barbados Government National Survey*  
 (1969), 220  
*Barbados Hotel School*, 155  
*Barbados Housecraft Centre*. *See*  
 Housecraft Centre  
*Barbados House of Assembly*, 15, 19,  
 39n118, 225n1  
*Barbados Marketing Corporation*, 221  
*Barbados Museum and Historical*  
 Society, 193, 205  
*Barbados Tourist Authority*, 162  
*Barbados Tourist Board*, 155  
 barbecue, 34, 51, 57, 95, 146, 168, 171,  
 245–46  
 Barnes, Sandra, 21  
 barrack yard fiction, 113–14  
 Barrow, Errol, 117, 222–23  
 Barthes, Roland, xxi  
 Bath punch. *See* drink  
*Bathsheba Pancakes*, 205  
 bearded fig, 199  
 Beckford, William, 18  
 Beckles, Hilary, 15, 18–20, 40n158  
 beef, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25, 27,  
 28, 29, 31–32, 33, 48, 49, 53, 57, 61,  
 62–64, 87, 99, 101, 114, 146, 169,  
 191, 250n33. *See also* salt meat  
 beer. *See* drink  
 Beeton, Mrs, 150, 197  
 Belize, 88  
*Belly Full*, 229  
 Benin, xxiv  
 Benitez-Rojo, Antonio, xx, 124, 247  
 Bennett, Louise, 100  
 Bermuda, 64, 149  
 Berti, Ilari, 79, 102  
 Bewes, Timothy, 90, 93n52  
 Biet, Antoine, 7–10  
 Big Belly Man (Admiral Bailey), 126  
 biscuit, 12, 28, 46, 61, 65  
 black cake, 141, 143, 158, 186  
 Blackmailer (Winston Morris). *See*  
 calypsonians  
 black mustard seed. *See* spices  
 ‘Black Rob’, 31  
 blawly. *See* soup  
 Bligh, Captain, 21, 39n121, 152  
 blood sausage, 169  
 Blue Mountains, Jamaica, 63, 152  
 boar, wild, 51  
 ‘body memory’, 140  
 Bolt, Usian, xviii, xix, xxviin21, 230  
 Bonavist (bean) soup. *See* soup  
 Bon Maman, 196  
 Botton, Charles, 20  
 Bourdieu, Pierre, xxii, 235–36, 246  
 Bovril, 152, 210  
 Brahmins, 113, 119–20  
 brandy. *See* drink  
 Brathwaite, Kamau, xxiii–xxiv, 120  
 Brazil, 5  
 breadfruit, 117, 152, 160, 161, 166, 170,  
 171, 175, 176, 180, 190, 193, 205,  
 221  
 Breeze, Jean Binta, 118  
 Bridenbaugh, Carl and Roberta, 6, 9  
 Bridgetown, Barbados, 20, 163, 172,  
 178, 186, 198, 210, 215, 217  
 Britain, xx, xix, xxvi, 17, 30, 32–33,  
 43–44, 128, 144, 146–47, 150–51,  
 168, 181, 184, 186, 196–97, 211,  
 214, 219, 223, 229–47, 248n7  
 broccoli. *See* vegetables  
 Brodber, Erna, 138–39  
 Brown, Jennifer, 14

- Browne, Phyllis, 209  
bun-bun, 224  
Burger King, xv, 162, 165, 168  
Burnard, Trevor, 14, 22  
Butler, Judith, xxii  
butter, xv, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 25, 30, 32, 49, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68, 89, 104, 158, 160, 170, 211–12  
Byron, Lord, 55
- Cadbury's, 152  
calabashes, 48  
callaloo. *See* vegetables  
calypso, 99, 124–26, 220  
calypsonians: Blackmailer, 200n3; Calypso Rose, 126; Caresser, 125; Gorilla, 134n150; Growling Tiger, 134n150; Mighty Sparrow, 125; Mighty Spitfire, 125  
Canada, xx, 48, 125, 142, 144–45, 169, 211, 216, 229  
cannibal/cannibalism, xiv, 29, 96, 125  
cardamom. *See* spices  
Caresser. *See* calypsonians  
*Caribbean Food Made Easy*, 242  
*Caribbean Recipes 'Old & New'*, 224  
Caribbean restaurants, xxviiin21, 149, 151, 168, 196, 229–30  
Caribs, xviii, 6, 95  
Carmichael, Mrs, 4, 22, 44, 53–55, 58, 64, 79, 81, 88, 89, 102  
carrots. *See* vegetables  
cassareep, 95, 101  
cassava, 2, 4, 5, 9, 28, 67, 95–96, 100–101, 117, 222  
Cassidy, Frederic, xxiii  
cayenne pepper. *See* spices  
chaklata tea/cocoa tea, 13  
champagne. *See* drink  
'charlas culinaris', 138  
Chefette, 148, 160–61, 165, 167, 169, 194, 224  
Chen, Willi, 109, 111, 119, 132n91  
chicken broth. *See* soup  
chicken/fowl. *See* poultry  
chicken steppers, 19, 160  
Chinese-Caribbean, 109–10, 111, 119, 207  
chocolate, 13, 26, 27, 54, 62, 70, 163, 245  
Christmas, xvii, 18, 58, 68, 81, 83, 87, 88, 99, 108, 134n162, 140, 144, 159, 178, 181, 186, 215, 219, 221, 227n56, 243  
Chutney music, 111, 132n91  
Civil War (English), 8  
claret. *See* drink  
Clarke, Austin, 105, 117, 182, 203, 210, 224, 238, 250n51  
class, 187–88, 190–91, 197, 204–6, 210, 212–14, 222, 225, 236  
Cliff, Michelle, xiv  
Cobham, Jeff, 225  
Coca Cola, 107, 217  
coca-finger/cocos. *See* vegetables  
cocoa/cocoa beans, 13, 62, 69, 70, 115, 245  
coconut. *See* fruits  
coconut bread, 156, 182  
Codrington College, Barbados, 198  
Codrington Estate, Barbados, 20, 22  
coffee, 35n2, 44, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 89, 152, 245  
Coleridge, Henry, Nelson, 11–12  
Colt, Sir Henry, 6  
Columbus, Christopher, xiv, 13, 29, 96  
*Come Cook with Us*, 221–22  
commensality, 10, 64, 91, 113, 225  
communality, xxv  
condiments. *See* salt; *specific sauces*  
conkies, 205, 206  
coneree (jar), 15, 143, 186  
consumerism/consumers, 123, 140, 210, 214, 216, 234  
consumption patterns, of food, xiii, xiv, xxi–xxii, xxiii–xxvi, 5–6, 7, 9, 14, 44, 81, 82, 102, 107, 109, 119, 120, 124, 137, 139, 201n25, 206, 209, 235, 239

- cookery books, xxii, xxvi, 142, 203–25, 229–47
- cooking utensils, 34, 245
- cooks, 70, 79, 83, 95, 101, 105, 119, 125, 127, 141, 162, 188, 192, 194, 207, 208–10, 213, 217–18, 222, 223, 224, 230, 234, 242, 247, 249n31
- Cook-Up in a Trini Kitchen*, 238
- ‘coolies’, 68–69, 110, 112
- coprophagy, 14
- corned beef, 101, 217
- cornmeal, 9, 104, 147, 161, 169–70, 175
- cosmopolitanism, xxvi, 90, 128, 209, 219, 231, 235
- cou cou, 104–5, 147, 161, 170, 175, 180, 201n26
- country peppers (capsicum). *See* fruits
- crab, 5, 9, 17, 18, 20, 27, 30, 65, 98, 101, 124, 217
- crayfish. *See* fish
- creolisation, 2, 45, 79, 102, 105
- Cuba, 61
- Culinaria the Caribbean: A Culinary Discovery*, 224
- culinary heritage, 124, 205, 224
- culinary matrilineages, xvii, 115
- culinary tourism, 205–6
- curry, xviii, xix, 106, 110–11, 124, 146, 150, 151, 167, 168, 169, 179, 184, 197, 207, 234
- cush-cush (taro), 68
- Dampier, William, 21
- Demerara, 63, 101
- De Nayra, Mendana, 21
- deterritorialisation, xxv, xxvi, 127, 128, 231
- diabetes, 198
- diaspora, xvi, 26, 95, 126–27, 138, 149–51, 169, 229–47
- dinners, 8, 18, 45, 53, 56, 88
- domestic science, 173–74
- Dominica, 58, 177, 201n26
- Douglas, Barrington, 249n18
- Douglass, Frederick, 84
- dove, 56, 63, 89, 120
- Drax, James, 8, 9
- drink (alcoholic): Bath punch, 65; beer, 61–62, 158, 217; brandy, 8, 10, 17, 18, 54, 62, 63, 110, 217; champagne, 62; claret, 18, 44, 62, 89; fruit wine, 177–78; Guinness, 144; hock-negus, 44; Madeira wine, 12, 17, 18, 24, 32, 44, 65, 80, 89; malt liquor, 80; porter, 18; port wine, 143, 178, 186; punch, xviii, 17, 18, 67, 151, 157; red sack, 8; Rhenish wine, 6, 8; rum, xiii, 8, 17, 18, 26, 28, 54, 62, 63, 66, 67, 106, 107, 143–44, 151–52, 158–59, 162–63, 178, 186, 216, 217, 245, 249n22; sangaree, 32, 44, 89; stout, 62, 144; Taunton ale, 18; wine, 6, 8, 9, 22, 31, 33, 44–46, 48, 50, 62, 63, 80, 85, 87, 89, 120, 162, 186
- duck. *See* poultry
- Dudley, Robert, 4
- dukunu/duckanoo/duckna, xvi, 37n63
- dumplings, 118, 206
- Dunn, Richard, 8
- Dutch oven, 68, 182
- Eagleton, Terry, xx–xxi
- Easter, 189
- Eckstein, Lars, 89, 93n52
- economy, xxv, 2, 3, 15, 16, 19, 43, 55, 79, 85, 101, 166, 210, 213, 215, 218, 232, 247, 250n45
- Edwards, Bryan, 3, 17, 45–49
- El Dorado, xx, 4
- eroticism, xxv, 87, 124–26
- Espinet, Ramabai, 105–6, 108, 119, 132n106
- essences (cooking), 207–8, 209, 216
- Essequibo, Guyana, 5
- ethno-advocacy, 242
- Eurocentrism, 57, 88, 187, 206, 232, 237, 245
- Euro-Creoles, 79, 101, 111, 204–6, 212, 214
- exile, 102, 114, 118, 232, 241

- exoticism, xiv, 10, 23, 26, 62, 87–88, 100, 107, 219, 230, 232–33, 241–43, 245–46  
exported food, 12, 63, 105  
Eyre, Lord, 43
- fast food. *See also* Burger King; Chefette; McDonald's  
fasting, xiv, 95, 98, 128  
feasting, xiv, 33, 88, 95, 97, 105, 107, 128, 140  
feminist criticism, 138–40, 237  
fish: crayfish, 24, 66, 101; fishcakes, 162, 200n3; flying fish, 103, 104–5, 141, 147, 161, 167, 170–71, 175, 180, 185–86, 194–95, 201n28, 206, 217, 218; herring, 10, 16, 25, 31, 49, 52, 57, 67, 111, 175, 180; kingfish, 65; ling, 10; pilot fish, 32; sardines, 61; shad, 10; tusk (cod fish), 32. *See also* saltfish
- food: choices/preferences, xxv, 100; nostalgia, xvii, xxv; rituals, xiv, 95, 105, 128; shortage, xv, 14, 16–18, 20, 31, 34, 98, 100, 113, 221–22; taboos, 29, 80–81; theft, 20, 22, 83–85
- Food Channel, 236
- Food for Friends*, 242–43, 244
- Ford-Smith, Honor, 138–39
- Fox, Desrey, 97
- Frazer, Carmeta, 205
- free blacks, 27
- Friendship Hall, St Michaels, Barbados, 225n1
- fruits: ackee, xv, 51, 21, 26, 45, 51, 57, 149, 191, 197, 230; apples, 8, 51, 65, 166, 176, 194, 195, 201n27; avocado, 29, 54, 61, 62, 68, 132n85; bananas (figs), xxiv, 6, 34, 56, 57, 67, 68, 96, 99, 105, 111, 120, 126, 177, 180, 198, 199; coconuts, 156, 157, 177, 182, 189, 194; country peppers (capsicum), 28, 54; granadillo, 56; guinep, 97; limes, 6, 10, 24, 34, 47, 62; Madeira peaches, 18; mangoes, 18, 23, 54, 62, 81, 96, 124, 143, 166, 177; mangosteens, 54; naseberries, 34; olives, 8, 9; oranges, 6, 8, 10, 24, 32, 34, 47, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 87, 96, 160; pineapples, 5, 6, 8, 18, 32, 34, 54, 56, 89, 245; plantains, xvi, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14–19, 21, 28, 29, 33, 34, 37n63, 47, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 88, 105, 117, 127, 153, 166, 177, 191, 218; plums, 34; raspberries, 53; shaddock, 18, 32, 166, 176; soursop, 166, 176; strawberries, 177; tamarind, 34; tomatoes, 153, 196; watermelons, 8, 34, 55
- Fry's Cocoa, 211
- funeral offerings, 12–13
- fungi/fungi, 105
- Futter, James, 8
- garlic, 26
- geera (cumin). *See* spices
- Geiger, Susan, 139
- gender, xiv, xvi, xxv, xxvi, 53, 80, 85, 87, 95, 102–5, 106–7, 114–15, 118–20, 128, 138–39, 140, 145, 146, 204, 205
- Germany, 183
- Ghana, xxiv
- ghee, 69
- Gilman, Vivien, 125
- Gilroy, Paul, 236
- ginger. *See* spices
- global/globalisation, xiv, xv, xviii, xiv, xx, xxvi, xxvii22, 1, 13, 95, 105, 126–27, 128, 150, 152, 230–32, 236, 246–47, 248n8
- Glow Spread, 218
- Gooding, Gloria, 220
- Goodison, Lorna, 123, 127, 154
- Gorilla. *See* calypsonians
- Goucher, Candice, 1, 99, 105
- gourds. *See* vegetables
- granadillo. *See* fruits

- Grainger, James, 4  
 grandmothers, 110, 141, 142, 145–46,  
   152–54, 156–57, 160–62, 165–67,  
   170–72, 179, 182–83, 186–89, 190–  
   94, 197, 215, 219  
 Grant, Rosamund, 230  
 Greece/Greek islands, 140  
 Gregg, Veronica, 107–8  
 Grenada, 211  
 ‘groundation’, xxiii  
 ground provisions, 15–18, 29, 47, 50,  
   51, 58, 123, 148, 155, 160, 170, 181,  
   197, 198, 211  
 Growling Tiger. *See* calypsonians  
 Guam, 21  
 guava cheese, 190, 192  
 guava jam/jelly, 177, 192, 205  
 guinea corn, 34, 159, 227n56  
 guinep. *See* fruits  
 Guinness. *See* drink  
 Guyana (formerly British Guiana), 97,  
   109, 137, 167  
 haggis, 169, 207, 227n56  
 ‘Halifax mutton’ (saltfish), 66  
 Hall, Stuart, 127  
 Hamilton, Jill, 222  
 Harriott, Ainsley, 234  
 Harris, Wilson, 97  
 Hart, Marion, 205  
 Harvey, Thomas, 58–59  
 Hastings, Barbados, 168, 213  
 Hawaii, 199  
 herbal remedies, 172  
 Hernandez, Lolita, xiii  
 herring. *See* fish  
 Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, xxii, 139  
 higgliers, 20, 21–22, 33, 56, 65  
 Higman, Barry, 40n147  
 Hinduism, xviii, 99, 107, 111, 114,  
   119–20  
 historiographic metafiction, xxii, xxv,  
   77–91  
*HMS Bounty*, 21  
*HMS Providence*, 21  
   ‘hob and nob’, 32  
 hock-negus. *See* drink  
 Hodge, Merle, 110–11  
 Hodson, K. E., 215–16, 217  
 hogs, 5, 6, 29, 30–31, 34, 51, 152  
 Holland, 9, 226n27  
 home economics, 164, 181, 189, 217  
 Hopkinson, Nalo, 102  
 hospitality, 7, 8, 31–33, 46, 56, 62–63,  
   66  
 hotel food, 61, 63, 104, 120  
 hot sauce. *See* Reggae Reggae Sauce  
 Housecraft Centre, 163–64, 170, 172–  
   73, 217–18  
 Houston, Anne-Marie, xxii, 79, 101,  
   106  
 hucksters. *See* higgliers  
 Hulme, Peter, 96  
 hunger, 2, 16–20, 50, 77–91, 81  
 hurricanes, 2, 21, 48, 49, 50, 127  
 identity, v, xxv, 3, 11, 78, 91, 95–129,  
   140, 194, 197, 203, 207, 212, 214,  
   232, 233, 236, 247  
 imported food, xv, xxv, 3, 8–10, 20, 21,  
   28, 30, 34, 51, 53, 62, 70, 80, 87–89,  
   100, 127, 148–49, 176–77, 195–96,  
   203, 209, 211, 217, 221  
 improvisation (culinary), 99, 141, 143,  
   203, 218, 233, 240  
 Indo-Caribbean, 99–100, 105–9, 111,  
   114, 119–20, 124, 132n91, 137, 151,  
   175, 207, 226n17  
 indentured labour/indentureship, 19, 28,  
   62, 63, 69, 109  
 India (East)/‘Indianness’, xviii, xx, 13,  
   31, 34, 43, 63, 105, 108, 109, 119,  
   150, 197, 207, 211, 233, 234, 235  
 Indian Bridge (Bridgetown, Barbados),  
   6, 9  
 Indian corn, 5, 12, 14, 46, 51, 58, 59  
 Indian kale. *See* vegetables  
 Indian restaurants, 147, 234  
 Ireland, 8, 32, 48, 62, 89  
 Irving, Gemma, xxii, 205

- I-tal food, 122–23, 172
- Jaffrey, Madhur, 236
- Jamaica, xiv, xv–xvii, xviii, xix, xxiii, 2–3, 10–34, 43–59, 61–63, 65–67, 78, 80–91, 96, 98–109, 118, 120, 122–24, 126–27, 137, 147, 149, 150, 152, 159, 171, 184–85, 186–92, 194–95, 197, 200n15
- James, C. L. R., 113–14
- James, Marlon, xv–xvii, 102
- Jekyll, Walter, 98, 99
- jerk/jerking, xv–xvi, xviii, xix, 10, 34, 51, 65, 150, 151, 159, 184, 185, 190, 223, 229, 235
- Jewish communities, 25–26, 163
- Jug Jug, 159, 221, 227n56
- Kabo Tano, 96
- kathas, 119
- Kellman, Anthony, 102
- Kelly, Ivory, 117
- Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), 168, 224
- Khan, Ismith, 111
- Kincaid, Jamaica, 118
- kingfish. *See* fish
- Kingsley, Charles, 68–70
- Kingston, Jamaica, 26, 27, 48, 59, 61, 65, 247
- kitchen gardens, 153, 172
- kitchens, xiii, 108, 114, 138, 141, 145, 194, 204, 207, 210, 214
- ‘KitchenTalk’, xxiv, xxv, 137–99
- Kumina, 120, 122
- labour riots, 211
- Lakhan, Anu, xxiv, xxiv, 128
- Lamming, George, 102–5
- Lawson, Nigella, xxi
- Lee, Caroline, 199
- Lee, Easton, 109
- Lee, Kendal A., 117, 223
- Lee, Rustie, 234
- lemonade, 46
- Lent, 125
- Levy, Andrea, xxv, 77–78, 80–88, 90–91
- Lewis, Gordon, 45–46
- Lewis, Matthew, 22, 43, 48, 55–58, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83
- Ligon, Richard, 6, 7–10, 19, 222
- limes. *See* fruits
- Lindsay, Andrew, 102
- ling. *See* fish
- ‘livity’/livet, 122
- Loichot, Valerie, xiv, 96
- London, xxviin21, 12, 13, 23, 55, 56, 109, 168, 179, 196, 229, 242
- Long, Edward, 3, 22, 25–30
- luncheon dishes, 29, 45, 58, 80, 206, 209
- Lyn, Wade, 229, 230
- Lyons, John, xviii, xx, 117, 238
- Madeira peaches. *See* fruits
- Madeira wine. *See* drink
- ‘making do’, 79, 101, 210, 213, 238, 243, 250n45
- malt liquor. *See* drink
- mangoes. *See* fruits
- mangosteens. *See* fruits
- Manning, Charles Jasper, 225n1
- Manning, Jasper M., 225n1
- Manoo-Rahming, Lettawatee, 124
- Mapuri, 96
- markets, 15–17, 22, 34, 52, 54, 58
- Marley, Bob, xviii, 244
- maroons, 34, 38n112, 51
- Marshall, Emily Zobel, 84
- Marshall, Paule, 39n137, 115–17, 138
- Martinique, 58, 73n96
- material culture, 4, 44, 47, 53, 140, 205, 209–12, 245
- Mathews, Samuel Augustus, 33
- matrilineage, xvii, 114, 138, 247
- McCauley, Diana, 102
- McDonald’s, 162, 168
- measuring (of ingredients), 141, 156, 170, 179

- Mehta, Brinda, xxiv, 106, 114–15, 120  
 Melville, Pauline, 97  
 memoirs, xxiv, 105, 117, 123, 204, 223, 235, 238  
 Mendes, Alfred, 109  
 meta-ingestion, 108  
 Middle East, xx, 34, 151, 188  
 Middle Passage, 46, 99  
 Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco).  
*See* calypsonians  
 Mighty Spitfire. *See* calypsonians  
 military, 27–28, 105, 222  
 Miller, Kei, 127  
 Mintz, Sidney, 140  
 modernity, 119, 138, 141, 203, 210, 217  
 Mohammed, Patricia, 138  
 molasses, 8, 199, 211, 216, 246  
 Monar, Rooplall, 113  
 Montego Bay, Jamaica, xvi  
 Morant Bay Rebellion, 43  
 Moreton, J. B., 33–34, 51, 57  
 Morley, Laurel Ann, 224  
 mulattoes, 22, 27, 86  
 Murray, Glyn, 199n3  
 music, xviii, 111, 125–26, 132n91, 197, 229, 234, 237, 238–39, 243, 246–47.  
*See also* calypso; Chutney music  
 Muslims, xviii, 119  
 mutton, 10, 17, 18, 27, 48, 53, 61, 230  
 mutton broth. *See* soup  
 Naipaul, V. S., 107, 108, 109, 119–20  
 Nanny of the Maroons, 240  
 naseberries. *See* fruits  
 National Nutrition Centre (Barbados), 220  
 Nation language, 100, 225  
 native whites. *See* Euro-Creoles  
 ‘negro pot’, 34  
 Newfoundland, 48  
 Newton, Sir Isaac, 12  
 New York, 30, 109, 209  
 Nichols, Grace, 97, 102, 124, 127, 154, 211  
 Nimblett, Anton, 124  
 nkuyu, 120  
 North America, xix, 1–2, 4, 8, 17, 27, 28, 30, 34, 52, 146, 151, 219, 223  
*Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 237  
 Norway, 209  
 Notting Hill Carnival, 229, 231, 239  
 Nugent, George, 43  
 Nugent, Lady Maria, 4, 43–45, 62, 80, 81, 89, 101  
 nutmeg. *See* spices  
 nyam, xxiii, 170  
*Nyam Jamaica*, 224  
 oatmeal, 14, 31–32, 48  
 Oblata, 120  
 O’Brien, Charmaine, 209, 213–14  
 Oliver, Andi, 234  
 Oliver, Jamie, xix  
 olives. *See* fruits  
 onions, xxviiin32, 24, 32, 61, 62, 64, 67, 143, 154  
 onion sauce, 57  
 oral histories, 70, 114, 137–99, 229, 230  
 orality/oral tradition, xxv, 89, 117, 237, 239–41  
 oranges. *See* fruits  
 ottoise (OTT) apples. *See* fruits  
 palm nuts, 99  
 palm oil, 28, 47, 120  
 palm wine, 28, 99  
 Panama Canal, 229  
 Parang, 124  
 paratexts, xxii, 204–6, 209, 214, 216, 217, 224, 240  
 Parkinson, Rosemary, 215, 224–25  
 Parry, John, 2  
 Pascale, Lorraine, 234  
 Patten, Marguerite, 181  
 penns, 13, 15, 63  
 Pepperpot, 11, 14, 33–34, 56, 66, 70, 78–79, 89, 96, 100–102, 167, 206, 221  
 Perry, Lee ‘Scratch’, 126

- Persaud, Lakshmi, 106, 108, 119  
Phibbah, 21–22  
Phillips, Caryl, xxv, 77–90, 93n52  
Phillips, Riaz, 229, 235, 247  
pickles, 23–24, 61, 63, 68  
pies, 45, 53; macaroni, 157, 195, 201n28  
pigeon. *See* poultry  
pilot fish. *See* fish  
pindals/Indian earth-nuts/ground nuts, 12  
pineapples. *See* fruits  
plantains. *See* fruits  
planter class/plantocracy, xxv, 1, 4, 10, 14, 28, 46, 56, 70, 78, 79, 80–82, 88, 101, 222  
Plasa, Carl, 124  
plover. *See* poultry  
plum pudding, 87, 88  
plums. *See* fruits  
Police Acts (of Antigua), 58  
polinks. *See* provision grounds  
pone/cassava pone, 222  
Pope-Hennessy, James, 53–54, 64  
pork, 101, 114, 123, 124, 147, 159, 163, 169, 178, 190, 200n25, 216. *See also* salt meat  
porridge, 67, 169, 170  
porter. *See* drink  
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, 68  
Port Royal, Jamaica, 61, 65  
Portugal, 26, 63, 196  
port wine. *See* drink  
potatoes. *See* vegetables  
poultry: chicken/fowl, xv, xvi, xviii, xix, 8, 11, 19, 59, 114, 145, 157, 160–61, 162, 168, 184–85, 186, 191, 192, 194, 234, 235, 246; duck, 5, 8, 18, 34, 52, 53, 81, 83; pigeon, 56; plover, 17, 56, 89; quail, 56, 89; snake, 56; turkey, 8, 15, 44, 53, 59, 83, 100, 159, 173, 178, 186  
Powell, Captain Henry, 5  
Poynting, Jeremy, 118–19, 127  
pregnancy, 44–45, 118  
preserves, 23, 88, 204  
Pringle, Rachel, 199  
print culture, xxii, 205, 211, 215  
*Privilege: Cooking in the Caribbean*, 222–23  
proverbs, 1, 67, 100, 128, 142, 225, 232, 238–39  
provision grounds, xxiii, xxv, 2, 16, 21, 47–48, 56, 62, 67, 79, 148  
*Provisions: The Roots of Caribbean Cooking*, 247  
pudding and souse, 144, 169, 201n25, 218, 219  
pulses: beanos, 5; channa (chickpeas), 106; French peas, 18; gungo peas, 99, 127; kidney beans, 18  
punch. *See* drink  
quail. *See* poultry  
rabbit, 8, 186  
Raleigh, Sir Walter, xx, 4–5  
Ramoutar, Shivi, xviii–xix  
Rampini, Charles, 65–67  
raspberries. *See* fruits  
Rastafarianism, xxiii, xxvi, 122, 122–23, 234, 238  
recipe books, xxvi, 128, 138, 141–42, 155–56, 164, 173, 188, 203–25  
Reddock, Rhoda, 138  
red pea soup. *See* soup  
red sack. *See* drink  
refrigeration, 65, 182, 192, 212  
*Reggae Reggae Cookbook*, 232, 235, 238–40, 241, 242, 243, 244  
Reggae Reggae Sauce, 231, 234–36  
respectability, 85, 87–88, 204–5, 210, 212–13  
Revolutionary War (American), 1, 30  
Rhenish wine. *See* drink  
Rhianna, 167  
rice, 15, 18, 39n137, 46, 48, 50, 69, 100, 107, 109, 113, 120, 156–57, 161, 173, 175, 250n43; and peas,

- xvi, xix, 145, 147, 157, 189, 191, 194, 206, 230
- Roberts' Manufacturing Company Ltd (Barbados), 218
- Roberts' Mello Crème, 160, 218
- Rohlehr, Gordon, 125
- Roots, Levi, 128, 150, 223, 225, 229–47
- Roseau, Dominica, 58
- roti, 106, 110–11, 167, 169, 175, 207
- Rousseau, Michelle and Suzanne, 247
- Rudder, David, 126
- rum. *See* drink
- Runkles Cocoa, 226n27
- salad, xvi, 64, 145–46, 157
- salt, xvi, 47, 49, 57, 68, 120–23, 184, 207
- salt bread, 159
- saltfish, xv, 18, 21, 26, 39n137, 110, 114, 125, 175, 180, 191, 197, 218, 230
- salt meat (beef, pork), 32, 33, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 61, 66, 67, 83, 160, 175, 186
- sancocho. *See* soup
- sangaree. *See* drink
- sardines. *See* fish
- Savannah-la-Mar, Jamaica, 13, 18, 56
- Schaw, Alexander, 30
- Schaw, Janet, 11, 30–33, 46, 89
- Scotch Bonnet pepper, 66, 127, 244
- Scotland, 50, 53, 65, 127
- Scott, Sir Walter, 55
- seasonal food, 2, 19, 30, 166
- seasoning, 28, 153, 185–86, 207, 235, 243
- Selvon, Samuel, 105–7, 108, 115
- Senior, Olive, 13, 39n121, 79, 96–97, 100, 101, 109, 138
- Seremetakis, C. N., 140
- Seville oranges. *See* fruits
- sex/sexuality, xv, xvi, xx, 14, 21–22, 29, 84, 99, 102, 105, 108, 109, 111, 118–19, 123, 124–26
- sexual politics, 85, 87, 114, 124–26
- shad. *See* fish
- shaddock. *See* fruits
- Shakespeare, William, xx
- Shange, Ntozake, 137, 138
- Shango, 120
- Sheller, Mimi, xiv–xv, xvii
- Shepherd, Catherine, 138
- Shepherd, Jill, 6
- Shepherd, Verene, 40n158
- Sherlock, Philip, 22, 96, 98
- Shervington, Pluto, 125–26
- Shinebourne, Janice, 109, 119
- Slave Act (Jamaica), 48
- slave diet, 1–3, 12, 18–20, 28–29, 52, 54, 58, 62
- slavery, xiii, xv, xxiii, 2, 3, 12, 43, 45–46, 55, 63, 84, 93n52, 123, 124, 196, 200n3, 247
- slaves: field, 18–19, 102; house, 18, 20, 46, 82
- slave trade (English), 1–2, 3, 43, 46, 55
- Sloane, Sir Hans, 12–13
- Slow, Beatrice, 217
- Smith, Captain John, 5–6
- snape. *See* poultry
- sorrel, xvii, 99
- soup, 67; blawly, 35n2; Bonavist (bean) soup, 217; chicken broth, 31; mutton broth, 17; red pea, 99; Saturday, 100; sancocho, 100; turtle, 207
- soursop. *See* fruits
- South Carolina, 30
- Spanish Town, Jamaica, 27, 65
- 'Spice Islands', xiv
- Spice It Up*, 238, 243–44
- spices: achar masala, 124; black mustard seed, 124; cardamom, 124; cayenne pepper, 195; geera (cumin), 124; ginger, 12, 28, 67, 99, 124, 174; nutmeg, 15; turmeric, 124
- St Christopher, 11
- Stewart Castle, Jamaica, 50
- St Lucia, 58, 68, 177
- St Nicholas Abbey, Barbados, 198
- stout. *See* drink

- stoves, 210  
strawberries. *See* fruits  
St Thomas, 61  
Sturge, Joseph, 3, 58–61  
St Vincent, 21, 22, 53, 149, 177  
subaltern histories, 82  
sugar/sugar cane/sugar plantations, xv, xviii, xx, xxiv, 2–6, 8, 9, 12–13, 15, 17, 23, 24, 26, 28, 32, 33, 36n29, 43, 46, 48–49, 50, 54, 59, 62–63, 65, 66–67, 68, 91, 98, 99, 105, 109, 111, 113, 120, 124, 149, 158, 163, 167, 178, 198–99, 211, 216, 245, 246  
Sullivan, Caroline, 101, 226n7  
survivalism, 16, 70, 125  
Sutton, David, xxii, 130n43, 137, 140–42  
swedes. *See* vegetables  
sweet potatoes. *See* vegetables  
*Sweet*, 232, 244–45, 249n22  
Sworder, Peggy, 222  
syncretism, xviii, 128
- Taino, 40n150, 97, 100  
tamarind. *See* fruits  
Tannen, Deborah, 142  
taro. *See* cush-cush  
taste/tasting, xiv, xv, xvi, 19, 24, 26, 27, 30, 32, 53, 56, 57, 65, 78, 80, 81, 87–88, 101, 111, 113, 124, 145, 148, 149, 156, 164–66, 186, 200n3, 204–5, 206–8, 216, 218, 222, 223, 234, 235, 245, 246  
tea, 13, 31, 32, 44, 62, 65, 85, 88, 89, 91, 110, 113, 115, 178, 194, 209  
Temple Yard, Bridgetown, Barbados, 122, 172  
Tesco (supermarket), 196  
Thai food, xviii, 229  
Thistlewood, Thomas, 13–18, 21–22, 34  
tinned food, 64, 149  
tomatoes. *See* fruits  
tongue (meat), 15, 31, 166  
Toronto, Canada, 146, 149, 151, 154  
tourists/tourism, 107, 128, 162, 180, 195. *See also* culinary tourism  
‘tradition’. *See* culinary heritage  
transculturation, 11, 79, 102  
Tree of Life, 96  
Trelawny, Jamaica, 50  
trickster figures and tales, xxv, 84, 97–99, 125  
Trinidad, xiii, xviii, 4, 22, 53, 63, 68–70, 74n145, 99, 102–4, 105–8, 109, 110–11, 113, 117, 120, 124, 124–25, 137, 151, 160, 171, 175, 211, 216, 223  
Trollope, Anthony, 61–64, 72n63  
turkey. *See* poultry  
turmeric. *See* spices  
turtle, xiv, 5, 10–12, 24, 32, 44, 53, 56, 78–79, 80, 81, 87, 89  
turkey soup. *See* soup  
tusk (cod fish). *See* fish  
‘Twice Laid’, 217
- UNESCO, xxviin22  
United States, 105, 169. *See also* North America
- Van Houten’s, 226n27  
Vassall, Richard, 16, 17  
vegetables: broccoli, 17, 18; callaloo, xiii, 51; carrots, 17, 31, 59, 166; coca-finger/coccos, 57; Indian kale, 51; potatoes (English), 4, 5, 6, 12, 28, 31, 32, 48, 57, 61, 62, 63, 64, 89, 90, 96, 107, 160, 162, 184, 207, 217, 222; swedes, 176; sweet potatoes, 6, 59, 67, 90, 144–45, 149, 179, 197, 199, 201n25, 218, 243  
Velvo-Kri shortening, 218  
Venezuela, 224  
Verney, Thomas, 6  
vintage style, 232, 244–45, 249n30  
Virginia, 4
- Waitrose (supermarket), 152  
Walker, Alice, 138

- Ward, Edward, 10–12, 36n40, 66, 78, 100  
Warner-Lewis, Maureen, xxiv, 120  
Warnes, Andrew, 84, 96  
*Wartime Recipes for Use in the West Indies*, 215–16  
Washington, George, 14–15  
watermelons. *See* fruits  
weddings, 99, 105–6, 107, 111, 119; cakes, 179  
Weekes, Nathaniel, 23–25  
*West Indian and Other Recipes*, 203–16, 208, 212  
West Indian stores (in diaspora), 149–50  
Wilk, Richard, 83, 88–89  
Williams-Forson, Psyche, 84  
wine. *See* drink  
Witt, Doris, xxii, 236, 237, 246, 249n31  
Worcester sauce, 63  
World Food Day, 221  
World War I, 212, 213  
World War II, 105, 210, 215  
Wynter, Sylvia, 2  
yams, 2, 5, 12, 16, 28, 33, 34, 46, 56–59, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 96, 99, 105, 243; boiled, 47, 52; creamed, 162; pie, 160; white, 120, 149; yellow, 118, 149  
Yearwood, Mrs Graham (Bessie), 203–15, 216, 225n1  
Yearwood, Mr Graham, 203, 209, 225n1  
yellow fever, 80  
Yocanu, 96  
Yorkshire pudding, 184, 191  
Young, Kerry, 110

## About the Author

**Sarah Lawson Welsh** is associate professor and reader in English and post-colonial literatures at York St John University, United Kingdom.

