Giving and receiving food, whether to relatives or to strangers, is generally recognized as a mark of positive social encounters. But differences between practices of cooking and eating can also offend, as when cooking smells offend neighbours, or, for example, Japanese were repulsed by the smells from a Maori *hangi* (a feast prepared in an earth oven), prepared by a group of Maori visiting in Japan. The wider significance may be lost in the reaction to an unfamiliar smell or taste. To offer a bear's paw as food to someone with strong conservation values sets up tensions in that relationship that have to be worked through. Misunderstandings through inadequate knowledge of local food ideology can even harm social relationships. When early visitors to the Pacific such as Captain Cook offered some of their prized meat (dried) to their Tahitian noble guests, the honor was misunderstood, since the foods were new to the guests' palates. Similarly, when a visitor to Indonesia is offered durian fruit, she is likely to question the edibility of something that smells so offensive. Learning other people's tastes is part of the social dimension of gastronomic experience.

Foods shared at household meals are cooked and presented in familiar ways. But the protocols of serving food may be unfamiliar to an outsider, as when she is served alone, while the rest of the family waits to eat later; the 'honor' may seem otherwise. The order of foods, whether sweet before savory, or separate foods served in courses, French-style, is passed on through the generations. Shared tastes, perhaps idiosyncratic
p. 246 to particular households, continue over time as well as being ↳ modified. A child learns the tastes of different foods from adults and siblings in the household, along with principles that establish certain foods as 'good' foods, or special treats, but then develops their own taste as their experience widens. Chicken and ice cream are no longer the birthday foods they used to be for English children. Instead, a birthday boy may request a party at McDonalds. For some families, a variety of tastes are cultivated in the process of sharing daily meals. For others, access to a variety of foods is limited by availability, whether because of distance from a market or supermarket or other supplier, or because of lack of cash.

Feasts are often occasions at which the range of food available is greater than that used daily in the household. Households may be asked to contribute particular foods, such as specially prepared combination dishes not usually eaten at home. In the Pacific, leaf packets of taro, corned beef, and coconut cream, baked in the earth oven, are offered as 'feast' foods. Similarly, haggis in Scotland used to be a shared communal dish, though now it is available in supermarkets, and even tinned. Thus the foods presented at a feast may be an important signifier of the success of that social event in terms of foods the participants approve of, usually the familiar, and those they consider to be unusual. Sharing ethnic dishes across national boundaries enlarges horizons, as when pizza were first introduced by Italians resident in the United States. But a pizza base topped with bananas and maple syrup indicates adaptation to the new host community.

Religious beliefs can contribute to differentiating 'good' foods from those not to be eaten. All communities select those items from their environment that they consider edible, while rejecting those they deem inedible for various local reasons. Chinese claim they eat anything, a factor that others consider unusual (Chang 1977). While pork is unacceptable to strict Muslims for religious reasons, horse or dog meat is unacceptable to many Europeans for emotional reasons. The association between a particular foodstuff and the ancestors may be a strong reason for not eating it, and for signifying it as a totem. For the Hua community in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, many rules govern the production, preparation and consumption of their food. According to Meigs (1997), the act of eating connects the Hua to the world, and emphasizes relatedness. They view foods as possessing the vitality and dynamism of living beings, but they also fear certain foods as carrying ill will, or pollution.

Ongoing exchanges of foods between households can be both a social responsibility and a practical exchange. When visiting for any length of time in another community, for example in a Jamaican village, the anthropologist is challenged by the simple need to eat, and thereby faces a complexity of social issues. To understand the relationships expressed by the plate of donuts, or fried fish, that a young girl brings to the door requires many questions. And to return that plate empty is a social offence. The relationships