

Seasons and Seasonings

Africa's Geographic Endowments of the Edible

Rhythm of the Seasons

What Africans in the preindustrial era ate and when they ate it was, as in all cultures, a compromise between individual choice, cultural preference, and the vagaries of nature. Africa's physical environment and climate imposed on it a distinctive annual rhythm—that of the seasonal calendar of climate, movement, and human ritual. In the temperate zones of the world, growing seasons and cycles of life respond most directly to fluctuations in temperature, but Africa's rhythms of life reflect the availability of moisture, especially rainfall. The shifting of the seasonal rain-bearing turbulence on an annual basis sets a general two-part pattern of seasons, one wet and one dry. The movement of the turbulence over what is known as the Intertropical Convergence Zone brings rainfall to regions north of the equator from June to September (the northern summer) and then to regions south of the equator from December to March (the southern summer).

The onset of the rains has a remarkable visual effect. Within two weeks, brown and seemingly lifeless landscapes turn green as seeds germinate and chemical reactions within soils make nutrients available to plants. Livestock—cattle, goats, sheep, camels—regain their vigor and regenerate both sinew and fat. Camel's and cow's milk becomes more plentiful. In the dry season that follows, the wet-season fields ripen for harvest, pasture grasses shift into dormancy, and livestock (and their human minders) migrate to pasture nearer permanent water sources. Where the equator crosses near

the Tanzania/Kenya border, this seasonal change brings one of the planet's most dramatic effects, the great annual seasonal migration of wildlife in the Serengeti Plain. As rainfall moves with the season, grazing wildlife—wildebeest, impala, kudu, gerenuk—and the carnivores that follow their prey move north to seasonal pastures in the summer and back south at the end of the rains when the pasture itself retreats into dormancy. For pastoral people like the Masai in East Africa, the Fulani in West Africa, and the Herero in the southwest, it is young men who follow their cattle's seasonal needs. For the Somali and the Afar in the Horn of Africa, it is the movement of their camels and goats that motivates those annual rhythms.

Africa's sharp contrast between wet and dry seasons is the most unforgiving of any continent, and the seasons have imposed on many African societies a harsh "hungry season" that runs from the end of the rains until the fall harvest. Stocks of stored grain and tubers dwindle, and households often turn to collecting wild plant foods or insects or rely on hunting for protein or saleable meat. Some of those foods of seasonal scarcity now paradoxically appear in modern cookbooks as delicacies.¹

At opposite ends of the continent, in areas like South Africa's Cape and northern Algeria, a wetter and more temperate Mediterranean climate prevails, making wine, citrus, and grain production possible. European settlers were attracted to these areas, which also provided both markets and cheap local labor.

Why did certain foods evolve in certain places? At least part of the answer is the seasonal availability of certain foods and local solutions to the problem of what people ate and when. In the 1930s, British anthropologist Audrey Richards recorded the diet and foodways of the Bemba people of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Her work showed clearly that what African people ate—and what African women cooked—changed radically through the year depending on the patterns of rain, movements of livestock, and Africa's peculiar shifts from wet to dry as the seasons changed. As a young woman anthropologist in a professional field dominated by men, Richards began to explore an unusual approach to social anthropology: she first observed women as the managers of nutrition and then tried to understand cooking itself. Her book *Land, Labour, and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* was to become a classic in social anthropology as a whole and in the field of food studies in particular. Her description of the seasonality of food in that era is an important primary historical document produced by a colonial government attempting to understand the material culture of its colonial subjects.

It also reflects a seasonal rhythm lost in an industrialized world where supermarkets homogenize the annual cycle. Her findings are presented in table I.I.

TABLE 1.1 SEASONALITY OF FOODS, BEMBA (ZAMBIA)

	Wet Weather			Cold Weather				Hot Weather			Wet Weather	
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Gardens												
Millet				-----	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	-----	-----
Maize			-----	xxxx	xx--							
Kaffir corn					-----	xxxx	xx					
Curcubits	xx	xxxx	xxxx	----								
Groundnuts				---	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	-----	-----	
Legumes (fresh)		--xx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xx--						
Legume leaves		---	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xx--				
Sweet potatoes				xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx		
Bush												
Wild spinaches					-----	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	-----		
Mushrooms	xxxx	xx									-----	xxxx
Orchids						---	xxxx	xxxx	--			
Fruit												
Meat								xxxx	xxxx	xxxx		
Fish	-----			xxxx	xxxx		xx	xxxx	xxxx	----	xxxx	xx
Caterpillars	xxxx	-----	-----	-----						-----	xxxx	xxxx
Ants etc.										xxxx	xxxx	
Honey				xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx			xxxx	xx	

xxxxxx supplies plentiful

----- supplies scarce

The lines indicate the length of time the average Bemba uses each foodstuff, either because it ripens during that particular month; or, in the case of game and fish, can be trapped then; or because he has only planted sufficient for the supply to last for a given number of months. For instance, maize could be made to last to twelve months of the year, but the ordinary Bemba only grows enough to use it fresh during two, and therefore this period only is shown as a line. Dried relishes are not shown. Caterpillars swarm at different periods in different districts and hence are marked from November to April.

Note, in the table, the preharvest scarcities of the January–March period in central Africa (what was to become northern Zambia). Richards notes the increased consumption during those months of collected wild but edible foodstuffs like caterpillars, ants, and honey. She observes:

In effect the people have a harvest season from May to September in which millet, beer, green food, ground-nuts, pulses are plentiful, and meat in some areas, and the diet is therefore ample and probably varied. This is followed by a dry season (October–November) in which millet and beer are still available but green vegetables scarce or non-existent. The wild fruits are much liked, but only for about a month or six weeks. Meat and fish are obtainable in these months also, but only in certain districts. At the beginning of the rains, November and December, the diet changes. Millet is already beginning to be short, and mushrooms and caterpillars are the main standby as additional relishes. In the late rains millet is practically non-obtainable, and gourds and occasional maize cobs are often the only available foods. Thus the diet changes completely in composition from one season to another.²

Though Richards gives us an accurate rendering of what she observed in landlocked central Africa, this description of Bemba diet offers little insight into cookery or the culinary imagination at other times and places in Africa. Would that we had such rich descriptions for other areas as well.

As mentioned earlier, both the seasonal climate and the political calendar of Africa's great empires determined in many ways what Africans ate in a particular place. The seasonality of moisture in the African climate affected not only the abundance and variety of food, but also disease, migration of humans and livestock, the timing of military campaigns, and ritual cycles of politics and religion. Kings and their subjects feasted at harvest time, but tightened their belts during the hungry season. Each of these actions by rulers or by citizens, especially the ritual feast cycle, had implications for food and cookery. Most tropical diseases, whether epidemic or endemic, were also seasonal events. Military states, like the Zulu, generally organized raids and large military campaigns during the dry season, when their soldiers were free from agricultural work and enemy harvests were in storage. Roaming armies of young men fought their rivals but also foraged among the enemy village granaries and corrals. In many cases, camps of women followed the armies to cook the spoils on campfires, a pattern of mobility that encouraged simplicity of both tools and ingredients.

Other African societies adapted to seasonality in ways that reflected a food system with meat or fish as a greater part of the mix than in the Bemba

diet that Richards describes. The historian Diana Wylie, working from accounts of contemporary observers, has described the nineteenth-century Zulu diet. A clear rhythm of seasonality is evident in her reconstruction, but with the subtle differences of a society where cattle were a more important symbolic and nutritional focus than in Richards's Bembaland:

The staples of an ordinary nineteenth-century Zulu diet were fermented milk, cereals boiled as porridge, and cultivated vegetables, eaten twice daily, first after milking and then before sunset. Zulus spoke of solid and watery foods. People stored their food by fermenting in the form of thick sour milk (*amasi*) and sorghum beer. Sour milk—extraordinarily rich in cream where the cattle grazed on long grass, but low in yield after the calves sucked—was ideally the basis of each of the two meals eaten daily. Only children drank fresh milk. Beer was a seasonal delight, the postharvest reward for a good season's crops. People ate boiled or roasted maize every day, supplemented by pumpkins, beans, taro root, and sweet potatoes. The consistency of the porridges depended mainly on how coarsely the grain was ground and for how long it was boiled. When the grain and vegetable supply ran short in late winter and early spring, that is, between June and August, people scoured the bush for wild spinaches (*imifino*), gathering greens perhaps three or four times a week in the spring, drying some leaves for winter meals when they might have to ration themselves to one daily meal. While looking for *imifino*, they could also hunt for bitter herbs to help their stomachs accommodate the radical shifts in diet brought by the changing seasons. Meat was rarely served. . . . By-products of a slaughtered beast produced highly prized dishes of fatty dumplings and sausages and congealed blood. Only at such times and few others did nondairy animal fat enter Zulu diet.³

Although the Bemba diet of the 1930s and the nineteenth-century Zulu food culture seem unremarkable and monotonous compared to that of Cape Town and the East African coastal ports (see chapter 6), both Bemba and Zulu diets were then undergoing change through contact with the wider world of neighboring people, economic forces, and European intruders. And though southern African societies like the Zulu and Bemba are quite different in cultural and economic terms, by the mid-nineteenth century

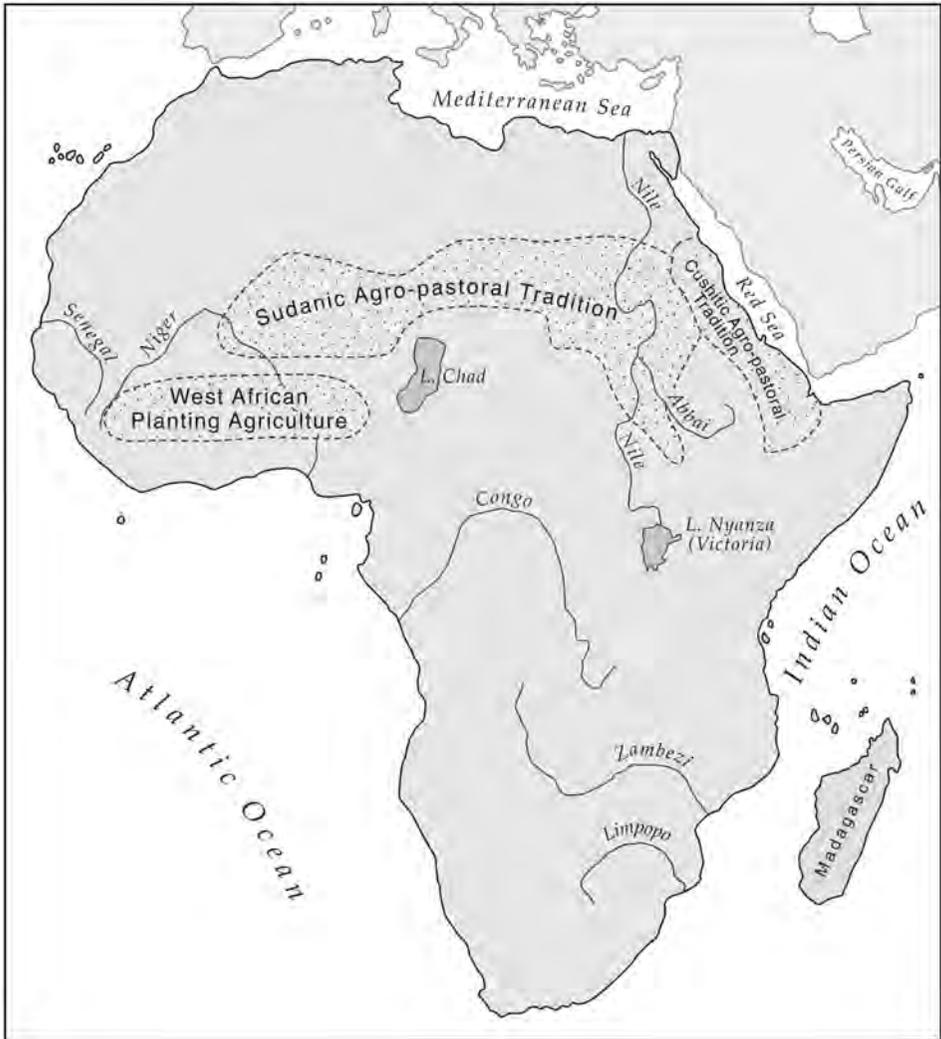
their foods were more cosmopolitan than one might think. They included adopted New World plants like maize and groundnuts (although not yet cassava; see below). Both societies consumed maize as a vegetable snack on the cob in the milky green stage, but not yet as a rough milled flour used boiled in porridges. Millet (for Bemba) and sorghum (for Zulu) were the dominant grains historically, and as rural peoples not yet drawn into an urban orbit, both the Zulu and Bemba cooks also had access to a natural world of wild plants, game, and seasonal insects. Locusts, ants, and caterpillars were treats that broke the seasonal monotony, as Richards recorded meticulously in her seasonal food chart. The rural diets depicted by Richards's pioneering study and Wylie's more recent one were distinct from an older maritime and cosmopolitan culinary culture of the coastal areas of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic Rim, where fish, fruit, and spicy curries with coconut milk brought a wide variety of flavors to local diets.

A Chronology of African Cuisine

Three distinct periods shaped the cookery of Africa in the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first. The regional systems of food types and cooking described in part 3 of this book were in one way or another the results of historical changes that brought together ingredients, particular oral knowledge, the practice of how to cook, what consumers expected, and, finally, culinary communities that came to recognize themselves as having a common cuisine. The three periods are described below.

Africa in the World, c. 1500 CE

Africa's culinary history begins with its edible palette of possibilities in ingredients derived from hunting, gathering, agriculture, and herding. While Africa is now universally understood to be the place of humankind's origin, our knowledge of its agricultural history of food is more limited than that of other world areas. Although sub-Saharan Africa was home to three distinct zones in which food production arose (the Sahel zone, tropical West Africa, and the Ethiopian highlands), Africa had fewer endowments than other parts of the world in genetic materials of plants and animals available for domestication. This is particularly true in the distribution of the fifty-six large-seeded grass species (the ancestors of wheat, barley, rice, and rye) that made up the raw material from which humans could domesticate cereals. West Asia, Europe, North Africa, and England had a total of thirty-three



MAP 1.1 African agricultural innovation. *Map by Claudia K. Walters*

species; the Americas had eleven; and sub-Saharan Africa had only four. As for large domesticated mammals, Africa was the genetic homeland of only the Nile Valley's donkey, while the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia was home to four (goat, sheep, pig, and cow).⁴

A simple list of Africa's limited genetic endowments of the flora and fauna of food sources, however, belies the dynamism of Africa's wider physical and human geography. If Africa had fewer building blocks of food

supply, its ability to adopt outside foods was its greatest skill. Ironically, of course, humankind itself had its earliest florescence in Africa, where gathering and hunting activities sustained human food sources and eventually fostered the skills in foraging and agriculture that humans took with them on their global expansion. More relevant for its food and culinary history, Africa has always been part of a global system of biological and human exchange.

Africa's globalization is not a new phenomenon, and its importation of new types of food was not an exception. Africa's human population, and its cooking pots, combined the continent's own peculiar initial gifts of nature with ingredients and culinary ideas of others that they absorbed and adapted, usually with great energy and imagination. The continent has long been on the receiving end of world trade in goods, ideas, and genetic endowments related to Africa's culinary larder. Interactions took place across penetrable ecological borders (the Sahara), along natural corridors of trade (the Nile Valley), along ocean currents (the Indian Ocean Rim), and along tightly organized trade networks (the Red Sea/Persian Gulf) of peoples, ingredients, and ideas about cooking. In more recent times (after 1500 CE), the Atlantic Rim has played perhaps the largest role as a result of the forced migration of African peoples to the New World along with their tropical ingredients and cookery ideas. These pathways enabled activities that at some times absorbed ideas peacefully and at other times took them by force.

Africa's culinary engagements with the wider world in the early pre-Atlantic period were sometimes subtle and often profound. When Europeans first arrived at the coasts of West Africa and East Africa before 1500, they found a huge range of "foreign" crops and fruits already well adopted by African farmers and cooks. Each of these geographic connections flavored African cookery, influencing the evolution of distinctive African cuisines in differing regions. Each chapter of this book describes a cornucopia of ingredients that cooks adapted, filtered, and adjusted to make regional cuisines marked by their own culinary philosophies and the iconic dishes that are part of their identity. Transcripts of this accumulated and dynamic knowledge—otherwise called recipes—demonstrate the history of African cookery as a form of distinctive technical and aesthetic practice. From the Mediterranean world (including Egypt) Africa received citrus fruits, chickpeas, wheat, barley, onions (including garlic and shallots), Asiatic rice, dates, goats, sheep, and cattle, either from across the Sahara or via the Nile

Valley. Other Mediterranean foods included figs, melons, pomegranates, and cucumbers. From the Indian Ocean and Asian connections had come Asian yam, coconuts, mangoes, ginger, bananas, and rice (see chapter 2). Some of these had even originated in Africa and returned in new forms.⁵ Contacts with the monsoonal trade of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf brought coconut palms, sugarcane, cloves, cocoyams, and, indirectly, maize.

Africa also accepted certain cooking techniques, such as brewing coffee from Yemen and steaming couscous from North Africa, but rejected others, such as cooking rice in fat, typical of Arab and Spanish cookery. The result was a smorgasbord of possible ingredients, techniques, and taste combinations from which African farmers and cooks selected and innovated as ecological, political, and economic factors brought cultural and aesthetic adaptations of many kinds.

The Columbian Circulation as Culinary Benchmark, 1500–1900

Dynamic forces were already at play when European maritime and naval technology in the fifteenth century expanded trade across global oceans and transformed forever humankind's cooking larder. Over time there was much to choose from and lots of ways to cook it. Africa's farmers and its cooks were active participants in that moveable feast. Food writer Linda Civitello, in an evocative but misleading image, refers to the opening of the Atlantic world in the late fifteenth century as "the collision of Eastern and Western Hemispheres." Environmental historian Alfred Crosby coined the term "Columbian Exchange," which stuck in the literature and public vocabulary but implies that the exchange was ordered and bilateral.⁶ But it was not so much a European-led event as it was a process, the initiation of a long-term swirl of material culture on a colossal scale, with Africa front and center in the biological buffet that resulted.

The Atlantic biological circulation involved a number of key foods from the New World, Africa, the Mediterranean, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, as shown in the lists in table 1.2. These lists, and others, of Columbian Exchange materials are somewhat misleading in that they distort the swirls, eddies, and recirculation of genetic materials, the lumpy transfer of knowledge between cultural groups and economic classes, and Africans' role as sources, consumers, and adopters overall. This is particularly true of human agency and intellect, the role of African farmers and cooks. In fact, until the 1830s the Atlantic exchange brought three to four times more Africans to the New World (as captives) than Europeans, and the ships carrying those

TABLE 1.2 THE ATLANTIC CIRCULATION (COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE)

Foods from the New World to Africa			
<i>Animals</i>	<i>Vegetables/Spices</i>	<i>Grains, Legumes</i>	<i>Fruits</i>
turkey	allspice	kidney bean	avocado
muscovy duck	green beans	navy bean	cacao
	soy beans	maize	papaya
	capsicum (peppers)	cassava (manioc)	pineapple
	pumpkins	peanut (groundnut)	tomato
	potatoes (Irish)		guava
	potatoes (sweet)		
	sunflower		
Foods from Africa (including the Mediterranean) to the New World			
<i>Animals</i>	<i>Vegetables/Spices</i>	<i>Grains, Legumes</i>	<i>Fruits</i>
donkey	cowpeas (black-eyed peas)	sorghum	watermelon
	okra	millet	lemon
	coffee	African rice	orange
	malagueta pepper (grains of paradise)	sugarcane	banana (via Asia)
	yam	teff	
	olive		

Africans often brought African domesticated food crops with them, including rice, okra, watermelon, yams, and black-eyed peas.⁷ Perhaps more importantly, those African captives brought the knowledge of tropical cultivation, food preparation, and medicine to the New World. Geographer Judith Carney makes this point effectively regarding rice:

The development of rice culture in the Americas required more than the movement of seeds across the Atlantic. In Virginia rice was planted and discarded as a potential export crop by whites because cultivation with rainfall was low yielding and European milling methods could not produce a whole-grained product. In the Carolina colony blacks implemented another way of growing rice, in high-yielding wetland environments, and introduced the mortar and pestle for milling. Rice cultivation in the Americas depended on the diffusion of an entire cultural system, from production to consumption.⁸

This last point (about consumption) points directly to the issue of cookery, where Africa's contribution to the New World's methods of cooking rice

has been profound, continuing right into the twenty-first century. Africa was thus instrumental in shaping how the New World cooks—then and now (see also chapter 7).

Africa's Colonial Period in Culinary Practice

Africa's formal colonial experience stretched from roughly 1885 through the mid-1970s, an era when European powers ruled colonies in sub-Saharan and North Africa. Afro-European cultural and economic interaction in places like Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa and along the West African coast, however, had been long established during the mercantile age (roughly 1500–1850) that preceded formal colonial rule. While the impact of Europe on Africa in the colonial era was profound in terms of language, the creation of economic dependency, and the formation of new national identities, the precise effect of these factors on food and cookery is less well understood.

Food writer Linda Civitello asserts rather recklessly that “much of modern African cuisine is the colonial cuisine that Europeans forced on Africa in the nineteenth century.” This is why, she says, “there are croissants and baguettes in Ivory Coast in West Africa, spaghetti in Ethiopia and Eritrea on the east, and curry and chutney in British east and west Africa.”⁹ Her observations are true of elite urban culture, formal restaurants, and expatriate homes perched in elite urban neighborhoods in postcolonial Africa, and perhaps what one can buy in a modern supermarket in Addis Ababa or Ouagadougou. But the far more salient reality was not the introduction of the French baguette, but the colonial period's role in the expansion of scale of trade, centralization of power, and the emergence of national political life, which influenced Africa's kitchens and food stalls in a global marketplace of new ingredients, industrial foods, and consumer tastes for Coca-Cola, Uncle Ben's rice, and Maggi broth cubes.

But the movement of ideas about cooking, class preferences for wheat bread, sweets, and industrialized canned goods flowed in two directions, not just one. Food historian Filipe Fernández-Armesto argues for a very different view of the culinary effects of imperialism:

No source of influence in cookery . . . has exceeded imperialism. Empires can sometimes be powerful enough to enforce a metropolitan taste on a peripheral area, and they usually promote human migration and colonization. These in turn transmit eating habits alongside other aspects of culture, or reeducate the

palates of expatriates who become vectors of new tastes when they return home. The tides of empire run in two directions: first the flow outwards from an imperial center creates metropolitan diversity and “frontier” cultures—cuisines of miscegenation—at the edges of empires. Then the ebb of imperial retreat carries home colonists with exotically acclimatized palates and releases the forces of “countercolonization,” dappling the former imperial heartlands with enclaves of sometimes subject peoples, who carry their cuisines with them.¹⁰

Fernández-Armesto has in mind more than the twentieth-century European colonization of Africa; he also includes the Ottoman Turks, the Dutch in the East Indies, imperial China, and the Islamic effects on the Mediterranean, among others. In this book it will also become evident that empires, states, and religious movements in Africa like Ethiopia, Asante, Oyo, and Benin promoted a mix of cookery, ideas, ingredients, and forms of consumption of particular Africa-based cuisines.

The influence of colonial rule on Africa did not involve merely formal political domination; it also included the work of missionaries, the establishment of schools, and the circulation of different peoples in colonial society. The effect in food and cooking, however, was not a transfer in toto, but a more subtle and layered infusion into and out of different parts of the non-Western world. So a far more fundamental measure of the effects of European colonial rule on food and cooking is in the unintended consequences by which ingredients, cooks, and ideas circulated under the radar of formal programs like mission schools and teacher training. Here is an example of gendered communication about cookery during the Jeanes School Program in Kenya colony of the 1920s and 1930s, a program that trained male teachers but also asked wives to join in the colonial effort by attending classes in sewing, gardening, and proper hospitality. The actual result was an informal exchange of ideas about cooking and cuisine that the colonial officials had not planned, as Zipporah M’Mwirichai, a wife of one of the male participant teachers from central Kenya in the 1930s, recalled:

I was always nervous sitting in those classes [in European hospitality] because I did not follow what we were learning. I was not able to understand the teacher. I always waited for the free time or the weekend to ask other women to show me how to do the sewing or to explain to me what the teacher had said. This way, I

was able to learn faster. What I most liked was cooking, but not the *mzungu* [white European] foods. I wanted to know how the other women from different parts of the country cooked their foods, and I also showed them how we cooked our foods. By the time we were through with the training, I could cook rice, fry my foods with onions, cook *ugali* [maize porridge], and fish and chicken. Some women learnt my way of mixing maize and beans to make [a] family meal. I learnt more things by visiting the women in the village than I learnt from those classrooms. I had trouble keeping measurements of flour, sugar and butter when we were taught to make cakes. One evening while we practiced our baking, we figured out how to estimate the measurement by using our hands and eyes, not spoons. The *mzungu* teaching was full of mathematics, we wanted simple things.¹¹

This recollection suggests two of the arguments made in this book. First, it indicates the importance of the contact between different food cultures (e.g., maize-based, rice-based) and language groups (e.g., Kikuyu, Luo, Swahili), in this case within the Kenya colony. Second, it provides illuminating testimony of the oral nature of the transfer of knowledge about types of food and types of cooking as dynamic and active—the “vibration” cooking described by American Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor.¹² Measurements, ingredients, and innovation by consensus among women took place as an active process alongside emerging ideas of what it meant to be Kenyan, Nigerian, or Ghanaian.

The emergence of colonial cuisines was a common occurrence in Africa and in other world regions like British India, Dutch Indonesia, and French Algeria. From these colonial collisions came hybrid dishes—Scottish kedgeree (salmon and rice), Cape bobotie (ground lamb baked in a béchamel cream sauce), or Algerian ratatouille (with couscous)—using ingredients that moved between colonial and local kitchens. These new concoctions had new flavors, colors, and tropical pizzazz. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai makes the case for the emergence of an “Indian” cuisine as a culinary consensus that emerged “because of, rather than despite, the increasing articulation of regional and ethnic cuisines.” He argues that in the pulsating ideas about cultural identity in emergent nations like Kenya or India, cosmopolitan cultures in urban areas interacted “dialectically” with local parochial expressions rather than simply mixing willy-nilly. “Especially

in culinary matters,” he asserts, “the melting pot is a myth.”¹³ What he means in plainer language is that the emergence of a new type of cookery was not a random mixing of many types but an interaction of flavors, textures, and ingredients that reflected power relations, encounters between social classes, and the creation of a middle class that cooked in multiple identities. This phenomenon, visible in India in the post–World War II era, affected African cookery in the 1980s and continues today in cosmopolitan areas like London, Washington, Paris, and Houston, where African-themed restaurants are becoming common.

A similar view holds that there are three types of imperial—as distinct from colonial—cuisines: (1) cuisines of the colonized areas themselves, which sweep ingredients, styles, and dishes from all over the regions of conquest into a central menu; (2) colonial cookery, which juxtaposes the food of elite colonists from the home country with the styles of local cooks and concubines; and (3) the “counter-colonial” effect, whereby the food culture of the imperial country is exposed to the cookery and foods of the subject people when the latter migrate to the imperial center.¹⁴ The first type is exemplified by the Indian cuisine most visible in the cookbooks of Madhur Jaffrey, the actress whose books popularized Indian cooking across the West and India itself. A second type, similar though less globally visible, can be seen in Kenya, Malawi, and Nigerian national cookbooks compiled by expatriate women.¹⁵ The third type is certainly visible in the Indonesian *rijsttafel* of Amsterdam, Indian takeaway shops in London and Manchester, or the Vietnamese restaurants of Paris or Everett, Massachusetts.

Africa’s influence in Europe is a far more recent phenomenon of the postcolonial period than South Asian or Southeast Asian cooking or even the migration of Tex-Mex cuisine to Europe via America. The most visible examples of African cuisine are Ethiopian restaurants, which appeared in most major cities of Europe and North America in the 1980s. Yet cookery and a recognizable cuisine from Europe’s former African colonies, like Nigeria, Cameroon, or Angola, is not yet a common part of the cosmopolitan restaurant scene. Why?

One possible reason is that the effect of the colonial experience in Africa differed substantially from that in India, Vietnam, or Indonesia. In the case of Asian cuisine, the category of “curry” associated with a blend of Indian Ocean spices used in meat and vegetable stews and using sweet and hot accompaniments of chutneys and pickles is a concoction of the Indian colonial experience, rather than imported wholly from local Indian traditions.

In East Africa, colonial curry dishes spread to the coast and inland towns more than British cookery did; samosas are much more common than Cornish pasties in East Africa. The curries found in the coastal cuisines of eastern and southern Africa are versions of the hybrid dishes assembled by the British and Indian armies and adapted among trading communities along the Indian Ocean rim. In places like Lamu, Malindi (in Kenya), or Maputo (in Mozambique), dishes like goat curry, curried black-eyed beans, and curried chicken are a regular feature of local menus, but more for a commercial audience than in the home cooking of Kenyan workers or the Mozambiquan women who process cashew nuts in a local factory. These dishes and taste/texture combinations are the results of historical interactions between trade of spices and trading communities and local cooks who knew how to prepare them.

Cooks in colonial households occupied a middle ground between local knowledge and the culinary expectations of their employers. Those connections link colonial Africa to a wider geography of colonial settings more than to Europe itself. For example, food writer Harvey Day's multivolume cookbook *Curries of India* includes dishes from Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, Malaya, and Thailand under the category of curry.¹⁶ *The Malawi Cook Book*, published in 1979, is a compilation of recipes by three British expatriate women that includes sections on soups, fish, edible insects, meats, chicken, salads, desserts, and household hints. We know little about these women themselves, but their cookbook tells us something about the culinary world they came from and the one they came to inhabit. Its recipes include a full range of the culinary geography of the British empire: Irish stew, chicken Maryland, Assamese fish curry, kedgerie, *mtedza* (groundnut) chicken, and a wild poultry dish called duck hartebeeste.¹⁷ Unlike these colonial culinary cultures, however, African cookery's influence has taken place less in the public sphere of the upscale urban restaurant than in the daily cookery of the Caribbean, southern United States, and Latin America.

Africa's cookery, or more properly cookerries, evolved historically as the product of a lively stew of culture, place, and migration within a wider world of politics, power, and human interaction. Africa's cooks were among the more subtle intermediaries of those dynamics. Even though, as women, they were marginal to formal politics at the regional, national, and household levels, they were the custodians of an oral culture of concoction that drew on local and exotic ingredients and formulae to transform raw materials into cultural meaning in taste, texture, and aroma.