

## From:

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### **Caribbean Food Cultures**

### Culinary Practices and Consumption in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas

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»Caribbean Food Cultures« approaches the matter of food from the perspectives of anthropology, sociology, cultural and literary studies. Its strong interdisciplinary focus provides new insights into symbolic and material food practices beyond eating, drinking, cooking, or etiquette. The contributors, e.g. Rita De Maeseneer and Fabio Parasecoli, discuss culinary aesthetics and neo/colonial gazes on the Caribbean in literary documents, audiovisual media, and popular images. They investigate the negotiation of communities and identities through the preparation, consumption, and commodification of »authentic« food. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the influence of underlying socioeconomic power relations for the reinvention of Caribbean and Western identities in the wake of migration and transnationalism.

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# The Caribbean (on the) Dining Table

## Contextualizing Culinary Cultures

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WIEBKE BEUSHAUSEN, ANNE BRÜSKE, ANA-SOFIA COMMICHAU,

PATRICK HELBER, SINAH KLOSS

Food is the first of the essentials of life, the world's largest industry, our most frequently indulged pleasure, the core of our most intimate social relationships.

WARREN BELASCO 2008: 1

## CONTEXTUALIZING CARIBBEAN FOOD CULTURES

Food is at once a material good and a means of symbolic representation. Both its production and consumption can be regarded as performative acts that play a crucial role in various areas of human behavior and interaction. This involves, for example, the self-preservation of the body, the construction of ethnic, religious, and national identities, local and global commercial relationships, or the equal allocation of food and relations of production. These biological, social, economic, historic, and ethnic dimensions have taken a special turn in the Caribbean as a geographic region and for its discursive construction.<sup>1</sup> Forced and vol-

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1 The Caribbean "is often defined as the island groupings of the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles, and the Bahamas, plus certain coastal zones of South and Central America sharing a cultural and historical relation to the island plantation societies (e.g. Suriname, Guyana, Belize)" (Sheller 2003: 5). We consider the Caribbean as a geographical and historical space as well as a sociocultural construction. In reference to Sheller,

untary migration have significantly influenced food cultures in this sociocultural space, marked by the contrast of its apparent diversity and subjacent common societal patterns. Thus, on the one hand, colonizers, enslaved Africans, indentured laborers, privateers, and refugees were social actors within specific historical relations of production, consumption, and trade. On the other hand, these different groups of people brought along social, cultural, and economic practices related to food, consumer and luxury goods such as tobacco, coffee, and sugar, which were subject to change and creolization. In the course of colonization, decolonization, migration, and tourism, the aforementioned goods, amongst many other Caribbean products and raw materials, have been circulating between the Caribbean, Europe, and North America. As B.W. Higman (2011: 97-140) and Sidney Mintz (1986) have shown, sugar has been the single most important Caribbean good. The so-called “sugar revolution” (1650-1770) brought about significant transformations of the ecosystem and society. It determined the colonies’ economic and social structures by creating slaveholder societies and, subsequently, the system of indentureship. In addition, the emerging plantations, via a particular plantation architecture and extensive deforestation, visibly changed the colonies’ geographical surface:

Once inscribed on the surface of the islands, sugar created a landscape that proved highly durable and a system of exploitation of land and people that was capable of withstanding social and political shocks. It was in this process and this period that the modern Caribbean was born. (Higmann 2011: 98)

In the course of the development of a highly sophisticated sugar industry, a complex interplay of production, consumption, and power structures began to dominate the relations between the European colonial powers and the Caribbean as well as within the colonies and Europe. Interestingly enough, in *Sweetness and Power*, Mintz points out the active role that colonies played in stimulating European demand for refined sugar and shaping European taste (cf. 1986: xxix). During the sugar revolution, the cultivation of sugarcane expanded on numerous islands, as e.g. Barbados, Jamaica, Guadeloupe, or Cuba. This caused a large-scale economic dependency on exportation, first to the ‘motherlands’ and, after decolonization, to the U.S. in many cases. For example, in Cuba, dependency shifted from Spain to the influential North American neighbor and later, during the Cold War, to the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, after the breakdown of the U.S.S.R., Cuba’s political peculiarity occasioned one of the most fatal crises in

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we also “think of the Caribbean as an effect, a fantasy, a set of practices, and a context” (ibid.).

Cuban economy, euphemistically called the ‘Special Period in Times of Peace’ (*Período Especial en Tiempos de Paz*). This epoch of extreme food shortage has left an indelible footmark on Cuban sociocultural and culinary practices, for instance instigating the population to invest in self-supply, e.g. by breeding pigs in highly urbanized areas, and the black market. Furthermore, Cubans had to adapt traditional recipes to the deteriorated nutrition conditions, involuntarily mimicking the famous socialist chef Nitza Villapol.<sup>2</sup> Most likely it is this combination of deprivation and inventiveness that also led to the invention of urban legends like the *bistec de frazada de piso*, or rag steak (cf. De Maeseneer in this volume).

The Cuban Special Period and the lasting effects of colonial economy referenced above are emblematic of the sociocultural aspects of culinary and consumption practices as explored in this anthology, *Caribbean Food Cultures*. It analyzes numerous facets of food cultures in the transnational and transcultural space of the Caribbean and its diasporas from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By taking postcolonial relations into account, it critically addresses the never tiring neo/colonial gaze and the problematic consumption of the Caribbean (cf. Sheller 2003). It further points out the historical continuity of the commodification of the region and its people, which has its origins in the sugar and banana plantations. The United Fruit Company, for instance, commodifies the Caribbean and its exotic fruit for marketing purposes of their Chiquita brand. The omnipresent icon of the ‘exotic woman with fruit’ sells bananas, imagines a Caribbean landscape, and also emblemizes an eroticized image of the Caribbean female body—first and famously enacted by Brazilian-Portuguese actress, dancer, and singer, Carmen Miranda (cf. Parasecoli in this volume). Thus, as Mimi Sheller rightly states, “Western European and North American publics have unceasingly consumed the natural environment, commodities, human bodies, and culture of the Caribbean over the past five hundred years” (Sheller 2003: 3). Along similar lines, Western scholarship has constructed stereotypical ideas and images of an allegedly homogeneously creolized Caribbean, reducing its complexity and diversity to symbols that fit the Western imagination. Theories of ‘créolité’ or ‘créolisation’ originated from the Caribbean and have been largely consumed by and reproduced in Western academic discourse, which either sees the Caribbean exclusively through this lens or radically decontextualizes those theories by

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2 The famous Cuban cook Nitza Villapol (1923-1998) reached the status of a national heroine by making dishes socially presentable prepared with the few existing ingredients in these times of scarcity. She published two cookbooks, *Cocina criolla* (1954) and *Cocina al minuto* (1956), and had her own TV show. Her cuisine has been considered to be ‘authentically’ Cuban (cf. De Maeseneer 2012).

eliminating their sociohistorical dimension.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the ever so often quoted dish Callaloo<sup>4</sup> is held to emblemize the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of the Caribbean in a positive way—a stew of acculturation and transculturation, of recreation, syncretism, but also traditions (cf. Houston 2005). Publications frequently draw on this image of Callaloo-soup to illustrate these concepts.<sup>5</sup> Historically, however, the mixing of people and cultures has been despised as miscegenation and regarded as bastards or impure.<sup>6</sup> The nowadays dominant, rather romanticized imaginaries of a creolized culture, or a ‘happy hybridity,’ often-times conceal conditions and lived experience that stem from asymmetries in power structures, for example, economic exploitation within an unequal global North-South divide. Processes of consuming the ethnic and exotic ‘Other’ are inextricably linked to the commodification of ‘Otherness.’ As bell hooks affirms with regard to dominant representations and appropriations of Blackness in mass media in the majority white societies of North America and Europe,

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- 3 While Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant coined the term ‘créolité’ to re-value a specific Antillean heritage of mixed origin, Glissant’s concept of ‘créolisation’ insists on the process of cultural contact in a colonial context without attaching this process to a specific geographic region (cf. Glissant 1989 [1981], Bernabé and Chamoiseau 2006, Müller and Ueckmann 2013: 19-21).
  - 4 Callaloo refers to either a specific plant used for cooking or a specific dish. According to the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, calalu (or Callaloo) is defined as “[a]ny of a number of plants with edible, succulent leaves” which is cooked as green vegetables. As a dish calalu refers to 1) a “very thick soup made of Calalu I. or Dashéen leaves and other ingredients [...] served as a main meal,” 2) a “dish of solid food prepared by boiling some of the same ingredients” or 3) as a “general mixture” (Allsopp 2003: 130).
  - 5 For example, Callaloo as a dish is referred to in Viranjini Munasinghe’s study *Callaloo or Tossed Salad?* (2001), where it emblemizes creolization, the ‘melting pot,’ and is opposed to the image of the tossed salad. Other publications referring to Callaloo are, for instance, Aisha Khan’s *Callaloo Nation* (2004).
  - 6 The terms ‘bastard’ and ‘hybrid’ are originally racist and colonial categories, which named deviations from an assumed racial purity. They are crucial in the social construction of races and racial hierarchies and part of a discourse of social degeneration. The latter was associated with miscegenation in the eyes of the white colonizers (cf. Ha and Arndt 2011: 627). While ‘bastard’ maintains to date its racist content, the term ‘hybrid’ was picked by scholars of cultural and postcolonial studies and endowed with a new and opposing meaning. It further became part of technological and postmodern capitalist discourses and is often used without any knowledge of its original racist and pejorative meaning (cf. Ha 2011: 346).

[t]he commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture. (hooks 1992: 21)

While hooks is certainly right in her critique of the exploitation of difference as commodities “offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate” (39), the perceived and constructed ‘Otherness’ may also be appropriated by the ‘Other’ who engages in commodification processes (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 24). In the Caribbean, chattel slavery, economic systems of exploitation, and social hierarchies based on race have favored structures that have led to the marginalization of minorities during the de- and postcolonial period until today. Consequently, the construction of the ethnic ‘Other’ concerns not only colonial, that is European or North American, gazes on ‘non-white’ Caribbean populations, but also involves processes of ‘Othering’ among the different groups, for instance between Indo- and Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Lebanese, and indigenous communities.<sup>7</sup>

## COOKING AND CONSUMING ‘AUTHENTIC’ FOOD

The Caribbean has traditionally been seen as a region where food was produced for export to and consumption in Europe or North America (cf. Garth 2013).<sup>8</sup> This perspective neglects the fact that even in the past food has been imported to the Caribbean to feed its populations, as autarchy was never achieved in post/colonial times. According to Wilson, the colonial project required the “importation of European food [...], as human factors like population increases from brutal forms of labor recruitment and geographical factors such as floods and droughts created scarcities” (Wilson 2013: 109). Non-perishable foods and products manufactured to be shipped to the Caribbean not only changed the diets of colonizers and colonized, but “became staples” (ibid.) and integral parts of

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7 A case in point is the racialized discourse of the ‘dougl’a’ in Trinidad, referring to the offspring of mixed African and Indian ancestry. Shalini Puri comments that “anxieties around racial ambiguity are often expressed as disavowals of the dougl’a—either through the discursive repression of the dougl’a or through explicit attack on the category” (Puri 2004: 190).

8 Not only in regard to food and crops, but also concerning resources and labor, the Caribbean is often considered as a “place for extraction” (Cabezas in Garth 2013: 7).



their diets.<sup>9</sup> This practice of importing foods and drinks is even (more) visible today. Not only do inter- and multinational companies such as PepsiCo Inc. and Nestlé S.A. import edible goods, but also family members and friends, who have migrated to North America or Europe, actively engage in the exchange and the sending of consumption goods to the Caribbean. The necessary infrastructure is provided by specialized shipping companies, which offer affordable shipment of boxes and barrels for individuals, families, or associations. Barrels and boxes sent from North America to the Caribbean are to a vast extent filled with food items, such as oil, pasta, instant coffee, cereals, and cookies (cf. Plaza in this volume). Caribbean people also actively engage in the consumption of goods produced abroad and defined as Western. Hence, the consumption of culturally ‘othered’ goods is not a one-way street. Both, in the Caribbean and abroad, branded goods that signify ‘the foreign’ are very popular and at times even demanded by the receivers. Through their consumption, a means to access distant places, oftentimes potential migration destinations, is created and social hierarchies are re/established on local and international levels (cf. Halstead 2002).<sup>10</sup>

According to Daniel Miller, consumption is a “process of objectification” meaning both “a practice in the world and a form in which we construct our understandings of ourselves in the world” (Miller 1995: 30). In other words, consumption can be defined as a performative act that not only fulfills a concrete purpose, but also serves as a medium to construct identities and to express one’s position in relation to society, class, nation, religion, and culture. In many respects, food cultures are inextricably linked to symbolic and material consumption practices that are much more than simply preparing, eating, and digesting food, but include processes of appropriation, infection, exhibition as well as possession, destruction, or wasting (cf. Sheller 2003: 14). At the core of consumption lie relations that are “economic, political, cultural, social, and emotional” (ibid.). By preparing and eating *mofongo*<sup>11</sup> or *mangú*,<sup>12</sup> derived from African cul-

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9 The majority of these goods was either smoked or salted (e.g. boxed fish and beef). Crops and food produced in the Caribbean for local markets and home consumption were “indigenous and African crops like yams, sweet potatoes, and cassava” (Wilson 2013: 109).

10 Monetary remittances have impacted the diets of people living in the Caribbean, as brands and other goods available for purchase in stores are becoming more affordable to greater parts of the population.

11 Puerto Rican dish made from pureed plantains with vegetables, seafood, or meat traditionally served with rice and beans.

12 Dominican side dish made from mashed green plantains.

inary traditions, especially in the diaspora, one nourishes oneself while at the same time revealing his or her identification as Puerto Rican or Dominican.

It is in this relation of food, consumption, and self-definitions that the social constructedness of authenticity and its importance for culinary practices come to matter. This aspect is of particular interest in the area of food studies. Changing food cultures de/construct 'authentic' Caribbeanness as well as national and diasporic identities. In this regard certain questions need to be addressed: What is the functional role of food for re/inventing and performing individual and collective identities? To what extent are Caribbean food practices and representations crucial to constructions of an authentic and stable self both for Caribbean and western communities? Particularly in migratory contexts, specific ingredients, spices, and cooking rituals help in the construction of perceived 'pure' identities. When asking how and in which contexts authenticity is constructed, oftentimes, it is "the pressure of nostalgic expatriates and authenticity-seeking travelers" (Belasco 2008: 30) that influences a culture's cuisine. Cookbooks play a fundamental role in the process of authenticating specific culinary practices and dishes by establishing written and printed standards. In "How to Make a National Cuisine" Arjun Appadurai considers the writing of cookbooks as a technique to determine a specific regional and cultural cuisine (cf. also Lawson Welsh in this volume). In doing so, Appadurai explains, "[...] what are created, exchanged, and refined are culinary stereotypes of the Other, stereotypes that are then partly standardized in the new cookbooks" (Appadurai 1988:7). Likewise, Anita Mannur underlines the impact of migration on the construction of national cuisines, clarifying that recipes in some cookbooks "strategically mobilize nostalgic memories of the past to enhance the value of the recipe for a readership hungry to consume 'authentic' difference" (Mannur 2007: 14). While this is but one example of how authenticity is negotiated, the growing influence of remittances from overseas, multinational companies, and international tourism must be taken into account. What is perceived as authentic everyday food in the Caribbean is transformed, as Wilk (1999, 2006) exemplifies in the case of Belize, which regained independence in 1981 and since then has been determining its own 'national' cuisine.

## STUDYING FOOD

Food studies are not limited to a mere description, but have a clear analytical scope.<sup>13</sup> Their subversive potential, then, lies in their ability to transcend “disciplinary boundaries and to ask inconvenient questions” (Belasco 2008: 6). Food studies enable an enriching synthesis of historical, philosophical, anthropological, economic, political, literary, and natural-scientific research. They ask why in certain parts of the world people have foods of all kinds in abundance, while in other parts malnutrition and starvation are still a tremendous problem. The search for answers starts with the investigation of the origins and routes of food. These inquiries inevitably raise new questions concerning hunger, inequality, neo-colonialism, and their connection to global capitalism in general (cf. *ibid.*). Food studies therefore always display a complex system of exploitation based on a variety of power relations between the global North and the countries in the South.

As “intrinsically interdisciplinary” (Parasecoli 2008: 11), the emerging academic field of food studies includes a multitude of perspectives and areas of interest, such as nutrition and health, food chain and production, food security, religious usages of food, culinary practices and identities, and many more (cf. Mintz and Du Bois 2002, Belasco 2008). Journals like *Gastronomica* or *Food, Culture and Society* offer multidisciplinary platforms for this diverse research area where they enable discussions on the history, literature, as well as on the social and cultural impact of food. Interestingly enough, the contributions often reach beyond the scope of academia by including works of culinary professionals and artists.

Publications on food, its production and consumption in the Caribbean and its diasporas are scarce which is all the more intriguing given that food and crops have always been of high significance in the region. The few existing studies have mainly been conducted in the disciplines of history, social and cultural an-

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13 Roland Barthes identified the symbolic value of food as a “system of communication” (Barthes 1997 [1961]: 29). The usage of specific ingredients and different methods of preparation are, then, part of a “system of differences in signification” that enables a “communication by way of food” (30). Claude Lévi-Strauss even attempted to provide cultural categorizations of dietary customs by analyzing specific food preparation habits. His highly controversial concept of the culinary triangle opposes three food conditions: the raw, the cooked, and the rotted. Therein, the angles are divided according to the required cultural impact, since “the cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation” (Lévi-Strauss 1997 [1966]:37).

thropology (Ortiz 1940; Mintz 1986; Miller 1995; Sheller 2003; Higman 2008; Garth 2013), agricultural sciences (Ganpat and Isaac 2012), cultural studies (Cooper 2004; Dreisinger 2010; Hope 2010), and literary criticism (Mehta 2005; De Maeseneer and Collard 2010; Mannur 2010; Loichot 2013). Several recurring key topics discussed in these works include issues of ethnicity and authenticity, the significance of national dishes, their symbolism for the nation and national identity, and how the local and the global meet over kitchen talk. They furthermore show that food often serves as a medium to translate memory, longing, and nostalgia. Culinary practices are aestheticized in advertisements, fictional literature, film, and visual arts. Here, they represent ‘ethnic food’ or function as metaphors or symbols, depicting gender norms, (normative or ‘deviant’) sexualities, and constructions of the body.

The present volume fills this evident gap in food studies dedicated to the Caribbean and its diasporas from the perspective of social anthropology, cultural studies, social and behavioral sciences. The essays of this volume are methodologically diverse. They explore food, consumption and related practices, performances and aesthetics in religious contexts, popular culture, new media, and literature concentrating on a variety of key aspects. For example, they consider how food-related practices and discourses in colonial, postcolonial, and transnational Caribbean spaces de/construct ethnic, gender and class identity, as well as alterity. Moreover, the contributions demonstrate to what extent consumption, power constellations, and human exploitation have been interrelated in their historical continuity. Food discourses and practices have subversive potential to counter hegemonic structures and neo/colonial discourses. Following this lead, the contributions take into consideration perspectives that are critical of gender biases and social hierarchies. The authors focus on the geographical locations of the Caribbean diaspora in the U.S. and the U.K. as well as on various Caribbean nation states, such as Cuba, Jamaica, Suriname, and Martinique. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary anthology draws extensively from source material as diverse as TV shows, cookbooks, travelogues, novels, advertising, and commercials as well as quantitative and qualitative observation.

## **MENU, DISHES, AND INGREDIENTS**

Now, in what way does this anthology serve the academic dining table with a Caribbean and diasporic menu? If not literally then certainly intellectually nourishing, the collection offers a rich and tasty four-course meal made up of Caribbean food and consumption cultures. What are the major dishes? Which theoret-

ical and methodological spices flavor this interdisciplinary stew? The twelve contributors selected and cooked up the best ingredients. They focus on medial representations of food cultures, neo/colonial perspectives, the pungent question of authenticity, as well as community-building through consumption practices.

The chapters of the first course “Culinary Aesthetics” pay attention to the aestheticization of food practices in various medial genres. Food and its consumption are represented artistically in literature, film, or television, conveying a significant role in the construction of (culinary) identities. In the first article, Rita De Maeseneer examines different strategies in novels and films that refer to the so-called *Período Especial en Tiempos de Paz* in Cuba. These strategies are applied to convey hunger as an artistic expression. Louisa Söllner focuses on Cristina García’s novel *The Lady Matador’s Hotel* (2010), in which the Cuban-American author refers to food as indicator for social and political conflict. Söllner highlights food as a medium of resistance that is more than just a nostalgic practice. Sebastian Huber analyzes the U.S. American TV series *Treme*, which takes place in the eponymous New Orleans neighborhood after the devastating hurricane Katrina in 2005. On the basis of the TV show, Huber demonstrates how cinematic representations of cooking produce social relations which resist biopolitics. Daniel Graziadei takes a closer look at Fortuné Chalumeau’s novel *Désirade, ô Serpente!* (2006) as well as at the poetical afterword of Édouard Glissant’s novel *Ormerod* (2003). Emphasizing how realist representations of food and food practices have primarily metafictional functions, Graziadei puts his analytical focus on the female cooks and reads the two novels as a critique of exoticising and euphemistic images of the Caribbean.

This aspect of ‘Othering’ by constructing an exotic image of the Caribbean takes center stage in the second course, “Neo/Colonial Gaze.” Both articles focus not only on historical, but also on contemporary representations of the Caribbean through images and descriptions of food in literature and popular culture, thus arguing for the existence of a colonial and neocolonial gaze on the Caribbean. Accordingly, Ilaria Berti applies the notion of creolization to food practices and consumption in order to reflect the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Berti illustrates how the contrast of ‘our’ and ‘their’ food is overcome in three British travelogues from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Fabio Parasecoli explores, in the context of U.S. popular culture, how the Caribbean is produced and reproduced as a real and imaginary space. Parasecoli demonstrates how specific representations of food and fruits, such as the banana, are utilized to construct and exploit the Caribbean as a means to fantasize and escape.

The notion of authenticity as well as specific items that are perceived as authentic vary within different cultural and socio-historical contexts, and are influ-

enced in the course of migration. The third course, “Constructions of Authenticity,” highlights and analyzes different ways of how authenticity is constructed, transformed, and promoted. Sarah Lawson Welsh offers an analysis of how authenticity is negotiated on the basis of specific food, recipes, and cookery books in the Caribbean diaspora in the U.K. Based on the case of Jamaican-British cook Levi Roots, the paper focuses on the influence of economics and marketing of cultural products as authentic, and how the idea of authenticity is continuously addressed, questioned, and reconstituted. Further, it addresses how the diasporic context influences and constructs a culinary version of the Caribbean. Ivan Darias Alfonso elaborates on the construction of Cuban identity and a sense of belonging through food and eating in London. The study describes how perceptions of ‘authentic’ Cuban cuisine are revised in diasporic contexts. The link between authenticity and cultural difference is discussed by Mona Nikolić in reference to tourism in Costa Rica. Nikolić’ analysis focuses on the transformation of Afro-Caribbean cuisine and how relevant social actors, such as tourists, influence the notion of authenticity in the local Afro-Caribbean culinary culture.

The consumption of food can be interpreted as a process of transformation and re/construction, rather than merely an act of destruction. Similarly, the exchange of food items as well as practices of grocery shopping, preparing food, eating, and drinking can be interpreted as acts of constitution and creation. Eating and drinking nourish an individual, but also serve as a means to reconstruct communities and identities through, for example, communal meals. Therefore, the fourth and last course, “Consumption and Communities,” approaches the creative aspect of consumption in regard to social relations and the construction of community. It additionally emphasizes the significance of abstinence from certain foods and drinks as well as strategies that evolve in the course of food shortages and unavailability of specific products. Dwaine Plaza examines the material exchange of food by Caribbean migrants focusing on the practice of barrel-sending from Canada to Jamaica. The analysis of these practices highlights how food items are among the most important items sent in “barrels of love” to friends and (fictive) kin at ‘home’ as gifts and / or remittances, hence maintaining and recreating social relations within families and accordingly transnational social fields. Plaza further argues that the practice of barrel-sending is a gendered ritual, in which women usually shop for and pack groceries to be sent. Elizabeth den Boer discusses how especially women are regarded as transmitters and keepers of culture and religion through the act of cooking and preparing Hindu ritual food in Suriname. Drawing on the examples of part-time vegetarianism and fasting, den Boer further elaborates how these practices of abstinence are a means to establish, maintain, and influence social relations. Prac-

tices of not-eating and the existence of food taboos are also discussed in Annika McPherson's analysis of Rastafarian culinary identity. The Rastafarian concept of Ital food restricts the consumption of certain types of food to counteract Euro-American hegemonic influences. McPherson theorizes Ital food as decolonial practice and demonstrates how the consumption and non-consumption of certain foods create and facilitate means of resistance and means to create identity.

*Caribbean Food Cultures* thus brings into dialogue different disciplinary and thematic approaches to food practices and discourses in the Caribbean. The collection restructures and decolonizes the production of theoretical knowledge by overcoming neo-colonial gazes on the Caribbean. It offers a promising theoretical framework which enables a comprehensive study of food-related research. With its strong interdisciplinary approach, it allows for new insights into the importance of transnational food and consumption practices for the shaping and the re/invention of Caribbean as well as Western identities in the wake of colonial history, decolonization, and globalization.

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