

Foodways as Frontiers

The importance of food for belonging
in New Orleans



Cajun
COOKIN'
Makes
you
GOOD

N.K.M. de Jonge
M.E. Vreugdenhil

GUMBO

A LITTLE BIT OF DIB
A LITTLE BIT OF DAT

PORC

LAISSEZ
LES BON
TEMPS

AND DON'T
BACK NO MO

NO MORE...
NO MORE



BE
SEI



CLOSE

Photograph Frontpage¹

¹ The picture shows the signs of a food stand during the Freret street festival. On the signs is written "Gumbo – a little bit of dis a little bit of dat" "Cajun cooking makes you good" "And don't you go back no more no more no more no more" And in the bottom the New Orleans motto: "Laissez les bon temps rouler!" It was taken by Níne de Jonge on the 4th of April 2015, New Orleans.

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Map of the USA and New Orleans



Figure 1: Map of the USA (http://www.aussiefity.com/graphics/travel/maps/AM/NA/USA/locations/Map_NA_USA_Louisiana.gif, accessed October 12, 2014.)

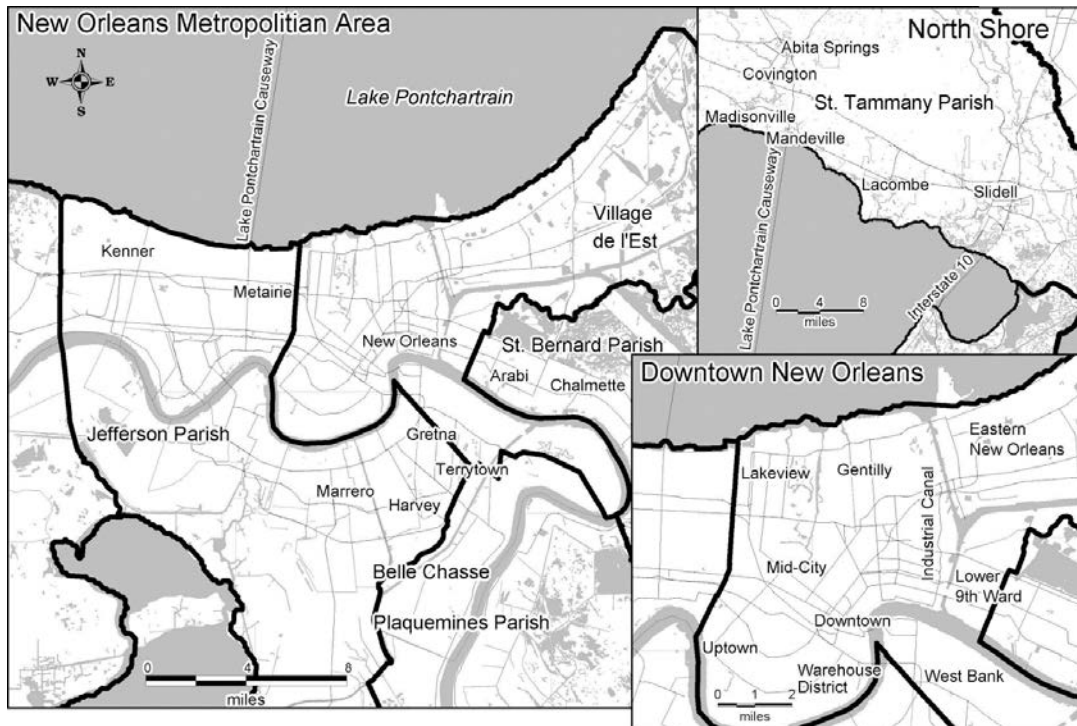


Figure 2: The New Orleans Metropolitan area: Orientation map (Zaninetti, University of Orleans)

Acknowledgements

One Monday evening we decided to go to a neighborhood bar in Mid-City where a free meal is served every week. It was quite far from our place and not the best neighborhood, but we wanted to go somewhere. Around seven o'clock a line formed for the small buffet which offered coleslaw, chicken with a herbal bread crust and pasta with mayonnaise and ham. Waiting in the line we started to chat with the man in front of us; Jack became one of our key informants. The atmosphere was relaxed, people were open and enjoyed the free food and cheap beers. While we were eating at a large table, we talked with new people and experienced this 'community feeling' that informants told about. For us this was one of the places where we felt at home too. We discovered that many people ate there often on Mondays and they knew each other, like a small and open community. Both of us went there a couple of times. Doing fieldwork is experiencing, joining, listening and meeting. It can be quite tiring but most often it was exciting. We enjoyed exploring new places, tasting unfamiliar food and hearing interesting stories.

We are grateful for all informants who participated in our research. For people who showed us around, took us to places we wouldn't have found otherwise and introduced us to the local cuisine. Food-related organizations were very open as well and willing to do interviews, often they helped finding new informants. Without our informants this fieldwork would not have been possible and we thank them for spending time with us and giving us a warm stay.

A special thanks to Coco Kanters, our supervisor. She guided us through the whole process of doing ethnographic research: from the start of our project in November 2014 in designing a research proposal, to the actual fieldwork, until the final thesis. Her extensive feedback, critical notes and enthusiasm were a great help to us. Without her great support our thesis would be not as it is now.

Last but not least, we thank each other for the collaboration and support over this whole year and for creating this unique experience in New Orleans; from joining parties, to conducting in-depth interviews, endlessly waiting on the streetcar, tasting alligator meat, to cutting a pig's head at a butchery. It finally resulted in this thesis.

Marlies and Níne

Introduction

Níne

“One central element that makes food an effective symbol for New Orleanians is a sense that they all share in a common cuisine” (Beriss 2012:5).

Food is an important aspect of everyday life in New Orleans; not just eating, but sharing and talking about it as well. New Orleans is famous for its culinary character and can be described as a foodscape; a place strongly linked with food, where the food carries local meaning and can be smelled, tasted and seen (Adema 2006:13). To visitors the city is sometimes presented as a gumbo, the typical local stew symbolizing the rich history and the mixture of different cultures and cuisines. The cuisine connects residents, it can intensify feelings of belonging. Food is a powerful medium through which people develop a sense of belonging to community as well as place.

In New Orleans food is not just food, it is a *cuisine*. According to Mintz (1996:96), “a cuisine requires a population that eats that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves expert on it [...] they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste”. New Orleans’ multicultural character has shaped its cuisine. The many ethnic groups have brought their food habits with them, resulting in a constant intermingling between recipes, local ingredients and ethnic foodways. New Orleans has many ethnic cuisines which have a local character. They can be roughly delineated into Creole, Cajun, Soul Food, Vietnamese and Latino (e.g. Gutierrez 1992, Ten Eyck 2009, Beriss 2012). Yet the city hosts a very specific sense of place articulated through the blending of its diverse ethnic cuisines.

Belonging is a central concept for this research, including both an emotional aspect; the personal feeling of 'being at home' in a place, as well as the politics of belonging, which deals with boundaries: who belongs and who does not (Antonsich 2010:644, Yuval-Davis 2006:197). Two spheres of belonging are important here: belonging to an (ethnic) group and belonging to place. Both are connected to food.

Community and ethnic identity are both constructed in relation to others, by marking the boundaries between groups. Belonging to an ethnic group is often considered as something natural. Nevertheless, ethnic belonging is formed in a specific context or place, not only one's homeland but also where one lives. Food can play a central role in expressing ethnic belonging.

In a new context authentic food often survives, but at the same time foodways are influenced by the new surroundings and culture.

Local belonging, or place-belongingness relates to the connectedness to a specific place. Where one is born, one's personal and social ties, and one's culture influenced feelings of place-belongingness (following Antonsich 2010:8). The connection to a place can be called 'a sense of place', defined by people's attitudes, beliefs, meanings and interpretations attributed to a particular place (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009). They use it as an umbrella term for place attachment, place identity and place dependence.

In literature, food is often described as a boundary-creating mechanism. In scientific literature on New Orleans, authors often discussed the cuisines separately, there was not much attention to how the cuisines are connected (Gutierrez 1992, Ten Eyck 2009, Beriss 2012). At the same time it is mentioned that food also has an including capacity among people. According to Williams (2012:1): "The cuisine of the city is a web that embraces and connects all of the inhabitants. Regardless of class or education or income or race [...] Talking about food, both its preparation and its taste, is the greatest equalizing factor in the city." Food seems to surpass ethnic differences. From the literature, food in New Orleans seems to have a local and an ethnic component. How those relate to each other was not clear. Furthermore the relation between belonging and food in New Orleans is not explored yet. This led to the following research question of this thesis: *In what way do place-based- and ethnic feelings of belonging intersect through local foodways in New Orleans, USA?*

The focus was on the intersection of food and belonging in the dynamic context of New Orleans: how the ethnic cuisines intersect with the local cuisine of New Orleans and in what way food constructs a feeling of local belonging as well as ethnic belonging. We explored the foodscape of New Orleans and how it is connected to a sense of place. We operationalized our main question in the following sub questions:

- In what ways do residents of New Orleans feel a sense of belonging, locally and ethnically, to New Orleans and how is this expressed in daily practice?
- How are the New Orleans ethnic cuisines constructed through daily discourse and practice?
- How is the New Orleans local cuisine constructed through daily discourse and practice?

- How do elements of ethnic belonging and local belonging take shape in particular foodways?

This thesis shows how food can be a way through which inhabitants connect to a place and to each other: it plays a significant role in place-belongingness. Attention is paid to different ethnic groups and their cuisines, the construction of a community and the role of festivals and neighborhoods. Furthermore we emphasized the importance of expert knowledge on food, what is seen in daily discourse and practice and the influence of place-promotion and tourists. We investigated the tension and connection between what is believed to be the local cuisine and what as ethnic cuisines, as well as the excluding and including forces that food can have.

Scientific Relevance

We argue that the cuisines are best seen as frontiers, instead of having clear boundaries. Hannerz (1997:9) explained that frontier is a term “not for sharp lines, but for zones, where one thing gradually shifts into something else, where there is blurring, ambiguity and uncertainty”. We found mainly that the cuisines intersect; what is believed to be the local cuisine and what as ethnic cuisines, is not entirely clear. There is a common cuisine but it is constructed via a multiplicity of ethnic cuisines. As will become evident throughout this thesis, it is this commonality through difference that defines belonging to New Orleans.

We will show that food is a powerful way through which people develop a sense of belonging to community as well as place. Identity can be marked through food; and food functions to both connect and separate groups. We found that food can create boundaries between groups, especially between locals and tourists. A line is drawn by means of having expert knowledge about food. However, food mostly functions as a binding factor that creates an overall local New Orleans identity, a sense of local belonging that can include other forms of belonging. The study of cuisines is therefore a useful way of discovering how residents of New Orleans experience a sense of belonging, both to their ethnic group and to the place itself, and particularly the dialectics between those different ways of belonging.

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to existing literature by connecting theories on belonging, food, communities and place-making. As such, we show that food can connect people to a community, can constitute a shared feeling of belonging, and is thus a way of place-

making. Furthermore, we intend to update the excellent works that have been written on New Orleans cuisine, by providing a contemporary document of the meanings of food in the city, including the impact of ethnic foodways. In academic literature (Gutierrez 1992, Ten Eyck 2009, Beriss 2012) there seems to be no consensus about what the local cuisine of New Orleans consists of, or how this cuisine can be defined. What the relation is between the cuisines and which role food plays within a sense of belonging in New Orleans, has not been examined yet. Empirical research was needed to obtain a deeper insight.

Methods

This research is based on anthropological fieldwork that we, Marlies Vreugdenhil and Níne de Jonge, conducted in New Orleans, United States. From February second 2015 until April 10th 2015 we conducted this qualitative research in different areas and neighborhoods of New Orleans. In order to account for our focus on local and ethnic belonging, we demarcated a diverse research group. This included residents from divergent ages and ethnicities (North-, Central- and South-American, Vietnamese, African-American, Creole and Cajun). As such we were able to capture varied views and opinions. Even though we had limited time for our research, by collecting and analyzing our data together, it was possible to get a broader view and conduct an extensive research.

Our research would not have been possible from a distance; tasting, talking and joining celebrations are all part of a gaining a full understanding. Participant observation was a main method because it enables the researcher to learn about the explicit and tacit aspects of culture (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:1). It included living among locals and participating in daily activities as well as attending festivals. Secondly, we applied sensory anthropology² when visiting restaurants, markets and informants' homes as tasting, smelling and seeing constitute essential parts in doing research about food. Besides the experience, it worked as a good conversation starter. Photography helped to pay more attention to our surroundings while documenting what we saw. Of course, field notes attributed to this as well. After the first appointments that were

² Sutton (2010) marked the importance of sensory anthropology. Using the senses during fieldwork about food is relevant and will give good insights. Sutton (2010:215) came up with term 'gustemology', for approaches in anthropology that "organize their understanding of a wide spectrum of cultural issues around taste and other sensory aspects of food".

arranged by e-mail, the snowball method helped us to find more informants. Hanging out with participants was a good way to build rapport, which is important to get an insider view.

Interviews complemented our observations and informal conversations. Depending on the desired direction of the interview, we conducted expert, informal and semi-structured interviews. Expert interviews with food-related professionals, such as cooks and writers, led to insights in their view on our research topics. We tried to limit our influence on the direction of interviews, for that reason we did not conduct structured interviews. Instead we made use of a topic list; in this way we made sure essential information was covered while informants were able to talk freely. With questionnaires we would not have received the same comprehensive results; belonging is a broad subject one should talk about to discover.

Each of the applied methods were important to our research as they all gathered a different type of data; one method would not have been comprehensive.

Food and belonging was not a sensitive topic, people enjoyed talking about it and did not request anonymity or mind if we took notes. Nonetheless, we took care of the ethical codes with particular concern (following the AAA guide on ethics 2012). We were open and honest about our work and obtained informed consent. With the exception of the interviewed authors, pseudonyms are used to secure the privacy of our research population.

Structure

In chapter one, the theoretical framework, we will start with the anthropology of belonging and make a distinction between emotional belonging and the politics of belonging. The importance of place as well as the concept of frontiers will be marked. Then we will focus more specifically to what people can belong; to an (ethnic) community and a certain place. The next section deals with the anthropology of food and how food relates to the concepts of belonging, place, community and ethnicity. The final section will connect all these theories and concepts. Chapter two, the context, provides a short overview of the history and food in New Orleans in general. In chapter three, four and five we will show our empirical data. Chapter three, deals with the food of New Orleans and explains why the city is called a melting pot. Chapter four deals with the question when one is perceived to be a New Orleanian and five elaborates the feeling and construction of home and belonging. Finally we will summarize our findings and present our conclusions including a discussion. Thereafter our bibliography and appendices can be found.

In the first appendix a list of quoted informants is provided, appendix two includes a summary of this thesis, and appendix three consists of pictures made during our fieldwork.

1. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter we start with the anthropology of belonging and make a distinction between emotional belonging and the politics of belonging. More specifically, place-belongingness, place-making and community are discussed. Section three deals with the anthropology of food and the ways that food relates to ethnic identity and place. Finally, section four connects all chapters together.

1.1 The anthropology of belonging

Níne

Everybody belongs somewhere, may it be to a group, an ethnicity, a place, neighborhood, nation or to home; there are different modes of belonging (Antonsich 2010:4). Individuals do not necessarily belong to only one group or place. Neither is it bounded: people can change where they belong over time. Belonging thus is a dynamic process (Yuval-Davis 2006:199). Belonging “encompasses citizenship, nationhood, gender, ethnicity and emotional dimensions of status or attachment” (Antonsich 2010:4).

Hence, one does not simply belong somewhere, belonging is an interplay between being and longing: individuals want to belong (Probyn 1996 in Bell 1999:1). Besides the process of self-identification, belonging can also be ascribed; i.e. identification by others. Belonging is socially constructed (Antonsich 2010:18).

Scholars have noted the importance of distinguishing emotional belonging and the politics of belonging (Antonsich 2010:644, Yuval-Davis 2006:197), which we will discuss below. Yuval-Davis (2006:199) describes three analytical levels of belonging, she distinguishes: social locations, individual identifications and ethical and political value systems. Antonsich (2010:7) however, criticizes Yuval-Davis’ framework for focusing too much on the politics of belonging and overlooking the notion of place. Following Antonsich, our main focus will be on belonging as feeling ‘at home’, with attachment to a place.

Emotional belonging

Emotional belonging is related to attachment, the feeling of being at home (Yuval-Davis 2006:197). This feeling can be related to a specific place, what is called place-belongingness. “To belong means to find a place where an individual can feel ‘at home’ [...] ‘home’ here stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment (Hooks, 2009, 213)” (Antonsich 2010:6). This place attachment can for example be related to one’s house, a neighborhood or city. Place-belongingness is further related to place identity and a sense of place (Antonsich 2010:6), which will be discussed in the next section.

According to Antonsich (2010:8) five factors influence feelings of place-belongingness: auto-biographical (where one is born), relational (personal and social ties), cultural (language, food), economic, and legal. For our study, we will focus on the first three, of which the place of birth remains particularly important (Antonsich 2010:8). Antonsich (2010:11) notes furthermore that the length of residence is not captured in this model, yet this is an important factor as well.

Processes of globalization are an essential aspect in the perception of home and belonging. People move through borders and might find a new place where they belong, or feel home at different places; this is what Ward (2003:81) calls “contextual identities and multiple sites of belonging”. An example is the category of refugees and migrants, for whom their homeland is not necessarily a place where they feel at home (Ward 2003:90). Belonging, then, can be related to particular identities as well as to geographic sites.

Where one feels at home is produced and contested as belonging is constructed in relation to others (Ward 2003:90, Probyn 1996:19). Belonging and the concept of home are thus closely entwined. They can be related to a place but one should not forget that both are dynamic and in flux. The feeling of home is real and imagined. People construct homely spaces, for example by cooking and eating, to feel a sense of belonging (Ward 2003:92). In large communities where people do not know each other, people can still experience a shared belonging to the community. A common cuisine can be a binding factor in such an imagined community³ (Anderson 2006). How so will be discussed later on in this framework.

³ For an elaboration on imagined communities see Anderson 2006.

Politics of Belonging

The politics of belonging are a process of boundary maintenance, outlining the imaginary boundaries between communities and nations. The politics of belonging define who belongs and who does not and maintains the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In fact, it is the process of *othering* (Yuval-Davis 2006:204,207). This is echoed by Trudeau (2006:423), who remarked that “the opposite of belonging is exclusion”. Inclusion and exclusion logically lead to the perception to feel more or less at home (Ward 2003:90).

In reality, however, there is not always a strict division, besides boundaries, one could also look at frontiers; Hannerz (1997:9, emphasis added) explains:

“[...] we may recognize some of the difficulties with the notion of a boundary, a sharp and more or less continuous demarcation line, when applied to the realities of cultural diversity, not least in the present. Perhaps it is partly due to these difficulties that alternative terms of discontinuity now seem at least as attractive in mapping culture, terms I can hardly ignore here. In a small bundle of geographical metaphors, "boundary" would seem to belong with "frontier" [.. which is a term] *not for sharp lines, but for zones, where one thing gradually shifts into something else, where there is blurring, ambiguity and uncertainty*”.

Boundaries can be seen as sharp lines which separates two groups or things. Frontiers have a wider meaning, they are more like zones, the boundaries are vague.

Both Conversi (1999:565) and Cohen (1994:53) quoted John Coakley (1982:36) with his explanation that boundaries “have a precise, linear quality, and frontiers, which have more diffuse, zonal connotations. The concept of frontier has a broader social significance than the more restrictive legal concept of boundary.” ”

As will become clear, a focus on frontiers rather than boundaries is especially useful in understanding the ways place-based belonging and ethnic belonging intersect in New Orleans.

Concluding

Belonging is a personal feeling, which can be real or imagined. One can belong to a place or group and express this by self-identification. It is however also constructed in relation to others (Antonsich 2010:18). The feeling of home and belonging is dynamic (Yuval-Davis 2006:199).

Belonging includes people but has also an excluding factor, not everyone can belong to a certain group, community or place (Yuval-Davis 2006:204). However, frontiers can be used to analyze the intersection between groups and borders. Before discussing the anthropology of food, we will outline the construction of a community and place-making.

1.2 Belonging, ethnic community and place-making

Marlies

Community and ethnic identity are constructed in much the same way. According to Eriksen (2010:215) “all categorisations of group membership must have boundaries”. It is in relation to others, who are considered different, that a collective identity makes sense. An individual can belong to several communities, which might overlap or contradict, whilst belonging to several ethnic groups is much more complicated. In this chapter we furthermore discuss belonging to place, including a sense of place as conceptualized by Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) and explain the concept of foodscape.

Ethnic belonging

One way of belonging is identification with an ethnic group. Eriksen (2010:5) defines ethnicity as referring to “aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive”. Hence for ethnic identity to be relevant there must be social contact between groups. Ethnic identity deals mostly with boundaries, which are constructed through individual identification, ethnic group formation, informal ascriptions and official ethnic policies (Nagel 1994:161). Nagel (1994:153) states that ethnicity is a kind of ‘property’ of individual identity and group organization and consists of two basic elements; identity and culture. Individual ethnic identification, however, is very limited and largely determined by external factors (Nagel 1994:161). Boundaries between ethnic groups determine who belongs and who does not belong. Yet people can have several modes of belonging (Antonsich 2004:4) and when boundaries become blurred it is better to speak of frontiers: zones “where one thing gradually shifts into something else, where there is blurring, ambiguity and uncertainty (Hannerz 1997:9)”. Barth in his influential work developed the idea that in the study of ethnicity the focus must be on the boundaries between groups rather than on the ‘cultural stuff’ inside a particular group (in Eriksen 2010:44). Nevertheless, we follow Nagel (1994:161) who states that culture is just as identity an essential element for ethnicity. Culture involves the ways that ethnicity is given meaning in a particular context. It forms the content of ethnicity and includes language, religion, art, music, dress, traditions, and lifeways.

Ethnicity is a negotiated social fact and a matter of structure, power and agency (Nagel 2003:42). Important is what ethnic categories are available (structure), who decides to which category someone belongs (power), whereas the cultural content of ethnic identity is more open to internal processes of giving meaning (agency). Ethnic identity therefore is not just like any other group identification. The options for individual ethnic identity are limited, and while in anthropological discourse ethnicity is usually seen as a construct, in daily life it is rather often perceived as something 'natural' and related to a specific place.

A sense of place

Place has always been important to anthropologists: ethnography after all is always located in a specific place. However, since the 1980s place was no longer taken as a given but became a concept of interest itself. Globalization processes, especially increased mobility, made people and their cultures less attached to specific locations and social scientists more aware of place as fluid, constituted and relational (Ward 2003:85).

Spaces are made meaningful both by individuals and collectives, and this process is a result of social relations. The meaning of place is fluid; the past of place is open to different interpretations (Blokland 2009:1594). Blokland shows that historical narratives are processes of place-making. Collective memories are partial and selective and will never include everyone in a certain community. These processes of place-making therefore have a political aspect and can define the community, in other words, who belongs to it and who does not (Blokland 2009:1608).

Watt and Smetts (2014) note that despite people being on the move more than ever, research still provides many cases where residents express a strong sense of place. A good example is how in New Orleans, after hurricane Katrina, displaced residents of the Ninth Ward neighborhood became conscious of their strong sense of place to their neighborhood and this subsequently has been an important motivation for their return (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:619). When material resources are scarce (the Ninth Ward suffered heavily from Katrina), cultural resources become more important.

In times of change, such as displacement in the above example, a sense of belonging provides something familiar. Emotional attachments often become powerful when threatened (Yuval-Davis 2006). Factors that contribute to a strong sense of place are among others home-

ownership, length of residence in the neighborhood, perceptions of cohesion and frequency of community activities. Negatively affecting a sense of place are fear of crime, mobility and (perceived or observed) incivilities (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618). The emotional aspect of belonging, like the feeling of being at home in a place, makes that place-belongingness is often discussed in relation to place attachment and place identity (Antonsich 2010:6).

Place attachment, place identity, place dependence

Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) use the concept of a sense of place to describe people's attitudes, beliefs, meanings and interpretations attributed to a particular place and distinguish it into three narrower concepts which are place attachment, place identity and place dependence. Place attachment is about the emotional relations of an individual with a specific location. It involves both memory of past events related to a specific place and future experiences likely to occur in the specific place (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618). Also Ward (2003) describes that memory and imagination are cognitive processes of belonging to a place which show that place is fluid, and not necessarily bound to particular times and spaces. Secondly, place identity refers to the element of an individual's identity defined in relation to the environment. Place dependence finally refers to the degree to which a certain place is suitable for the preferred lifestyle of an individual. The conceptualization of place as mentioned above will be central to the way we look at a sense of place in our research.

Place promotion

A paradox in the sense of place is noted by Gupta and Ferguson (1992:10). While place becomes more and more blurred in times of increasing globalization, *ideas* about places as culturally and ethnically distinctive become stronger. In this respect, scholars have written about 'the globalization of the local' (Gotham 2007b:130).

"Place branding manipulates 'place' through marketing and is contingent on incorporation and use of what it considers real, authentic places" (Adema 2006:65). Hence marketing can turn a place into a brand, usually to attract tourists and stimulate economic development. A useful tool to do this is marketing of ethnic distinctiveness or differences. In the case of New Orleans, Gotham (2007b:128-129) argues that the expansion of the tourist industry led to "increasing 'corporation' of local ethnic events" and the targeting of ethnic

groups as niche markets. Place promotion by the tourist industry shows that ethnic identity and place are very much intertwined. The branding of place can create community but it can also lead to struggles about representation of ethnic identity within the process of place promotion.

1.3 Consuming identities

1.3.1 The anthropology of food and belonging

Nine

Cooking and eating is an individual act as well as a social one. People construct and maintain their identity by their food consumption. Food, then, becomes embodied (Fischler 1988:280 in Locher 2005:274, Sutton 2001:5⁴). Food also creates a collective identity by cooking together and sharing (ritual) meals (Paulson 2006:662, Preston-Werner 2009:15). This paragraph outlines the different functions of food; connecting as well as separating.

Levi-Strauss considered food as a cultural system. Taste in this respect is “culturally shaped and socially controlled” (in Caplan 1997:1). In the literature on food, *foodways* present an intersection between food and culture: they are used to preserve traditions and maintain group identity (Miller 2013:4, Airhihenbuwa and Kumanyika 1996). Foodways relate to all activities and ideas surrounding food; these include food habits, attitudes and taboos (Long 2010:23). Communication, thus, is possible through food. Foodways, however, can change over time (Mintz and Dubois 2002).

Remembrance is important when discussing foodways. It plays a role in forming a community, ethnic identities, for imagining the nation and can be related to place. Cooking traditions are passed on, partly because of the nostalgic associations with the food. Locher (2005) describes nostalgic food as a part of comfort food. Comfort food can be defined as “food prepared in a traditional style having a usually nostalgic or sentimental appeal” (Locher 2005:274). Nostalgic food is related to a specific time and place in someone’s life, when food is prepared and consumed with significant others (Locher 2005:281-282). In this way memory can become embodied.

Food memories are furthermore meaningful for transnational identities, often people bring food with them; this marks their identity. Food, thus, can create a place-identity because food is related to a specific place but also because traditions and memories relate the food to the past. Belonging is not only related to a place, but also to time.

⁴ See also Paulson 2006 for an elaboration on Bolivia where people construct their identity by their food consumption.

Preparing and consuming dishes with a group creates feelings of shared belonging and a sense of *communitas* (Adema 2006:164-165, Sanabria 2007:270, Locher 2005:289). Specific food can remind of home and can be used to construct a home. Just like the feeling of home and belonging food is not necessarily place-bounded. Food can still be specific to a place but may be available in other countries.

“Anthropological work has produced a broad consensus that food is about commensality – eating to make friends – and competition – eating to make enemies” (Sutton 2001:5). Specific food can be an identity marker to a group, there are differences in what different classes and ethnicities consume.

In short food is an individual as well as a social act, it further is cultural and works communicative. It connects individuals, food is a representation of belonging to a group, but can serve to separate them by the politics of belonging. “Food is more than the dishes we eat” (Long 2010:23).

1.3.2 Food and Community

Marlies

People can belong to a place, but also to one or more communities or an ethnic group. Food is an important way of communication in a social system and relevant here are two main messages of food which are solidarity and separation (Anderson 2005:126).

Solidarity and separation

Eating together means sharing and participating. This powerful message of solidarity is crucial to courtship, business and politics among others. There appears to be a kind of natural link between food sharing and personal involvement. On the other hand, through food, social divisions can be articulated as well. Not everyone can share in particular eating and food can serve as a boundary marker for ethnic groups, kin groups, religious groups, local communities and nations. Food thus often conveys messages about group identification.

Foods itself also carries meaning. For example, elite groups always try to distinguish themselves by consuming expensive or prestigious foods (Anderson 2005:136). Differences in class and status can be symbolized by food, however status is also subject to change⁵.

Food as ethnic marker

Culture involves the ways that ethnicity is given meaning in a particular context and forms the content of ethnicity (Nagel 1994:161). Foodways form an aspect of the cultural element of ethnic identity and can communicate messages of solidarity and separation. What to eat and what not (either because certain food is regarded as disgusting or delicious, religious rules determining food choices, or other reasons), - how to eat, when and with whom, is all cultural behavior learned to children and passed on to the next generations.

Just as culture is constantly reconstructed, foodways also change. In our globalized world, movement rather than rootedness is the norm and consequently the forming of transnational identities (Ward 2003:86). Migrants bring their own foodways to their host society and this forms a powerful way through which migrants connect with their homeland. In addition, at special occasions and festivities for example, ethnic identity can be affirmed through ethnic cuisine. The forming of ethnic cuisines also influences the local foodways in the host society. In the Netherlands for example kebab and Turkish pizza are now widely available.

1.3.3 Food and a sense of place

Marlies

A sense of place often involves a sense of taste (Anderson 2005:130). Particular food is often associated with a particular place, think for example of Boston baked beans, the fast-food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken or the Italian dish spaghetti Napolitano. This paragraph deals with the links between food and place. We will give a definition of cuisine, introduce the concept of foodscape and will shortly mention how food can be central in the promotion of a place.

⁵Soul food provides a good example here. This African-American culinary tradition from the long marginalized southern USA was re-evaluated during the heyday of the black power movement, gained prestige across racial differences and now forms a marker of ethnic African-American identity (Anderson 2005:127).

Defining a cuisine

The word cuisine is borrowed from French and means kitchen as well as cooking. According to Mintz cuisines are the foods from a *place*;

“I think a cuisine requires a population that eats that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves expert on it. They all believe, and *care* that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste” (Mintz 1996:96).

Anderson (2005:189) takes a slightly different approach and states that cuisine can be defined, but not exactly. In his broad definition he follows Rozin, who defined a particular cuisine by its use of a specific mix of flavorings. This ‘flavor principle’ allows for diversity within a cuisine, while the unity comes from the spices, herbs and other flavoring ingredients.

While Mintz emphasized more the social aspect of a cuisine, Anderson uses the ‘flavor principle’ in defining a cuisine. In our view both the food itself and the implications it has for the community are important elements that constitute a cuisine.

Foodscapes

The concept of foodscapes is useful in exploring the links between food and place and is an extension of the several ‘scapes’ as introduced by Appadurai⁶ (in Ferrero 2002:3). A foodscape is a manifestation of the relations of people with food in various contexts and includes dynamics of global exchange and transnational modern food practices (Adema 2006:13). A foodscape has a tangible element in the sense that it refers to a landscape, a physical space where certain food can be smelled, tasted and seen. At the same time a foodscape also incorporates something intangible, such as the use and the meanings given to the actual landscape in association with food. The relation of food with place can be imagined and also the place itself can be imagined (Adema 2006:14).

As briefly mentioned before, Ferrero (2002) considers ethnic food as a foodscape. For Mexicans in North-America their ethnic food is a means of empowerment and a connective element. Adema applies the concept in a different way and sees a particular locality and local

⁶ In his study of the dynamics of globalization, Appadurai distinguished five dimensions that characterize global (cultural) exchange and transnational consumer society; ethnoscaples, technoscaples, mediascaples, ideoscaples and finanscaples (in Ferrero 2002:3).

community as a foodscape. In a foodscape, food thus always has a local aspect in the sense of the physical landscape where it is consumed. A landscape becomes a foodscape if the association between certain food and place is promoted and the food becomes a symbol of place (Adema 2006:vi).

Community, place-making and place promotion

Food can be an important aspect of place-making, in the promotion of a certain place and the creation of a community. Blokland (2009) showed how local celebrations (usually including food) can create and express collective place identities. According to Adema (2006:8), the deliberate creating or promotion of a foodscape can be a way of place-making. Local food festivals are an example of this and create community and a sense of place.

Also ethnic food can be central to place promotion. Ethnic identity and place are intertwined and this becomes clear in relation to food. Ethnic restaurants for example are in fact ‘travelling spaces for consuming the exotic other’ (Ferrero 2002:2). In ethnic heritage tourism, as a result of place promotion, ethnic goods and activities are commodified. The branding of a place can create community and can be a process of place-making. In this process food can play a central role.

Food is thus a powerful way of communicating, both messages of solidarity and messages of separation. Cooking and consuming food is an individual act, but especially also a social one. Through food, belonging to an (ethnic) community or to a specific place can be affirmed and a collective identity created. People can feel ‘at home’ by consuming specific food. On the other hand, food can also create or mark boundaries. Food has therefore to do with emotional belonging as well as the politics of belonging.

1.4 The role of food in constructing an inter-ethnic community and a sense of belonging

Níne

Belonging to an (ethnic) group or community is important for individuals, it gives a positive feeling and helps to construct a feeling of home. Place-belongingness has the same effect. This is called emotional belonging, it has to do with personal feelings (Yuval-Davis 2006:197). Belonging is not static but a process, it constantly changes. Place belonging and ethnic belonging are the main themes of this thesis. Both are often described as having boundaries, nevertheless frontiers are just as important. It shows that two different things can overlap, they are zones. Clarifying Hannerz (1997:9) explained: “where one thing gradually shifts into something else, where there is blurring”.

Food plays an important role in these senses of belonging. Cooking, sharing food and a common cuisine is connective. Food can create a collective identity and is important for social life (Paulson 2006:662, Preston-Werner 2009:15). Furthermore, food helps to express one’s (ethnic) identity. For calling it a cuisine, it is essential that people are connected to it. Having an ethnic or local cuisine, people should “eat that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves expert on it. They all believe, and *care* that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste” (Mintz 1996:96).

The use of ethnic food as a way to mark identity has increased with global trade and global connections (Anderson 2005:200). Ethnic- identity and belonging are constructed in relation to others. Individuals distance themselves from other groups, to define who they are. Food is a way to express solidarity *and* separation for the in-group and outer-group (Anderson 2005:126). This boundary maintenance has been called the politics of belonging.

Food can also be related to a place, as Mintz (1996:96) made clear, cuisine is what food and place connects. Foodscapes mark this connection (Adema 2006:8). We explained the framework of Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) to show that a sense of place is related to place identity, place attachment and place dependence. The meaning of place is fluid, individuals experience place differently but it is also related to social relations. Food can be an important aspect of place-making, in the promotion of a certain place and the creation of a community. Between foodways, the boundaries are not always clear. Foodways can be frontiers which overlap, there is room for change and outside influences.

2. Context

New Orleans has a rich culinary tradition; food is important for defining this city as a unique place within the United States (Beriss 2012, Beriss and Sutton 2007:3). In this section we elaborate on the concepts from our theoretical framework such as belonging, community and food within the context of New Orleans. Two maps are included right after the table of contents. We will start with a short historical background of New Orleans, then we will discuss what the local cuisine of New Orleans constitutes. Finally the place-marketing of New Orleans will be discussed.

Historical background

Marlies

“There is no place like New Orleans” (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:621). A combination of social networks (friends, family neighbors, church), particular music and food created this strong sense of place among residents in the Ninth Ward neighborhood in New Orleans. This is remarkable given the social inequalities and hurricane Katrina that struck the city in 2005.

Located in the south-eastern state of Louisiana, along the Mississippi and surrounded by marshlands and lakes, the city of New Orleans is home to about 340.000 residents and the whole urban area to about 1.2 million people (U.S. Census Bureau)⁷. The city was founded in 1718 by Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville and came under control of the US government in 1803 after periods of French and Spanish colonization (Fussell 2007:847).

Fussell (2007:846) distinguishes three distinct periods in the population history of New Orleans. The first period, starting with the foundation, is characterized by immigration. French and later Spanish colonial settlers came, as well as African slaves, Haitian refugees, a flow of immigrants mainly from Germany, Ireland, Italy, and other parts of America. In the second period (1900-2005) New Orleans grew in a much slower pace and in contrast to rapid industrialization in northern cities, New Orleans remained depended primarily on agriculture. Also in this period, New Orleans transformed from a multi-racial city, where next to whites and enslaved Africans a class of free people of color existed, into a biracial city where one was

⁷See appendix one for two maps of New Orleans.

either black or white. Finally a third phase in population history starts in 2005, when hurricane Katrina and subsequent floods damaged New Orleans. This had changed the population again. New Orleans became more white than before and there was an influx of Hispanics who did part of the reconstruction work (Passidomo 2014:387).

After Katrina the city had undergone considerable change. According to a critical article in National Journal this led to a bit of an identity crisis in New Orleans. The city is alive and thriving:

“But away from the French Quarter, New Orleans is not the same place it once was. The famously African-American city has gotten whiter and more Hispanic. Townhouses have popped up where housing projects once stood, pushing poor, black residents to the suburbs to find cheaper rent--or to homeless camps under the city's highways. [...] Latinos now outnumber the city's established community of Vietnamese refugees. Then there's the influx of the so-called white "YURPS" (Young, Urban, Recovery Professionals)”⁸.

Also, after Katrina many people *had* to leave and came back with a greater appreciation of the city. Emotional attachments are often stronger when threatened (Yuval-Davis 2006).

The cultural geography of today is influenced by the old division of the upper city dominated by white English speaking migrants, versus the lower city that was largely Creole (Campanella 2007:705). Since the times when New Orleans had been the center of the slave market in the south (Campanella 2007:705), New Orleans faced unequal educational opportunities, residential segregation, and employment discrimination (Fussell 2007:851). Before Katrina about 28 percent lived below the poverty line, the majority of them being African Americans. Economic resources besides tourism were scarce and crime rates relatively high. The disaster painfully exposed already existing problems in New Orleans, especially racial inequality (Passidomo 2014:387). The population of New Orleans was unequally affected in the process of evacuation, rebuilding and return, the most vulnerable also suffered most.

⁸ <http://www.nationaljournal.com/next-america/population-2043/new-orleans-post-katrina-identity-crisis-20141020>, 06-16-2015

Foodways in New Orleans

Nine

New Orleans has a distinctive cuisine within the United States (Beriss 2012:5). Food and cuisine are linked to place as the available food influences the cuisine. Seafood for example is much used in New Orleans. Food further plays a role for residents in feeling at home, and to belong to New Orleans (Beriss 2012).

Food is very important to identity within New Orleans. Williams (2012:2) marks that “All of the peoples who lived or settled in New Orleans, whether free or enslaved, brought with them their sense of identity as defined by food. [... They] contributed to what has become to cuisine of the city”. Food seems to surpass ethnic differences and connects all inhabitants (Williams 2012:1). According to Beriss (2012:10) all New Orleanians share a common cuisine. Yet this common cuisine is constructed via a multiplicity of ethnic cuisines, as Tucker (2009:x) point out: “a diverse and local cuisine that transcended and supplanted the cuisines it actually emerged from”. And, as will become evident throughout this thesis, it is this commonality through difference that defines belonging to New Orleans.

By explaining the notion of cultural creolization, Beriss (2012:9) defines it as “making a new social group and cultural expressions from the co-mingling of earlier discreet traditions, in this case African, European and native American”. This marks the ethnic and open character of New Orleans.

Creole food can be seen as the food of New Orleans (Beriss 2012, Gutierrez 1992:36). It is a mixture of cultures who came together and influenced each other (Trucker 2009:5-6). Creole encompasses various people, “white descendants of French and Spanish settlers, [...] people of mixed African and European heritage” (Dominguez 1997 in Beriss 2012:10). Like Creole food, Cajun food is the outcome of assimilation, which led to a unique food culture (Ten Eyck 2009:232, Tracy 2014:6). Cajun food is sometimes referred to as New Orleans food, in fact it is the food from rural Southern Louisiana. Cajun comprises both ethnic and regional identity according to Brown and Mussel (1984:170). They claim that Cajuns are French people who lived in Canada (Acadian) but when forced to move, came to Louisiana. Cajun food is believed to be a blending of the French, Spanish, Nova Scotian and the African-American

cuisine (Ten Eyck 2009:232). The Creole and Cajun cuisine are more similar than different and the two cultures become increasingly intermingled (Tracy 2014:6).

Soul food⁹ is not specific to New Orleans; it is the cuisine of African-Americans who are the majority of New Orleans¹⁰. Soul food in New Orleans, however, is influenced by Cajun and Creole cuisine, therefore similarities between the cuisines are not uncommon. Soul food is often linked with good memories and a warm feeling. Soul food is the time of coming together (Hurt 2012).

Recently, Vietnamese and Latinos have contributed to the cuisine of New Orleans, an example is the Vietnamese po'boy (Williams 2012:21). There are now many variations on this New Orleanian baguette-style sandwich. Though there are many restaurants which stick to old recipes and thus try not to blend with other cuisines.

American fast food chains can also be found in New Orleans, though (significantly) not in the great quantity of many other cities. Though it seems that people eat more fast food now than before, people like the convenience of grabbing some pizza, hamburger or chicken wings (Williams 2012:12).

Representation of New Orleans

Nine

New Orleans attracts many tourists by its music, food and history: the so-called 'holy trinity'. Tourists can enjoy local food in the many restaurants, food festivals and cooking workshops (Beriss and Sutton 2007:1). Besides that food is important for the representation of New Orleans, it is also an important source of income.

Long (2010) uses the term 'culinary tourism' for tourists who go somewhere to experience the food. Food is a way to enter a new culture (Long 2010:1). However, local foodways can change due to tourism: the local food of New Orleans has (almost) become a standardized commodity (Tucker 2009:xi, Gotham 2007:320). Although tourism can have a homogenizing effect, it can also help to construct authenticity and promote the local culture (Gotham 2007:320). The cuisine of New Orleans never has been static and therefore there is no

⁹ Or southern food according to Miller 2013:xiii and Whitehead in Baer & Jones 1992:108.

¹⁰ According to the US Census Bureau 2010.

need to worry (Tucker 2009:xi,xii, Williams 2012:xiii,19). The relationship between tourism and authenticity is thus fluid (Gotham 2007:320). Yet important to note here is the centrality of food in representing New Orleans to “outsiders”. We will see below how this features in demarcating the boundaries of belonging.

Concluding

In this chapter we mapped New Orleans’ history and gave some general explanations about the cuisines. Hurricane Katrina changed a lot in New Orleans: the lives of the residents and the character of the city. Later on we will explain that there was a greater appreciation of the local cuisine after Katrina.

According to the literature Creole cuisine, Cajun cuisine and Soul food can be seen as the local cuisines, and have influenced each other. More cuisines contribute to the culinary character of the city, and immigrant waves continue to influence the foodways. We are aware of the fact that also in New Orleans people nowadays take less time for cooking (Ten Eyck 2009:236). People prefer fast, already prepared food. But still there are chefs who cook and keep their family tradition intact (Ten Eyck 2009:236, see also Beriss 2012:5).

In the following chapters we will show our empirical data and dig deeper into the entwinement between food and belonging. The focus of the following chapter is on the local- and ethnic cuisines.

3. Gumbo - the melting pot of New Orleans

Nine

In this chapter, we will first explain that New Orleans has a particular cuisine and which dishes are important herein, followed by a description of how food is embedded in daily life (through discourse and practice) and in this way functions as a binding factor. Then the different ethnic cuisines we focused on during the field work are discussed, where after we will mention the intertwinement of the cuisines; often called a gumbo- or melting pot. We will finish with what is believed to be the local cuisine.

The aim of this chapter is to mark the importance of food in New Orleans and show that New Orleans is a melting pot. Rather than constituting clear ethnic boundaries, we argue that food in New Orleans is a binding factor. The different ethnic cuisines seem to overlap, we therefore see the cuisines as frontiers wherein residents meet each other.

A cuisine – the importance of food

In New Orleans food plays a big role; it is important in daily discourse and practice. The local newspaper for example has a large section on food, drinks and restaurants. There are many events that center on food, such as cook-offs or fundraising events. Bars offer free meals to attract customers. And there are shows on the radio about food. Food is, not surprisingly, an important source of income. Tourists see New Orleans as a food destination. There are about 1800 restaurants in New Orleans parish according to Marly, who is a local in her forties and works at a restaurant association¹¹.

Sidney Mintz' definition of cuisine is very applicable to New Orleans as Liz, the Founder of Food and Beverage Museum and writer, marked. She pointed out that: "It is a good definition because here in New Orleans food is for all classes, everyone eats rice and beans"¹². Our informants refer to New Orleans as having a cuisine. Mintz (1996:96) wrote that cuisines are linked to a place. The inhabitants consume this cuisine frequently and moreover there is a common idea about what this cuisine includes and how it should be prepared. This is the case in New Orleans: by growing up with the local cuisine and being exposed to it almost every day,

¹¹ Marly, Informal interview, 04-03-2015

¹² Liz, Semi-structured interview, 02-18-2015

people gain a certain knowledge. However there are many more cuisines present in New Orleans which are important to locals as well: these ethnic cuisines in turn get a local meaning.

Next to this social aspect of a cuisine, Anderson accentuates the ‘flavor principle’ in defining a cuisine. Anderson (2005:189) defines a particular cuisine by its use of a specific mix of flavorings and further allows for diversity within a cuisine. In New Orleans cuisines seem to be defined both by its flavor and the implications it has for the community.

Foodways are an intersection between food and culture: it relates to all activities and ideas surrounding food (Miller 2013:4, Long 2010:23). In this way they preserve traditions and maintain group identity (Airhihenbuwa and Kumanyika 1996). Throughout this thesis, we will both use the term cuisine and foodways to describe the food and cooking habits of ethnic groups in New Orleans.

Furthermore, following the definition from Adema (2006:13), New Orleans can be seen as a foodscape since food is very much linked to this place. The food itself is mostly local as are the dishes: the seafood for example comes from the Mexican Gulf, what will go into the local dish Gumbo. Besides preserving old traditions, outside influences keep changing the cuisines, food is more dynamic than it may seem. Food can be smelled, tasted and seen; it is important for defining New Orleans as a city.

The food

What does the local cuisine consists of? First of all there is Gumbo, what seems to be the most important dish in New Orleans: people care a lot about gumbo. It is part of the Creole and Cajun cuisine and can also be considered as Soul food. The preparation is time consuming, as one lady on the market noted “there is no such thing as fast gumbo”¹³. Gumbo is like a thick soup, with the basis of roux. By stir-frying oil and flour one can make a dark roux, which is Cajun and pairs best with wild game, or by cooking it shorter; a lighter roux, which is Creole and best paired with seafood¹⁴. Meat and seafood can also be mixed. Mina, an elderly dark-skinned Creole woman, explained:

¹³ White American lady, informal conversation, 03-03-2015

¹⁴ Kate, semi-structured interview, 02-11-2015

“Put shrimp, maybe some seasoning ham, garlic, onion, I don’t put bell pepper in it, but green onion or shallots, parsley and of course salt and pepper and a little Cayenne. And you cook all that, juicy juicy like a soup, and when it comes to boil you put your okra in it, and just let it simmer, stir it every now and then. When the okra is tender, and it won’t be slimy, people that actually fry it make it slimier. And you got your okra gumbo”¹⁵.

As all informants told us that everybody makes it their own way, we have tasted many variations. Creoles use tomato, some use okra. You can put anything you like or your leftovers in gumbo. Yet no matter what you put in it, the dish remains Gumbo: when people call New Orleans a gumbo pot, they mean that everything together becomes one whole.

The holy trinity of food (bell peppers, onions and celery) is the basis for gumbo, as well as for jambalaya and red beans with rice. For a better understanding, I will now describe some other important dishes. Tom, a Cajun guy, explained: “Gumbo is soup over rice. Jambalaya you cook with rice”¹⁶. Jambalaya is a rice dish, which consists of spices, meats and seafood. Juan, a Honduran manager from a bakery, made the comparison with paella¹⁷, which is kind of similar. Red beans with rice are made by simmering the kidney beans for hours, it becomes a thick sauce to which spices are added as well as the holy trinity and sausage. Then in almost every corner shop and restaurant you can buy a po’boy. Po’boy is a baguette style sandwich with mayonnaise, lettuce, and deep fried seafood or meat. The last two dishes are probably consumed on a regular base. Spring season furthermore is crawfish season, many people hold crawfish boils in their garden and invite family over. The smell of crawfish boils sometimes literally infuses the streets and homes of New Orleans. As such, as we will outline in chapter four, it represents local belonging and plays a role in the construction of a community.

Let’s talk about food

Judy Walker, a white American food editor in her forties, told us that talking about food is “[...] huge. And people are very free to share their opinion. If you want to engage anybody to ask something about their mothers’ gumbo, you know, they will talk your ear off”¹⁸. We

¹⁵ Mina, semi-structured interview, 04-07-2015

¹⁶ Tom, informal interview, 02-21-2015

¹⁷ Juan, semi-structured interview, 03-20-2015

¹⁸ Judy walker, semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015

experienced that people are more than happy to talk with us about food. New Orleanians talk about ingredients, techniques, dishes, recipes and chefs. They care about what they eat, they like to share food and see it also as a way of creating a community. Marly explained that:

“In New Orleans food is a social activity and not food as a substance. When you have dinner with a group together, you will talk about your last meal, this meal and your next meal. We have lots of friends who are working in a food related area, many chefs, waiters, everybody has these friends. It is a convenient topic. Everybody understands the topic, everybody has an opinion about it”¹⁹.

Talking about food is a binding factor, it connects all inhabitants and creates a collective identity (following Paulson 2006:662, Preston-Werner 2009:15).

Not only talking, but eating and sharing is important as well, it creates feelings of shared belonging (Adema 2006:164-165, Sanabria 2007:270). Food, thus is very social.

As African-American Chef Dean mentioned: “Food is important, people connect to it. When people gather, there is always food. When I want people to show up, I’d better have some food”²⁰.

Cuisines

New Orleans is an ethnically diverse city, many ethnic cuisines (restaurants) are present in New Orleans. Ethnic identities that we focused on are: Creole, Cajun, Vietnamese, African-American, Latino and North-American. We see all these groups as ethnic groups because they are culturally distinctive and interact with each other (following Eriksen 2010:215). Even though ethnic boundaries seem to be clear, ethnic food boundaries are not, they are much more fluid. Foodways can communicate messages of solidarity and separation (Anderson 2005:126), though in our case study we mostly found food to be the binding factor. The New Orleans cuisine we consider as a local cuisine, which will be discussed later this chapter. It will become clear that local and ethnic cuisines are not two clear categories as they tend to have similarities, we will indicate them as frontiers.

¹⁹ Marly, informal interview, 04-03-2015

²⁰ Chef Dean, informal interview, 02-10-2015

Long (2010:23) marked that “food is more than the dishes we eat”. For most ethnic groups, food is a way to preserve traditions and heritage. Below we will elaborate upon the different ethnic groups and their cuisines, there are however no clear boundaries between the cuisines. Remember that New Orleans is a gumbo pot, the cuisines are influenced by each other.

Creole

Monique, a Creole women and tour guide, spoke at a Creole heritage event she had organized:

“I am sure you picked up that spice in my pasta, that is my key ingredient, cayenne pepper. Main ingredients were salt and pepper and cayenne. You always have the taste, the smell and the look of the dish. We have a very specific food that you just don’t see today. So we are losing part of our history”²¹.

Food is an important part of the Creole ethnic identity, but since New Orleans is often described as a Creole city, we assumed that Creole as an identity would still be more present. The majority of our informants see Creole identity as something from the past, only some consider themselves as Creoles and are interested in their heritage. Creoles are generally described as people of mixed race, children of Europeans and Africans and born in America. As Mina mentioned: “Creole is an offshoot of African, French, Spanish, you name whatever culture took over for a while we included in the pot”²². The Creoles in New Orleans were well-educated and considered to be the upper class of New Orleans culture. Creoles nowadays are usually described as their descendants, catholic and light-skinned.

Creoles are proud of their cuisine and of the huge influence that their ancestors had on the cuisine of New Orleans. Creole cuisine is not something just practiced by Creoles, but by anyone in New Orleans, we will discuss this later at the subsection on ‘local cuisine’. Even though there are many Creole restaurants, Monique mentioned that real Creole cuisine is practiced at home²³. Joe, a Creole local, told us that the food is best at home but to be a Creole,

²¹ Monique, participant observation, 03-14-2015

²² Mina, semi-structured interview, 04-07-2015

²³ Monique, participant observation, 03-14-2015

one does not need to eat that food every day. Creole food is not very healthy and mostly linked to celebrations²⁴.

Cajun

Tom mentioned that “it is hard to find real authentic Cajun food here in New Orleans”²⁵. ‘Authentic’ Cajun culture and cuisine can be found in villages in rural Louisiana. Fishing and hunting is still common, not surprisingly are most dishes meat based. Boudin sausage is one of their specialties. They further make all kinds of gumbo, depending on which meat they hunted. In contrast with these northern Cajuns, the Cajuns in the bayou (swamps) relied much more on seafood and have another culture²⁶. Crawfish is harvested on the farms and Crawfish boils are common. Furthermore lots of herbs and spices are used.

There are not many Cajuns living in New Orleans, the ones we spoke with do not cook Cajun dishes often²⁷. Dishes usually take much time, so people tend to prepare it for special occasions. When they go back to their home-village, their parents will cook it for them. The Cajuns in New Orleans are proud of being Cajun, but it does not seem that they have a strong community here.

Soul food

Dark skinned people tend to see themselves as African-American, even though they are a New Orleanian²⁸, some would say they are Creole. Many ‘blacks’, as they are called, live in the same neighborhood. You will see African-Americans eating in all kinds of restaurants, but the food they eat at home is considered as Soul food. Soul food originated during the time of slavery. Mina described: “Whatever there was leftover from what they cooked in the big kitchen, the bad meats, the bony meats. That was cooked in the slave quarters and that was named soul food”²⁹. Hattie, an older African-American chef from a cooking school, described Soul food as: “Black American food, or more food for poor people. They are inclined to eat Soul food, they cannot afford to eat the best. But they put a lot of love in their meals, there is the soul. In

²⁴ Joe, semi-structured interview, 04-06-2015

²⁵ Tom, informal interview, 02-21-2015

²⁶ Tom, informal interview, 02-21-2015

²⁷ e.g. Claire, semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015; Tom, informal interview, 02-21-2015

²⁸ e.g. Karen, Creole heritage but African-American identity, semi-structured interview, 02-24-015

²⁹ Mina, semi-structured interview, 04-07-2015

this way it becomes satisfying”³⁰. All our informants agreed on this last point, as Chef Dean mentioned: “it is comfort food. Soul food means cooking with love”³¹. An African-American bus driver in his 60’s further sums up dishes: “It is red beans, etouffee, pork chops, fried chicken, black eyed peas, cornbread, and all kinds of greens. It is usually not so spicy”³².

The question however is if people eat it in New Orleans and if it is something local. Although Hattie told us that there is no Soul food in New Orleans and that it is a word she would not use anymore, Mina, among others, told us that “it is still eaten in New Orleans. The name soul food is still in use, I cook it. [...] In fact Soul food can be anything”³³ Hattie seemed to agree on this last point when she told that “a lot of times that is just dinner”³⁴. According to Liz “Soul food is different in every place”³⁵. Soul food has a local meaning in New Orleans.

A young African-American waitress at a Soul food restaurant perceived Soul food as “a southern thing, it is not specific to New Orleans but in the whole South”³⁶. Sometimes, it is referred to as southern food. Marly sees what she ate when she was younger as southern food, what according to her was in fact Soul food though they never claimed it that way³⁷.

There are only a couple of restaurants in New Orleans who claim they are a Soul food restaurant, often the food is pretty similar to Creole food: the boundaries of Soul food are not very clear. Soul food is probably the topic on which informants differed most in their opinion.

Vietnamese

When we had just arrived in New Orleans, it became already clear that this is a city with a strong Vietnamese community. Vietnamese restaurants and corner shops are abundant, though the Vietnamese encompass just a few percent of the total population. Kate explained their impact: “The Vietnamese impact has been growing for forty years, it started before the Vietnam war. It has become more and more apparent in certain communities but then really only since Katrina, but it had a forty year head start”³⁸.

³⁰ Hattie, semi-structured interview, 03-12-2015

³¹ Chef Dean, informal interview, 02-10-2015

³² African-American bus driver, informal conversation, 03-18-2015

³³ Mina, semi-structured interview, 04-07-2015

³⁴ Hattie, semi-structured interview, 03-12-2015

³⁵ Liz, semi-structured interview, 03-13-2015

³⁶ African-American waitress, conversation, 03-03-2015

³⁷ Marly, informal interview, 04-03-2015

³⁸ Kate, semi-structured interview, 03-26-2015

All Vietnamese participants mentioned that the Vietnamese community is very strong, they have their own Vietnam-town and many people know each other³⁹. They eat Vietnamese food, what is mostly consumed with their family. Even though for example Jane, a twenty year old Vietnamese girl, is born in New Orleans and feels that she is a New Orleanian, she also has a Vietnamese identity. These two identities can exist next to each other. Interesting however, is that the Vietnamese in New Orleans do not seem to have a connection to Vietnam as a place, but only to the culture. Jane told that she connects to Vietnam “only by the food, culture and the church”⁴⁰. The Vietnamese cuisine is seen as an important aspect of their culture. Family is important and this plays a role in preserving traditions. Sue, who is born in Vietnam but lives here for 35 years, described the diner traditions:

“The main thing is a big pot of rice. [...] Everyone has a bowl of rice, the food (three side dishes) is in the center. We eat with chopsticks. The other dishes we put on top of the rice, so everyone makes their own meal. [...] That is our culture. We eat like this every day. Sunday is more difficult, we have a big pot with spicy chicken and vermicelli noodle and vegetables”⁴¹.

Hispanics

Another large ethnic group that is present in New Orleans are Hispanics. Hispanic is a term for everyone from Central and South America, in New Orleans Hondurans and Mexicans are the largest groups. Our informants tend to feel a strong connection to their homeland or the country their parents came from. They identify with their heritage rather than with being North-American. However, our informants considered themselves to be Americans, because America is North, Central and South America.

Most Hispanics came after Katrina for jobs to rebuild the city. And, as Kate marks, they were the first to start with street food and food trucks in New Orleans, just after Katrina⁴². Helen, the owner of a Mexican restaurant, noted that with these food trucks the first Mexican food was sold. “It is actually weird that there was not much before, perhaps the Mexican

³⁹ e.g. Thuan, semi-structured interview, 03-11-2015; Yen, semi-structured interview, 04-02-2015. Both born in New Orleans with Vietnamese parents.

⁴⁰ Jane, semi-structured interview, 03-30-2015

⁴¹ Sue, semi-structured interview, 03-31-2015

⁴² Kate, semi-structured interview, 02-11-2015

community was too small”⁴³. Now many Latino restaurants can be found in the city, as well as supermarkets, bakeries and food trucks. They mostly serve Latino customers but also seems to be popular among other residents. When talking with Latino informants, it was remarkable that all of them mentioned authentic or traditional food, what seems to be valued. According to Miguel, the owner of a Latino restaurant, authentic means using the same ingredients as the women would do in Central-America⁴⁴. Juan describes these points from his own experience:

“The food we offer here is homemade, Central-American food, very traditional [...] type of meals that you would eat at home. When you go to your house and have your beans and your rice and tortilla, that’s traditional in Central-America and also Mexico. [...] My clientele is pretty much every Latin-American country. They want something home-made, that’s why they come. It is pretty much a melting pot I guess. You can’t get tired of eating beans and rice. [...] You know, New Orleans has red beans and rice, Latin-America has beans and rice. [...] I eat it myself too. At my house I would do the Latin American way, but when I am out, red beans and rice are good too, in the New Orleans traditional style”⁴⁵.

Juan marks here, what we will see later, that cuisines overlap. Informants talk about cuisines but not about strict boundaries. Juan gave another example when he made a seafood soup which was seen as gumbo. He said: “I really believe, within time, things are gonna melt in”.

Mixing and melting

Judy Walker described how New Orleans gave more place to other cuisines:

“When we first moved here, one of my friends who also lived here told me that the local cuisine is so strong that it dominates all the restaurant cultures, this was in 2000. So it sort of kept a lot of other cuisines out [...] But now, especially since hurricane Katrina, there

⁴³ Helen, semi-structured interview, 03-13-2015

⁴⁴ Miguel, informal interview, 04-10-2015

⁴⁵ Juan, semi-structured interview, 03-20-2015

are a lot more different ethnic kinds of foods here. It is directly related to people who came to build afterwards”⁴⁶.

Different cuisines, as described above, exist next to each other but at the same time there is mixing. Food does not seem to mark clear boundaries. We see the cuisines as frontiers, which does not contain strict lines but zones (Cohen 1994:53, Hannerz 1997:9, Conversi 1999:565), since they overlap and people eat food from different cuisines. However, people do make distinctions between authentic food and other food.

It is remarkable that people crave for ‘their’ food (what they grew up with) after a while, as the Vietnamese told they crave for rice after a couple of days. Obviously it depends on the person how much people connect to ‘their’ cuisine, we both spoke with people who do not eat the food from their group daily. For example Joe connects much to his Creole identity but eats Asian food on a regular basis⁴⁷. Meghan, a young white American lady, preferred new food since “You can eat so much gumbo, that you got over gumbot”⁴⁸. Jane, a Vietnamese student, sees eating other food as a way to connect to other cultures and all kinds of people⁴⁹.

People like to eat and cook food of other groups even if they are proud of their own food; where they grew up with. Hence, there is an exchange between cuisines, this marks the openness of the city.

Melting pot

New Orleans is often referred to as a melting pot of different cultures. The cuisines are not something static but seem to mix with the local surrounding: dishes get a local twist. People say it is important that New Orleans has so many cuisines. As outlined above, they describe New Orleans as a gumbo pot⁵⁰. This implicates that all cuisines together forms the cuisine of New Orleans. Food can thus be seen as a social glue across ethnic differences.

The city of New Orleans is described as a Creole city. Although Creole is also a group of people, this term is mostly used to describe the New Orleans culture and cuisine. Creole

⁴⁶ Judy walker, Semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015

⁴⁷ Joe, semi-structured interview, 03-14-2015

⁴⁸ Meghan, informal interview, 03-10-2015

⁴⁹ Jane, semi-structured interview, 03-30-2015

⁵⁰ e.g. Marly, informal interview, 04-03-2015, Kate, semi-structured interview, 03-26-2015

refers to the mixing of cultures, and thus a constant change. Creole is therefore a term for New Orleans cuisine that makes it possible to incorporate the newer influences.

Vietnamese food and Hispanic food are important as well in New Orleans. It depends whom you ask if it is part of local cuisine, but it is popular, there are many restaurants and people cook it at home too. The Vietnamese po'boy and crawfish tacos are both examples of mixing of cuisines.

Susan, a white American lady in her 60's, mentioned that she always advises customers to buy the Junior Laque book 'Talk about good', a New Orleanian cookbook, from Louisiana. On the question why it consists of a Mexican food section she answered: "Only a certain amount of local dishes can be found in the book, because we eat everything"⁵¹.

Local cuisine

As shortly mentioned before, after Katrina more ethnic cuisines could be found in the city, Liz explained that also the local cuisine was appreciated more:

"People discovered that their food was different from outside New Orleans. I personally experienced 'I can't find this and that'. When all the former residents came back to New Orleans, the fast food chains did not come back. Small food places came up again, like po'boy places. They protected their food culture. Now there was a great appreciation for their authentic cuisine. [...] When the rug is pulled out from you, you are aware of it. So people became aware of the uniqueness"⁵².

All our respondents had the opinion that the cuisine in New Orleans is distinctive within the US. New Orleans has a rich history and cultural influences from Europe, the Caribbean and Africa led to a cuisine that is not found in other places. Confusing is that the Creole and sometimes Cajun cuisine (including gumbo and jambalaya) are seen as the local cuisine, which are found in whole Louisiana. Stacy, a white middle-class mother who works at a Hospitality Foundation, told us that the food of New Orleans is kind of similar to the rest of South Louisiana, but because of the promotion for tourists people think that the cuisine is unique⁵³.

⁵¹ Susan, informal interview, 02-20-2015

⁵² Liz, semi-structured interview, 02-18-2015

⁵³ Stacy, semi-structured interview, 03-16-2015

Unlike Stacy, many informants have the opinion that the cuisine of New Orleans is unique. As Juan, Honduran manager of a bakery, marks: “New Orleans has this own food, other cities try to copy. A lot of great chefs have come out of New Orleans, go to work somewhere else. New Orleans has its own flavor and it has flavor. The food has got love. It is not just something put together”⁵⁴. Interesting here is that he accentuates the flavor principle for defining the cuisine, from Anderson (2005:189), whereas for example Liz mentioned the social aspect of the cuisine. Both are thus important.

Next to gumbo, jambalaya and crawfish boils, there are certain dishes which are not only iconic to New Orleans but also originated there, such as snowballs (ice cream), bbq shrimp, po’boy and ya-ka-mein (sort of noodle soup). The location of New Orleans as a port city and transportation hub and the abundant availability of seafood and other local foods contributed to the development of a local cuisine.

All cuisines get a local meaning, they intersect and foodways change. One could argue that all ethnic cuisines are local cuisines in a way.

Conclusion

New Orleans is a foodscape; the food is local and can be experienced with all senses (following Adema 2006:13), and applying the definition from Mintz (1996:96) it has a cuisine. Making a division between local- and ethnic cuisines is problematic, since the boundaries are not clear. This chapter wove through their similarities and differences as to reflect New Orleans as a melting pot. Creole is considered to be the local cuisine, however it overlaps with the Cajun cuisine and Soul food. For all cuisines in New Orleans gumbo is important. No cuisine is separate in New Orleans: they get inspired by the surroundings and incorporate New Orleans traditions. The Vietnamese and Latino cuisine are important for New Orleans as well. New Orleans is an ethnic diverse food city, food binds all together. Also talking about food works as a binding factor, it connects all inhabitants and creates a collective identity (following Paulson 2006:662, Preston-Werner 2009:15).

⁵⁴ Juan, semi-structured interview, 03-20-2015

One could argue that all ethnic cuisines in New Orleans are local cuisines. Food does play an important role for identity in New Orleans⁵⁵. People mark that they are a New Orleanian by eating, sharing and talking about food, on which we will elaborate more in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Liz, semi-structured interview, 02-18-2015

4. New Orleans' food experts

“But I know how to eat crawfish!”⁵⁶”

Marlies

When explaining our research to informants, reactions were invariably positive and according to participants it must be amazing to study food in New Orleans. They asked us if we had been going to this particular restaurant already, or tried that po'boy. We were usually given a list of interesting people, places, restaurants and chefs we should contact. After a while we could also join in those conversations about food and tell people for instance that we ate a delicious shrimp and grits at the Congo Square Festival. Respondents themselves sometimes felt uncertain and told they were not an expert, so it should be better to talk to this or that person. Still it was striking how much New Orleanians liked to share their knowledge, their opinions and preferences related to food.

As already discussed in chapter three, local food culture is an important aspect of identity in New Orleans. When identity is defined in relation to the environment we speak of place identity (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618). Again, following the definition of Mintz, a cuisine is the food from a *place*. Foodways in New Orleans indeed constitute a local cuisine. There also is a population that eats that cuisine frequently and more important in this respect, “[...] consider themselves *expert* on it. They all believe, and *care* that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste” (Mintz 1996:96).

In this chapter we will argue that by taking on an ‘expert role’, people show a sense of local belonging to New Orleans and its food culture. Through the construction of a collective historical narrative about New Orleans cuisine, personal memories and living and eating in New Orleans, locals share knowledge and have opinions about food. Showing one’s knowledge about food is a way to define yourself as a local compared to visitors, tourists and newcomers. For newcomers, to become an expert on food can be seen as an initiation ritual to becoming New Orleanian. We argue that knowledge about food is a marker of belonging in New Orleans which contributes to the sense of place.

⁵⁶ Pierre, informal conversation, 04-05-2015

Of course people do not necessarily agree in conversations about food; not about the difference between Cajun and Creole, not about what soul food is, and not about the quality of Chinese restaurants in New Orleans, just to mention a few discussions. However, people's opinions are open to those of others. After a long story about why bagels are not as good in New Orleans compared to, for instance, New York, David Beriss said: "People here are better in local food and have knowledge about how to make something, good recipes. I was listening the other day to a conversation about creole sauce in Wallgreens, The women really knew where she was talking about"⁵⁷.

A collective historical narrative

The past of a place is open to different interpretations (Blokland 2009:1594); everyone can create his or her own version of the history of a particular place. We noticed however that all our informants refer to the local cuisine as Creole and as a melting pot, as already elaborated on in chapter three. They furthermore largely agree upon the story of how New Orleans, as part of Louisiana, gained such a distinctive food culture within the US. The history of local cuisine in New Orleans is closely intertwined with the history of the city itself. Informants showed their knowledge about different waves of immigrants coming to the city, the slave trade and the French and Spanish colonization. Through social interactions a collective narrative can be constructed about the history of a place. Blokland (2009) refers to these historical narratives as processes of place-making.

Spaces are made meaningful both by individuals and collectives. This process is selective and can define the community (Blokland 2009:1608), some might be emphasized while others are neglected. A collective narrative thus has to do with politics of belonging; who belongs and who does not. Concerning New Orleans cuisine, also food introduced by more recent migrant groups is part of the collective historical narrative. The Vietnamese community is often mentioned by informants as already having added another dimension to the 'melting pot' of New Orleans and to a lesser extent the same goes for the Latino community. In the case of the Vietnamese community therefore, their being part of this narrative shows their belonging to the place New Orleans.

⁵⁷ David Beriss, semi-structured interview, 03-11-2015

The construction of a collective historical narrative about New Orleans cuisine is a process of place-making that contributes to a sense of place-belongingness. Having knowledge about the history of local cuisine and above all *expressing* it is part of the ‘expert role’ that locals take on to mark their belonging to New Orleans.

Personal memory and childhood

Another way in which place is made meaningful is by emotionally relating a place to the past and to the future. Chamlee-Wright and Storr call this place attachment, which is part of a sense of place (2009:618). Joe, born and raised in New Orleans and very concerned about his Creole heritage, described how he grew up smelling the gumbo of Dooky Chase, a famous New Orleans restaurant in his neighborhood.⁵⁸ Juan, born in Honduras and raised in New Orleans, told us how he had the opportunity to grow up eating Honduran food at home, and New Orleans food at friends’ houses. “So I have learned a bit of everything you know. If it is good, it doesn’t matter”⁵⁹. Martin, grew up in New Orleans and his favorite food is Italian:

“I grew up in an Italian family, we learned to cook Italian. That was very much a part of, I grew up with pasta. Pastas with tomato sauce, great anti pasti’s, always the marinated vegetables and marinated seafood, that was very important in our diet. My grandparents came over here, were very poor here but worked very hard and started a food company they grew and grew and became Progresso, Italian food business. It is pretty popular now. It is in the Italian food section. You know he started a food company. When I grew up it was all around food, part of our culture and part of our heritage”⁶⁰.

To have memories about a certain place is also a process of belonging (Ward 2003). Memories about food and eating in New Orleans thus lead to place attachment and belonging.

Also, memory can be seen as kind of expert knowledge. For Tom, a young man living in New Orleans since ten years, his childhood memories make him an expert on Cajun culture and food, which is something from the countryside although the food had influenced New Orleans cuisine since the 1970s. “When I grew up, the men would go fishing and hunting. My

⁵⁸ Joe, informal conversation, 03-14-2015

⁵⁹ Juan, semi-structured interview, 03-20-2015

⁶⁰ Martin, semi-structured interview, 04-02-2015

grandparents know almost any animal, how to slaughter and prepare it and use every part of the animal. A gumbo would be a chicken and sausage gumbo”⁶¹. In this example, his knowledge here marks a boundary with people who do not have these memories related to Cajun culture and food. In other cases memory can mark a boundary with people who moved later in life to New Orleans.

Moreover, when born and raised in New Orleans it is more likely that cooking skills and knowledge about New Orleans cuisine is passed on to children at the home. In the next paragraph we will discuss that home-cooked food, which reflects particular skill in ingredients and cooking, is usually more valued than other food.

Home and public

“There is a few places [in the French Quarter], but not much good food. I talk to thousands of tourists each year and they ask me, where can I get good gumbo? I will tell them you’ll have to go to my house. It is very unfortunate but that is where our food culture is”⁶².

Food that people grew up with, that is considered their ‘own’ cuisine, is preferably eaten at home, while other cuisines can be enjoyed elsewhere. For Monique it is beyond doubt that the real food culture in New Orleans is at home. She was not the only informant who referred to home for the best food. Informants furthermore agreed that people cook more at home in New Orleans than in most other parts of the US. In a restaurant people will usually eat something that they do not eat at home. Monique told about really good Jamaican food next door and also said that she is quite a critic: “I have never in my whole fifty years ordered a gumbo out anywhere, because you all know that the best place is the home”⁶³. While for Juan it is the other way around: “If I go to a restaurant, a New Orleans type of restaurant, I will try their gumbo and see how it is”⁶⁴. Besides home cooking, most informants also showed expert knowledge by telling us about what they thought were the ‘good’ restaurants and the ‘great’ chefs in New Orleans. If they knew them they would tell us and offer to bring us in contact with them.

⁶¹ Tom, unstructured interview, 02-21-2015

⁶² Monique, participant observation, 03-14-2015

⁶³ Monique, participant observation, 03-14-2015

⁶⁴ Juan, semi-structured interview, 03-20-2015

We asked informants to describe what they eat on a regular day and noticed that people were hesitant to tell that they ate simple things for lunch, take-away meals, or fast-food on a regular basis too. Though according to our informants not as much as elsewhere in the US, fast-food and take-away meals are available everywhere in New Orleans. Some told us that they actually never cook themselves such as Cheng, who later on added that he “can make a gumbo, but don’t know how it will taste”⁶⁵. Also in New Orleans people take away meals for lunch, and eat fast-food. But as Judy Walker explained:

“Americans are like ‘let’s go out to eat, let’s have fast food, let’s make convenience food’. Not that the people in New Orleans do not make convenience food, they do it too. But at least they still know what the New Orleans foods are and are willing to have a conversation with you for twenty minutes at the post office about it”⁶⁶.

Concerning one’s ‘own’ cuisine, food at the home is valued more than food elsewhere. People can take on an expert role and talk about food also if they don’t know how to cook it themselves.

Being a New Orleanian

“New people who move here, see themselves as experts of New Orleans. Really? You just came to town. I don’t mind, but they are not experts by moving here. [...] I am not an expert of New Orleans myself. The city is always evolving because it is a port city. There are always new people coming in, that has not changed. I feel like that, I think it is funny. It is a European gumbo mix”⁶⁷.

As Marly explained in this quote, to be accepted as expert on New Orleans requires more than just moving there. The population of New Orleans had changed considerably in the last ten years due to an influx of white mostly well-educated young people and Latino’s. The question when someone is perceived as a New Orleanian is therefore an interesting one.

⁶⁵ Cheng, unstructured interview, 03-10-2015

⁶⁶ Judy walker, Semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015

⁶⁷ Marly, semi-structured interview, 03-04-2015

In general, time is an important factor. Informants thought that the longer you live here, the more you are New Orleanian. For some, one year is enough while for others you can say that you are New Orleanian after at least twenty five years. Helen explains: “I feel that I am here in the long term. Yes I do claim to be New Orleanian. But people still hear my Californian accent. So I’m not really from here”⁶⁸. As often in New Orleans, Katrina is an important marker of time. According to some informants, you are New Orleanian if you came back after Katrina. Not everyone however cares if and when people see themselves as New Orleanian. Judy Walker told us that most people would identify themselves as New Orleanian when they live here, for her if you say you are from New Orleans, that is fine⁶⁹.

Several times belonging to New Orleans was expressed through food. A young French teacher said: “I came in 2006, but I know how to eat crawfish”⁷⁰. Apparently for him this was a sign of being local. According to a young woman from Nola Cooking School, as a local, you need to know how to make praline and gumbo⁷¹. David Beriss thought that knowledge and discussion about food among others make you an insider, not a native. An important part of local New Orleans identity is its food culture. Stacy exemplified this: “Even with my ten year old’s birthday party. It was planned around what are we eating, what are the parents eating, what are the kids eating, what are we providing”⁷². In the next section we will explain that since food is part of local identity and daily life in New Orleans, learning about food can be seen as an initiation ritual for newcomers to New Orleans.

Becoming a New Orleans expert

Jean, who owns a cookbook shop in the French Quarter, described the crawfish boil when we asked what he would eat at a birthday party. “Crawfish, at this time of the year. People take the table out, cover it with newspapers and throw the boil on the table. People learn at young age how to eat it, fast. Yes, also the rich people eat it”⁷³. As a local you learn to eat crawfish at young age. Others who are not born in New Orleans or not familiar with it have to learn about

⁶⁸ Helen, semi-structured interview, 03-13-2015

⁶⁹ Judy Walker, semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015

⁷⁰ Pierre, informal conversation, 04-05-2015

⁷¹ Nola Cooking School, informal conversation, 03-02-2015

⁷² Stacy, semi-structured interview, 03-16-2015

⁷³ Jean, informal conversation, 02-20-2015

it later on. This learning to eat crawfish can therefore be seen as an example of the initiation ritual of becoming New Orleanian.

Knowledge about food, about specific New Orleans dishes, about famous New Orleans' chefs, about the collective historical narrative of New Orleans cuisine, all show belonging to New Orleans. The process of learning is thus a way to belong and to become New Orleanian. At a party we spoke with Thad, who lives in New Orleans for three years: "I added gumbo and red beans and rice to the family recipes. When I came here I had the motivation to make all the traditional recipes, but this did not really come through like most intentions"⁷⁴.

In general informants who were not from New Orleans liked to learn about the food, either by cooking themselves or by just eating it. One informant, Alex, runs a bed and breakfast in Treme and showed us books about the history of Treme and the cookbook 'Treme: stories and recipes from the heart of New Orleans' from which he learns to make some local dishes⁷⁵. His interest in the city is part of what drew him here and he wants to give his guests breakfast with some local elements. Learning about local cuisine is a crucial part of becoming New Orleanian.

Constructing boundaries through expert knowledge

"I love my culture and I love teaching people about our culture. Especially the tourists that come here and think that everything is Cajun. So when I stand before a bunch of white faces. I will tell them, do you know where okra came from? 'Oh no, isn't that indigenous?!' So I will tell them the story about okra and how it was brought here"⁷⁶.

The quote above is from Charlotte, a Creole woman and cook. Tourism is one of the most important industries in New Orleans. The city is promoted as a food city and there are several cooking schools, organizations offering culinary tours and a huge amount of restaurants. In this way, knowledge about food is passed on to tourists as well. In general however, tourists will not have the same level of expertise as locals.

First, as we noted above, New Orleans residents see their most important food culture to be in the home, and tourists usually do not have access to homes. Knowledge about food

⁷⁴ Thad, informal conversation, 03-13-2015

⁷⁵ Alex, informal conversation, 02-27-2015

⁷⁶ Charlotte, participant observation, 03-14-2015

therefore becomes a marker of belonging: a way in which the boundaries for group membership of being local are created. A collective identity only makes sense in relation to others who are considered different (Eriksen 2010:215), in this case the others are tourists and visitors. To be an expert on home cooking in New Orleans is thus one way in which locals show their belonging to New Orleans.

Second, outside of the home locals know where the good places are. It is less important if people actually visit those places regularly. From the small corner shop for a po'boy, to the more high-end restaurants and "famous" chefs. In the view of Jean: "You know, in the French quarter people come there only once, while in small groceries stores people live there and will come back if its good and tell others"⁷⁷. Knowledge about the 'food map' of New Orleans is therefore a second way in which locals set themselves apart from others.

Not all newcomers have an interest in local food and culture: perhaps people like to consume it but do not want to become part of it by learning about New Orleans food and cooking. Yet caring about food (see Mintz 1996:96), even though one is not very much of an expert, remains a central element for inclusion into New Orleans. Kate was very critical about the recent wave of people from New York and other parts of the US coming to New Orleans. In her opinion they love New Orleans but recreate the place to their own needs:

"What we see specifically with New York movement, that in the Bywater you can find on one side of St. Claude that two dollar breakfast sandwich, but around the corner you can find the twenty dollar coffee shop. That caters to New Yorkers and is run by New Yorkers"⁷⁸.

Hence, compared to newcomers who are not learning much about food culture in New Orleans, locals define their belonging to New Orleans. As Kate signals, outsiders are marked through food and their presence or unwillingness to learn leads to the delineation of a particular 'New Orleans community', separate from those who do not *know* or do not *care* (see Mintz 1996:96). Knowledge about food marks a boundary between people who belong in New Orleans and people who do not, such as tourists or newcomers. At the same time however, among locals

⁷⁷ Jean, informal conversation, 02-20-2015

⁷⁸ Kate, semi-structured interview, 03-26-2015

themselves, food is a means of crossing boundaries and connection. Within this ‘New Orleans community’ we therefore speak about foodways as frontiers. This will be elaborated upon in the next chapter about belonging and a collective identity in New Orleans.

Conclusion

New Orleanians are proud of their local cuisine and like to share their knowledge and opinions about it. The construction of a collective historical narrative about New Orleans cuisine is a process of place-making that contributes to a sense of place-belongingness (Blokland 2009). Expressing knowledge about the history of local cuisine it is part of the ‘expert role’ that locals take on. Memories contribute to place-making as well and are a kind of expert knowledge. Informants with memories related to food in New Orleans had stronger attachment to place (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009).

Informants reluctant to tell that they ate fastfood and takeaway meals too on a regular basis. Concerning one’s ‘own cuisine’, food at home is valued more than the same food elsewhere. Knowledge about local cuisine is essential part of being New Orleanian. The process of learning about food culture in New Orleans can therefore be seen as an initiation ritual in becoming New Orleanian. As our informant Pierre, who lives in New Orleans since nine years, said: “But I know how to eat crawfish!”⁷⁹. Expressing knowledge about food is a way to express local belonging. This marks a boundary with those who do not share in this knowledge and are not part of the ‘New Orleans community’.

⁷⁹ Pierre, informal conversation, 04-05-2015

5. Belonging to New Orleans

“This is a red bean city here”⁸⁰

Marlies

“Unlike seafood gumbo, shrimp remoulade, or pecan-crusting drum, red beans and rice is not likely to inspire a tourist to write home or a food critic to praise the city as a culinary destination. It is not on the menu in many of the fancier local restaurants. It is, however, arguably one of the core dishes New Orleanians are likely to identify as a sign of home” (Beriss 2012:2).

Beriss (2012) described how after Katrina displaced people, including himself, longed for particular food only available in New Orleans and how particular dishes, such as red beans and rice, invoked strong feelings of home. Judy Walker also realized that red beans and rice was the dish people missed the most after Katrina:

“Because you could get the ingredients to make gumbo or jambalaya wherever you were. You could still go to the grocery store, but everybody here buys the local company Camellia red beans and you can’t get that everywhere. There was all the public moaning and groaning about people who could not get their red beans”⁸¹.

Red beans and rice is regarded as a typical New Orleans dish, compared to many other dishes that are found throughout Louisiana. The exact origin is not clear, but it probably started as leftover food for the poor and is usually eaten on Mondays. The dish is popular among residents and many restaurants, cafes and take-away places offer it.

Antonsich (2010) approached the concept of belonging as an emotional feeling towards place, the feeling of being ‘at home’. We have shown how New Orleans is considered to be a melting pot and discussed the importance of expert knowledge in defining place-belongingness. In this chapter we will discuss different ways in which our informants experience this place-belongingness, in other words, feel at home in New Orleans. By many, the city is perceived as

⁸⁰ David Beriss, semi-structured interview, 03-11-2015

⁸¹ Judy Walker, semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015

a unique place, as a melting pot of cultures. At the same time, New Orleans is a very community oriented city where people tend to feel a strong sense of belonging to their particular neighborhood and/or ethnic group. We will discuss how food is a way to overcome barriers between people. Furthermore we argue that promotion of the foodscape New Orleans is a process of place-making. Finally we approach the local celebrations and festivals as a frontier where a local New Orleans identity takes shape.

New Orleans as a unique place

“Everyone wants to come to New Orleans because it is a museum without a roof and you don’t have to go anywhere to be somewhere, you are already there. You are architecturally overwhelmed. Our city center is old. Most cities are proud of their new buildings and how tall they are. So America has to reckon with Louisiana in a way that for me as a Creole, I love the idea that I feel, I can’t help it, it’s my birth home”⁸².

In the quote above Joe described how for him personally New Orleans is like home, and at the same time points to why according to him the city is attractive to others. Answers to the question of what makes one feel at home in New Orleans, can for the most part be summarized by describing the city as a *unique place* because of the mentality of its people and its diversity. Within Louisiana and in the United States as a whole, the city has something special; it is a ‘gumbo’ of people and cultures.

New Orleanians are generally seen as friendly and open. Informants like it that people still greet each other in the street, are willing to help each other and have random conversations in the bus or at the line at the supermarket for example. Cheng, a young Chinese-American man who lives in New Orleans for about nine years now, recalled an experience that changed his view of the city. He had a flat tire and two cars stopped and asked if they could help. According to Cheng in the rest of the US, people who would do that are seen as either weird or it is assumed that something must be wrong with them⁸³.

Diversity also seemed to be something locals are proud of. It is appreciated that New Orleans has a rich history which is reflected in architecture, in characteristic neighborhoods, in

⁸² Joe, semi-structured interview, 04-06-2015

⁸³ Cheng, unstructured interview, 02-10-2015

a diverse population, a vibrant music scene, local traditions such as second line parades and obviously in food. For a Nicaraguan informant, the culture, openness and diversity make New Orleans feel like home because it is like being back in Central-America:

“New Orleans is the closest to home. [...] The people in New Orleans are friendly. The food is good. It is a very small town, you don’t have to drive hours to go to one place. The culture here is beautiful, there are so many different cultures. It doesn’t feel like being very far from home when I am here”⁸⁴.

Part of the sense of place as conceptualized by Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) is place dependence, which refers to the degree to which a certain place is suitable for the preferred lifestyle of an individual. What we mentioned by ‘New Orleans as a unique place’ make a certain lifestyle possible and can therefore lead to place dependence. According to Kate there is the idea that New Orleans is so fun and so crazy that some people who move here never really grow up⁸⁵.

Obviously, to feel ‘at home’ in a place requires more than appreciation of a city, of its diversity, its tolerance and its cultural heritage. Antonsich (2010:8) discerns place of birth, length of residence, personal and social ties, cultural factors such as language and food, and the legal and economic situation among the factors that influence place-belongingness. Participants seem to be more at home when they are settled, when they have kids, friends and a job. As David Beriss explained:

“Yeah sure, I feel this is my home. I live here since 1979 but would not claim that I am a native. You will only be a native if you have been here to the high school or when you are born here. But my kids are native here. For me the feeling of home depends on my social network, what I have here. My friends live here”⁸⁶.

Part of what makes New Orleans culture unique is its food, as already extensively discussed in the previous chapters. Food as an important aspect of local belonging became especially clear

⁸⁴ Miguel, informal interview, 04-10-2015

⁸⁵ Kate, semi-structured interview, 03-26-2015

⁸⁶ David Beriss, unstructured interview, 03-11-2015

after Katrina. Together with Marcelle Bienvenue, Judy Walker wrote a cookbook 'Cooking Up a Storm' in which she collected recipes that were lost because of the storm and the floods. The book became very successful. Judy Walker: "It [Katrina] really did have a huge impact nationwide. People across the country were making New Orleans food as a way to feel closer to New Orleans, as an empathetic thing. It was comfort food for them too"⁸⁷.

Food culture is one of the aspects that makes New Orleans a unique place in the eyes of our informants. The diversity of the city is appreciated as well as the mentality of its inhabitants. Local foodways reflect these characteristics, cultural influences from immigrant groups changed local food and New Orleanians like share it with others.

A community-oriented city

This year the newspapers Nola.com and The Times-Picayune, together with their readers created a journalistic partnership and started an online interactive neighborhood project which: "does enable all New Orleans area residents to literally put their communities on the map - and in the process, contribute to the creation of a new, crowd-sourced NOLA Neighborhood Map"⁸⁸. Residents are not only asked where they live, but also what they call their neighborhood and what exactly are the borders of neighborhoods. The project also collects stories of inhabitants and examines history and cultural changes in particular neighborhoods. Articles usually generate lots of comments and the interactive map looks crowded. Apparently such a project makes sense to New Orleanians.

Indeed, most of our informants experience a strong sense of community. In many cases people identify themselves with their neighborhood where they know each other, have conversations on the street and invite each other for dinner. Others refer more to community in general, families would go to the same schools for generations and the school you went to can be another version of the question where are you from. This community orientation is reflected in food culture. Since sharing is important, food is usually prepared in large quantities. Also during celebrations, public or at home, and at festivals, fundraising events or religious events, food is usually involved.

⁸⁷ Judy Walker, semi-structured interview, 03-18-2015

⁸⁸ http://www.nola.com/neighborhoods/2015/04/about_yat_map.html, 06-16-2015

As with everything in New Orleans, Katrina had an impact on the neighborhoods and on the sense of community. Stacy told us that in Metairie, the suburb where she lives, the resilience was very strong after Katrina and that they are now back to the same strong community, pride and strength as before:

“Well, the neighbors are a lot older, about a generation, but uh, we still feed each other. [...] So sure there is people who might have more resources than others, but in general it is a healthy community when it comes to the economy, to the availability of resources. We have problems with crime, just like the inner city does but I can't be scared to go to places because there is crime”⁸⁹.

Stacy points here to the fact that despite age differences people “still feed each other”, this marks the community feeling residents experience. Among our informants their opinions about gentrification processes and the changing population after Katrina varied. On the one hand, it is thought that the city was underpopulated, so new people were needed to be able to rebuilt. Despite the disastrous consequences of hurricane Katrina and the floods, informants point to the positive changes and new opportunities, such as better schools and better houses. Juan: “I remember before, there was always a worry that every young college graduate would always leave town to go offer their skills somewhere else. And now we have people that want to come here, and talk about New Orleans”⁹⁰. On the other hand, since New Orleans became attractive again, all those new people from out of town might be seen as a danger to the local culture as expressed by Mina, born and raised in New Orleans:

“We talk to one another, we share different recipes, we sit on each other's steps and talk, we sit out there and play music and dance on the streets. And they commin' here, complaining and tell us to stop. They moved into neighborhoods which we're famous for their music clubs and they force them to shut down. They are destroying the culture. The neighborhoods are changing because of the new people coming in. They can come with

⁸⁹ Stacy, semi-structured interview, 03-16-2015

⁹⁰ Juan, semi-structured interview, 03-20-2015

the attitude but not if they don't respect ours. The culture, not our attitude. If you respect our culture, we welcome you with open arms"⁹¹.

Diversity, mentality of New Orleanians, openness and tolerance are the aspects the drew people to the city, especially after Katrina. This led to divisions such as between newcomers who do not take part local culture and older inhabitants as Mina mentioned in the quote above. This is one of the divisions that exist in New Orleans and that we will discuss in the next paragraph.

Divisions in New Orleans

"I think that New Orleans has got good points and bad points. It is very tolerant to difference. So I love that it is a crazy place and it is kind of open and relaxed and all that kind of stuff. I hate that it is so provincial and yet there is some people here that lived all over the world. [...] There is a lot of poverty, a lot of undereducated people who I think don't have as much opportunity because they don't have a good education. That is too bad. [...] I do think it is a fun place. Well obviously public celebrations"⁹².

Quite a few informants also pointed to the negative sides of New Orleans, such as Liz, an older women born in New Orleans, in the quote above. Despite the strong sense of community that participants often mentioned that New Orleans also is a very class-sensitive society. As Marjorie explained: "A lot of people live with barriers, it is not real barriers but they do exist in people's minds. And people act according to it"⁹³. Race also plays a role in divisions, Kate said that in the hospitality industry "the manager is gonna be white, the housekeeper black. I think that that is just artificial and just based on race. I think that is something that really defines the city and how people travel through it"⁹⁴. Furthermore, the city is spatially segregated, but not as much as other cities in the USA according to our informants. Neighborhoods in New Orleans are relatively small and have their own characteristics, different socioeconomic and ethnic groups are relatively mixed. In David Beriss' words: "If you are dropped out of a helicopter, in most cities you do not know where you are, but in New Orleans you will know"⁹⁵.

⁹¹ Mina, informal interview, 04-07-2015

⁹² Liz Williams, semi-structured interview, 03-13-2015

⁹³ Marjorie, semi-structured interview, 02-24-2015

⁹⁴ Kate, semi-structured interview, 03-26-2015

⁹⁵ David Beriss, semi-structured interview, 03-11-2015

One of our informants Gary, the owner of a community garden project, lives in the Lower Ninth Ward. A neighborhood that is considered a ‘food desert’ and according to Gary largely neglected by New Orleans’ corrupt politicians:

“The closest place to buy fresh food is Walmart, over three miles away, and other supermarkets which are also over three miles away. To be a food desert they look at income level also. Here, 30 percent of the population lives on or under the poverty line. Also, 33 percent does not own a vehicle. So to get fresh produce people have to take a bus or walk very far. Instead they go to the groceries stores on the corners. But those stores have junk food, and milk for example is more expensive there than in other supermarkets”⁹⁶.

Also in New Orleans food is thus a way in which divisions between people, between communities, between neighborhoods can be made clear. Indeed, food can communicate messages of solidarity *and* separation (Andersen 2005:126). However, at the same time, food in New Orleans functions as a means to cross those barriers. Therefore the focus seems to be not on the separation message but on the solidarity message of food. According to Liz Williams, in New Orleans money and education are the things that differentiate people, but everyone still eats the same food. She mentioned her elevator experiment, which is not scientific, but telling:

“I dressed up with a friend and we went to a high class building. We took the elevator for several hours. We studied a discussion about where to get the best po’boy. As we expected, people from all classes joined in our conversation, from the cleaning lady to the serious high end worker”⁹⁷.

Opinions on food are taken serious and people expect each other to respect the opinion of others. Talking about food can break rules and social conventions. Ethnic- and local belonging can overlap as we will explain in the next section.

⁹⁶ Gary, unstructured interview, 02-13-2015

⁹⁷ Liz Williams, semi-structured interview, 02-18-2015

Ethnic belonging in New Orleans

Nine

“My grandparents came here from Sicily and I can remember that every Sunday we would all have a big lunch which lasts three hours. [...] So what food does is that it brings people together. It makes a community. We have gatherings [...] with all our neighbors and everybody brings a dish and we sit outside in a park near my home and hear music and eat good food”⁹⁸.

As described in the previous paragraph food functions to separate and connect, in this quote Martin, born and raised in New Orleans, explained that food is so important to him because it brings people together. In his case both in an ethnic and local sense; we explained before that the community ties are strong in New Orleans. Belonging is related to a place, where one feels home, but also to a group, with which one identifies him- or herself.

Immigrants often connect to their ethnic group. Even if ethnic groups live in New Orleans for many generations, their ethnicity stays important to their identity. This can be explained by the fact that individual ethnic identity is perceived as something ‘natural’ (Eriksen 2010). It seems that people in New Orleans connect more to the culture (language, traditions) of their ethnic group, than to their homeland as a place. For example the Vietnamese in New Orleans experience a double identity of Vietnamese (culture) and New Orleanian (place). This is echoed by Nagel (1994:153) who marked that ethnicity is a kind of ‘property’ of individual identity and group organization, it consists of culture and identity. Culture includes what meaning is given to ethnicity, foodways form a part of this.

Even though we expected ethnic belonging and local belonging to be separated, we discovered that they are intimately intertwined in New Orleans. The boundaries of local and ethnic overlap, we therefore consider those as frontiers (following the definition by Hannerz 1997:9). Being a New Orleanian can include having an ethnic identity, the overlap of these identities is reflected in the fact that ethnic groups are formed by its local surroundings. The ethnic groups to which our informants belong (North-, Central- and South-American, Vietnamese, African-American, Creole and Cajun) are situated in the city for at least one

⁹⁸ Martin, semi-structured interview, 04-02-2015

generation, they form part of the composition of New Orleans. They connect to their own ethnic groups, but also to New Orleans as a whole. This is reflected by Antonsich (2010:11); the length of residence is an important factor in emotional belonging.

People belong to New Orleans ethnically and locally: often residents state that they feel at home in New Orleans because they are born here. The informants who are not born here, generally made this place their home. As Ward (2003:90) marked, for migrants their homeland is not necessarily the place where they feel at home; belonging is a dynamic process (Yuval-Davis 2006:199). As seen in New Orleans, migrants bring their foodways with them, at special occasions and festivities ethnic identity can be affirmed through ethnic cuisine. Food plays a central role in expressing ethnic belonging in New Orleans. As we concluded in chapter three, ethnic food is important for New Orleans as a whole; for New Orleans as a melting pot, where cuisines and people mix. In the words of Marly: a “gumbo of cultures”⁹⁹.

Different areas or streets have a different character, some are dominated by one ethnic group. In Mid-City around lunch time you will see that Latino workers get their lunch at one of the places where they can get Latino meals and talk Spanish. Daniel, the manager of a Vietnamese restaurant, explains:

“Besides the Vietnamese community, there is a mix. Nobody really separates. We have a whole community feeling where everybody gets together. For example everybody celebrates Mardi Gras. My friends are from everywhere. There is not a lot segregation, this is typical for New Orleans. It is a melting pot”¹⁰⁰.

New Orleans is a gumbo of cultures¹⁰¹, it is known as a tolerating city wherein people appreciate the ethnic diversity, the many restaurants and festivals. Residents who connect to an ethnic group often belong locally in New Orleans, ethnic belonging has a local meaning. In the next paragraph we will explain that outside influences can play a role in the construction of place-making.

⁹⁹ Marly, informal interview, 04-03-2015

¹⁰⁰ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 03-11-2015

¹⁰¹ Marly, informal interview, 04-03-2015

Belonging, place-promotion and place-making

Níne

In New Orleans many frontiers come together, including different cuisines and spheres of belonging. Besides ethnic influences, tourism and place-promotion have an impact on the city and its cuisine as well. In this paragraph the link between belonging and tourism is exemplified. By explaining the effects of tourism we will add to what is pointed out in chapter four, that by having the expert knowledge, inhabitants connect with each other and distance themselves from tourists.

As we noted, New Orleans can be described as a foodscape: food is very much linked to this place¹⁰². The food is local and can be tasted, smelled and seen all around the city (following Adema 2006:13). New Orleans is promoted by its culinary character and attracts many tourists. Adema (2006:8) noted that the deliberate promotion of a foodscape can be a way of place-making. By place-promotion specific characteristics are emphasized, in New Orleans this is food. Food connects inhabitants who are proud on the cuisine; as such it contributes to a feeling of local belonging. Place-promotion can thus intensify community feelings, inhabitants connect to this city with its food. Local food festivals are an example of this, even when (or maybe because) they attract many tourists, locals are proud of it.

New Orleans has many outside influences, nevertheless the idea of having their own cuisine remains strong. According to Stacy, however, the food of New Orleans is not unique but kind of similar to the rest of South Louisiana. There is so much promotion for tourists that it *seems* like New Orleans has a unique cuisine¹⁰³. Promotion definitely has an effect on the perception of what the local cuisine constitutes. An example is that the cuisine that is promoted is New Orleans cuisine in the style of Creole and Cajun food. Cajun and Creole are presented together or as one thing, while in fact it are two different culinary traditions. This blending can be seen in restaurants and tourist shops. Different traditions are mixed to meet the expectation of tourists. Visitors expect Cajun, so restaurants will cater to that, even though according to locals it is not 'real' Cajun. It seems to annoy locals who know the difference. Tourists want

¹⁰² Gupta and Ferguson (1992:10) marked that even when globalization increases, *ideas* about places as culturally and ethnically distinctive become stronger. This can be called 'the globalization of the local' (Gotham 2007b:130). Globalization processes make tourism possible on a larger scale.

¹⁰³ Stacy, semi-structured interview, 03-16-2015

the local specialties, but this is not something residents per se eat. Food that is popular among locals, such as taco's and Vietnamese food, does not feature that much in the promotion of New Orleans as a tourist destination. So even though the food is what many tourists attracts to the city, there is a difference in what the two groups consume. Food thus functions as a marker of local belonging.

The promotion of the local cuisine intensifies the importance of it among residents, it is a way of place-making. Yet tourism and promotion influence the cuisine and how it is looked at, New Orleanians still connect to their opinions and food. Festivals are important for the image of New Orleans as well, in the next section we will emphasize that festivals can be seen as frontiers.

Festivals and celebrations - "Laissez les bon temps rouler"

Nine

This paragraph focuses on festivals, as they show how ethnic belonging and local belonging are entwined and how the New Orleans' community is constructed in opposition to outsiders. We argue that festivals and celebrations are a frontier where ethnicity, locality and tourism all come together. Festivals are widely promoted and attract many tourists, yet locals enjoy it as well and are the main visitors. That New Orleanians like to party is reflected in the slogan of the city: "Let the good times roll" or in French "Laissez les bon temps rouler". Often this can be seen in promotion on posters and in magazines.

Arriving in New Orleans on the 28th of January, we were 'just in time' according to the people we met. The Mardi Gras preparations were to be seen everywhere, soon we experienced the Mardi Gras. During two weeks the whole city celebrates carnival by joining the many parades¹⁰⁴, gathering on the streets with friends and family and attending parties. Residents share food, bring king cake¹⁰⁵, dress up and wear colorful beads. The public transport shuts

¹⁰⁴ People pay thousands of dollars to be on the parade, which is status related and a unique experience, the majority of the people stands along the parade route to watch over thirty parades and catch beads and other goodies.

¹⁰⁵ King cake is a special cake only eating during Mardi Gras time, New Orleanians will eat it everywhere; at their office, at parties and at home. It is a tradition to eat it, the one who has the plastic baby in their slice is supposed to bring the next cake. New Orleanians all have a strong opinion where to buy the best king cake. One day at museum there were about thirty different cakes you could try.

down for parades, roads are blocked. It is seen as *the* festival of the year for which New Orleans is famous and attracts thousands of tourists. David, living here about 35 years, marks: “It is a celebration of mostly local people, in the French Quarter you would see tourists. But else everyone is local”¹⁰⁶. Tourists celebrate it in the French quarter; the tourists area where it is more party centered. In other neighborhoods where most residents celebrate, it is more a family celebration. Kate described that it “is about family, like Christmas. Where food is the best the next day and where leftovers are saved”¹⁰⁷. Mardi Gras is a community celebration, which strengthen ties between people; people celebrate together and share food.

New Orleanians celebrate a lot, almost every week there is a festival. As Martin pointed out: “You are coming in the time of the year that there is two or three festivals a week around food”¹⁰⁸. Blokland (2009) described that local celebrations (usually including food) can create and express collective place identities; this is very much the case in New Orleans. Festivals are a local frontier in which inhabitants are connected. Not surprisingly, locals take pride in their festivals¹⁰⁹. Liz implies this by telling the following:

“If you have been to a parade in New Orleans, you can’t go to a parade anywhere else. Because the parades everywhere else are so, boring. Here you can walk down the street and there are people covered in silver and drag queens everywhere. I love that, nobody even looks twice at them”¹¹⁰.

Parades mark the New Orleans character of celebrations, there are parades with for example Easter, St. Patrick’s Day and Carnival Latino. Many festivals are ethnic, such as Oktoberfest (German), Cajun Zydeco Festival, St. Joseph’s Day (Italian-American), and Tét Festival (Vietnamese). These festivals are not just bound to their specific ethnic group, but present a reason for many residents to join another party. This illustrates how the local identity of being a New Orleanian surpasses the ethnic identities, the celebrations have a local meaning and connect inhabitants. Local belonging and ethnic belonging are intertwined.

¹⁰⁶ David, semi-structured interview, 02-09-2015

¹⁰⁷ Kate, semi-structured interview, 02-11-2015

¹⁰⁸ Martin, semi-structured interview, 04-02-2015

¹⁰⁹ Angee, open interview, 03-10-2015

¹¹⁰ Liz Williams, semi-structured interview, 03-13-2015

At the Vietnamese New Year celebration¹¹¹, called Tét, many Vietnamese walked around, they were eating and joining games. Nevertheless people from other ethnicities were present in considerable amounts. Next to traditional Vietnamese games and food, American live music was present and Vietnamese- beignets and po'boys were sold. Jane told us that at the Tét festival "food is the most popular, people mainly go there to eat"¹¹². This shows the connecting capacity of food and festivals. People shared dinner tables with each other; a Vietnamese girl asked us if we needed advice how to eat the spring rolls. It is a frontier where cultures meet.

"As far as food and community, the food it seems like, you know, the common denominator of every event. There is always food. It is really such a big part of New Orleans culture. We create celebrations around food"¹¹³. As Martin marks here; celebrations are related to food. Specific dishes are eaten and shared with others. People come together and are connected through the food, in this way ethnic boundaries are crossed. At St. Joseph day many food altars could be found across the city, it is a religious celebration where free meals are served to everyone who goes to these places. St. Patrick's day further shows the binding and sharing. On the day of the parade everybody is dressed in green, people gather with friends and family and share food and drinks. During the parades, floats will hand out cabbage and carrots to people, who bring it home and make diner of it. Stacy told us that she would make big meals and gives food to family and neighbors¹¹⁴. This marks further the community orientation, as described before in this chapter. With pride Jack told us that New Orleans is the best place to celebrate St. Patrick's day, with the best and biggest party¹¹⁵.

In Martin's quote above, he pointed out that there are many festivals which are not related to a certain celebration but centered only around food. For example Foodfest and Seafood festival. These festivals are not less crowded, people come to enjoy the food.

Festivals are important for locals and tourists, the festivals are most often connected to food and mark the embedding of food in daily live. Local celebrations have a binding and including factor, they create and express collective place identities (Blokland 2009). Local

¹¹¹ Vietnamese New Year in New Orleans East on 02-22-2015

¹¹² Jane, semi-structured interview, 03-30-2015

¹¹³ Martin, semi-structured interview, 04-02-2015

¹¹⁴ Stacy, semi-structured interview, 03-16-2015

¹¹⁵ Jack, informal conversation, 03-13-2015, he told he has been in Ireland but there the celebration was disappointing. In his opinion one should celebrate it in New Orleans.

belonging is expressed by sharing food and crossing ethnic boundaries. It is a frontier where people celebrate together.

Concluding

Nine

This chapter focused on belonging, how New Orleans is home to many residents and the role of food in this. Red beans and rice is a dish that shows this connection of food to a specific place. Not very fancy or popular among tourists, however red beans and rice reminds people of home and connects inhabitants. Residents consider New Orleans as their home with particular unique qualities. These comprise the atmosphere, diversity and the mentality of locals. A certain lifestyle is therefore possible which might lead to place dependence.

New Orleanians seem to be part of strong communities, often these are neighborhoods, but also (ethnic) communities. Although there are divisions between people and groups, food works mostly as a binding factor in New Orleans that creates a collective local New Orleans identity. The feeling of both ethnic and local belonging are strong in New Orleans, they go well together.

Tourism and place-promotion have an impact on the city and its cuisine: residents probably value their city more and it also influences how this cuisine is perceived, e.g. if Cajun is part of the local cuisine. Other cuisines do not feature much promotion but are important as well for the city and its population.

Festivals show how ethnicity, locality and tourism all come together in New Orleans. Festivals often have an ethnic character, but are locally embedded. Local celebrations (usually including food) can create and express collective place identities (Blokland 2009). Inhabitants are connected by the festivals and the food, the social reality is constructed by frontiers. Only a boundary is constructed between locals and tourists, they are not part of this local community. Local belonging is expressed through food and sharing with neighbors, friends and family, who may have another ethnic background.

Conclusion

Marlies

In this thesis we have argued that in New Orleans food is central in the construction of belonging to a particular place and to its community of residents. We approach the local cuisine as a frontier, a zone where different foodways intersect and influence each other. It is at those frontiers where a sense of local belonging, being part of New Orleans, and feelings of ethnic belonging, connecting to one's ethnic group, overlap. Through local cuisine therefore a shared sense of belonging to New Orleans is created.

Since the common denominator in New Orleans seems to be food, this city is the right place to take food as a lens to examine the dynamics between different spheres of belonging. This research aims to contribute to the anthropological literature about belonging by relating the concept to food. In the empirical chapters, based on ten weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in New Orleans, we gave an answer to our research question: *In what way do place-based- and ethnic feelings of belonging intersect through local foodways in New Orleans, USA?*

Everybody belongs somewhere, may it be to a group, an ethnicity, a place, neighborhood, nation or to home, there are different modes of belonging (Antonsich 2010:4). Belonging is a dynamic process; it can change and people can belong to several places or groups at once. In general we noticed a strong sense of belonging to New Orleans. Our informants often said that they 'feel at home' in the city as a whole, and in their particular neighborhood or (ethnic) community they are part of. It was agreed upon that food forms an important part of being New Orleanian. Cooking and consuming food is an individual act, but even more a social act. Food is a way of communicating; it is about commensality and competition (Sutton 2001:5). As we showed throughout this thesis, commensality seemed to be the main message of food in New Orleans.

Setting the stage

Food culture is intimately entwined with history, this applies certainly to New Orleans.

In the southern state of Louisiana, New Orleans had been under French and Spanish colonization and many immigration waves have contributed to what is seen as a unique culture, including a particular food culture. According to Williams (2012:2), immigrants "brought with

them their sense of identity as defined by food”. New Orleans has a rich culinary tradition and food is important for defining this city (Beriss 2012). The local cuisine is also attractive to tourists, New Orleans’ economy depends largely on tourism related to food. In 2005 hurricane Katrina painfully exposed problems that New Orleans faced (Passidomo 2014:387), such as unequal education opportunities, spatial segregation and racial inequality, not to mention the high rates of crime. The population changed into more white and more Hispanic than before. After Katrina New Orleans went through a considerable change and became an attractive place for people to move to. This subsequently influenced the local cuisine again.

Food and place

According to Mintz cuisines are the foods from a *place*; “a cuisine requires a population that eats that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves expert on it. They all believe, and *care* that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste” (Mintz 1996:96). This definition applies very much to New Orleans: the food is linked to place, it is specific to Louisiana and New Orleans. People eat the cuisine regularly, there is a common idea of what the local cuisine consists of and how it should be prepared. Food is important in everyday life and through food people experience a sense of belonging to New Orleans. Being part of the ‘landscape’ of New Orleans, where food can be seen, smelled and tasted, food carries meaning and this makes New Orleans also a foodscape (Adema 2006:14).

Another concept indicating the intersections between food and culture is ‘foodways’, which relates to all activities and ideas surrounding food; these include food habits, attitudes and taboos (Long 2010:23). We use the concepts foodways and cuisine interchangeably.

Ethnic cuisines

Since New Orleans is a food focused city, it is no surprise that all kinds of ethnic restaurants and supermarkets can be found. We examined Creole, Cajun, Vietnamese, Latino and African-American food culture. We see these as ethnic groups because they are culturally distinctive and interact with each other (following Eriksen 2010:215). Nagel (1994:153) states that culture gives meaning to ethnicity. Food culture is a way to affirm ethnic identity.

The city of New Orleans is described by our informants as a Creole city. Although Creole is also a group of people, this term is mostly used to refer to the New Orleans culture and cuisine. Creole then means the mixing of cultures and the constantly changing local cuisine

(Beriss 2012). Ethnic foods get a local flavor in New Orleans and can be incorporated in the local cuisine. Also existing local dishes and traditions are influenced by ethnic foodways. Therefore a distinction between ethnic and local cuisine is problematic. To give an example, a restaurant in Kenner (suburb of New Orleans) offered seafood with ‘creole sauce served over Cajun rice’ furthermore people from different ethnic backgrounds were enjoying the food. The local cuisine is thus described as Creole, but there is overlap with Cajun cuisine, Soul food, and other ethnic foodways.

Local cuisine: mixing and melting

In the third chapter we showed that ethnic cuisines exist separately, but also influence each other. Mixing and melting of different foodways, ingredients, recipes, and traditions make the local food culture Creole. Within the local cuisine of New Orleans boundaries between communities become blurred and ethnic and local belonging can overlap. At these frontiers a sense of collective belonging to the place New Orleans is created.

Informants often used the metaphor of gumbo to describe New Orleans and its cuisine. Gumbo is perhaps the most famous dish in New Orleans and it features in Creole, Cajun and soul food. It is available almost everywhere and many locals have their own way of making it. This thick soup is served with rice and made with seafood or with chicken and sausage. Gumbo reflects how informants think about New Orleans and its cuisine, anything can be put in it as long as it tastes good. When food becomes a symbol of place, a landscape turns into a foodscape wherein the association between certain food and place is promoted (Adema 2006:vi).

Expert knowledge

New Orleanians like food and enjoy to talk about dishes, restaurants, chefs, ingredients and recipes. They are proud of their food culture which is perceived as unique within the US. Their own cuisine does not seem to hold people back from trying and discussing other cuisines. The enormous availability of cookbooks, blogs, Facebook groups and the large food section in the newspaper and in free tourist magazines also show the appreciation of food.

Knowledge, stories and opinions about local food make a place meaningful. The knowledge New Orleanians have about their food culture contributes to a shared sense of belonging and simultaneously sets locals apart from outsiders. Different forms of knowledge

we discussed are the construction of a collective narrative about the history of local cuisine, memory, the culture of home-cooking and the local 'foodmap'.

New Orleanians know about the history of local cuisine. The construction of this collective historical narrative about New Orleans' cuisine is a process of place-making (Blokland 2009) that contributes to a sense of place-belongingness. This narrative also relates to the politics of belonging. The Vietnamese cuisine is often mentioned as part of New Orleans' food culture and therefore marks the local belonging of the Vietnamese community. Having knowledge about the history of local cuisine and above all *expressing* it is part of the "expert role" that locals take on.

Another form of 'knowledge' are memories related to food in New Orleans. Place attachment includes the emotional relations of an individual with a specific location (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618). Memories involving local food contributed to this place attachment of our informants. Those memories are mostly about food consumed at home. We noticed a difference in appreciation of home cooked food and food consumed elsewhere. Informants were reluctant to tell us that they ate fast-food and takeaway meals on a regular basis. Concerning one's 'own cuisine', food at home is seen as the best. Since tourists and visitors usually do not have access to homes, the distinction between home and public is a way that excludes them from the 'New Orleans community'. Moreover, outside the home, locals know where the good places and restaurants are. In other words, they know the local 'foodmap' of New Orleans.

Opinions about when someone is perceived as local varied from one to 25 years of living in New Orleans. Yet knowledge about local cuisine is essential part of being New Orleanian. For newcomers who are in the process of making New Orleans a home, learning about local foodways can therefore be seen as an initiation ritual in becoming New Orleanian.

People identify themselves in relation to others and according to Eriksen (2010:215) "all categorisations of group membership must have boundaries". Showing expertise on local food creates such a boundary with people who do not have this knowledge, it is therefore a way to define who belongs and who does not. While until now we mostly focused on the question when someone is considered New Orleanian, in chapter five we discussed what makes locals feel 'at home' in New Orleans.

A unique place

The importance of food in daily discourse and practice makes food a useful way to study a sense of belonging to New Orleans. Among our informants we found strong feelings of being ‘at home’. The diversity and the mentality of residents create an atmosphere that is often said to be particular to New Orleans, which is remarkable given the high rates of crime, corruption and poverty that also exist in New Orleans. Informants told us that in general people are friendly, open, willing to help each other and to talk to strangers. Secondly, the cultural diversity is mentioned in making New Orleans a unique place. Its history is reflected in architecture, music, specific local traditions such as Mardi Gras, and obviously also in food. We do not want to suggest that other places do not have history, a cuisine or cultural diversity, but rather indicate that people are proud of the city and feel a particular local belonging. Place dependence refers to the degree to which a certain place is suitable for the preferred lifestyle of an individual (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618). Newcomers who are attracted to this lifestyle and New Orleanians by birth, for both of them place dependence can contribute to a sense of place.

Not surprisingly New Orleans attracts many tourists. It is promoted as a fun city with many things to offer such as a vibrant music scene, interesting history and a famous cuisine. Tourism influences the food culture. For instance, visitors tend to think that New Orleans is a Cajun city, so the tourist industry caters to the wishes of tourists: restaurants serve Cajun dishes and tourist shop sell Cajun spices. Adema (2006:vi) argues that the “deliberate promotion of foodscape is way of place-making”. The promotion of ‘foodscape New Orleans’ thus contributed to a sense of place, and place-belongingness.

Food connects

New Orleans can be described as a community oriented city. Many informants experience a strong sense of belonging to a particular (ethnic) community and/or neighborhood. This is reflected by the importance of sharing in the food culture. Nevertheless, divisions between groups and people also exist. Informants agreed that New Orleans is a class-sensitive city and spatially segregated.

Food communicates messages of solidarity and separation (Anderson 2005:126). Engaging in food either by consuming it, cooking it, having conversations about it or all of these, is a way in which divisions between people can be surpassed. Within the ‘New Orleans

community' itself food is a binding factor, foodways are frontiers where people from all backgrounds can share in a local belonging to New Orleans. One informant explained it like this: "everyone eats red beans and rice"¹¹⁶.

The focus on community in New Orleans is also seen in the many festivals and celebrations that people take part in. We did not attend or heard of any festival where food was not involved. For both locals and tourists festivals create collective place identities (Blokland 2009). Local belonging is expressed by sharing food and crossing ethnic boundaries. It is a frontier where people celebrate together.

Discussion

In the anthropology of belonging a distinction is made between emotional belonging and the politics of belonging. The latter deals with the creation of boundaries determining who belongs and who does not belong (Antonsich 2010:644, Yuval-Davis 2006:197).

While Yuval-Davis mostly focused on these politics of belonging, Antonsich (2010:6) emphasized the notion of place in the concept of belonging and described belonging as an emotional attachment and feeling of being 'at home'. For that reason he speaks of place-belongingness, a term often discussed in relation to place attachment and place identity (Antonsich 2010:6). When, such as in New Orleans, identity is defined in relation to the environment we speak of place identity (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618).

Our research contributes to the anthropological literature about belonging. By relating foodways in New Orleans to belonging, place and (ethnic) community, it became clear that food is a powerful connective element in New Orleans. Despite possible other spheres of belonging informants shared a sense of place-belongingness. We therefore agree with Antonsich on the importance of place and the emphasis on belonging as an emotional feeling.

We found that in New Orleans the boundaries between different cuisines are unclear. It rather is a frontier, where different modes of belonging, such as local and ethnic, overlap. The solidarity message of food (Anderson 2005:126) seemed to be the main message. In our view, it is important to focus not just on boundaries but pay attention to frontiers.

Further research is necessary to get a more complete picture of communities in New Orleans. The length of our fieldwork, ten weeks, limited our research population to the middle

¹¹⁶ Liz, semi-structured interview, 02-18-2015

and higher class of New Orleans. The language barrier of Spanish further limited our Latino informants to residents who could speak some English, who lived here for a longer time already. Other ethnic groups in New Orleans would be worth researching, for example a focus on recent immigrants waves and investigate how cuisines are influenced by it, and if this is a way for groups to integrate.

More attention should be paid to different ethnic and socio-economic groups. Including also the lower classes in New Orleans, and their views concerning local cuisine, will provide a more extensive view of the meanings of food. Some neighborhoods are considered as food deserts and not everyone has access to food, or knowledge about healthy food. A focus of research could be how food functions in the many community gardens and initiatives that provide food for the poor and education about a more healthy lifestyle.

During our research we also visited one school and one university. Time was too short to really include this aspect and compare schools in different neighborhoods and communities. Interesting could be to take into account the role of schools in construction of local and ethnic belonging through food.

We took food as a focus to gain more understanding about belonging, and this thesis is a modest attempt in linking the two. Further research is necessary to gain more insight in the relations between food and belonging and in how food functions as a frontier between different spheres of belonging.

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Figure 2: The New Orleans Metropolitan area: Orientation map

Jean-Marc Zaninetti, University of Orleans, France, CEDETE Institute. In: Shrinking New Orleans: Post-Katrina Population Adjustments Jean-Marc Zaninetti a & Craig E. Colten.

Appendix 1 : List of quoted informants

Date	Name informant	Function informant	Type of conversation
02/05 02/20 03/02	Jean	Elderly man, who is not born in New Orleans, but told that it took him only two weeks to feel home in New Orleans. He is the owner of a cookbook shop.	Informal conversation
02/09 03/11	David Beriss	Anthropology professor at University of New Orleans, specialized in food and New Orleans, living in New Orleans about 35 years.	Unstructured and semi-structured interview
02/10	Chen	Development coordinator at a social-workplace restaurant.	Unstructured interview
02/10	Chef Dean	African-American Chef, over 40 years old	Unstructured interview
02/11 03/26	Kate	Chef at a cooking school, thirty-five years old, originally from New York.	Unstructured interview
02/13	Gary	Owner and manager of a community garden project in the Lower Ninth Ward.	Unstructured interview
02/18 03/13	Liz Williams	Founder of Southern Food and Beverage Museum and writer on New Orleans food.	Semi-structured interview
02/20	Susan	Older lady, partner of Jean, owner of the same cookbook shop.	Informal conversation

02/21 03/11 03/29	Tom	Lives in New Orleans, 33 years old, has a Cajun background. Grew up in a small village near Lafayette.	Informal conversation and hanging out
02/24	Marjorie	CEO of an New Orleans events company that produces Food Fest among others.	Semi-structured interview
02/24	Karen	Staff member of Marjorie's events company, Creole background. End twenties.	Semi-structured interview
02/27	Alex	Manager of a Bed & Breakfast in New Orleans, came to New Orleans a couple of years ago.	Unstructured interview
03/02	Seller	African-American lady working at the tourist shop of Nola Cooking School	Conversation
03/03	Waitress	African-American waitress working in a Soul food restaurant	Conversation
03/06	Angee	Single mother, is doing a masters in Disaster Studies. Is fond of eating.	Informal conversation and hanging out
03/09 03/13 03/14 04/09	Jack	Several jobs, in New Orleans since seven years. Loves the city and the food, forty years old.	Informal conversation and hanging out
03/10 03/21 04/08	Meghan	Manager at a sports bar/bistro, in her early thirties. Born in New Jersey, came to New Orleans seven years ago.	Informal interview, hanging out

03/11 03/29 04/05 04/07	Pierre	Originally from France, he teaches French since nine years in New Orleans.	Informal conversation, hanging out
03/11	Thuan	He is the chef of a Vietnamese restaurant, his parents are from Vietnam, he is born New Orleans.	Structured interview
03/11	Daniel	He is the manager of a Vietnamese restaurant, he lives in New Orleans for several years.	Structured interview
03/12	Hattie	She is chef at Langlois culinary school and has a catering business. She is African-American, born in New Orleans.	Semi-structured interview
03/13	Helen	Owner/manager of Mexican restaurant (together with her Mexican husband), thirty years in New Orleans, originally from California.	Semi-structured interview
03/13	Thad	Living in New Orleans for three years	Informal conversation
03/14	Charlotte	Creole cook, author, passionate about her heritage.	PO
03/14	Monique	Creole, has a small museum about Creole heritage, tourist guide.	PO
03/16	Stacy	Executive Director at Louisiana Hospitality Foundation. Mother, middle-class, lives in New Orleans suburb.	Semi-structured interview
03/18	Judy Walker	She is a food editor at a local newspaper. She also wrote cookbooks. Came to New Orleans before Katrina.	Semi-structured interview

03/18	Claire	Manager of a cooking school, she is 25 years old and Cajun.	Semi-structured interview
03/18	Bus driver	African-American, 65 years, from New Orleans	Conversation
03/20	Juan	Manager of a bakery, in his early forties. Was born in Honduras, moved with parents to New Orleans as a young child.	Semi-structured interview
03/30 04/02	Jane	She is Vietnamese, but born and raised in New Orleans, 21 years old.	Semi-structured interview
03/31	Sue	From Vietnam, forty years old, lives here for thirty five year. Owner of a Vietnamese restaurant.	Semi-structured interview
04/02	Yen	She works at a family owned Vietnamese restaurant, thirty five years old, she was born in New Orleans and has children.	Semi-structured interview
04/02	Martin	Born and raised in New Orleans, in an Italian family.	Semi-structured interview
04/03	Marly	She is born here, in her forties and works at a restaurant association.	Informal interview
04/06	Joe	Born and raised in New Orleans and very concerned about his Creole heritage.	Semi-structured interview

04/07	Mina	An elderly dark-skinned Creole woman born and raised in New Orleans.	Semi-structured interview
04/10	Miguel and Ariana	Owners of Latin American neighborhood restaurant in Uptown, New Orleans. Mid forties.	Informal interview

Appendix 2 : Summary

Nine

New Orleans is known for its culinary character. Inhabitants are proud of their cuisine and food is one of the reasons that the city is popular among tourists. New Orleans is an ethnic and culturally very diverse city. The local food culture of New Orleans is the result of many immigrant waves and cultural influences from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and native America. Immigrants brought their foodways with them and contributed to the local cuisine of New Orleans. Food culture in New Orleans thus both has a local and an ethnic aspect. We could however not find a clear document about what this local cuisine constitutes of, or what the role was that other ethnic cuisines play in the city. We were especially interested in the role of food for belonging to an (ethnic) group and belonging to place, in New Orleans. This led to our research question: *In what way do place-based- and ethnic feelings of belonging intersect through local foodways in New Orleans, USA?*

In other words, our aim was to examine if local belonging and ethnic belonging clash, and or go well together, through the study of food culture. To answer this question, we conducted fieldwork in New Orleans for ten weeks. We explored the role of food in the sense of belonging in New Orleans. Attention is paid to different ethnic groups and their cuisines, the construction of a community and the role of festivals and neighborhoods. Furthermore we emphasized the importance of expert knowledge on food, what is seen in daily discourse and practice and the influence of place-promotion and tourists. We investigated the tension and connection between what is believed to be the local cuisine and what as ethnic cuisines, as well as the excluding and including forces that food can have.

Our diverse research group made it possible to get a broad view of the meaning of food in New Orleans. Our informants lived in different areas and neighborhoods of New Orleans and their ages and ethnicities were varied. We included the following groups and their cuisines: North-, Central- and South-American, Vietnamese, African-American, Creole and Cajun.

Informants often called New Orleans gumbo of cultures and cuisines. Gumbo is perhaps the most famous dish in New Orleans and it features in Creole, Cajun and Soul food. It is available almost everywhere and many locals have their own way of making it. This thick

soup is served with rice and made with seafood or with chicken and sausage. Gumbo reflects how informants think about New Orleans and its cuisine, anything can be put in it, and as long as it tastes good it is fine.

In this thesis we have argued that for residents food plays a central role in the construction of belonging. Belonging to New Orleans as a place as well as to an (ethnic) community. People can feel home in New Orleans and at the same time stay connected to their ethnic group.

Often informants told us that this city is their home, either they are born here or they fell in love with the city. Residents appreciate New Orleans as unique because of the atmosphere, the cultural diversity and the mentality of locals. Openness, tolerance, people greeting each other in the street and examples of that. We further noted that where one is born, the length of residence, personal and social ties and cultural factors, influence the connection of inhabitants with New Orleans. Red beans with rice is a dish that marks this feeling of home, it is probably missed the most when one is not in New Orleans. By eating it on Mondays, it is in a way equalizing, it is food for all classes.

New Orleans has a rich history which led to the ethnically and culturally diverse city it is now. Several ethnic cuisines contributed to the food culture of New Orleans which is mostly described as Creole. This local cuisine is a construction of outside influences of different cultures, ethnic cuisines and also by tourism. The boundaries of what is believed to be the local cuisine is unclear. Creole, Cajun and Soul food are quite intertwined. Recently also the Vietnamese and Latin American cuisine get a more local character. Different cuisines overlap, it seems like all the cuisines situated in New Orleans can be seen as local cuisines. Still people connect to what they see as their cuisine, this is something they are likely to eat at home or with family. When eating out, informants often told us that they preferred eating something new and above all, their 'own' cuisine is best at home.

Food is an important aspect of daily life in New Orleans and people identify themselves as local partly through food. Engaging in food either by consuming it, cooking it, having conversations about it or all of these, is a way in which divisions between people can be surpassed. Expressing knowledge about local foodways marks local belonging to the 'New Orleans community'. Opinions vary when one is perceived to be a New Orleansian. In any case knowledge about food is part of being New Orleansian. By taking on expert roles, locals

distance themselves from tourists and visitors, who generally do not know much about the local food culture. For newcomers, learning about food can be seen as a way to become New Orleanian.

At least every week there is a festival or celebration in New Orleans. Locals are quite proud on their festivals, which mostly include food. Even if it is a celebration related to one ethnic group, others are likely to come as well. Festivals are open to everyone, it is a space where cultures meet.

The case of New Orleans showed that a shared food culture that is linked to a specific place creates a sense of local belonging through food. We argue that within the local community food functions mostly to connect. Local foodways are therefore best seen as frontiers, a zone where boundaries between different communities become blurred.

Appendix 3 : Pictures



Picture 1: Gumbo. Taken by Níne, March 2015



Picture 2: Crawfish boil at a neighborhood bar.
Taken by Marlies, March 2015



Picture 3: Mardi Gras King Cake, Taken by Níne, February 2015



Picture 4: Pre-cooked local dishes in the supermarket, often seen in tourist shops as well. Among which: Jamabalaya mix original, spicy, with brown rice or with cheese. Cajun chicken, Gumbo, Etouffee base and Shrimp Creole. Photo taken by Níne, February 2015