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PERSONAL MEMORY, COLLECTIVE HERITAGE, AND QUANDARIES OF TRADITION: THREE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN DISHES

Abstract

I suggest here that personal memory can be a key to understanding how individuals and groups construct their own notions of which foodways products and practices are heritage and what that means. It also can mediate between heritage and tradition, challenging Dan Ben-Amos's assertion that the two are incompatible since heritage is static and canonical while tradition is dynamic and fluid.

Heritage is popularly thought of as a legacy from the past – objects, customs, ways of thinking and doing that have been passed down over generations and that provide an historical foundation for our present-day identity.[1] Scholars in a variety of disciplines, including folklore and food studies, recognize the constructed nature of the concept, acknowledging that it is a selection of what is thought to have come from the past that then is used to define how one thinks of themselves today.[2] This selection involves reinterpretation according to the specific contexts in which it appears and the uses to which it is put. It also serves as justification for actions,

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1 Reference to this study: Lucy M. Long: Personal Memory, Collective Heritage, and Quandaries of Tradition: Three Appalachian Mountain Dishes. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage.* Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 77–94.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-3

2 For example, see Ayora-Diaz, Steffan Igor ed.: *The Cultural Politics of Food, Taste, and Identity: A Global Perspective* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Brulotte, Rhonda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Long, Lucy M.: 'Culinary Tourism as Public Folklore: Heritage in Negotiating Competitiveness and Sustainability', *Journal of American Folklore* 137/543 (Winter 2024), 45–60.

attitudes, and choices in the present and as a resource for future performances of self, identity, and values. In folklorist Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's words: 'heritage is […] a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past.'[3]

As a construction – a mode of production – heritage would seem to be dynamic and fluid, but some scholars critique it as static. Folklorist Dan Ben-Amos, for example, states emphatically that 'The packaging of traditional culture for modern consumers deflates it from the symbolic values of these words and objects within their communities. When heritage begins, tradition ends.'[4]

In relation to food, Brulotte and Di Giovine, similarly pointed out in 2014, that various global movements, such as UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage lists which bring attention to, validate, and preserve various dishes, ingredients, cooking styles, and meal systems, have frequently led to the canonisation, ossification, and even invention of foodways products and practices. Heritage, they conclude, has become an 'added value' for marketing, tourism, and nationalist purposes.[5]

From this perspective, heritage is an official category of cultural production, a set of practices or products that have been canonised and crystalised by those in authority or power as representing a particular view of the past that supports their vision of identity in the present and future. The same scholars state that food as cultural heritage is tied to memory: 'as individuals collectively remember past experiences with certain meals and imagine their ancestors having similar experiences. When this occurs, food is transformed into heritage.'[6] It also opens heritage-making to all individuals and groups.

However, not every individual has the same memory of the same food or foodways experience. They may remember different aspects of it, attach different emotions to it, or interpret its meanings differently. Nor is every food memorable and fodder for heritage for every individual participating in it. If heritage is made up of memories, then it is as multifaceted as the memories themselves. Thus, just as individual remembrances can change in content and meaning, so too can individual perceptions of heritage change. In this sense, as Graham, Ashworth, and Turnbridge, pointed out, heritage can be understood as […] 'a negotiated reality – a social construction

3 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: 'Theorizing Heritage', *Ethnomusicology* 39/3 (1995), 367–380.
4 Ben-Amos, Don: 'Between Intangible Cultural Heritage and Folklore', *Folklor/Edebiyat* folklore/literature 29/114 (2023), 386; 348. DOI: https://doi.org/10.22559/folklor.2459.
5 Brulotte and Di Giovine: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage.*
6 Brulotte and Di Giovine: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage,* 1.

that evolves through time and which is simultaneously capable of representing a plurality of heritages'.[7]

Memory, I suggest, can be a key to understanding how individuals and groups construct their own notions of which foodways practices are heritage, what they mean, and how they can be used. Drawing on work by folklorists such as Hafstein, Noyes, and others,[8] I suggest here that we can better understand the dynamics between heritage and memory by identifying the source of heritage claims and then exploring how and why they became meaningful memories to individuals as well as to the larger collective group. This construction, presentation, and affirmation of culinary heritage, occurs on four levels:

> OFFICIAL/ELITE (Agents: institutions with power and authority, such as, UNESCO, State tourism boards, arts councils, cultural centres and museums)
>
> POPULAR – Mass-mediated/Commercial (Agents: Restaurants, Cookbooks, Food Media)
>
> FOLK/ VERNACULAR – Of 'the people' (Agents: Home cooks, Local Restaurants)
>
> PERSONAL – Individual experiences, memories and interpretations.

I recognise that dividing society into such levels is an out-dated notion and that modern society does not fall neatly into such categories, but I think the levels offer a useful heuristic for looking at who is doing the producing and the interpreting of both memories and heritage. As Halbwachs[9] and others have noted, individual memories exist within society, but folklorists recognise that individuals have agency in the making of meaning and that they bring their own unique experiences, values, tastes, and circumstances to the selection and interpretation of products or practices that they then consider to be heritage.

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7 Graham, Brian – Ashworth, Greg and Turnbridge, John: *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture, and Economy* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2000).

8 Hafstein, Valdimar Tr.: 'Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited', *Journal of American Folklore* 131/520 (2018), 127–149; Noyes, Dorothy, and Abrahams, Roger D.: 'From Calendar Custom to National Memory: European Commonplaces', in Ben-Amos, Dan and Weissberg, Lillian eds.: *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 77–98.

9 Halbwachs, Maurice: *The Collective Memory* (New York, Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980 [Translated from *La mémoire collective*] [Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950]).

I use as illustration three dishes current in the Southern Appalachian Mountain region of the United States, an area that is part of my own heritage and one in which I have done extensive ethnographic research. Fried green tomatoes, soup beans, and apple stack cake represent the continuum of private/domestic and public/commercial foodways. Each originated in a different level and suggests the dynamics by which memories get created, disseminated and turned into tradition as well as crystalised into heritage.

The cultural context

The Appalachian Mountain range stretches south to north across eastern North America, but, culturally, 'Appalachia' refers to the southern part of the chain, from the Ohio River valley and northern foothills south to Alabama. This region was inhabited by Native American cultures that thrived in the woodland environment rich in natural resources, but the mountains posed hardships for most European colonisers, slowing settlement and creating a perception – and in some cases, a reality – of isolation from modernity. In the later 19th century, two basic stereotypes developed: the first a romanticisation of mountain culture as survivals from Elizabethan England; the other as backwards, depraved, and ignorant.[10]

Although Appalachian foodways were similar to rural 'pioneer' American ones, they were stereotyped as primitive and simple, lacking culinary discernment and reflecting a culture of poverty, dependent on hunting, fishing, foraging, and hard-scrabble farming on steep mountainsides. Tourist souvenirs and 'humorous' cookbooks present it as consisting of moonshine (homemade corn whiskey), 'road-kill', and small mammals dismissed by mainstream American food culture, such as opossums, raccoons, and squirrels.

Perceptions of Appalachia and its food cultures began changing in the mid-2000s, partly in response to shifts in mainstream society and 'foodie' trends that emphasised regional specialties and local and organic production. A number of cookbooks and chefs garnered attention from the elite, gourmet food world; restaurants and local governments began promoting the region as a culinary tourism destination; and, in the last decade, national food media has recognised Appalachian foodways as a

10 Starnes, Richard D.: *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

viable and valid regional cuisine. While there are no official proclamations of heritage, it is implied in many of the presentations of ingredients, dishes, and preservation practices. Shops, exhibits, brochures, and restaurants at state-sponsored rest stops and museums give a stamp of approval and 'authenticity' to selected foodways products and practices, and initiatives such as the Appalachian Foodways Practitioner Fellowships, based at Berea College, Kentucky, and funded by arts and humanities councils and the state, function similarly to the UNESCO lists of heritage.

Example 1: Fried green tomatoes

Fried green tomatoes are slices of un-ripe tomatoes dredged in a mixture of cornmeal or flour, then fried or baked. They are assumed by many residents, as well as outsiders, to be a traditional southern and Appalachian dish, frequently included in restaurants as a side, or featured in more gourmet presentations as a 'stack' with fresh mozzarella, fried cakes of corn grits, a slice of red tomato, pimento cheese, and a sprig of fresh basil.

The dish actually does not have origins or a long history in the southern mountains. Historians think that it may have entered the northeastern and Mid-Atlantic US in the late 1800s with immigrants from Eastern Europe. It was adopted and promoted by home economists in the 1920s and 1930s as a meat substitute for breakfast. There are no references to its presence in the Southern part of the country until 1987, with the publication of a novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café,* by Alabama native, Patricia Neal, better known by her stage name, Fannie Flagg. The dish became nationally known in 1991, through a popular film based on the book. Titled *Fried Green Tomatoes,* the film turned into a franchise with Flagg writing sequels along with a cookbook and packaged mixes branded as 'The Whistlestop Café'.

This history suggests that the perceptions of fried green tomatoes having southern Appalachian culinary heritage actually comes from the popular or mass-mediated level. Some restaurants attached to state-funded cultural centres that present Appalachian food now also carry the dish, shifting it to an applied official level. Several anecdotes suggest how personal memory comes into play.

Fig. 1. Fried green tomatoes sold at Tamarack, WV. (Photo: Lucy M. Long)

The first incident, and one that actually pushed me to look at these issues, occurred several years ago when I was chatting with a sister-in-law and told her what I had learned about the history of fried green tomatoes being a recent introduction to southern cooking. She got visibly upset and said that could not be true since they were a tradition in her family. I pointed out that her family was actually from Baltimore, not a southern state, but a Mid-Atlantic one, so they could have obtained the recipe from the early economists. That still did not 'feel' right to her, since her memories of eating them were also from when she had lived in the South.

Folklorists Jón Þór Pétursson and Valdimar Tr. Hafstein discuss a similar 'feeling' attached to the soft cheese, Skyr, in Iceland, by residents and consumers. Drawing from various scholars in food studies, they give their translation of French cultural sociologist Nathalie Heinich who wrote: 'One might even say that emotion is the proof of heritage; if the proof of the pudding, as the saying goes, is in the eating, the proof of heritage would be that it moves us.'[11]

The emotions my sister-in-law displayed suggest that the dish represented her heritage, that it was part of the historical foundation of her identity. The suggestion that it was not a long-standing tradition seemed to threaten that sense of identity and initially angered her. We then discussed how newly-established traditions could still provide a sense of connection to the past and place, and she seemed appeased, although still somewhat skeptical – partly because her own memories still validated her interpretation of the dish as heritage.

Another example, again from within my own family, also highlights the primacy of personal memory in 'feeling' heritage. My daughter was planning her wedding and wanted to have a traditional southern mountain menu since her guests were coming from around the world. She requested fried green tomatoes. When I told her they were not really traditional to the region, she pointed out they were a tradition for us. She had spent her summers in the mountains with my parents, and one of our end-of-summer rituals was to go out to eat. Since she was vegetarian, there were limited options, and fried green tomatoes was the one she usually chose. Her personal memories made the dish a meaningful tradition for her. It represented her relationship with her grandparents, her love of the mountains, and her ethical values

11 Heinrich, Nathalie: *De la Visibilité. Excellence et Singularité en Régime Médiatique* (Paris, Éditions Gallimard, coll. Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines, 2012), 21. Translation in Pétursson, Jon Dor and Hafstein, Valdimar T.R.:'Stirring up Skyr: From Live Cultures to Cultural Heritage', *Journal of American Folklore* 135/535 (2022), 64.

in her choice to be vegetarian. Although it was not part of the collective heritage or even memories of her immediate family, she felt it wase part of her personal heritage, regardless of its actual origins and use within the larger culture.

In the final example, there is neither emotional connection nor personal memory exhibited. In 2019, I was in a home-cooking diner in the mountains of West Virginia and saw that fried green tomatoes were on the menu as a side dish. When I asked the owner if it was a family recipe, she said that she had never heard of them before, but tourists kept asking for them. She now buys them frozen in bulk at Costco.[12] They hold no memories for her, and they were simply another item to sell. She also did not make any distinction on her menus of other traditional mountain foods along with standard American casual dining items.

Her customers seemed to include local residents as well as tourists. I did not interview them, so I do not know if they attached heritage to the dish, but it is likely that the tourists came away assuming that the menu represented what was commonly eaten in the mountains. Whether or not they reflected on the experience, their personal memory of seeing fried green tomatoes there would affirm the popular mass-mediated assumptions of its southern mountain heritage, helping those assumptions to circulate on the vernacular level.

Example 2: Apple stack cake

The second dish illustrates movement from localised personal memories to the official level, then dropping down to the popular, mass-mediated one. Apple stack cake is made of six or more cookie-like layers that are stacked together with a sauce of dried apples and sorghum or molasses. The cake has been presented by influential cookbook writers as iconic of the best of southern Appalachian cooking.

I first became aware of apple stack cake in the early 2000s, through conference papers and then a book by Dr. Mark Sohn, a professor at Pikeville College in eastern Kentucky in the heart of the southern Appalachian Mountains. Originally from the Pacific coast, Sohn had studied culinary arts in Paris, then moved to Kentucky to accept a position in educational psychology. In 1978, he started teaching an Appalachian studies class, and, as part of that, invited students to bring in family

12 Costco is a national warehouse for shopping by membership only. It is very popular throughout the U.S., but is famous for offering items only in large quantities.

Fig. 2. Apple stack cake at a restaurant in western North Carolina. (Photo: Lucy M. Long)

dishes and recipes. A decade later, he began writing a food column for a local newspaper, printing recipes that he had developed from his students' offerings. He also began travelling and documenting foodways in that area, then, in his own words, 'reworked' the recipes for several cookbooks, starting in 1992, 1994, and 1996. Then, in 2005, he published *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, & Recipes*[13] to much acclaim from the professional food world. In his talks and writing, Sohn presented stack cake as iconic of Appalachian cooking, as representing a culinary heritage that could be respected as a sophisticated and complex cuisine.

I was not familiar with the cake, even though I had spent a lot of time with my father's family in western North Carolina and had done extensive fieldwork on Appalachian food traditions. I began asking about it and found that few people had heard of it, aside from its inclusion in another cookbook that had been published in 1991 by a Kentucky native, Ronni Lundy,[14] who has gone on to publish extensively and insightfully about the diversity of mountain foods.

Both authors were initially working within a time in which mainstream America paid little attention to food in general and in which the derogatory stereotypes of Appalachia were still assumed true by many and were played up by marketing. As both Sohn and Lundy won public attention and recognition, their opinions became 'official' voices validating the heritage status of the cake. Recipes for it are now found frequently in other cookbooks and food media, and most present it as having a long history in the mountains. They also describe the large amount of work, time, and skill needed to make it, implying that mountain cookery is not the simple, solely functional, and un-creative chore presented in the stereotypes.

A clue to the continued emphasis on stack cake is a story described in a 1980s magazine column described by a native Kentuckian, Sidney Saylor Farr, who was an archivist at Berea College in Kentucky. The story went that people in the mountains were too poor to have wedding cakes, so friends and family would bring one layer to a wedding, stack those up, and present it to the bride and groom. Although Farr stated that the story was probably not true, it caught the imagination of others writing about mountain food, and later, of, the elite food world and people marketing or promoting Appalachian foods. Both Lundy and Sohn repeat the story, saying that

13 Sohn, Mark: *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, & Recipes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005).
14 Lundy, Ronni: *Shuck Beans, Stack Cakes, and Honest Fried Chicken: The Heart and Soul of Southern Country Kitchens* (Washington D.C.: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994).

it was improbable, but that seems to have simply planted the seed of its existence for others. Mountain residents now repeat the story in the numerous blogs and websites, emphasising that it represents the hospitality and generosity as well as the community-mindedness of mountain culture. Through these stories, the cake now represents a heritage that people can be proud of, embrace and promote.

Personal memories of the cake seem to be the basis for the original documentation and inclusion of it in printed cookbooks and recipe memoires. My research suggests that these memories were geographically limited to isolated pockets rather than widely held throughout the region. The heritage it now is framed as representing, however, is a homogenised, unified one, ignoring the diversity of class, race, ethnicity, religion, occupations, and lifestyles that actually make up the region.

To complicate the cake, two recent experiences challenge my observations and also created personal memories for me. In the Spring of 2024, I visited friends who were from another region but were staying in the mountains southwest of where my own family was from. While at a casual eatery frequented by 'locals', I asked them if they had ever heard of apple stack cake. The young women serving us said that her aunt and other relatives made them, and they even had one sitting in the refrigerator and could give me a slice. The dessert was not on the menu – they did not sell it all the time, only when someone had time to make it, but they said it was a family recipe and grew up with it. When I told them it was being promoted in gourmet circles as representing heritage, they seemed surprised but delighted to see it recognised and celebrated. They both proudly posed for a photograph with it. They also said that their aunt would be thrilled by the attention.

Ironically, several hours later, I stopped in eastern Tennessee at a casual restaurant attached to an Appalachian culture and history museum. Both tourists and 'locals' eat there, and they serve a range of foods that represent their culinary heritage as well as items likely to please most customers. I had eaten there numerous times and had never seen stack cake, so I asked the women (young and old) in the kitchen if they had ever heard of the dish. They all said no, and when I told them it was promoted as an icon of mountain food culture, one said that was odd since they were a museum dedicated to Appalachian heritage, and even though they had grown up in the area, they had never heard of it.

This confirmed my own experiences throughout the region, but as I was leaving, an older, white-haired woman stopped to say hello (as is common in the southern

mountains). When I asked her about the cake, she not only said she remembered such cakes from her childhood in the area and loved them, but she would make one for me if I wanted to come visit her that afternoon! I could not stay, but the interchange also confirmed what I had thought about the cake existing in 'pockets of tradition', perhaps family-based, rather than as a community-wide tradition.

Critiques of heritage point out that value is added to a product or process by connecting it to a particular past.[15] In this case, those individuals holding personal memories of the cake acted pleased when I pointed out that it is considered iconic. Their own memories of it were positive, connecting them to family members, but the idea that it was heritage meant to them that those memories were shared with other people in the region, and, since the cake is admired, that they represented something more than just their own experiences. Their memories were then elevated to represent their identity, their heritage.

Example 3: Soup beans

The final example is a dish that was a staple in many Appalachian households, and is known and eaten throughout the region. 'Soup beans' are made from dried beans – usually pinto, but other varieties can be used – that are slow-cooked with fatback[16] or a ham hock, into a thick soup. Although variations abound, they differ from the usual reconstituted dried beans in the 'gravy' that forms as they cook. They are then served, traditionally with cornbread, raw onion, and homemade pickles or chow chow – a sweet and spicy pickled relish made from whatever vegetables are on hand, usually cabbage, onions, peppers, and green tomatoes.

Soup beans are usually homemade or found in casual home-dining establishments catering to 'locals' or to customers looking for a taste of 'country'. They are included in most ethnographic descriptions of traditional mountain foodways and in cookbooks marketed as Appalachian, especially ones that present a 'down-home', rural, though somewhat backwards view of the region. The dish accurately reflects the culinary history of the region in terms of the ingredients available, traditional

15 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 149–150.

16 Fatback is a strip of fat from the back of a pig. It might include the skin, and is oftentimes dried or cured in salt. It is traditionally used in the American South and Southern Appalachia, added to beans (legumes) or vegetables (collard greens, in particular) as they cook.

Fig. 3. Soup beans and corn bread. (Photo: Lucy M. Long)

cooking styles, the socio-economic history of scattered poverty, the need for living off the land, and a culinary aesthetic emphasising practicality.

For those who grew up on soup beans, the dish elicits memories that are both warm and unpleasant, depending on the circumstances of that growing up. For some, they are reminders of poverty and hardship; for others, they evoke family, and reminders of 'hardiness' – strength in the face of hardship. In either case, they represent Appalachian culinary heritage from the personal and the vernacular level.

Jon Holtzman, in his study of food and memory, observes that it is the accumulation of daily experiences that make memories of food powerful.[17] It is in the everyday, seemingly quotidian experiences, that emotions and other memories get intertwined with food, and we oftentimes do not realise those memories exist until something calls them to mind.[18]

This happened one time when I took my father out to dinner. Notoriously thrifty, he had no interest in the gourmet presentations of mountain food that were starting to occur in the 2010s, so we went to a casual restaurant attached to the Asheville farmers' market. They served him a bowl of pinto beans with biscuits, which were more upscale than the usual accompaniment of cornbread. He happily accepted them as satisfying his tastes and his values, both of which he felt represented his Appalachian heritage. Whenever I would suggest he try something else, he would reply, 'I'm just a hillbilly', oftentimes a derogatory term, but in his case, accurately emphasising his origins.

I also have personal memories of soup beans as a staple in the homes of my 'mountain' relatives. There was always a pot of beans on the stove, and if we were hungry, we were welcome to a bowl. It was also part of my father's repertoire of dishes he cooked for us, contrasting with my mother, who came from the flatlands and a more 'proper' family. That difference clarified the mountain heritage of the beans.

The dish's status as heritage begins at both the personal and vernacular level, although for most people, that status is implied rather than proclaimed. It seems too ordinary

17 Holtzman, Jon D.: 'Food and memory', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006), 373.

18 For more on the relationship of food and memory, see Sutton, David: *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (London, England: Berg, 2001). For an analysis of the role of rituals and festivals in creating food memories, see Long, Lucy M.: 'Apples as "Objects of Memory" in the Midwestern Imagination', in Beth Forrest and Greg de St. Maurice, eds., *Food in Memory and Imagination: Place, Space and Taste* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2022), 173–185.

to be put up on a pedestal in the way that most claims of heritage appear. In that way, it affirms the values felt to define mountain food culture – resourceful, practical, humble, not 'going above one's raising', but also delicious and filling.

Interestingly, some regional chefs and restaurants are now 'elevating' soup beans as a heritage food that represents an authentic Appalachian culture of resourcefulness, living and eating in a sustainable manner with the seasons and from smaller gardens, and making use, respectfully, of natural resources. Recent initiatives to save heritage seeds are also affirming personal memories of soup beans as heritage, perhaps shifting them to the official level.

Musings

These three dishes illustrate different ways in which personal memories interact with official, popular, and vernacular presentations of heritage. The status – implied or articulated – of each as heritage, comes from a different source and then is disseminated through various means to various types of audiences. Examining these as negotiations between different levels of society offers a framework for identifying where the concepts and attitudes are coming from, by whom they are adopted, perhaps why, and how personal memory comes in.

This emphasis on personal memory also raises questions about the difference between tradition and heritage. Are they, as Ben-Amos claims, incompatible, since heritage is static and canonical while tradition is dynamic and fluid? Not all folklorists agree with him, but the distinction might be useful on a phenomenological level. Pétursson and Hafstein (2022) point out: 'To invoke tradition is thus to give meaning to actions and objects in the present, to connect them to other people and places and times, and to charge them with emotion or affect.'[19] Heritage seems to do the same. Furthermore, as Brulotte and Di Giovine state: "heritage is less an identifiable thing than a constructed discourse strategically deployed for political, economic, or ideological goals [...] heritage imparts particular value claims on people, their histories, social structures, and traditions…."[20]

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19 Pétursson and Hafstein: 'Stirring up Skyr', 56.

20 Di Giovine, Michael A. and Brulotte, Ronda L.: 'Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', in Brulotte, Ronda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2014, 1–27), 1.

Heritage, however, seems to go beyond tradition to be perceived as a fundamental and unchangeable aspect of an individual's or group's identity – an attitude of 'the past is the past, and we can't do anything about it'. However, what can change is the selection of aspects of that past and the choice to act upon them or not. Tradition, on the other hand, at least, on a popular level, is treated as guidelines for how to do something, but variable according to circumstances and identities. Also, new traditions can be established, even replacing older ones, reflecting newer identities without threatening the existence of our heritage. Personal memories can shift a product or practice from tradition to heritage and vice versa, adding emotional weight or diluting it. Perhaps approaching tradition and heritage as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy reflects more accurately the ways in which the past is present for us.

Similarly, personal memory itself, as all historians and folklorists know, is dynamic and changeable. It is shaped by others' remembrances, by contexts in which it is recalled, and the individual's own changing circumstance and identities. Scholars of memory studies suggest the term 'remembering' in order to emphasise that this is a process, oftentimes driven by disputes over defining and representing the past. They also emphasise that individuals are socially situated, so that their 'remembering' is not done in isolation, but also that collective remembering involves individual memories. As one of the founding thinkers of the field states: 'Perhaps the most interesting feature of collective memory is its restless nature.'[21] The same can be said of both heritage and tradition.

Heritage presentations presume, as well as create, even, invent, collective memories with particular associations and meanings. Those memories can then be shared among individuals, creating a sense of collective identity and belonging, and affirming that heritage. These presentations may also evoke individual memories, perhaps making explicit personal perceptions of heritage. If those memories are challenged, their relationship to heritage, tradition, and identity become clear – to the holder as well as to the outsider. While heritage might be a static construct for some actors and in some contexts, the relationship between it and memory is fluid and dynamic, with the possibility of creating new meanings and emotions that then tie it to an individual's or group's identity.

21 Roediger, Henry L. III and Abel, Magdalena: 'Collective Memory: A New Area of Cognitive Study'. *ScienceDirec*t 19/7 (2015), 361.

Furthermore, these concepts are scholarly constructs developed to explain what we observe. They are more than simply terms to parse, however. Groups and individuals use both heritage and tradition as justification for actions and for building alliances and divisions based on the identities which they envision for themselves. Attending to personal memories and rememberings can help us to better understand how emotions are attached to those constructs, and how and why they are meaningful. We can then perhaps act to re-create memories and dispel others.

Food offers incredible opportunities for memory making as well as for constructing, expressing, and negotiating heritage and tradition. Perhaps those personal memories can also support present identities that emphasise our similarities and common humanity rather than our differences.

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