Taste and the place of local food: Exploring the social and cultural geography of cuisine in South China

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Abstract

Cuisine and food vary from region to region, and from ethnicity to ethnicity. Local food, dietary habits, cooking techniques, social conditions and cultural contexts are all seen as being related to the evolution of a cuisine. This thesis considers the roles of place and modernisation in shaping the development of a cuisine, and examines how people and ethnicity influence and are influenced by cuisine.

Nanxiong is a remote and developing county situated in the northeast of Guangdong Province in South China, and most of its population belong to the Hakka ethnicity. Urbanisation and modernisation are two ongoing changes in this region. Nanxiong cuisine is influenced by neighbouring cuisines in Guangdong and Hunan and Jiangxi Provinces, and this mixed cultural context provides a good opportunity to explore contemporary relations between place and cuisine.

Through ethnographic methods, this thesis investigates various issues such as ecological environment, everyday food practice, ethnic practices and events – food rituals, banquets and festivities in Nanxiong cuisine. It employs four main themes: cuisine and its relationship with taste and flavour, food authenticity and modernisation, the evolution of ethnic cuisine, and the nature of rituals and ceremony in relation to food culture.

The thesis contains three principle arguments. The first is that place is a vital shaper of cuisine, more even than ethnicity. In Nanxiong cuisine, local seasonings and food, dietary habits, household kitchens are playing increasingly significant roles in defining the place of Nanxiong and its cuisine. The second relates to the transitory, constantly refashioned concept of food authenticity, and argues that pulses of modernity have not equally and uniformly influenced various aspects of Nanxiong cuisine. The third argument is that, when it comes to ethnic cuisine, its related elements and meanings are porous and contested. Ethnic culinary elements have been refined and partly retained as cultural signifiers to retain a sense of Hakka identity.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Hakka food as cuisine

1.1 Why the project?

1.1.1 Thinking from cuisine studies

When talking about cuisine, we usually think about distinctive ingredients, special cooking techniques, and signature regional dishes. At the highest level, court/royal cuisine or hotel gastronomy is always mentioned. However, we are not clear or confident about the roles and functions of other occasions (family cooking, ethnic celebrations, festival meals) and non-food material-social conditions within the cuisine. We see cuisine as being historically situated in accordance with the climate, ecology, people and culture of a region. It is interesting and valuable to think about how cuisine and its environment and background interact with one another and what identity, experience, stories and food practices have been produced. However, systematic analysis of relations between cuisine and place is rare.

Cuisine has been explored in terms of food history and cultural philosophy worldwide (e.g. Chang and Anderson, 1977; Laudan, 2013; MacVeigh, 2008). Academic research on cuisine has traditionally focused on class, social institutions, recipes, innovation, and so on. (e.g. Appadurai, 1988; Goody, 1982; Leschziner, 2006; Svejenova et al., 2007). Cuisine has always been changing in accordance with new material and technological advancement, consumer demand and behaviour, and social change. Scholars have also commented on new cuisine, global cuisine, revived traditional cuisine, new practices and gastronomic tourism (Bech-Larsen et al., 2016; Chung et al., 2016; Kim, 2015; Miele and Murdoch, 2002; Sunanta, 2005). Cuisine as cultural heritage, linking past and present, faces challenges associated with modernisation and urbanisation, and traditional and ethnic elements within cuisine "may be under threat from the standardising chains" (Miele and Murdoch, 2002: 317; see also Bessière, 1998). In this thesis, I am concerned with how 'traditional' cuisine and its constituent parts change in response to modernisation and urbanisation. Further, I am curious about how authenticity associated with cuisine is experienced and perceived by local people under these changing circumstances. There is, however, little in the way of academic discussion that links all these aspects -- material, social, cultural -- using empirical case study work. A notable exception is Klein (2007). Although some research on the development of local cuisine pays attention to new tastes occasioned by tourism (Liao, 2008), geographical research centring on place can contribute to a broader discussion.. Cuisine studies should be more grounded.

There are quantitative studies of cuisine using networking methods to explore relations between different regional and national cuisines in terms of recipes and ingredients (Kular et al., 2011; Sajadmanesh et al., 2017). For example, Sajadmanesh et al. (2017) collected worldwide recipes from the web and analysed their attributes (ingredients, flavours, rating, nutrition) to uncover similarities between cuisines. However, quantitative methods are insufficient to investigate differentiation between cuisines and relations between cuisine, ingredients and (ethnic) culture. More ethnographic research would therefore be beneficial.

Overall, there appears to be scant academic interest in examining the 'soil' that cultivates the (ethnic) cuisine, and its interaction mechanism. The development of food and the food industry "cannot be separated from its agricultural and cultural characteristics, including its people and religion, and the nature of its geography, climate, and crops" (Kwon, 2017: 1). I argue that it is necessary to go beyond the traditional scope of cuisine studies, and focus on the material-social and cultural context of place (see also MacVeigh, 2008: viii). This is the theoretical position deployed in this thesis.

Analysing different recipes from each culture, Kular et al. (2011: 4) note that ingredient differences between various regional cuisines around the world are not as diverse as we may think. What really defines a cuisine is its connectedness and embeddedness with the lives of the local population. We should therefore pay increasing attention to the social and cultural conditions of cuisine rather than merely its material ingredients. We should refocus our attention on how basic ingredients are endowed with meaning by the context of the place and embedded within local life (Wongcha-UM, 2010: 3). Although it is acknowledged that regional cuisines have been developed in line with the climate, ecology and the people of the region, the relations between ethnic cuisine, sense of place and the social and individual life of the local population have not been systematically analysed.

Considering these perspectives, the thesis goes further into the 'contexts': to look into the acquisition and making of authentic ingredients (Ahn et al., 2011: 6), everyday living, festivities and special occasions within the place in which the cuisine is rooted. Within these contexts, the thesis explores how cuisine is defined, narrated, shaped, and what connotations, identity, authenticity and experience are presented by and to locals and outsiders. We know that food can act as a "symbolic marker of ethnicity and festivity" (Esterik, 1982: 207), but how are the meaning and usage of symbolic foods incorporated into cuisine and food memory?

These are the starting points of the thesis. The thesis aims to uncover the 'soil' of cuisine, that is to systematically analyse the relations between cuisine and the diverse elements of place with empirical data. Therefore this thesis will not focus on big

globalised cities, where cuisines are plenty and ethnic cuisine has no social root, nor on tourist destinations, where cuisine is often tourist-oriented and where festivals may be invented or performed (Cook and Crang, 1996; Lewis, 1997). Instead, it will focus on remote cities and developing areas, where cuisine is 'lived' among the population and where indigenous ingredients and ethnic traits are apparent on both daily and special occasions. The thesis uses Nanxiong – an ethnic Hakka county in Guangdong province, South China – and its cuisine as a case study.

1.1.2 Understanding place, practice and their relations with food and cuisine

Place is one of the most fundamental and long-standing concepts in geography, and the concept is evolving, led by philosophical and theoretical changes in the discipline and in the work of related geographers, such as the regional geography of Richard Hartshorne, humanistic concerns of Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph, and the critical/cultural turn evident in the work of David Harvey, Doreen Massey and Tim Cresswell (Cresswell, 1996; Cresswell, 2014). At least three meanings of place can be identified – location, sense of place and the space of people's daily interactions (Castree, 2003; Liao, 2008). Basically, Put simply, place refers to a meaningful location (Cresswell, 2014: 12). In the geographical literature, place is a multiple and relative concept at a range of spatial scales. On the other hand, place evolves with the flow of time, particularly evident in discourses and practices of nostalgia for the past and for tradition (Massey, 1995b). The relations between place and past are relational and multidirectional, and are subject to different understandings by different people. This thesis builds on the idea of constructed or invented past and tradition, and insists that the past and tradition shape the character of places through material culture and material-bounded identities. On another hand, although linking with diverse scales, the concept of place is mostly concerned with the local, which can be both concrete in location and abstract in thought (Massey, 1991: 270). Existing literature shows that the local is open to and defined within wider forces and contexts. For example, Cresswell (1996) uses the example of homelessness in New York and discusses that although homeless people live in this city, they have been considered as people 'inappropriate' to the grand urban politics and economics of New York. However, places are "relational both inside and out" (Cresswell, 2014: 48): they are gatherings of things, people, and emotions. At least two threads of new insights about place can be summarised from the existing literature: (i) place in a mobile world and (ii) sensing place.

Place in the age of mobility has been a popular focus in recent scholarship, and new ways to think about place are encouraged. For example, Cresswell suggests that place is not just an object, but is a way of understanding (Cresswell, 2014: 14). As the motilities of people and goods increase, traditional notions of place (and the rooted authenticity

that relates to place) have been challenged. Terms such as 'open', 'cosmopolitan,' and 'hybrid' suggest that cultural identities and sense of place are no longer stable and bounded in specific places; rather, modernity, globalisation, migration and mass tourism have contributed to remaking place as mobile. In the context of modernisation, for example, new elements and relations are incorporated into places, mixing with and moulded by the existing features of the places (Massey, 1995a: 61). Places are lived, experienced and shaped by people in the processes of movement, migration and contest. In the context of this thesis, I aim to explore the relationships that have been created and modified by different (groups of) actors in place or out-of-place.

Sense of place is indispensable to the notion of place, and links a place, its constituent elements and people. In this thesis, the focus is on relations between place, people and food. Identities and feelings related to food support the argument that a sense of place is not just individual but social (Rose, 1995: 89). In line with this idea, the discussion of individual food taste can have wider implications for collective food taste and broader sociocultural relations, which is also a sub-aim of the thesis.

Although the foundation of place is material, the notion of sense of place centres on people. Sense of place can be either reactionary or progressive (Massey, 1991: 278). Place and sense of place can be performed, made and even romanticised by individual, community, or society as a whole. This is particularly true in the modern and post-modern ages when a stable basis for identity, or "a place called home", is sought (Massey, 1994: 163). Nigel Thrift (2008) and other scholars re-interpret sense of place from the perspective of subjectivity and affect. Feelings and emotions have been restructured by social pressures such as modernity and mobility. It is interesting to look into how people enact and enable characters and relations of place, which eventually shape sense or identities of place. I ask the question what people experience and construct a certain thing 'in place'. Echoing the interdisciplinary enquiry into place in recent scholarship (Cresswell, 2014), this thesis approaches the conversation from the "place" of food and cuisine studies. It argues that taste of place can be a way of tasting, smelling and sensing the world.

Practice theory contributes to this exploration because the recent revival of interest in place-in-process is concerned with movement and interaction on an everyday basis (Thrift, 2008). Practice theory, which emphasises "doing over thinking and praxis over theory", has been welcomed by empirical social science researchers recently (Warde, 2016: 43). Some even talk of a "practice turn" in the social sciences. Practice theory addresses the understandings of activities which are not just individually experienced but socially constituted. Johnston (2017: 276) argues that "Practices are embodied, routinized human activities"; moreover, the focus on practice also involves people's understanding of activities. Groups routinely conduct practices, forming certain patterns

and unspoken rules as an element of the culture of the place where they live (Spigel, 2017). In this vein, networks of practices that formed and functioned in the history can be signified by particular things which enrich places, and have been memorialised by local people (Thrift, 2008: 8-9). Food-related practices, or eating practices, have been explored by scholars such as Alan Warde (2016). In fact, modern eating practices and lifestyles have the capacity to remould the debates around cuisine (Poulain and Dörr, 2017).

Eating should be not treated as a taken-as-given topic, rather as an analytical concept, Warde (2016: 52) persuasively argues. Food practices happen in contexts imbued with social and cultural meanings where time, place and people are interacting (Warde, 2016: 63). In this sense, Warde connects practices with individual situations: performances of a practice are always tailored to particular situations. Social science research on eating aims to uncover the contexts and social relations behind eating habits and activities, and recent scholarship attempts to account for senses and experiences too. Forms of and knowledge about eating as embodied practice produce a lively sense of place and cultural identity. Warde (2016) highlights three fundamental elements of eating practice - (i) event and occasion, (ii) menu and meal, (iii) bodily incorporation and sensory experience. He calls for the concept of "compound practice" to frame everyday food practices which are "adjacent, complementary but also invasive or integrative" (Warde, 2016: 49-50). This thesis follows the notion that place is a meeting-place or inclusive carrier of practices (Massey, 1995a: 58-59), and agrees that food-related practices and their relationship to other activities (such as eating and playing) function differently from other sorts of practices (such as music). It asks questions, for example, about how food practices and traditional events inherited from the past develop materially and conceptually in the social and individual life of the households of a group.

In particular, concerning food and cuisine, some specific relations and practices open up the notion of place. Sense of place can be achieved through food: place is tied to food/cuisine, which generates an attachment or feeling of home or territory which is experienced when a particular meal is eaten. Groups draw lines around their place that reject outside elements, forming soft or hard boundaries. And food and cuisine can be an appropriate weapon for them to do so. As I will argue in this thesis, cuisine itself of a specific place belongs to a resurgence of exclusivist localism. In the Nanxiong case, contrasting overall flavours between its cuisine and other Guangdong cuisines can cause some identity conflicts (see Chapter 5.2).

The following sections will discuss the reason for choosing Nanxiong and its features (Section 1.2), the contribution of the thesis to Chinese food research (1.3), and the research aims, questions and thesis outline (1.4).

1.2 Context: Why Nanxiong cuisine?

1.2.1 Is there a Nanxiong cuisine?

An important question should be asked: is there a Nanxiong cuisine? What defines a cuisine is one of the core research questions within cuisine studies. According to the "flavour principle", which was first outlined by Elisabeth Rozin (1973) to define a cuisine, the flavour principle of Nanxiong cuisine lies in the compatible flavours of chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoot (see detailed discussion in Chapter 5). These two seasoning ingredients create the characteristic flavours of Nanxiong dishes, which are familiar to many locals and make an impression on non-locals such as tourists and out-of-town workers. The spicy flavour of Nanxiong cuisine is so apparent that it vastly contrasts with light and non-spicy Hakka and Guangdong cuisine to which it belongs as a category. Nanxiong cuisine is considered to be a particular variant of Guangdong cuisine, with the image of 'distinct-flavour'.

In addition, elements of ethnic Hakka cuisine have added to the particularity of Nanxiong cuisine (most of Nanxiong's population are Hakka; for more on this, see Chapter 3). The Hakka are known for "relying on mountain foods" (Rao, 2014), and wild animals and edible plants from local mountains have enriched the range of Nanxiong food sources and contributed to the flavour profile of the cuisine. This reflects a Hakka-style culinary relation with local ecology. Unlike Cantonese cuisine, Hakka cuisine relies upon heavy use of oil, salt and meat, and is served without too much regard to aesthetics. Cooking techniques include eating raw foods, roasting, frying with oil, boiling with salt and making chilli sauce (Nanxiong County Annals, 1991). Signature dishes, like the 'royal goose' (e'wang 鹅王) and braised duck with sour-bamboo-shoot, have become increasingly popular in recent years.

1.2.2 The context of Nanxiong and its cuisine

Talking about cuisine cannot be done without talking about history. Nanxiong cuisine traces its roots to the cultural history of Nanxiong and its role as a historical trading post linking Guangdong and the north. Looking at its geography in northeast Guangdong, Nanxiong has been and remains part of Lingnan (Guangdong and its western neighbour, Guangxi Province) and Lingnan culture. This culture is comprised of ancient Han Chinese and Baiyue (Hundred Yue, Non-Han southerners) customs and traits (Ye, 2000) (more detail is given in Chapter 3).²

¹ Generally speaking, Guangdong has three sub-cuisines: Cantonese, Chaozhou and Hakka cuisine. In a narrow sense, Guangdong cuisine refers to Cantonese cuisine.

² Han ethnicity refers to the majority (92 percent) of the Chinese population.

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Nanxiong is a 'remote' and relatively underdeveloped county in Guangdong, one of the wealthiest and most-developed provinces in mainland China. Northern Guangdong, where Nanxiong is located, however, lags significantly behind the Pearl River Delta region in GDP, and the difference is growing (Liu, 2010b). This is because of its mountainous terrain and because the provincial government has prioritised developing the Pearl River Delta region. There was no railway line in Nanxiong before 2014. Nowadays more than ever, discussion of Nanxiong County cannot be divorced from references to Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and the other Pearl River Delta cities, which are both the economic and cultural centres of south China. Guangzhou, the provincial capital, is a three-hour drive from Nanxiong. Indeed, many young and middleaged Nanxiong people move to Guangzhou for education and work.

In 2016 the population of Nanxiong County was 485,900 (Kong et al., 2017). After the start of reform policies in 1978, increasing numbers of rural people escaped from agricultural life and moved to cities, boosting the urbanisation process (see Chapter 3.2.3). This is in accordance with the development of industries in the Pearl River Delta region, driven by the Hong Kong capital. And many young people worked for manufactories in this region, bringing money, new information and products back home. Industrial investments and industry transfer from Pearl River Delta cities came later to Shaoguan and Nanxiong, especially after the policies of "vacating the cages and changing birds" launched by Guangdong provincial government in 2008 (Liao and Chan, 2011).³ Since the arrival of factories, although not many in number, Nanxiong started to lose its reliance on agricultural activities. The added value of manufacturing accounted for 33.4% of GDP in 2016 (Kong et al., 2017). Interestingly, urbanisation in this county has been accelerated by education: a large number of students move to primary and secondary schools in the city centre for better education, which attracts rural households to purchase or rent houses in the city. I have personally observed the growth in construction and infrastructure especially in recent years.

The county is rich in natural resources, including geothermal, minerals, forests, water, and is one of the main regions in Guangdong growing rice, tobacco and bamboo (Municipal Office of Nanxiong, 2018). Large number of rural households of Nanxiong depend on agriculture. With regard to tourism, gingko trees have been an important tourist attraction, along with cultural legacies such as Zhuji Lane, Meiguan Lane and the memorial park for Shuikou war.

Nanxiong has a history of "preserved meat" (*lawei* 腊味). Although the date of its origin is unknown, Zhuji Lane, the cultural core of Nanxiong (see Chapter 3.1) which is located

³ "Vacating the cage and change birds" (*teng long huan niao*, 腾笼换鸟) refers to the relocation of so-called low-tech industries outside the Pearl River Delta region so as to make room for new and clean industries.

about ten kilometres north-east of the centre of Nanxiong, has been the traditional centre of the industry of preserved meat; its alias is 'Preserved Lane' (*laxiang* 腊巷) and it is known as such throughout Guangdong because, as Liu (1995: 41) explains, in ancient times businessmen and tourists who visited Zhuji Lane would eat the preserved foods and bring some back home as precious foods. Preserved meat includes duck and duck organs, pork and pork liver, sausage, and so on. Unlike many other regions (for example, Hunan Province, where smoke-drying skills are used), preserving skills in Nanxiong are a combination of wind-drying and sunlight-drying in winter. In particular, preserved duck, locally known as *banya* (板鸭), is praised for its "beautiful appearance, white duck skin, thick oil, thin skin and tender texture, red meat and umami taste, fragile bone, unique flavour and good quality" (Liu, 1995: 41; Yu, 1824 [1967]).

The eating habits of Nanxiong people can be explained with reference to natural features and resources. In the past, Nanxiong people could be characterised by four pastimes: eating chilli, eating sour bamboo shoot, smoking and drinking local tea. Nanxiong people love eating chilli and almost all of their dishes are spicy. In the book *Legends and Stories of Zhuji Lane* (Folk Artists Association Of Guangdong, 2002), the authors explain that chilli is eaten to fend off the cold. Nanxiong is situated in a mountainous area of northern Guangdong, characterised as a barbarian frontier with damp and relatively cold winters. Eating chilli can thus help the body get rid of the cold and damp. Sour bamboo shoot is a traditional condiment in Nanxiong and serves to make the taste of the dish denser and stronger (*nongyu mianchang* 浓郁绵长). Bamboo grows in abundance across the county. The processes for making sour bamboo shoots can be summarised as follows: choose one new earthenware pot and wash without oil and salt; add the bamboo shoots and well water drawn before dawn (called *bujiantian* 不见天) into the pot; steep for ten days.

Nanxiong cuisine can be considered as a variant of Hakka cuisine but is distinguished from typical Hakka food. Broadly speaking, it has been influenced not only by Cantonese cuisine but also the cuisines of nearby Hunan and Jiangxi provinces and of local minorities. Linlin said that "Maybe our [Nanxiong] cuisine resembles Hunan cuisine because I feel their stir-fried meat dish is the same as ours" (interview, young man, 23/01/2016). In addition, distinctive Hakka-based special occasions such as ceremonies and festivals, rituals and taboos largely shape the dishes and food practices of the county (see Chapter 7).

The unusual nature of the Hakka people and their cuisine is threefold. First, Hakka are not considered to be a minority ethnicity but a branch of Han ethnicity, the Chinese majority (Zhou, 2007: 84); Hakka draw soft boundaries not hard boundaries in distinguishing their identity, language, traditions and cuisine from those of (other) Han Chinese (Cesaro, 2000: 233-234). Second, Hakka have been depicted as a migrant

group but the migration happened a very long time ago (see Chapter 3). Thus, at individual and social levels, Hakka cuisine has undergone a long-term adaptive process, unlike recently-migrated families who struggle to retain their native food practices (Longhurst et al., 2009). Third, in contrast to the ethnic cuisines of restaurants in big cities and tourist destinations agriculture, and rural characteristics remain core traits of Hakka cuisine (Liu and Jang, 2009).

For all these reasons – for its liminal situation in terms of geographical location, ethnic tradition and contemporary change – Nanxiong cuisine is a suitable case study.

1.3 How broader Chinese cuisine contributes to cuisine studies

Thus far, I have discussed the theoretical position and the case of Nanxiong cuisine. However, this thesis is also related to Chinese food studies. This section shows how work on Chinese cuisine and empirical research on Nanxiong cuisine may contribute more generally to cuisine studies. In this thesis, for convenience, Chinese cuisine is narrowed down to the cuisine of the Han nationality (including therefore Hakka).

Chinese food culture has been explored by both Chinese and foreign scholars in many disciplines, including anthropology, sociology and geography. In particular, the historical development of different types of Chinese cuisines can be seen in the seminal work of Chang and Anderson (1977) and Anderson (1988) and that of Chinese scholars such as Zhao (2006) and Ji (2008). Chinese food culture is recorded in numerous types of work, including poems, historical records, novels, modern local newspapers and narrative essays (Klein, 2006: 104-105). As Oakes (1999: 125) writes, "China's classical texts are all peppered with references to food and cuisine". However, most of these works on Chinese cuisines are descriptive, lyrical stories rather than academic research. Empirical research on Chinese regional cuisine is limited.

Chinese food shares particular food ideologies or philosophies which still influence contemporary restaurant chefs and home cooking practices. Typical traditional food philosophies includes *qi* 气 (air or energy), *yinyang* 阴阳 (masculine and feminine cosmic forces), *tian ren he yi* 天人合一 (people and heaven in harmony) (see Chapter 3). There is a need to see how these food ideas are located in contemporary cuisine and food practice. In addition, Chinese food ideology provides another understanding of the social grounding of cuisine, and is one which is distinctly under-researched. According to Oakes (1999: 125), whereas Christian angels are "content to live on air alone", supernatural Chinese beings "arrive" at and eat well in celebratory feasts; indeed, food occupies a central role in the "staging of rituals".

Few cuisines have been as deeply entangled with the people and history of the region as those of China are. Jean-François Revel says, "China... is perhaps the only country in the world in which scholars, philosophers, moralists, political thinkers, and poets have personally written treatises on food and put together collections of recipes" (Revel, 1984, as cited in Erlich, 2004: 128). Every place and every social class has an interest in developing the cuisine (Erlich, 2004: 126-127), which helps to inform the (collective) mentality of 'pursuing delicacy'. Chinese cuisine can encourage us to think of relations between food practice and social relations (*guanxi* 关系) in different ways (e.g. Wu, 2005). In fact, researching Chinese cuisine extends some concepts such as fragrant and umami (see Chapter 5) to make them more international concepts.

In terms of regional varieties, Chinese cuisine is complicated, diverse and distinct (Anderson, 1988; Li and Hsieh, 2004). There exist great differences between the cuisine of each region, particularly in terms of the preparation of the main dishes, special food choices like mountain foods and cooking skills. *Qi min yao shu* 齐民要术 (Techniques for People's Welfare) is said to be the first book to record regional differences in culinary practices (Cheung, 2013: 353). Although some literature has summarised key features of each regional cuisine (e.g. Ru, 1992), there is still limited academic work and in particular ethnographic studies that adopt a critical and contemporary lens to focus on material ingredients and micro-level sociocultural aspects of diverse regional cuisines, which are valuable perspectives when looking at Chinese food culture.

In addition, rural Chinese cuisine makes a contribution to discussions of low cuisine. Within Chinese cuisine literature, there is a considerable literature on refined cuisines, such as Cantonese cuisine, Hangzhou cuisine and court cuisine (e.g. Klein, 2007; Li, 2003). Refined cuisines, or haute cuisine, in China, are historically centred on big cities, which have a varied range of rarefied ingredients. In fact, court cuisine may incorporate culinary elements from peasant cooking (Erlich, 2004: 126). In contrast, countryside food and practice have received little attention. Rural cuisine is recognised for its frequent use of meat and salted, pickled vegetables, which "impart a distinctive flavour, [and] are low in calorific values" (Li and Hsieh, 2004: 147). In the meantime, the growing and traditional ways of pickling, salting and drying and the preparation of a variety of festive snacks have been an indispensable part of housework and rural living. The study of rural or peasant cuisine can fill some of the gaps in discussions on Chinese cuisine, and more importantly, introduce the role of traditional foods and skills and knowledge in how cuisine is constructed on a daily basis.

Hakka cuisine is one typical rural-style and mountain-style Han Chinese cuisine. According to Lyons (2007: 348), compared with haute cuisine, rural cuisine has been overlooked and is unknown to academia as it serves "only to fill the belly". Although living a difficult agricultural life, Hakka people also take an interest in food, creating a

number of characteristic dishes, such as stuffed bean curd, salted chicken and poonchoi (pencai 盆菜) which is a festive Hakka dish. The Hakka dishes taste salty and are heavy in oil, thus standing in contrast with the sweet and light Cantonese dishes (discussed further in Chapter 3). Like ethnic identity, ethnic food and cuisine are prominent in terms of "their encounter with the foodways of the other" (Arvela, 2013: 46). Food and rituals are the platforms for modern Hakka to realise or evoke their identity and roots and thus reconstruct group boundaries and their collective identities (Wilk, 1999: 245). Thus Hakka ethnic cuisine is an appropriate lens through which to explore the links between social and religious beliefs, banquets and food rituals.

1.4 Research aims and thesis structure

The thesis views food and foodways as cultural practices, and in this respect, it is distinct from much historical or nutritional research on Chinese food. In the following section, the research aims, questions and chapter outlines are described.

1.4.1 Research aim and research themes

The overarching aim of this thesis is **to systematically explore the relations between cuisine and place in the contemporary period**, with the region of Nanxiong county as the site of analysis. It is an ethnographic study that considers the wider contexts of cuisine such as eco-environment, everyday food practice, ethnic elements and events – food rituals, banquets and festivities. This broad aim can be divided into four subsidiary aims, each of which is picked up and developed in one of the empirical chapters.

The first is to advance our understanding of the concept of the flavour principle explored in Chapter 5. This thesis provides empirical data in support of this concept and shows how local people perceive and react to it. In Nanxiong, people believe the combination of spiciness of chilli pepper and sourness of sour bamboo shoot are their cuisine's overall flavour. I show how the flavour principle impacts ways of cooking and consuming, and vice versa.

The second subsidiary aim is to discuss the position of everyday meals in the cuisine structure and in food-related lifestyle (Chapter 6). It responds to questions about how the diverse principles of cuisine are reflected in everyday (routinised) food practices, and vice versa. I look into people's eating habits and lifestyles in terms of generational differences. I use the phenomenon of eating night-snacks as an example.

The third is to set cuisine in its traditional ethnic background, examining food-related rituals and associated banquets such as weddings (Chapter 7). It emphasises the rural style of banquets and thus of Hakka cuisine. It seeks to answer the following questions: How are banquets organised, prepared, served and consumed? How do food rituals and banquets adapt to modern change brought about by modern lifestyles?

The fourth subsidiary aim, developed in Chapter 8, is to explore the relations between cuisine presentation and living, presenting contexts – agricultural and festive. I investigate how agriculture influences people's social and individual life. I search for a narrative of food customs on festive occasions, for example, at the level of lineage. I examine how authenticity is constructed in terms of materiality, festival atmosphere and perceived foodways.

Alongside these aims, there are four main cross-cutting themes present in my thesis.

The first concerns **cuisine and its relationship with taste and flavour**. The thesis analyses the fluid significance of factors in defining cuisine. I argue that place is a vital shaper of cuisine, more even than ethnicity. Nanxiong cuisine is not haute cuisine. It is composed by the people who have lived in Nanxiong county over many generations having moved there as part of the great migrations of Hakka people from the Central Plains (zhongyuan 中原) of China. There are no records, and no documents outside the kitchen. Nanxiong cuisine derives not from restaurants or the palaces of the nobility like haute cuisine, but from the flavour principle that is formed of a particular combination of spicy and sour tastes. Flavour and taste difference can function as signifiers for the drawing of culinary boundaries.

The second relates to **the concepts of modernity and authenticity**. My research supports consistent arguments in the general literature that the authentic is transitory, constantly refashioned and refreshed by pulses of modernity. In terms of special occasions of festival and celebration, I suggest in this thesis that a sense of authenticity is sought by the people of Nanxiong partly in order to 'sanction' certain festivals, but authenticity is an elusive concept, especially when it confronts the social and technological forces of modernity . An interesting case is the changing of New Year Taste (*nianwei* 年味) as part of a festival atmosphere (Chapter 8.4). Significant too is the new-found popularity of night-snacking, an informal meal that grows out of modern lifestyles and has made a big impact on understandings of authentic cuisine (Chapter 6.4).

In third place, this thesis offers a deconstruction of the concept of ethnic cuisine and shows that ethnic cuisine is porous, contested and multiple. Food is always consumed in context: ethnic cuisine can be deconstructed into its context and social roots (Chapter 8.3). I will show that banquet cooking and preparation actually enrich the cuisine. Nanxiong cuisine is different from other Hakka cuisines, which in turn are different from those of the provincial capital of Guangzhou and its surrounding cities in the Pearl River Delta. This helps remind us that generalisations about ethnic and regional cuisines (not to mention national ones) should be treated with caution and rebutted when necessary. Hakka is known as 'mountain guest' and 'depending on

mountain foods'. Yet the meaning of mild mountain foods – an important feature for Hakka cuisine – is porous, contested and nonlinear (Chapter 5.3 and Chapter 6.3).

Fourthly, the thesis reflects on the nature of rituals and ceremonies in terms of their relationship to food culture. Here it takes the reader beyond the bounds of the Hakka world to signal a number of salient aspects. These include a dialogue with fantasy and a frequent resort to the culture of words that is such an important feature of the Chinese language. This has implications for understanding such things in other Chinese regions. Ethnic legacy includes food rituals. I will argue that, in the Chinese context, these ethnic elements are organised by people and lineage and place rather than by religion (Chapter 7).

This thesis contributes to a number of clusters of literature, casting light on (as mentioned above) on the literature on broader Guangdong and regional Chinese cuisines. Although the thesis is concerned with Nanxiong cuisine and the role of its place setting in shaping and making local cuisine, it relates to broader Guangdong and Chinese cuisines and in their material, social and cultural contexts. It also extends scholarly attention from haute cuisine to more everyday rural cuisine (Cwiertka, 2006: 11; Mintz, 1996). It stresses the social embeddedness and roots of the cuisine, rather than the cultural capital it represents.

1.4.2 Structure of the thesis

The following subsection outlines the main focus of each chapter in the thesis:

Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature around the themes of cuisine, everyday food practice and ethnic traditions. It finds that the basis for cuisine is the food range and seasoning ingredients and key items or original items which grow in the region. People and the culture they create have (historically) developed ways of cooking, serving and consuming in both everyday meals and during special occasions (whether ceremonial or festive), shaping the development of the cuisine. Through this review of the literature, the influence and role that home cooking, eating patterns, banquets and feasts play in a cuisine's structure, identity and experience is explored.

Chapter 3 elaborates on Nanxiong and its cuisine. It firstly introduces the geography and environment of the county – a mountainous region on the border of Guangdong, Jiangxi and Hunan provinces in South China. Environmental factors and Nanxiong's association with the Pearl River Delta (in the centre of Guangdong Province) have influenced the development of Nanxiong cuisine and food practices. Secondly, it discusses the role of the majority Hakka in Nanxiong county; ethnicity, rituals, traditions and festivals are all basically Hakka, just as the cuisine is.

Chapter 4 introduces the methods used for this research and related factors. After discussing the theoretical considerations of the researcher, it proposes that

ethnographic methods are sufficiently flexible to allow for fieldwork into cuisine and context. Therefore, the methods used in the fieldwork include semi-structured interviews, repeat interviews, group interviews with notes written by participants, and participant observation. It describes the situations, processes and data collected during the fieldwork (December 2015 to June 2016). It also discusses the background of fieldwork informants, ethical issues and the positionality of the researcher.

Chapters 5-8 are empirical chapters, which aim to locate Nanxiong cuisine in a range of different contexts and occasions, with a focus on the local environment and material ingredients, everyday food practice, rituals and banquets, festive foods and festive cycles. These analytical lenses are significant when discussing food in the context of a (Hakka) county such as Nanxiong.

Chapter 5 argues that local seasoning ingredients – the combination of chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoot – gives the flavour principle to Nanxiong cuisine. This principle influences the tastes of Nanxiong dishes, both in terms of cooking and consuming. Exploring this further, it tries to identity people's narratives and attitudes towards this flavour principle. It contends that the character of 'depending on mountain products' shapes domestic meals, restaurant eating and is a part of the population's daily life. Throughout, it emphasises that Nanxiong cuisine is rural/low cuisine, rather than haute cuisine.

Chapter 6 discusses Nanxiong's changing foodways, diners' habits and attitudes, and explores night-snacks as informal eating occasions. It finds associations between the foodways (provision and preparation of domestic meals and restaurant eating) and the format of Nanxiong cuisine, and argues that the county has been influenced by 'traditional' factors and modernising tendencies in its foodways and format. Members of the middle-aged and elderly generations are generally regarded as the authorities on traditional dishes and skills, while the younger generation are often critical consumers whose lifestyles have given rise to the development of night-snacking as a marker and signifier of Nanxiong cuisine and of Nanxiong as a place.

Switching to theme of the ethnic context of Nanxiong food, **Chapter 7** centres on food rituals and the socialising associated banquets and feasts. Food gifts and rituals reflect between-clan and inter-clan relationships, and bear auspicious meanings. The preparation and consumption of banquet food provides an occasion to generate clan solidarity, and retain or shape Hakka dishes. This suits the style of Hakka and the atmosphere of rural life. The chapter focuses on how banquets and feasts are inserted into the cuisine's structure as part of its 'authentic' heritage.

Chapter 8 focuses on festive occasions, including agrarian contexts, ancestor worship, and cultural festivals. It explores how agriculture influences the social life of households and of individuals. The Tomb-sweeping Festival to honour ancestors reflects the social

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life of the clan (or lineage).⁴ Gender and intergenerational experiences differ in these activities. The chapter focuses on New Year as the most important cultural festival, and finds 'authentic' narratives and experiences (including the festive atmosphere), particular through food.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter. It firstly concludes the empirical chapters and then summarises the main findings and arguments around Nanxiong cuisine, which shapes and is shaped by these different contexts and occasions (material ingredients, the everyday, ceremonies and festivities). Lastly, it speaks to a broader literature on cuisine and food studies, Chinese (East Asian) cuisine, and points out some future research perspectives.

⁴ In this thesis, I use the term *clan* to refer to families with close kinship ties, while I use the word *lineage* to stress vertical surname ties distributed in one region.

Chapter 2 Literature review: The material, social and cultural contexts of cuisine

2.1 Introduction

"Each [cuisine] had preferred ingredients, techniques, dishes, meals, and ways of eating. Each was shaped by a culinary philosophy that defined what cooking was and how cuisine was related to society, to the natural world (including human bodies), and to the supernatural." (Laudan, 2013)

Nutritional and medical research has dominated food studies (Kim, 2015), but in social science it has been anthropology and sociology that have had the biggest input. Cuisine studies are still an under-researched domain. In line with the thesis's aim of discussing cuisine within a geographical domain, this literature review chapter aims to provide a theoretical overview on the topic of cuisine, and the material, social and cultural contexts of cuisine.

Cuisine is literally 'kitchen' in French; in Chinese, cuisine is referred to using the word *caixi* 菜系 or simply *cai* 菜, the latter of which means vegetables or food in its main sense. *Caixi* and *cai* are used in verbal conversation, and *caixi* differs from province to province, from county to county, or even from town to town. In this way, consistent with historical narratives, *caixi* or *cai* (cuisine) seems to be a common and self-evident geographical phenomenon (e.g. Chen, 1994; Ru, 1992). In my thesis, Nanxiong *cai* and Hakka *cai* are, respectively, geographical county-level cuisine and ethnic cuisine; both of these are widely acknowledged within their regions (see Chapter 3 for details).

We know that food serves to maintain, communicate and negotiate social relationships; one way is through the association of locality within particular ingredients and local produce. The cultural identity of a certain cuisine can be fluid (Pfau, 2017) and shaped by people's diverse methods of production, consumption and exchange. Food is tasted, evoked with memories and narrated in different environments – in different living landscapes (Duruz, 2010). In this vein, the relations between cuisine and the social actors should be explored in everyday context. Likewise, Cheng et al. (2007: 40) contend that "the consumption of food is central to the temporal organization of daily life, social relations and changing modes of provision". Food and cuisine do not refer just to the material (i.e. ingredients, seasonings, spices) and ways of cooking. Rather, they are practised in different consumption ways and further are presented in social relationships and broader spatio-temporal relations. For example, the favoured dishes, eating habits and food activities of the population are absolutely part of the cuisine and distinguish the cuisine itself from other cuisines.

Cuisine has much to do with the past (food history) and place. As MacVeigh (2008: viii) argues, "One of the most difficult things for a culinarian, future chef, or food lover to grasp is a sense of place that a food comes from". Cultural and culinary history of a place has been shown to exert influence on contemporary cuisine. One example is that contemporary Greek cuisine is influenced by Roman, Ottoman, Venetian and English food cultures, alongside ancient Greek ingredients such as grapes, figs, honey, yellow lentils, and this hybrid still acts as the basis of Greek cuisine today (MacVeigh, 2008: 31).

Everyday food practice and ethnic-traditional events are constituent parts of the cuisine and extension into these two parts assists the construction of a theoretical systematic framework for developing cuisine studies. Mintz (1996: 96) argues that "A genuine cuisine has common social roots". Cuisine is embedded and maintained in the frequent practice, discourse and understanding of the population (Klein, 2007: 514). Everyday practice of a cuisine is its *lived* aspect; in contrast, rituals and banquets in special occasions can be the *performed* aspect, crucial for shaping 'traditional' flavours (ibid., 2007: 531). I concentrate on and contribute to discussion of contemporary cuisine.

As will be shown in the following sections, cuisine is an appropriate arena in which to incorporate themes of everyday food practices, lifestyle, special celebratory occasions and ethnic festivities with various actors, agents and family members, tourists, chefcustomers, hosts-guests, through the lens of material culture which focuses on materiality and tangible matter in human geography (Jackson, 2000). What's more, in line with the era of modernisation, consumerism and globalism, contemporary cuisine is contested and undergoing transformation.

In order to advance the analysis of cuisine and place/context, the following sections are shaped around some key ideas that come out of the existing literature and which relate to my research aims (see Chapter 1.4.1). Section 2.2 presents a review of cuisine studies and a diverse variety of (ethnic and regional) cuisines. Section 2.3 discusses meal, taste, terroir, and everyday food practices, which are tightly connected with cuisine. These themes are developed in Chapters 5 and 6. Turning to traditional ethnic perspectives, Section 2.4 looks at food rituals, banquets, feasts and traditional festivals, laying the context for a discussion on ethnic cuisine and foods. Chapters 7 and 8 examine the ideologies that lie behind the food at ceremonies, banquets and festivities. Section 2.5 concludes by extending the relations with contemporary cuisine and modern change.

2.2 Geographies of cuisine

This section starts by introducing the concept of 'cuisine' (Section 2.2.1) and then discusses its relationship with geography (place) and ethnicity, the two most significant

factors underpinning the construction of cuisine (Section 2.2.2). This subsection analyses the relations between them in both the past culinary practices and modernisation (Section 2.2.3). The section ends with concluding some insights by comparing French and Chinese cuisines (Section 2.2.4).

2.2.1 The concept of cuisine

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'cuisine' as, "a style or method of cooking, especially as characteristic of a particular country, region, or establishment" (Oxford English Dictionary). By contrast, modern Japanese culinary practices, Cwiertka (1998: 199) says, define cuisine as "a complex system of foodstuffs, cookery techniques, dishes and the names of the dishes, tableware and table manners". These definitions emphasise culinary elements organically combined within a place. Cuisine is both a verbal and academic concept; in everyday conversation, it is frequently used and the connotation seems to be self-evident. For instance, people like to discuss what cuisine to eat after work. In contrast with a verbal context, academic discussion of cuisine is more elaborated.

Some scholars link cuisine with culture in an evolving nature. Cuisine is more than food; as Clark (1975: 32) writes, "it is food transcended, nature transformed into a social product, an aesthetic artefact, a linguistic creation, a cultural tradition". In this vein, if food is "en-culturated material/nature", then cuisine is an en-culturated phenomenon (Kim, 2015: 4). Sajadmanesh et al. (2017: 1) go further to argue that "different cuisines are naturally intertwined with cultures, traditions, passions, and religion of individuals living in different countries and continents". Cuisine is not a single food item, meal or recipe; rather it is the *process*, comprising a range of relationships and functions (Clark, 1975: 32, emphasised by the author). Similarly, Narayanan (2016: 1) argues that "cuisine, as a phenomenon, [can] be analysed as a transcultural process rather than as a structure". Generally, cuisine is composed of a range of food practices and principles (such as cooking and preparing ways), food ingredients and flavourings, table etiquettes and culinary knowledge (recipes). It is fluid: one foodstuff may have a cultural connotation which can be changed/reshaped according to varying situations (Cwiertka, 1998: 120). However, it seems that these definitions of cuisine have not stressed geographical differences, nor the importance of place.

Other than domestic meals and restaurant eating, feasts or banquets accompanying special occasions such as rites of passage are believed to be integral constituents of cuisines, especially in so far as they relate to nationality and ethnicity (e.g. Raji et al., 2017). Special occasions link the past and present, and feasts, usually experienced collectively, are rare and extravagant, labour-intensive, bountiful, and are frequently linked to elite classes and rituals (Drury, 2009: 50; Shing, 2007) (for further discussion see Section 2.4.2). For instance, the poonchoi, a festive Hakka dish containing several

layers of food, reflects a particular arrangement of diverse ingredients and etiquette to follow, forming a fantastic foodscape (Shing, 2007).

Various writers have been keen to find the determinants of a cuisine, or what defines a cuisine. One way is analysing taste and flavour. Rozin (1973) argues that the flavour principle – a mix of frequently used and familiar flavours/tastes which results from local flavouring/seasoning ingredients – can define a cuisine. For example, characteristic flavouring ingredients for Japanese food are soy sauce, mirin and dashi; for Mexican food they are fresh chilli, lime and cumin; for Italian food, fresh herbs, oregano, thyme, olive oil, and so on (Labensky, [no date]; Prescott, 2012: 188). This discussion is developed in the context of Nanxiong in Chapter 5. On the other hand, some scholars consider ingredients as the determinant of a cuisine, for example the staple food – as in the case of rice – for Japanese cuisine (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994). This is often done through identifying the nuanced traits and narratives of the ingredient, which frequently link to the historical construction of the region's identity. However, we should never ignore the role of geographical factors, sense of place and daily interactions in regional cuisine (Liao, 2008).

Cuisine can also be linked with restaurant practices, rather than family meals. The best food and the recipes that represent the cuisine and embody its features are likely to be produced by professional cooks with decades of experience. And in the modern age, professional operations in the food service industry guide innovation and creativity in a cuisine, particularly when it comes to haute cuisine (Petruzzelli and Savino, 2014; Stierand et al., 2014). At least in China, where the role of the cookbook has typically been insignificant, systematic knowledge of the cuisine is typically contextualised in wordless experience; culinary traditions were persistently distributed by master chefs and through the master-apprentice relationship (Ru, 1992: 212). Furthermore, Hu (2016: 93) points out that the master-apprentice relationship can be an intimate relationship, such as the father-son relationship or that between members of a clan. In this regard, Chinese culinary practices open some space for the basis of a cuisine: for example in smaller, more remote cities like Nanxiong, there are no records, and no documents outside the kitchen.

2.2.2 Regional cuisine, ethnic cuisine and modernisation

In general, there are two major inter-related perspectives – regional and ethnic – that help to explain cuisine.

Cuisine is usually geographically defined – French, Cantonese, Japanese – because of regional differentiations in the environment, weather and culture, which lead to variations in the growth of particular ingredients. Particularly in the past, when commodities were limited, regional differentiations – inland, seaside, mountain – directly influenced the richness and quality of food materials; seasons and weather directly

impacted upon the population's dietary habits (Chen, 1994: 226). Costa and Besio (2011: 842) argue that regional cuisine involves a sort of attachment of local foods to agricultural and rural space to create a sense of authenticity.

There is also a hierarchical or scaling system in cuisine, from local through regional and national to international; however, this is neither homogeneous nor equal throughout the world. For example, there is Nordic cuisine (Bech-Larsen et al., 2016; Petruzzelli and Savino, 2014), but there is not a commonly acknowledged singular Chinese national cuisine nor an American cuisine (Cox, [no date]; Mintz, 1996: 94). Nor does every place have a (mature) cuisine. For example, many Macanese deny "the existence of a Macanese cuisine" or cannot distinguish Macanese dishes from Chinese, Portuguese or Hong Kong dishes (Augustin-Jean, 2002: 121-122). The undermining of a distinct place-based cuisine hierarchy is due to all-encompassing modernisation and globalisation, which causes culinary identity shifts and boundary conflicts. We need to be cautious when dealing with trans-scale cuisine contrasts. The narrower cuisine is not necessarily hemmed in by the broader cuisine, and their foodways, eating habits and culinary identities may be contested or even contrary.

Cuisine is also often connected to ethnicity. Kwon (2015: 1) argues that "ethnic food can be defined as an ethnic group's or a country's cuisine that is culturally and socially accepted by consumers outside of the respective ethnic group". An important issue in studying ethnic cuisine is the extent to which it changes and adapts to modernisation and urbanisation since "the differences in culture and customs are more pronounced" (Suhaimi and Zahari, 2014: 860). Ethnic cuisine is fluid and is, according (Shing, 2007: 64), always in danger of disappearing. One of the defining qualities of ethnic cuisine is its food authenticity. Chhabra et al. (2013: 146) write that "ethnic cuisines, their claimed authenticity and their authenticating markers constitute an important field of inquiry". Particularly within big cities, where populations are complex, ethnic restaurants provide ethnic cuisines that can satisfy both customers of the same ethnicity and other populations, contributing to the formation of the globalised image of the city. In this situation, ethnic and cultural boundaries are evident for heterogeneous population and landscapes (Bell and Valentine, 1997: 114). However, these boundaries are varied and nuanced according to different occasions. For example, Uyghurs draw a "hard boundary" and refuse Chinese food on religious occasions while they absorb it during other social celebrations – a "soft boundary" (Cesaro, 2000: 233-234). Similar situations happen in the context of culinary tourism, where ethnic cuisine and restaurants contribute to the tourist's experience of authenticity leading to a "conversation of traditional heritage" (Everett and Aitchison, 2008: 150) and traditional ways of life (Chuang, 2009).

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Food (and thus cuisine alongside it) is generally employed as a collective icon because it is widely used in people's everyday lives, shaping a "civic ideology" (Ashley et al., 2004: 81) and because people have an intimate relationship with it, thus bringing about embodied memories and imaginations. Interestingly, iconic food is not necessarily what most people consume on a regular basis; it can be abstracted or constructed as authentic, traditional or as festive/celebratory food appearing on special occasions. In this regard, iconic food and related practices may help to form collective rituals and etiquette that maintain group symbolism, strengthen ethnic solidarity and weave kinship bonds (see Section 2.4).

In the historical development of cuisine, it is not easy to separate ethnicity from place. Rather, the relations between them are nonlinear and even entangled, an area that is distinctly under-researched. Different cuisines occupying different places present vivid experiences and identities. Take Chinese cuisine for example. A division of eight major regional Han cuisines shows the geo-ethnic and evolving characteristics of the cuisine's development. On the one hand, distributed across the massive country from the south to the north and the east to the west, each regional Han cuisine distinguishes itself in terms of different ingredients and flavours (taste, colour, texture), signature dishes, restaurants and regional centres (further discussed in Chapter 5). On the other hand, because Han people share the same ethnicity, all cuisines share traditional food-related ideologies (like harmony of tastes) and rituals of special celebratory occasions based on *The Book of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记) (like the auspicious role of chicken), which will be further discussed in Chapter 7 (Liu, 2010a).

The evolution of cuisine has become increasingly complex in the modern era. For example, in the face of the westernisation of foodways, there was a movement in Korea to "reproduce and reinvent new items of 'national' cuisine" to claim the "superiority and uniqueness of Korean cuisine" (Moon, 2010: 8). This is accompanied by a diversification in food commodities available for family cooking and an advancement in seasonings and kitchen ware. This has led to changes in the structure of Korea cuisine: there has been a decline in the importance or role of local food ingredients but an emphasis on the role of traditional cooking, processing and serving ways/skills. Yet kimchi retains a central role as an iconic food, eaten daily and symbolising Koreanness. The boundaries between cuisines have be blurred, and if a number of contested cuisines exist within the same city, it may lead to contestation and eventually the modification of culinary identities and concepts. As shown in the case of Macau, although the phenomenon of "Hongkongization" – "a mixture of standardization [and] westernization" (Augustin-Jean, 2002: 114) – has recently influenced the Macanese culinary landscape. Augustine-Jean argues that it is the "presence of Portuguese and Macanese restaurants" that really distinguishes the city (ibid.: 115).

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Other than place and ethnicity, social hierarchy and class has long had a role in shaping cuisines. The luxurious, wide-ranging, fine foods of court cuisine reflect this. Take the famous Manchu Han Imperial Feast 满汉全席, for example. From the name we can see that the court feast combines elements from both the dominant Manchu ethnicity and subordinate Han ethnicity, in terms of strict royal specifications. It showcases the court's political ambitions of showing off national pride and ethnic fusion. The feast involved 108 dishes and lasted for four meals over two days; the feast also involved multiple cuisines — mainly Manchu and the Han cuisine of Shandong Province (Li, 2003: 25-26). As for court cuisine in France, the court's practices were the focal point of food development (Leschziner, 2006: 423) and court lifestyle and etiquette were the source of "social competition and emulation" within popular society (Gronow, 1993: 280).

The formation and empowerment of the bourgeois class led to the fashion of nouvelle cuisine and new haute cuisine; new social and cultural conditions "sustained broad participation and enthusiasm towards [gastronomy]" (Petruzzelli and Savino, 2014: 228; Rao et al., 2003). The nouvelle cuisine movement, led by elite chefs, started in 1970s France, but also had worldwide influence and led to the generation of world cuisine (Beaugé, 2012: 13). The trend involved more complicated techniques and skills, greater refinement and more glamorous style, seeking authentic, ethnic and new tastes (Cheung, 2002; Wu, 2002). Changing lifestyles have been an important consumption and aesthetic feature in contemporary societies, particularly in urban areas. Food and eating are significant ways of achieving these, challenging the traditional construction of identity, self and boundaries (inclusion and exclusion) (Cheung, 2002: 100-101). Emerging social classes can employ unique foods, cuisine or eating patterns to showcase their taste and construct their lifestyle: for example, the new rich in Hong Kong choose nouvelle Cantonese cuisine, characterized by "exotic ingredients, new recipes, adventurous cooking techniques, excellent catering service and outstanding décor and ambience" (ibid.: 106). However, we should acknowledge that changing eating habits and culinary skills in rural and remote regions may follow different paths.

There are also cuisines and banquets associated with lower classes. For example, countryside cuisine produced by rural populations is characterised by home-grown food items and inelegant serving and decoration (Beaugé, 2012; Clark, 1975). In the period of the Republic of China (1912-1949), the Manchu Han Feast mentioned above morphed into a non-court version, with fewer (Manchu) courses and cheaper and more local food ingredients; it was reserved for local officials and the rich (Li, 2003). It should be noted that in different places, the same cuisine may be favoured by different groups of customers; although relations between social class and cuisine are not consistent and unfixed, one can find hierarchies of cuisines (or culinary hierarchies), particularly in post-

modern cities. For example, in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Jiang-Zhe 江浙菜系⁵ cuisines are favoured by privileged class as "high cuisine", while in Taiwan local Taiwanese cuisine is deemed to be low-level cuisine by locals, but is favoured by mainland Chinese tourists (Wu, 2002: 88-89). In general, there is a need for more research on low or rural cuisines, the culinary skills and the related eating occasions, which are more likely to take place at home than in a restaurant.

In summary, there is not much literature linking regional cuisine and ethnic cuisine, or comparing the roles of place and ethnicity in the modern era. Empirical research is needed to explore the fluid relationships between cuisine, place and ethnicity.

2.2.3 Cuisine development: Comparing French and Chinese cuisines

The aim of this subsection is to derive other clues from certain cuisines around the world. First, I simply look at the epistemic foundations of French cuisine. French cuisine has dominated the development of cuisine in Europe in recent centuries. It is well-known for its "variety, ... refinement and ... complexity" (Clark, 1975: 33). Cookbooks conveying culinary knowledge were "written by social elites and for social elites" (Leschziner, 2006: 430). Since the eighteenth century, cookery and cuisine became an independent domain between science and art (ibid.Leschziner, 2006: 431-432). In the second half of the twentieth century, transformation in haute cuisine and the arrival of nouvelle cuisine show the trends in innovation and complexity in modern culinary forms (Svejenova et al., 2007: 543-544). In addition, chef and restaurant have particularly been important in specialisation of the cuisine, and implied "for the more elegant establishments, an elevation in prestige" (Clark, 1975: 37).

French cuisine has been intensively studied and it is interesting to look in particular at classical and nouvelle cuisine. The advent of nouvelle cuisine was accompanied by events in the 1960s by activists who rejected the rigid principles of classical cuisine. In contrast with medieval foods, which were usually over-spiced, and classical cuisine, which sticks to Escoffier's principles, nouvelle cuisine stresses the agency of the restaurant chef and uses new and 'exotic' ingredients and seasoning (Beaugé, 2012; Rao et al., 2003). Classical cuisine implies "conservatism and preservation" (Rao et al., 2003: 800). Fischler summarises five domains underpinning French classical cuisine: culinary rhetoric, rules of cooking, archetypal ingredients, the role of the chef, and organisation of the menu (Fischler, 1989, as cited in Rao et al., 2003: 800). The

⁵ Jiang-Zhe cuisine is chosen because last century many leaders of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) were from the two provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang and they carried their eating habits with them when they fled to Taiwan in 1949.

⁶ Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935) was a famous French chef and his book *Le guide culinaire* (first published in 1903) became a central text for professional cook training.

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development or revolution of cuisine is always in accordance with change in materials (ingredients, spices) and social change (institutions, class). In terms of French gastronomy from 1970 to 1997, Rao et al. argue that "the process of hybridization" and borrowing from classical and nouvelle cuisines led to the "erosion of categorical boundaries" (2005: 968). In the processes, chefs were authorities in drawing the "boundaries of culinary categories" (ibid.: 968). This leads us to think about authority of cuisine development and redrawing of culinary boundary.

In the Chinese context, a different food-related philosophy prevails. The concept of the 'unity of heaven and man' guides every aspect of Chinese society and it therefore affects Chinese culinary practices and aesthetics of taste. A majority of Chinese food scholars agree about the importance of this concept and the Confucian doctrine of the Golden Mean (*zhongyong* 中庸) in shaping Chinese food culture and dietary activity (Ji, 2008; Lu, 2001; Zhao, 2006). For example, Li Yiyuan, a Taiwanese anthropologist, argues that the "Golden mean is the highest guiding idea for food culture... it guides every aspect of food activity and diet regime and stresses a harmonious whole" (Ji, 2008: 19-20). Seeking delicacy has long been a central topic within Chinese society, literature and culture (Anderson, 1988: 112).

The hybrid influence of traditional food ideology and modernity has shaped Chinese social occasions related to food and eating as well as individual preferences, with many people developing new food practices, eating habits and social capital. Styles and choices of food and food practices convey "hierarchies of values" within distinct population segments. There is a series of sociological concepts, including "conspicuous consumption", "conspicuous eating" and "conspicuous leisure", which serve to mark the distinction in terms of social hierarchy and class. However, these concepts need to be adjusted in the context of the meeting of modernity in East Asian societies with traditional Chinese values (Drury, 2009: 51). Chinese society emphasises the importance of face (*mianzi* 面子), and people fashionably consume products with high symbolic value – products which are expensive or rare and which match their personal preferences and economic capacities (Drury, 2009: 52; Zhang, 2015b).

However, conflicts occur not only over access to food (for example, over the increasing commoditisation of food) but also as a result of social change such as life-work patterns and changing ideologies. The Chinese like to eat wild animals that are rare and expensive in order to show their privileged position in society. Chen (2003: 57) cites three reasons for the fashion of eating wild animals in China: firstly, Chinese dietary culture believes that wild animals have higher nutritional value than domestic animals, and that they even have magical medical benefit; secondly, there is a curiosity towards eating anything new or strange; thirdly, wild meat which is usually more expensive than normal meat is a way to show off economic and social capitals. However, empirical

research into wild meat preparation and consumption in China is rare. It should be added, at the same time, that there is growing opposition, especially in the big cities, to the consumption of wild meat (Drury, 2009). Wild food consumption is discussed further in Chapter 5.3.

It is necessary, therefore, to explore transitions and developments in cuisines and food practices as they follow broader changes in economy and society. As shown in this section, cuisines represent culinary-related materials, practices, social relationships and the culture and tradition of place and ethnicity. The following two sections discuss the themes of everyday food practices including meal and special occasions, with the aim of extending the relations between cuisine and place.

2.3 Meals, taste and modernisation

Until now, I have discussed the scope, elements and identities of cuisine. Analysing everyday food practices provides a way of understanding how people (as family members or as restaurant customers) see, participate in and experience cuisine. Cuisine is not just the grand and refined type, haute cuisine; rather, there is a need to incorporate the sphere of the domestic meal – food for common folk, home-style food, known as *jiachang cai* 家常菜 in Chinese. This can be referred to as home cuisine (Yoshino, 2010). The section begins by articulating various food practices that are based on the everyday dimension. Section 2.3.2 moves to key food practices concerning taste, flavour and terroir; Section 2.3.3 discusses routinised practices and eating habits, which eventually evolve into the domain of lifestyle.

2.3.1 Daily foodways

From the perspective of structuralism, food materials and practices are attached to "natural or commonsense meanings" and social relationships (Ashley et al., 2004: 5). Meal patterns, familial dining and eating out are frequently studied entry points for this. In fact, "influenced by social structure and societal institutions", meals and eating patterns not only regulate and organise domestic food practices, but also split families' everyday temporality, lifestyle and rhythms (Kjærnes, 2001: 7; Warde and Yates, 2017). Similarly, Fischler (2011: 534) observes that "meals regulate social life and individual behaviour both at a social and a biological level". Scholars have explored meal times and duration, eating occasions, table size and format, eating alone, food sharing, table manners etc. and generally agree that flexibility, individualisation and socialisation are the contemporary fashion in meal patterns (Kjærnes, 2001). In this regard, Kjærnes (2001: 10-11) explains that "the rhythms of eating represent socially shared routines that have emerged from the need for social co-ordination, particularly in relation to work and family life. Still, this rhythm is by no means compulsory, but represents very flexible conventions with a lot of freedom for the individual". Recent literature on challenges to

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meal patterns focuses on snacking, or less-structured and informal meals, "smaller eating occasion[s]" (Warde and Yates, 2017: 20). In the UK, snacks are more coordinated with people's routines, fragmented ways of working and different leisure schedules, which "may deinstitutionalize eating patterns" (Warde and Yates, 2017: 21-22). Snacking is explored in Chapter 6.4.

Family food provision has long been considered to be a significant way to show family care and resistance to social change. Family-level eating is easily connected to embodied relations, emotion and experience. The family is described as the consumption site where webs of power relations, narratives of identity and the self, "spatial openness and closeness of the home" are present and are negotiated (Valentine, 1999: 520-521). Charles and Kerr (1988) argue that the proper meal is a recurrently used sociological concept (Bell and Valentine, 1997: 62) and that a proper meal can "maintain and reinforce a coherent ideology of the family" through eating together (Charles and Kerr, 1988: 17). A proper meal (dinner) is argued to be "an important part of the symbolic production of socially and culturally acceptable feminine subject positions" (Bugge and Almås, 2006: 203). In modern China, where the idea of the nuclear family is increasingly common, proper meals provide nutritious, well-balanced and fresh (just picked or killed) food in the name of "taking care of" and "pleasing" family members, mostly children and grandchildren (rather than the husband as priority) (Veeck and Burns, 2005: 649-650). Through domestic food practice, urban Chinese families in particular are both cohesive and fragile socio-spatial units, and this shows in the transformation in foodways – the use of convenience and processed food, new foods, take-aways – and the changing definition of a healthy, proper, good meal (Liu, 2017; Tam, 2007).

Eating out, or restaurant eating, has historically not been a prevalent phenomenon across social classes. However, since the commercialisation of the food industry, family revenue has increased and the structure of the family has changed. It therefore became more popular throughout the world. Beriss and Sutton (2007: 1) state that "many of the most interesting aspects of social and cultural life in our contemporary world are featured in restaurants". Eating out at a restaurant is a fashionable activity in which the educated middle class with the financial capacity to do so are the most important customers; the primary purposes include a taste for the exotic and new cuisine, 'buying time' (particularly on busy weekdays), a leisure and lifestyle choice to provide dining pleasure (especially on weekends) and social entertainment and networking (Veeck and Burns, 2005; Warde and Martens, 1998). Notions of food 'neophobia' and 'neophilia' have been coined to categorise tourists choosing restaurant types in unfamiliar tourist destinations (Chang et al., 2010) – the former stick to familiar tastes while the latter value trying new dishes.

In East Asian countries in particular, people today seem to be well disposed to eating out and there are a wide range of eating outlets at all price points, from stalls and sidewalk booths (at street and night markets), teahouses, coffee shops, hotel restaurants, and farm restaurants for people of all incomes. Chinese eating-out practices have undergone a transition to fit into contemporary living and communication. Take the teahouse as an example. In contemporary Guangzhou and Hong Kong, morning tea is a well-known practice, the function of which has changed from one where men "socialize in the old days, to a gathering place for the entire family today" (Cheung, 2002: 107). They call it *yum cha* 饮茶 (drinking tea) or *tan cha* 叹茶 (enjoying tea), and this is part of the daily lifestyle of yum cha for the elderly in the early morning and *yum cha* for the whole family at weekends. It is accompanied by numerous elaborately made snacks (dim sum 点心). While the above paragraphs only pick out a few salient points, they emphasise the need to explore modern changes to all aspects of foodways particularly in remote and rapidly urbanising areas.

2.3.2 Taste, place and embodiment

In this subsection, I explore literature on taste in relation to place and people. I identify two lines of literature on taste: material taste (Section 2.3.2.1) and the biocultural view of taste (Section 2.3.2.2).

2.3.2.1 Taste, flavour, palatability and terroir

Taste has long been the core of understanding food practice and cuisine. Good taste is the most significant factor for successful food and cuisine when it comes to both everyday food and special occasions. For example, in tourist destinations delicacies, snacks and flavours have been increasingly seen as an important attraction (Bessière, 1998; Chang et al., 2010). A "taste profile" (Weiss, 2011: 446) includes various dimensions, such as texture (tenderness, chewiness, juiciness), aroma and temperature. Because the connotation of good taste is seemingly self-evident, social scientists try to deconstruct the concept.

According to the Oxford English Dictionaries (2017), the concept of taste is threefold: first, in a direct physiological sense, "the sensation of flavour perceived in the mouth and throat on contact with a substance"; second, in an interpretational sense, "a person's liking for particular flavours"; and third, beyond food into fashion, "the ability to discern what is of good quality or of a high aesthetic standard". Obviously, the taste concept is derived from food, and taste in this chapter is restricted to food and food practice.

To further express the multi-faceted concept of taste, two similar concepts are discussed. The first is flavour, which is equivalent to taste in food but with a different emphasis. While taste is more often linked with 'identifying' particular qualities (whether food or not), flavour simply refers to "gustatory qualities of food" in an objective material

way (Jong and Varley, 2017: 214). We can translate the word 'flavour' as *fengwei* 风味 or *ziwei* 滋味 in Chinese, and many Chinese people display collective pride about *fengwei* or *ziwei* of the traditional delicacies of their native place (Ru, 1992: 300). The Chinese context opens out the connotations and applicability of this concept of flavour. In this thesis, I argue that flavour can be seen as blending tastes or as taste complexity and is more closely related to place than taste is. On the other hand, flavour can describe the convergence of taste with other sensations (olfactory, visual, etc.), as Rolls (2005: 53) proved in his scientific evidence on the "substrate for the convergence of taste and olfactory stimuli to produce flavour in humans" (see also in Auvray and Spence, 2008).

In geographical research, there have been academic efforts to link taste and place, using the French word 'terroir' (e.g. Trubek, 2008; Vaudour, 2002). Mainly employed in wine-related research, terroir has spatial and locational meaning that traces the material reality of the plants and the cultivated soil (Trubek, 2008: 18) and its influence on cultural and commercial aspects. The concept refers to "a collective taste memory, which has matured over a long time, through several generations of people, and refers to geographically referenced products" (Vaudour, 2002: 121). Taste of place is frequently connected to advocates of slow, organic and local foods (Weiss, 2011: 439). Taste of place can also be linked with idyllic images, pastoral lifestyles and slow life and as part of resistance to "bad global food" (Jong and Varley, 2017: 214). This may be attributed to the fact that globalising homogenised effects threaten local gastronomic identities. This viewpoint is particular useful in helping discern the fluid relationships between changing foodways and local contexts.

2.3.2.2 Embodied understanding and atmosphere

Over recent decades, attempts by geographers to explore food's bio-culture have emerged on visceral, sensual and embodied levels, which seem particularly suitable tools for an investigation of the sensation of taste (e.g. Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008; Hayes-Conroy and Martin, 2010; Johnston and Longhurst, 2012). Food taste can function as a sensual medium for analysing people's personal experience. As Johnston and Longhurst (2012: 330) argue, "taste and smell were the senses that prompted feelings, memories and new connections". In this regard, food taste is not a fixed attribute, but an on-going activity or practice "between the consumer and the consumed or the sensor and the sensed" (Miele, 2017: 224).

The appreciation or experience of taste should not be divorced from other senses, particular sight. In particular, the notion of synaesthesia can contribute to the understanding of various senses, for example, olfactory-taste (Mojet et al., 2003), and lexical-gustatory synaesthesia (Ward and Simner, 2003). Taste intensity is another valuable concept for in-depth exploration. Changing perceptions of sensation (taste and

smell) vary in terms of age group and interaction (whether enhancing or depressing) between olfactory and taste (Mojet et al., 2003; Schifferstein and Verlegh, 1996).

Food scholars extend analysis of food to sensations in place or the experience of the dining environment (Litt et al., 2015). For example, Lang indicates that besides food taste and scene, the sound/music in a restaurant acts as an aesthetic element to influence the dining experience. Food helps to improve the aesthetics of the place: "Rather than emphasizing patterns of cuisine diffusion, the development of cooking styles and craft, and politics that privilege particular understanding of food, ... shifts attention to local aesthetic elements" (Lang, 2014: 578). Therefore, one new issue contemporary food studies is facing is how to understand people's aesthetic appreciation of dining environments and how they shape their dining experience.

In this regard, the concept of food atmospherics can extend the connotation of sensory experience of taste. In essence, atmosphere belongs to the domain of subjective/immaterial status and "feeling comfortable and at ease" (Gustafsson, 2004: 12) is a vital part of eating at a restaurant. Gustafsson (2004) summarises the elements that contribute to the construction of atmosphere: colour, sounds, light and decoration, embodied "meeting" between staff and guest, and guest and guest. (see also Bell, 2007: 19).

2.3.3 Ways of living and food-related lifestyles

We should also consider how food practices are regulated and routinised in terms of people's everyday life and pace in order to see whether practices and customs shape changing cuisine or vice versa. Different people have their own understanding of the good life, and this can be achieved through and presented in a wide range of approaches and shapes, such as migrating to a desired place, rare and high-class entertainment and haute and nouvelle cuisines (Benson and O'Reilly, 2016). These can happen on an everyday basis; they often form part of routinised practice and are inserted into work-life patterns. Sometimes, there is a perceived and ideal lifestyle that may be out of people's reach: the rural poor might romanticise about urban lifestyles while time-poor urban citizens dream of idyllic rural lifestyles (Germov et al., 2010).

Lifestyle and taste are two closely-related concepts. There is a vast amount of sociological literature discussing theories of lifestyle (for a review, see Chaney, 2001). Other than as a subjective and personal ideology, lifestyle (choice) is concerned with favoured or routinised practice and behaviour; it can be used as a verb, referring to 'lifestyling', for example, travelling or migrating (Chua, 2000: 24).

Lifestyle, or way of life, is a self-evident concept, but there is no consensus in academia on its exact definition (Fang and Lee, 2009: 2036). The concept cannot be divorced from consumers or consumption. In the modern era, the definition evolves deeper: "The term

'life style'... suggests a patterned way of life into which [people] fit various products, events or resources. It suggests that consumer purchasing is an interrelated, patterned phenomenon... products are bought as part of a "life style package" (Moore, 1963: 153, as cited in Anderson and Golden, 1984: 407). With regard to scale, Jensen (2007) briefly and explicitly summarises four levels: the global level, the structural or national level, the positional or sub-cultural level, and the individual level. This thesis mainly is inspired by contemporary a sociological and marketing understanding of lifestyle, and is concerned with the positional or sub-cultural (collective/group), and the individual levels.

Transition in lifestyle may involve material changes and (not to be ignored) changes in (consumption) ideologies. In Asian countries, we can look towards ideological change, which has led to the 'Westernisation' or 'Americanisation' of Asian youth (Chua, 2000: 16).

In line with other lifestyle decisions, food choice can be "a further means" to express people's "personal and philosophical commitments" (Fox and Ward, 2008: 2586). Although lifestyle choices over bodily health occupy an important role for many people, it is more than that: some people pursue organic and 'environmentally-friendly' products, some for bodily pleasure, some for the aesthetic experience, some for convenience and some for family care or hospitality.

In terms of food-related lifestyle, marketing research has dominated this topic since Grunert et al.'s work (1993). The quantitative model underpinning food-related lifestyle (FRL) was invented in the context of the rapidly changing economy of Western societies. The model is used for market segmentation and understanding "information on decisive factors in consumers' perception of value" (Buitrago-Vera et al., 2016: 170). Although this questionnaire-based quantitative method is fruitful in summarising features of each category or segment of the population, there is a need for qualitative research into the topic of food-related lifestyles.

FRL results offer different clues for understanding Chinese consumers. Take Grunert et al. (2011) for example: three types of consumers were found in urban China. The first is the "concerned" type, whose quest is for food quality, individualisation and environmental consciousness. Second, the "traditional" are concerned with "food taste, safety, and social connectedness over food". Third, the "uninvolved" do not like to cook, but consume more pork (366-367). In the context of the commodification of food markets, modernisation and consumerism in China, these summarised features mirror growing food-related diversification of work-life pace, eating out, home-cooking practices, contemporary eating rituals and manners since the beginning of the reform era in 1978.

Population change is significant and the younger generation are the pioneers and practitioners of 'the new'. In the context of *balinghou* 八零后 (people born in1980s) and

jiulinghou 九零后 (people who were born 1990s), widely-used social software like QQ, weibo and WeChat have been popularly described as shaping young people's practices, identity and work-life balance, reflecting a "neo-tribe affiliation", young people's cosmopolitan outlook (Yu, 2014: 108) and the existence of "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 2012; Ma, 2012: 304).

As argued above, consumers and consumerism are the keys to understanding food-related lifestyles. China's consumerism is commonly argued to be a distinct type, as illustrated by Yu (2014: 6), who talks of "the compressed nature of China's consumer revolution" (see also Schein, 2001). This is because of national policies and particular circumstances, like the One-Child Policy, the lasting impacts of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and strong state control over consumer culture (Chen et al., 2001). Su (2014: 55) situates modernity and consumerism as the background for China's economy and society: "What has happened in China since 1978 has given rise to a similar contour of modernity when commodification and consumerism replace patriotism and collectivism as the mainstream social melody".

China's consumer revolution takes place alongside an increasing social divide. This burgeoning consumerism is so wide spread that even rural folks are chasing such goods and lifestyles after their visits to big cities (Schein, 2001: 225). However, Chinese consumerism is not simply the same as it is in the West; as Elfick (2011: 202-203) writes, "one important difference is that the increasing disparity in wealth in urban cities did not immediately segregate Chinese consumers by class". As a result, for example, restaurants serving home cooking (*jiachang cai* 家常菜 or *sifang cai* 私房菜), which do not follow a particular Chinese cuisine but instead aim to "provide 'home service' to guests", have increased in popularity (Xu and Feng, 2015). On the other hand, when it comes to home cooking, Liu (2017: 573) discusses a fluid '*xiaokang*' 小康 lifestyle, which refers to "not only middle-level living standards, but also a political ideal that indicates the ideal situation of households and China under the construction of Chinese modernisation in the 21st century". The perspective of linking lifestyle with food and eating patterns represents a useful means of exploring people's attitudes, identities and responses to consumerism and modernisation.

In short, flavour and terroir (taste of place) are useful concepts in analysing the development of local cuisine. Changing food practices within the population lead to changes in cuisine, meal patterns, eating habits and food identities. In particular they lead to changing tastes and ways of tasting and mean that food lifestyles shift from being inclusive to exclusive and are heterogeneous. The next section discusses ethnicity and particular food traditions.

2.4 Ethnicity and food for special occasions

So far, I have discussed how everyday food practices have changed in contemporary society. Alongside food practices, social and cultural roots play a role in the construction of cuisine. These include cultural history, food philosophy, (ethnic) traditions, foodrelated rituals, and so on. If we move away from everyday narratives to ethnic traditions, changes of cuisine show in a different manner. For ethnic groups, traditions and etiquette appear typically on special occasions (such as weddings and funerals) and festivals. Traditions and ethnicity as local elements rooted in place have become more apparent in modern or indeed post-modern times, during which cultural boundaries have been crossed. This section discusses special foods as ritualised entities because through various symbolic ritualised entities - vegetable, animal, human - special occasions are the platforms through which divine and symbolic messages are delivered; they serve to articulate mythical and cosmological relationships (Janowski, 2007: 24). An emphasis on 'tradition' not only serves to legitimise the relationships between restaurant and customer (Warde, 1997: 64-65), but also plays a role in ethnic affairs (tourist landscapes, memory, festivities and politics), which are undergoing modernisation and commercialisation (Hoelscher, 1998; Roddick and Hastorf, 2010).

Previous research reveals that modern culinary practices and changes in lifestyle and eating habits have led to a decline in traditional culinary principles and the disappearance of food taboos (O'Connor, 2008: 159). For instance in Lebanon, there is no need to collect edible wild plants in order to stave off famine, and currently the traditional practice of wild plant collection has instead become a means through which social groups can obtain healthy food (Marouf et al., 2015: 356). Marouf et al. (2015) note that decreases in the prevalence of traditional foods, including wild edible plants, not only removes rare tastes and variety from meals, but also disrupts the transmission of knowledge and socio-cultural ties that have typically been used to maintain traditional practices within agrarian livelihoods.

I will begin by introducing the relationship between food and ideologies (Section 2.4.1). This will lay the foundation for the following subsections. Section 2.4.2 will focus on special occasions and rites of passage, while Section 2.4.3 will discuss annual festivals and activities.

2.4.1 Religious and symbolic food – ideologies that shape tradition and ethnicity

Ideology and belief are the keys to understanding traditional art, culture and activity. This subsection tries to understand these relationships, with a focus on food. Initially, religious belief is the most frequently mentioned theme. Sidney W. Mintz writes of the significance of religions on food: "The history of the study of food in the West has always

been profoundly affected by the history of Western faith" (Mintz, 2002: xiv). In anthropology and sociology, religious explanations provide valuable insights to food studies, especially when they are concerned with the past and individual or collective memory. In the words of Lupton (1994: 666), "Food serves... symbolically to... construct a cosmology"; Sabate (2004: 199) adds that "most religions have dietary norms or instruction".

Following this line, food is argued to be at the centre of sacred space and performance (Norman, 2012). Religious food is a medium through which "divine—human encounter" is made manifest (King, 2012: 442). For Middle East and European cuisines, bread traditionally has been a sacred staple food (MacVeigh, 2008: 9, 33); in some Asian countries such as Japan, it is rice (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994). Religious food is often described as soul food. As King argues, "In eating sanctified food the bond between the devotee and God, and between the devotee and those who eat and drink together, is solidified" (King, 2012: 443). As Cumbo (2000: 52) writes that, "the ritual consumption of the meal is as important as the meal itself". The kitchen is the medium or place critical for contextualising divine-human relations. King says that "food, a material substance, becomes the sacramental vehicle of cosmic, societal, and individual transformation, and one of the most powerful means of celebrating the embodied divine and transmitting belief in God's relational nature" (ibid.: 443). It is true that the interpretations vary from place to place, from culture to culture.

Another line to explore in discussions on food and religion is the role of semiotics or symbols in culinary structures (Feeley-Harnik, 1995)(Feeley-Harnik, 1995). This not only reflects ancestors' experiences and knowledge of food but "communicates social relations" within contemporary communities (ibid.: 565-566). Feeley-Harnik argues that talking of god and death makes people think about life. In terms of religious food, Sabaté argues that there are two main categories: "(1) a temporal abstinence from all or certain foods (fasting); (2) stable and distinctive dietary habits that differ from the general population" (2004: 199). To some degree, the second type may arguably refer to the traditional food eaten by some ethnic groups in contemporary society. Yet some ethnic group members rarely make or consume traditional food, as it represents the past and can be seen as backwards. What is more, making traditional food is often time-consuming, and thus rejected by middle-class cooks (Wynne, 2015).

However, some scholars have pointed out that religious meanings of food in many East Asian societies seem to be less powerful than in Europe. On the one hand, food taboos and prohibitions are fewer in number; on the other, religious meaning is achieved through relating to nature such as through purity-pollution, health-sickness dualisms rather than through religious codes (Mintz, 2002: xvi-xvii). The Chinese belief system, with its core beliefs in heaven ($tian \mp$) and ancestors ($zu \mp$ 1), excludes many forms of

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religious worship, which has historically been resisted by Confucianism. The body of beliefs and rituals that is Confucianism offers contradictory opinions regarding deities and ghosts and shows a concerned attitude towards humanity (Xiao, 2010a). In other words, belief in kinship and nature guide traditional production, life and culture in Chinese society. In reality, the Chinese sense of the otherworldly is a synthesis of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, and this is clearly apparent on celebratory occasions, including in a wide range of festivals (Formoso, 1996: 219). In this regard, the Han Chinese, especially in the south, seem not to have many taboos and prohibitions on edible foods; indeed, they eat diverse animals and animal parts, such as chicken feet, dog, snake and field rat. In general, however, it should be stated that the contextualisation of Chinese religion in food ritual and banquet is relatively underresearched.

Ancestor worship is a significant aspect special occasions (Kong, 2012). Taking collective ethnic memories into consideration, it is not just traditional feasts or banquets that can be explained with reference to religion and belief systems, but also family meals. In this context, the focus is on memories about ancestors' stories and experiences that reflect their "sacrifice and secret knowledge" regarding food (Norman, 2012: 266). Ancestors are made eternal and vivid in people's emotional memories through the medium of food. It is believed that Chinese link their ancestors to placemaking and identity formation: "Metaphorically, then, a place in China is a feast, exquisitely concocted by the ancestors, and savored by their lucky descendants" (Oakes, 1999: 126). Arguably, Chinese religion can be narrowed to family and lineage. Memories and understandings of a group's history and traditional dishes significantly impact domestic meals and table rules, such that they eventually mirror their sense of identity and so-called ethnic 'spirit' (Kalivas, 2007). These themes are elaborated in Chapter 7.

2.4.2 Etiquette, ritual and special occasions

Every ethnicity has developed its own traditions throughout history. As numerous scholars have done in their works on traditional food and habits (Cumbo, 2000; Duruz, 2010), we can conclude that traditional ceremonies and meals are two major focal points which link with temporal and spatial lines, sites and establishments, religion and groups, and memories and senses. In traditional meals, it is the imagined past, constructed on the basis of mysticism, rather than accurate history, that matters. As Norman writes, "This eternal time is not ordinary or linear. It can be recovered in memory or memorial acts, but it is also unique" (2012: 263).

Ritual and ritualisation are seen to be noteworthy phenomena in the context of special occasions. As scholarship generally understands tradition to be constructed, as argued by Linnekin (1983: 241), so for identity formation and maintenance, studying rituals is

an important way to explore traditions and ceremonies. Stevenson (1972: 45) argues that, "Only through ritual does the memory of man's promise survive, and the celebration of such ritual is important; it preserves the original vision. Ceremony suggests control and order; it suggests that in a chaotic world ritual is the only defense". Therefore, ritualisation and de-ritualisation are useful perspectives to analyse modern changes to ceremony and ethnicity (Tillman and Tillman, 2015). Food is often used as the gift linking inter-relations between families, or as the divine carrier linking human and deity/soul, through processes like abstraction, naturalisation and metaphor (Handler and Linnekin, 1984). In order to allow the community or family "to be seen", feasts, banquets or symposia are frequently characterised by abundance, excess and generosity (Falassi, 1987: 4). In the context of its emphasis on the roles of place and ethnicity, this thesis considers ritualisation and de-ritualisation on special occasions such as weddings and the Tomb-sweeping Festival, and it addresses the question of why food rituals are special (see Chapter 8).

In contrast to everyday meals, banquets and feasts are occasions designed to display hospitality, sharing and other socio-political elements (Pollock, 2015). According to Martín (2013: 213, 220), the consensus in studies of feasts is that feast practices not only construct a sense of community but create, negotiate and legitimise power and social relations, community ideology and social order. Also, both verbal and nonverbal forms of practice, such as conversation, speech, toasts, gestures and body language, play an important role; they celebrate and evoke a kind of identity and eventually a group's food history and memory (Arvela, 2013). Moreover, physical setting, time of the day, seating order, environmental factors such as sounds and smells and spatial format also matter. Other verbal elements of the ceremony such as the use of poems, speeches and toasts, are useful in conveying historical links.

For some cases, ritual offerings convey a sense of intense social meaning more than a sense of religious devotion. For example, the killing of livestock in ceremonies in Bali is primarily a rite amongst wealthy people who can afford the necessary animals (Van Baal, 1976: 168). Van Baal (1976: 172) contends that using sacrifices within the ritual is not just a way of communicating with beneficial gods and ancestors but serves to convey "the bearer of the sacrificer's impurity and sin" to evil spirits.

Another perspective for the study of rituals involving food is to analyse how they work and they are interpreted. The key elements here are related to the built environment, equipment, dinner service, linguistic forms, clothing and etiquette, etc. (Halstead, 2012: 34; Ogunkunle, 2013: 1107). In a study of Yoruba traditional marriage ceremonies, Ogunkunle (2013: 1107-1108) lists marriage items that includes honey, alligator pepper and fish, and writes that they are selected because of their qualities and because they generate spatial, textual and logical relationships, the purpose of which signifies

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participants' auspicious wishes for the new couple. The Chinese have developed particular food ideologies and systems of meaning that are usually based on particular linguistic forms and metaphors. For example, in wedding customs, the man would send home-made wine (which sounds in Chinese like 'long and long', indicating a long marriage) and fish (*yu*, which sounds like the word superabundant) as items to represent auspicious meanings and wishes (Ma, 2015: 197).

2.4.3 Festivities and food authenticity

Festivities are different from special occasions in terms of their temporality: festivals occur annually, whereas special occasions such as weddings work on a generational or life-time scale (Halstead, 2012: 22).

Studies of festivals form part of event studies, and have gained attention particularly in anthropology and sociology because of "the universality of festivity and the popularity of festival experience" (Getz, 2010: 1). Getz takes the cultural-anthropological definition of festivals from Falassi (1987: 2), defining them as "a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances" (Getz, 2010: 2). Following this, festivals are easily connected to various themes, such as symbolic and ritual practices, the sacred and profane, authenticity and commodification, host-guest interaction and political and social discourse (e.g. DeBernardi, 1992; Getz, 2010).

Food seems to be the thing that links all of these together; in particular, there is much potential to bond food with claims to authenticity and originality festivals. Food authenticity is always a popular theme in studies of festivals, especially in tourism studies (e.g. Beer, 2008; Belhassen et al., 2008). Robinson and Clifford (2012) illustrate the relationship between food and authenticity within cultural or traditional contexts and argue that food authenticity "can be reduced to two determinants: the authenticity of the cook and the authenticity of the process" (578). They differentiate between food and other materials; food represents genuine authenticity while other consumption spaces and materials like plates and tableware represent general/normal authenticity.

In terms of position and subject, many scholars adopt a tourist or outsider perspective (e.g. Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Groves, 2001), even though employing a local or insider perspective contributes to a deeper understanding of food authenticity. Employing an insider perspective enables us to consider food authenticity in broader contexts, such as agricultural life, enabling the scholar to participate in some more exclusive festivals. Festival experiences may include authentic ethnic food and traditional culinary practices for both tourist and locals in pluri-ethnic modern cities and regions. Bell and Valentine (1997: 192) write that food authenticity is also a fluid construct: "Culinary cultures constructed as 'original', 'authentic', and 'place bound' – regional or national cuisines, for example – can be deconstructed as mere moments of an ongoing process of incorporation, reworking and redefinition". In terms of

mechanisms behind food at festivals, Robinson and Clifford (2012: 577) argue that, "food services can augment overall event authenticity through differentiation, association and as a quality control mechanism".

Ethnic histories and social environments have the greatest influence on family (reunion) festival meals and traditional snacks. Given that festival meals and snacks are key elements behind the construction of a group's memories and stories (Anderson, 1988), I explore in my thesis how insiders perceive food authenticity and festive atmosphere with reference to modernisation. Traditional festivals recurrently celebrate folk customs and evoke ethnic bonds. In rural contexts, festivals often centre on "fertility rites and cosmogony myths" (Falassi, 1987: 3). This issue is a major focus of Chapter 8.

The food and drink at ethnic festivals are often served in abundance, are very varied and embodied with ritualised meaning. Ethnic foods become more powerful in an age of globalisation and they "fulfil different purposes for different people" (Arvela, 2013: 48). For urban populations and tourists, it is the culinary cultural capital and (pleasant) exotic/authentic flavour that appeal; for the ethnic people themselves, the appeal is a particular way of life and nostalgia (Arvela, 2013; Molz, 2007: 78).

The concept of atmosphere or ambience is another way to understand festivity and authenticity. It is a significant but easily-neglected part of the event and contributes to the construction of tourists' or diners' dining experiences and emotional connections (Robinson and Clifford, 2012: 573). It is important to note that the construction of atmosphere is a reflexive process: tourists and diners immerse themselves in the atmosphere and become its generative components. The interpretation of atmosphere is also people- and time-related, challenging notions of festival authenticity; food is genuinely authentic when it relates to a specific place; however, atmosphere can be associated with culture and history (ibid.: 577).

At least in the Chinese context, traditional festivals are best interpreted in a group and family perspective. They are concerned with folk rituals and local customs. This echoes DeBernardi's argument (1992: 249) that non-elite religion is "characterized as 'pragmatic,' less explicitly worked out, and more tied to 'everyday social relations'". In rural contexts that do not see tourists, traditional festivals and rituals remain relatively unbroken and, unlike tourist destinations, most participants are insiders, family and friends of residents (McClinchey, 2008: 262). Thus, traditional Chinese festivals and related food practices contribute to an understanding of relations between festival cycles, social and cultural meanings, authenticity and people's experiences.

In a traditional agrarian region, the festival itself often mirrors Chinese cosmology and crop-growing patterns. For example, New Year cakes should be square or round, representing the earth and heaven (Avieli, 2005: 173); on *Sheri* Day 社日 (a traditional festival), the second day of the Second Month, peasants pray for rain and a good harvest,

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and more broadly "Chinese people have depended on their festival cycle to reinforce their identity awareness" (Wu, 2005: 360). In exploring the micro-scale of festive customs and identities, Wu (2005) warns us not to simply see these as homogeneous across the same prefecture or county, but to see how different villages may share distinct narratives, rituals and practices with neighbouring villages. In other words, in some circumstances, we need to understand festive practices at the more nuanced level of the lineage.

Traditional food knowledge plays a significant role in shaping ethnic cuisine and as a marker for local identity and authenticity. Within households, traditional food knowledge is often transferred from generation to generation, and recipes and traditional food preparation often creates a sense of nostalgia for childhood, family or ethnic bonds (e.g. Bessière, 1998: 25). However, there are a number of related questions that require further research, including the development of new tastes and flavours and ways of preparing and consuming banquets. This will be a focus of Chapter 7. A further underresearched question I touch on in this thesis concerns what and how ethnic cuisine and food are associated with festivals in once rural and now rapidly developing and urbanising regions and how this affects notions of food authenticity.

2.5 Conclusion and implications

This chapter centred around the themes of cuisine and especially ethnic cuisine and how it is situated in the context of place in the contemporary world. Several strands were discussed. First, cuisine may incorporate various daily food practices including meal patterns and eating out and traditional events such as food-related rituals and banquets. These material-social-cultural contexts, which serve as the grounding and social roots of a region, shape and develop its cuisine. Second, a number of different ideas, such as the flavour principle, food-related lifestyles and food authenticity are critical. They are mutually influenced by cuisine.

This review calls for further research on contemporary ethnic cuisine as the culinary heritage of local people and as a link between place, urbanisation and tourism. More fluid factors such as the emergence of new social groupings, the food service industry and globalisation mean that researchers should focus their attention on daily life-work balance and food habits and preferences. Activities and events, individual ideological outlooks, behaviours, feelings and memories must be taken into account in research on cuisine.

Chapter 1 argued that we should not just look at what is served on restaurant tables. Rather, we should go deeper into family food practices and into (ethnic) socio-cultural relationships. Understanding the materials, behaviours and the relationships behind the dishes presented on the table extends our understanding and experience of (ethnic)

cuisine. The aim of the empirical chapters is to show how these two parts interact with each other.

As shown above, rapid urbanisation, consumerism and globalisation have undoubtedly led to changes in people's living and working patterns. In the Chinese context, there are changing food practices as modernity collides with tradition involving both the young and old. The next chapter will discuss the context of Nanxiong and its cuisine, with a particular focus on cultural history, ethnicity (particularly ethnic Hakka), geography (and the growing of local ingredients) and modernisation (of remote cities).

Chapter 3 The county of Nanxiong and its cuisine

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on geographies of cuisine, everyday food practice and the relationship between ethnic and traditional food. Following on from the short description in Chapter 1, this chapter presents more information about Nanxiong and its cuisine. As suggested in Chapter 1, Nanxiong county is a suitable case study for studying the relationship and interaction between cuisine and place. However, there is a need to look into sense of place and history in the county. This chapter introduces the historical context and stories associated with the cuisine.

There are many regional cuisines within China and there is a need to situate Nanxiong cuisine into broader Chinese food culture. Cuisine is historically developed within broader social and cultural contexts: since the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), as Simoons (1990: 1) argues in *Food in China*, "the Chinese advantage was mainly in their broader economic base and larger-scale political military organization". This consistency of Handominated culture influenced the development of Chinese cuisine; indeed, this feature of Chinese history differs from some other regions such as the Middle East and North America.

Therefore, given that the overarching aim of the thesis to explore the relations between Nanxiong cuisine and the material, social and cultural contexts in the county, this chapter offers an introduction to this discussion. Section 3.2 discusses the geography and history of the county itself, and pays attention to its links to the Pearl River Delta. Section 3.3 introduces the background to Hakka, its traditions, and elements of Hakka culture within Nanxiong. Section 3.4 focuses on cuisine, identifying some of the main points of similarity and difference between Nanxiong cuisine and Chinese cuisine and food culture in general and especially that in regions neighbouring Nanxiong.

3.2 Situating Nanxiong: A mountainous county on the border of Guangdong

This section analyses the natural elements of Nanxiong county (i.e. its geography, weather and so on), the population, its connection with Guangdong (Section 3.2.2) and the processes of urbanisation taking place there (Section 3.2.3). It provides the basis for an understanding of the county's food culture.

3.2.1 A mountainous county

Nanxiong 南雄 has historically been of geographical and military significance. Its alias is *Nanyue Xiongguan* 南粤雄关 which translates as 'grand pass of Guangdong'. Nanxiong is a county-level city in Shaoguan Prefecture, in the northeast of Guangdong.

Province and in the border area neighbouring Jiangxi and Hunan province (see Figure 3.1). In terms of topography, the county is located at the southern foot of Dayu Ridge 大 庚岭 and there are continuous mountains that run from east to west with an uneven basin in the middle, the Nanxiong Basin (Nanxiong County Committee of Local Records, 1991). The mountainous area to the south is more extensive than its counterpart to the north; these are historically depicted as Nanshan 南山 and Beishan 北山 respectively. These two names are used on a daily basis: for example, people from towns to the north are customarily called Beishan people. Nanxiong has been one of the thoroughfares connecting Guangdong and the Central Plains and has been an important distribution centre for goods and materials in the Guangdong-Jiangxi borderland since ancient times. There is an old saying referring to Nanxiong as "head of the Five Ridges and an important transport corridor connecting the Yangtze River (area) and Guangdong" (五岭之首、为江广之冲;枕楚跨粤、为南北咽喉).

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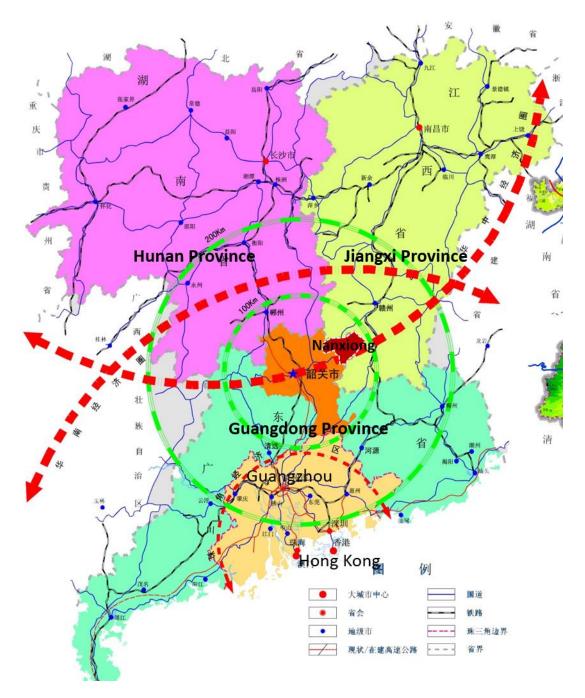


Figure 3.1 The location of Nanxiong, on the borders of Guangdong, Jiangxi, and Hunan provinces.⁷ Source: LI Shijie.

As a county-level city, Nanxiong consists of a central city, Xiongzhou, plus the surrounding ca. 2,300 square kilometres of land and a number of smaller settlements. The main natural resources of Nanxiong are minerals and forests. It is one of the key areas for bamboo production and is famous for its yellow mists and ginkgo trees. The

⁷ The green lines show distance from Shaoguan City centre. The red lines show Shaoguan's connectivity to the Pearl River Delta and to other provinces.

Nanxiong Basin contains abundant phosphate and potash, influencing the fertility of its soil. Overall, Nanxiong has a humid subtropical climate, which contributes to its ecosystem and agriculture. It is near the Tropic of Cancer, and has four seasons: spring has more rainy days, followed by a hot, wet summer, whereas autumn is dry, followed by a cold and rainless winter (Committee of Nanxiong Annual, 2015). Mountain areas have about 10% more rain, and are four degrees colder than the basin. In the winter there is a northeast monsoon and in the summer there is both a southwest and southeast monsoon. The average temperature in 2014 was 20.6 degrees celsius, with an average of 8.8 degrees in January.

According to the Nanxiong Annual (2011), Nanxiong's arable land is mainly comprised of paddy fields, which accounted for 75% of total land area in 2010, and the main crops are rice, tobacco, peanuts and soybeans. Speciality crops include gingko, mushrooms, winter bamboo shoots and red cluster pepper (Chen, 2016; Zhang, 2015a).

3.2.2 Zhuji Lane culture: Demographic and economic links with the Pearl River Delta region

Nanxiong county has historically and politically belonged to Guangdong Province. Nanxiong city is 100 kilometres north east of the central city of Shaoguan prefecture and is about 350 kilometres from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province. Nanxiong county has historically contributed to the development of the Pearl River Delta region (at the centre of Guangdong Province) (Zeng and Zeng, 1995a; Zeng and Zeng, 1995b) and, in recent centuries, has been inversely influenced by the developed delta region. Guangdong and its western neighbour Guangxi Province make up the Lingnan 岭南 region. Lingnan, which means 'south of the mountain passes', developed as a 'kingdom' independent from the north, being partially and slowly colonised during the Han (206 BC – 220 AD) and later dynasties; the people of Lingnan are often seen to have "an unusual exposure to foreign ways" (Simoons, 1990: 5, 7). The Lingnan Culture's main province, Guangdong, is constituted by the Cantonese (occupying the Pearl River Delta), Hakka (especially in the interior) and Chaoshan people (in the coastal east of the province) (Ye, 2000).

Zhuji Lane, just outside Nanxiong, is the cultural centre of Nanxiong county. Qu Dajun (1630-1696), in his *New Writings on Guangdong* 广东新语, wrote that "The ancestors of many distinguished clans in Guangdong migrated from Zhuji Lane". Zhuji Lane used to be the most famous commercial site of the region. At least since the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Zhuji Lane has been widely acknowledged and depicted as the spiritual hometown and ancestral cultural root of various lineages, or clans, in the Pearl River Delta region, both Hakka and non-Hakka (Ge, 1997; Zeng and Zeng, 1995a: 19). Zhuji Lane is the only remnant of Tang-dynasty cobblestone roads; it dates back to the year 809, and is 1.5 kilometres long (Yu, 1824 [1967]). Lineages can be called Zhuji-

Lane emigrants or descendants. Zhuji Lane is now the site of a well-known family name culture festival.

The family name culture festival has historical roots in a traditional celebratory activity in Shangfan, Wujing town, northeast of Nanxiong city; nowadays, with governmental support, many major lineages organise their family name festival in Zhuji Lane as a form of ancestor worship. By donating money, most families, particularly senior family members, are keen to have their names carved on tablets on the temple walls beside the various historic celebrities and stories, as a 'permanent' material presentation of their contributions and a confirmation of kinship (KIM, 2014).

Demographic links with Zhuji Lane emigrants or descendants have socio-economic implications. These are two-fold: first, the theme of ancestor worship attracts these people to visit the county, which boosts tourism; secondly it attracts Zhuji Lane descendants to making economic investments and donations in the county, which has been a governmental strategy (Huang and Pu, 2015; Wang, 2016a).

3.2.3 A developing and urbanising place

The county was formed in the year 684, and was named 'Nanxiong' in 971 (Kang and Zhou, 2011: 9; Office of Nanxiong Historical Records, 2011). Although Nanxiong's central city is Xiongzhou, in this thesis I will refer to it as Nanxiong, as most local residents do, unless there is a need to differentiate the county from its leading city. The population of the county is 485,900 (Kong et al., 2017: 59). According to the popular tiersystem used in academia, media coverage and folk perceptions, although making progress, Nanxiong is categorised as a sixth tier city (see China Business Network, 2017) because of its relatively lagging economy and lifestyle, small population and the small size of the city. Yet, consistent with the broader economic environment of China, the economy of Nanxiong county has undergone rapid development since 1979. The average annual growth in GDP was 10.9% during the 1980s and 7.8% during the 1990s. The economy has continued to grow since the millennium; GDP was CNY 2.28 billion (around GBP 259 million at today's exchange rate) in the year 2001, 5.63 billion (around GBP 640 million) in the year 2010, and 13.84 billion (around GBP 1.57 billion) in the year 2016 (Lin, 2017; Office of Nanxiong Historical Records, 2011). Nanxiong has long ranked first within county-level cities in Shaoguan Prefecture in terms of GDP (Wang, 2016b).

The frequent turmoil of the decades before the start of the reform era brought about many economic difficulties that greatly impacted on rural life and have coloured the

⁸ The family name culture festival (*xingshi wenhua jie* 姓氏文化节) has been held annually in Zhuji Lane and supported by the city since 2014. It aims to be the cultural label of the city and contains a series of activities including a food festival and ancestor-related activities, all of it highlighting the family name (lineage) culture.

memories of those who are elderly today. In the 1980s, production modes changed from village commune to household contract responsibility system with remuneration linked to output. As Krusekopf explains, under the household contract responsibility system, "the agricultural land controlled by the former collectives was contracted to individual households" (Krusekopf, 2002: 298). Since the 1980s, agricultural goods and living patterns in rural areas have developed greatly. In addition, in particular in recent years, agricultural industrialisation has been promoted in the county. In this sense, the rapid development of living standards in the county has taken place in just a few decades.

Manufacturing and tourism have been two major forces in developing the county. The percentage of GDP accounted for by primary, secondary and tertiary industries stands today at 20.6%, 39.8% and 39.6% respectively (Lin, 2017). In the city, as a result of national and provincial policies, Dalingshan Industrial Park was opened and supported by the government of Dongguan City in the Pearl River Delta, and this contributed to manufacturing output. In addition, rapidly increasing numbers of tourists have been attracted to the city due to a government tourism strategy and Nanxiong being branded a "national leisure-agriculture and rural-tourism county" (Wang, 2016b). According to a government report, 3.37 million tourists visited Nanxiong in 2015, 21.7% more than the previous year, bringing in revenue of CNY 2.37 billion (Wang, 2016a). Thanks to media coverage and social media, the number of tourists has soared considerably, drawn by the colour of gingko leaves in autumn. In late autumn, the golden gingko leaves on trees and on the ground create a poetic and romantic atmosphere, also attracting numerous professional and amateur photographers (see Figure 3.2).

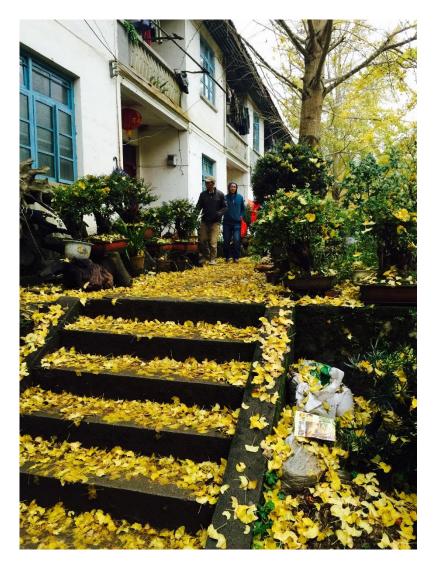


Figure 3.2 Yellow gingko trees with fallen leaves. Source: author.

Overall, Nanxiong is experiencing rapid urbanisation, and its subordinate rural towns are developing quickly, in spite of its sixth-tier status (Wang, 2016a; Wang, 2016b). The infrastructure and material environment in the city have improved considerably, resulting in an overall improvement in city living. For example, a new library and archives centre have been set up in recent years and large-scale real estate companies like Country Garden have been established offices in the city. Similarly, modern shopping centres such as RT-MarT and *Yuekelong* have recently been opened in Nanxiong city and provide a variety of commodities including foreign products for consumption by local Nanxiong people.

According to government reports, especially in recent years, the infrastructure and economy of rural areas have improved considerably. In particular, rural towns (i.e. those ranked below the county-level city) have contributed significantly to the changing landscape in a number of respects. The flow of people between Nanxiong's central settlements and rural towns has increased considerably, largely because of two factors.

First, as farmers have become richer, they have started buying houses in the city and sending their children into the city for a better education. Second, a growing number of professional workers – teachers, civil servants, doctors – work in towns or villages during the weekdays and return back to the city on weekends. This frequent and close social connection and personal communication bring city and village together, catalysing an exchange of goods including vegetables, domesticated animal meat and mountain products.

In short, Nanxiong county is a mountainous county located on the border of three provinces. As an ancestral cultural site – Zhuji Lane, it receives visitors from core parts of Guangdong province. Moreover, although still not developed, an urbanisation process is taking place throughout the county.

3.3 Nanxiong: A non-pure Hakka county

Nanxiong is well known for being a Hakka county in northeast Guangdong. Hakka ethnicity forms the foundation of rituals, traditions and society all across the county. This section starts by introducing the key features, identities and activities of the Hakka in general and ends with a discussion of the various distinctions within the county.

3.3.1 What is Hakka?

3.3.1.1 Hakka as a branch of the Han ethnic group

'Hakka' derives from the Cantonese pronunciation of two characters, literally meaning 'guest home' 客家. These characters are pronunciation *khek* in Fujian dialect and *kejia* in Mandarin (Jiang, 1996). Liu contends that the word '*kejia*' emerged in the seventeenth century, and often appeared as '*tuke*' (host-guest) (Liu, 1994). The Hakka are considered to be a branch of the Han ethnicity who migrated from the Central Plains to South China starting in the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC). Hakka experts generally believe that four or five migratory waves took place (Figure 3.3), with the last one in the middle of the nineteenth century. Powerful incentives existed for the Chinese to migrate southwards, including repeated drought and floods, famine, political instability and civil war. The Hakka speak their own dialect, which is different from neighbouring Cantonese and Hokkien (Fujian) dialects. They maintain their own traditions, rituals and beliefs, which have origins in the Central Plains, and they try to protect their own cultural boundaries and group identity (Tan, 2003: 7).

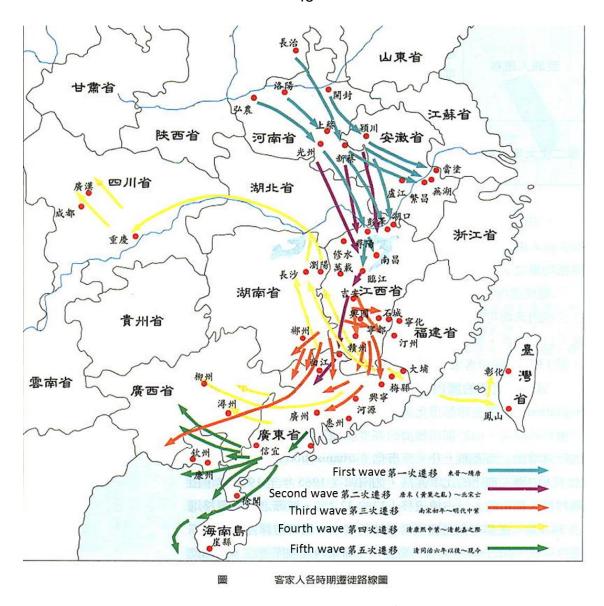


Figure 3.3 The five migratory waves in Hakka history.9

According to Hakka scholars, the Hakka ethnic groups occupy the regions of west Fujian, northeast Guangdong, south Jiangxi, parts of Sichuan and Guangxi, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to Huang Xuezhen, their total Hakka population was 35 million in 1982, 6.9 million of whom are in Guangdong (Xie and Zheng, 1994).¹⁰ Traditionally Hakka people reside in mountainous areas, forced there "by poverty... [they] struggle with unproductive soil and wrestle a bare livelihood therefrom" (Char and Kwock, 1969: 4). These difficult conditions played a part in prompting many Hakka people, especially those living along the coasts of Guangdong and Fujian provinces to

⁹ Source: https://forum.gamer.com.tw/Co.php?bsn=60076&sn=33341625

¹⁰ There is no consensus among scholars as to the size of the Hakka population within China. For example, Zhang and Liu (1990) say the Hakka population was 45 million in total, with 15.78 million in Guangdong in 1982. This problem is caused in large part because Hakka people are not officially considered a minority people (*shaoaoshu minzu* 少数民族) and therefore are not treated distinctly within the Chinese official statistics.

migrate overseas (Chin, 1991). There is today a significant Hakka population in Taiwan, as well as smaller numbers in Singapore, Indonesia and elsewhere in South East Asia, and in the United States and across the world. As Tan states, "Where there is the seawater, there are Hakka people" (Tan, 2003: 238).

3.3.1.2 Hakka identity: Defending true Han Chineseness and polytheism

Apart from honouring the ancestral past, two collective features — 'true' Han Chineseness and polytheism — are key elements that influence the social life of the Hakka and its history-making. The Hakka not only consider themselves to be a branch of Han Chinese, but also have a sense of true Han Chineseness, reflected in the Hong Kong Hakka society's name, *chongzheng* 崇正 (respecting the orthodox).

Polytheism (Buddhism, Taoism and, in some places, Christianity and animism) is also a feature of the Hakka. In Hakka areas, people place greater emphasis on the *Guanyin* (the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara) than on the Buddha. They believe that, in the past, when their ancestors experienced illness, faced hardships in their journey from north to south, and had clashes with aboriginal groups, the infinitely merciful *Guanyin* gave them succour.

The Hakka are generally criticised for being overly superstitious for spending too many resources in funerals and weddings, and for a number of special taboos concerning women (Xiao, 2010b). These might be influenced by witchcraft culture in the *Chu* area of central China (the ancient name for the Hunan-Hubei area). There are many Buddhist and Taoist temples in Hakka areas and there are lots of festivals celebrating Buddhist and Taoist immortals. As in other regions in China, these festivals or celebrations involve offering blessings for various purposes, such as love, wellbeing and safe journeys, as entertainment and to foster family reunion.

3.3.1.3 Ancestor worship

Ancestor worship is arguably the key characteristic of Hakka identity. Zhang (1994: 275) writes that "The Hakka are very proud of and memorise their historic revered ancestors who were the scholar-officials [shizu 士族] in the Central Plains. It was this history that helped the group develop a collective sense of ancestor worship". Hakka people mainly use the signifiers of county of origin, clan title and literary couplets (duilian 对联), which appear at the ancestral hall's gate, as a strategy to claim their Han Chinese roots. In addition, there is the genealogy book that records information about the locations of ancestors' tombs, social relationships within the lineage and names of male descendants, and which is updated annually on every Tomb-sweeping Festival.

Ancestral halls act as the centre of traditional Hakka social life. The ancestral hall is located in the centre of the village, which may contain more than one hall. *Fengshui* (风 水 Chinese geomancy) is a critical factor when choosing the location of ancestral tombs

and halls. It is argued that Hakka *fengshui* was developed by Yang Yunsong 杨筠松 (834-900), and is a variant of *fengshui* beliefs in north China. The routes of rivers, landscape topography and tomb direction are carefully examined by geomancers, and strategies are often deployed to improve *fengshui* in order to protect the clan family and foster good wishes.

Another important activity is ancestral tomb-sweeping, which reflects Hakka beliefs and plays a central role in collective Hakka life. The activities start by honouring first-generation ancestors and then later, more recent ancestors. The costs are covered by earnings from collectively owned clan fields (*gongchang tian* 公偿用). The activity itself is considered so important that even those who live outside the region return home for it. On arriving at the tomb, everyone weeds the field and the most respected elderly in the clan reads prayers that describe the family clan history and family events. It is a serious occasion. Most Hakka clans faced difficult migration journeys in the past, and this activity expresses their gratitude to their ancestors, maintaining family bonds and conveying a willingness for a better future (Zhou, 1994). Then, clan members have dinner beside the tomb or eat a banquet after returning to their village. I discuss this in detail in Chapter 8.3.1.

3.3.2 Nanxiong as a non-pure Hakka county

The people, landscape and culture of Nanxiong county reflect features common to mainstream Hakka. However, variants also exist. The Hakka population can be divided into 'pure' Hakka counties where Hakka constitute 90 percent and 'non-pure' Hakka counties where they constitute less than 90 percent. The famous Hakka scholar Luo Xianglin estimates there are 32 pure Hakka counties and 95 non-pure counties (Zhang and Liu, 1991). Nanxiong belongs to the latter; although it is occupied predominantly by Hakka people, they account for about 80% of the total population. Nanxiong's population also includes minorities such as She, Zhuang and Tujia (Nanxiong Annual, 2015).

Another point at play here is language. The dialect spoken in rural Nanxiong is the Hakka language. Although there are four major variants, Hakka language can be understood across the county. Although there is no consensus within academia on whether the dialect of Xiongzhou is Hakka, there is consensus that it is based on Hakka and influenced by Cantonese (Sagart, 2001). Particularly in rural Nanxiong, Hakka language features are more apparent. Elderly women still wear traditional Hakka-style costumes – black kerchief, black apron and blue-dyed shirts. Liu (1995: 50) describes how there are hand-woven decorative figures on the traditional costumes and that these costumes function both as sun-shades, suitable for agricultural work, and as objects of beauty.

Most of the festivals in Nanxiong resemble Hakka ones, with some variants and inventions. Although there are festivals celebrating or honouring deities, the particular deities and activities are different, to reflect local specificities. For example, in Zhuji Lane, there is the famous Piao-se 飘色 drama (probably influenced by south Guangdong), acted by children and narrated by actors playing local figures such as Zhang Jiuling 张九龄 (678-740), a celebrated native of the area who became prime minister in Tang Dynasty and the legendary Princess Hu.¹¹ In Baishun town, Nanxiong county, there is the 300-year-old tradition of the joss-stick dragon dance.¹² What is more, in Zhuji Lane ritual meals vary compared to other Hakka areas. There is a family banquet of "reunion wine" on New Year at noon, which is composed of oil-fried bean curd, egg, daylily, ginger, brown sugar and rice wine. And there is also a "soup bowl" – a soup of egg, chicken, pork, and other ingredients – which is not just for domestic eating, but for guests during the New Year period (Zeng and Zeng, 1995a: 54).

In summary, Hakka ethnicity is a special variant of the Han branch that held onto Central-Plain traits after they settled down in the south. Hakka people speak their own language, which has its variant dialects, engage in ancestor worship and maintain traditional rituals. This is possibly due to their relatively isolated lives in mountainous areas. As a non-pure Hakka county, Nanxiong has its own versions of Hakka traits.

3.4 Locating Nanxiong cuisine

After talking about the geography, development and ethnic features of Nanxiong county, I now turn to its cuisine. Even though it is generally seen as being one of the world's two most complex and prestigious cuisines (the other being French cuisine), and thus one rich in history and with great variation and refinement (Chuang, 2009: 90; Clark, 1975: 33), Chinese cuisine enjoys far less academic attention compared to that of France. In order to establish Nanxiong cuisine's links with broader cuisines, I begin by introducing Chinese food culture (Section 3.4.1). Section 3.4.2 introduces the basic features of Hakka cuisine and Section 3.4.3 analyses Nanxiong cuisine.

3.4.1 Chinese food culture

"The government of a kingdom [basically follows the same principles] as the preparation of small sea animals." (Laozi, chapter 60, cited in Höllmann and Margolis, 2013: 1)

Any introduction to Chinese cuisine should start with its cultural history. One feature of Chinese history is that mainstream culture in ancient China since the Han Dynasty was

¹¹ Princess Hu was a wife of Emperor Duzong of Song Dynasty and she migrated southwards to and lived in Zhuji Lane.

¹² Source: http://www.gd-info.gov.cn/shtml/nxs/lanmu05/mrdg/2017/04/25/202628.shtml

influenced by Confucian thought. Thus, the Chinese have developed their own cultural ideologies surrounding food. For example, Chinese food culture and ideology stresses pursuing neutralization (balance and obeying rules) and a taste for harmony (Höllmann and Margolis, 2013). The Chinese culinary arts rely on the canon of "colour (aesthetic beauty), aroma, and taste," (se xiang wei juquan 色香味俱全) and missing any one element would not make a good dish (Lin, 2000). What is more, since the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581-907), Buddhism also had an impact on Chinese food culture, leading to "large-scale vegetarianism" and growing consumption of tea (Anderson, 1988: 54-55). A third influence is from Taoism, as Kwon and Tamang (2015: 45) write: "Taoism provides for the needs and healing of the sick and is the basis for regulating festivals".

As a consequence of these thought systems, religions and cultures, food and nutrition in China are linked with nature. The close relationship with nature also means that the "human body is a microcosm of the universe" (Simoons, 1990: 18). There are also the concepts of *qi* (body strength or energy), and *yin-yang* (cold-hot) equilibrium. *Yang* means those 'hot' foods like chilli pepper, garlic, beef, shrimp and pickled cherry can nourish *qi* in the body (Lin, 2000); *yin* refers to food that is 'cold' by nature, such as daikon, bamboo shoot, duck, pork and watermelon. Relatedly, there is a well-known saying that "using any shape or part of the animal[,] the same part of the human body can be replenished and strengthened" (*yi xing bu xing* 以形补形) (Lin, 2000).

China has a wide range of material ingredients. Because of a lack of economic capacity and the traditional link between eating vegetables and benefits for health, Chinese households consume a wider variety of vegetables than fruits (Jussaume, 2001: 221-222). When it comes to meat, pork is the most frequently consumed, followed by chicken and duck, together with their eggs (Leppman, 2005: 156). There are a wide range of familiar staples (e.g. millet, rice, wheat, maize), fruits (e.g. apple, banana, pear, watermelon), vegetables (e.g. Chinese cabbage, daikon, long bean, mushroom), and spices (red pepper, ginger, cinnamon) (Chang and Anderson, 1977: 6-7). The Chinese have constantly absorbed new foods and drinks from other regions including chilli pepper, potato and, more recently, Coca-Cola, but "most of the additions have been supplementary, rather than staple food" (Leppman, 2005: 156).

The basic dietary regime can be summarised using "the *fan-ts'ai* principle" (Wertz, 2007: 256): *fan* refers to rice, noodles, grain, while *ts'ai* (*cai* in contemporary transliteration) refers to vegetables and meat dishes. Dishes use multiple ingredients and mix different seasonings (Bosse and Watanna, 1914: 2; Chang and Anderson, 1977: 7-8). Rice is served in individual rice bowls while "dishes are placed in the middle of the table for people to share" and chopsticks are used (Bosse and Watanna, 1914; Ma, 2015). Banquets and feasts play an important role. Almost all classes are enthusiastic when preparing celebratory banquets, albeit according to their respective economic

capabilities: they range from luxurious court banquets to countryside open-air banquets (Ru, 1992: 342-343). In Chapter 7 I discuss an open-air banquet in the Hakka style. The banquet, which always involves wine distilled from grain (generally rice or millet), is an intrinsically social gathering, strengthening a variety of social relationships and leading to social cohesion, and thus bound with traditional etiquette and rules.

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China is rich in food practices. Other than a wide range of food choices, China's cuisines are well-known for their diverse cooking methods. These are shown in historical records. For example, there are several types of frying practices in terms of cooking utensil, heat intensity and amount of oil, which are reaffirmed by Chinese vocabulary - stir-fry (chao 炒), quick-fry (bao 爆 or liu 熘), deep-fry (zha 炸), sauté (jian 煎), simmer (wei 煨) and others. Stir-frying, which is central to Chinese cuisine, is absent or insignificant in both Europe and America (Jiang, 2010; Wu, 2012). Regional varieties are obvious. Staple grains differ greatly: rice is the main staple of the south, while noodles, normally made from wheat, are the main staple in the north. The colourful landscapes consisting of a wide range of regional and local cuisines show the adaptation of the place's environment, simply represented as shui \pm (water) and \pm (soil) in Chinese narratives. In this regard, there are eight major regional cuisines based around eight provinces: Sichuan, Hunan, Shandong, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang and Anhui (Höllmann and Margolis, 2013: 71). There is another variation for culinary classification purposes: Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western cuisines (e.g. Cheung, 2013: 354; Simoons, 1990: 44-45). Many of the regional cuisines in China have their own particular flavour(s); Cantonese, for example, is described as "light and mild".

3.4.2 Hakka cuisine: Pure and salty food

In Guangdong, in South China, the cuisine incorporates Cantonese cuisine, Chaozhou cuisine and Hakka cuisine, often known as East River or Guangdong Hakka cuisine (Cai et al., 2011: 323). Hakka cuisine has developed in a unique way since the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1636-1912) Dynasties and is treasured within Chinese food culture. In particular, Hakka cuisine enjoys distinct flavour profiles and uses distinct ingredients. The tastes of Hakka dishes are salty, fatty, heavy and pure, although there are some light exceptions. Although traditional central Chinese food customs remain, Hakka cuisine has been heavily influenced by the mountain environment and neighbouring minority peoples, meaning it is in the "style of mountainous food" (Kong, [no date]). Moreover, as a consequence of arduous working and living conditions in the past, being practical and easy to make is an important characteristic of Hakka food and

¹³ East River cuisine, *Dongjiang cai* 东江菜, is based in Huizhou, one of the traditional Hakka areas of Guangdong.

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consequently Hakka dishes are cooked in large quantities and therefore tend to lack aesthetic appeal (ibid.).

Hakka food practices contextualise a pattern of natural-cultural beliefs and exhibit some cultural differences from other Han regions. For example, *niangjiu* 娘酒 (literary mother wine) is the favoured rice wine within Hakka regions, and is a necessity during confinement in childbirth for new mothers. The cultural connotations and guiding ideologies of Hakka food practices are primarily praying for good luck, underlining the morality and behaviour of people, fertility, honouring ancestors and origins and praying for family prosperity (Song and Luo, 2015: 147-153). In addition, with *Leicha* 擂茶 as the typical tea, Hakka tea culture – including tea songs and tea performances – plays an important role in occasions such as social gatherings, traditional weddings and celebratory events.

When it comes to ingredients, one important characteristic of Hakka cuisine is the use of products from the mountains, including wild animals and edible wild plants. Perhaps influenced by minority food culture in South China, Hakka use many 'unfamiliar animals', such as rat and frog, animals that are not in the normal food range in north China. For example a rat dish is a delicacy in Tingzhou county in Fujian Province. Animal organs like large intestine of pork are frequent sources of protein and delicacies in their own right. Processed, pickled and salted foods add to the range and quality of the cuisine; examples include bean curd made with mountain spring water and beef balls (Cheung, 2002: 104). Among wild foods from the mountains, Hakka frequently use fungus and bamboo-related products (Song and Luo, 2015: 40). New food ingredients, such as the famous *meicai* 梅菜 (pickled vegetables) and Tingzhou bean curd were invented, enriching Hakka food culture and cuisine.¹⁴ The typical taste of Hakka food is natural and pure, without much chemical additive. The use of *niangdou* 酿豆腐, or stuffed bean curd, instead of dumpling wrappers, is widely believed to be a material metaphor for dumplings, a staple food in central and north China, representing collective respect for the Hakkas' cultural origins.

There is also a rice culture. Regarded as the masterpiece of rice culture in South China, ban 粄 refers to rice snacks that are eaten on different occasions (Song and Luo, 2015: 63). The word itself is derived from Hakka and has roots in ancient times. Ban has been modified such that it can be served at celebratory banquets: for example, faban 发粄 is red in colour due to the addition of red yeast rice and after the steaming process its surface ruptures, suggesting smiling faces and a good life in the future (ibid.: 64).

¹⁴ *Meicai* 梅菜 is local particular vegetable for pickling in Meizhou and Huizhou (Guangdong), and is rumoured to be delivered by *Meigu* who is a goddess with family name of Ma.

3.4.3 Nanxiong cuisine

Chapter 1.2 gave a brief overview of Nanxiong cuisine. This subsection situates Nanxiong cuisine within Chinese cuisine (particularly that in the south) and discusses some of its common features.

Each regional cuisine has its frequently used and familiar ingredients, cooking skills and flavour principles. These serve as the set of rules and principles that underpin the cuisine and which are familiar to local people. In terms of basic ingredients, Nanxiong cuisine uses poultry (chicken, duck and goose), mountain foods (for example, field rat (zhushu 竹鼠), mushrooms and river products (such as river fish and crabs). This contrasts in certain respects with Cantonese cuisine, which uses sea fish and a wide range of other products, and neighbouring Hunan cuisine, which has a wide range of ingredients, including preserved meat and river products. The cooking skills differ too: Nanxiong cuisine mostly uses braising, stewing and stuffing, whereas Cantonese cuisine uses (almost) all kinds of cooking skills, and Hunan cuisine relies upon stewing, frying and steaming (Ru, 1992). The most typical flavour profile of Cantonese food is sweet, fresh and light, whereas Hunan cuisine is spicy, fragrant and fresh, and Nanxiong is spicy, sour, fragrant and fresh. What is particularly significant for this thesis is that Nanxiong developed its own version of many Hakka foods. An important festive and celebratory dish, stuffed fried bean curd, is a variant of a traditional stuffed bean curd dish that is common among Hakka people. The dish is said to convey good wishes, safety and prosperity for the household (Liu, 1995: 52).

According to *Guangzhou Daily*, Nanxiong officially promoted their ten signature dishes and ten signature snacks as part of their second family name cultural festival (Pu, 2015), They are: stuffed bean curd, braised duck (*huangmen ya* 黄焖鸭), 'royal goose' (*e'wang* 鹅王), stir-fried pork with pickled cabbages (*meicai kourou* 梅菜扣肉), snail and chicken pot (*tianluo jibao* 田螺鸡煲), steamed beef balls (*qingzheng niurouwang* 清蒸牛肉丸), fish cake with leeks (*jiucai yubing* 韭菜鱼饼), snail and duck pot with sour bamboo shoots (*suansun tianluo yabao* 酸笋田螺鸭煲), braised duck organs (*huangmen ya sanbao* 黄焖鸭三宝) and pork trotters (*meiji zhushou* 美极猪手). The ten snacks are dried beef (*he niuganpu* 和牛干脯), dried bean-curd sticks (*fupi juan* 腐皮卷), spoon pastry (*tongshao bing* 铜勺饼), *jiaoleici* 饺俚糍 (yellow dumpling stuffed with pickles), oil-fried roll (*xiangcui wang youjuan* 香脆网油卷), chilli sauce (*dalaokuang lajiaojiang* 大佬匡辣椒酱), taro pastry (*yusi bing* 芋丝饼), tomato and maize cake (*xiangjian fanqie yumibing* 香煎番茄玉米饼), ginkgo nut cake (*yinxing su* 银杏酥) and delicious field snail (*meiwei shiluo* 美味石螺).

In addition, Nanxiong people often claim that Nanxiong cuisine has a number of its own inventions or adaptions. These include pickled cabbage, *jiaoleici*, Meiling royal goose

and braised duck with sour bamboo shoots (suansun menya 酸笋焖鸭). This is a description of the 'royal goose' dish in Meiling 梅岭 town.

"Meiling 'royal goose', as Nanxiong's signature dish, enjoys popularity across and beyond Guangdong province... It is prepared in the ancestral [traditional] way... [In the restaurant] before serving it at the table, the special aroma of the [cooked] country goose fills the air, making the juices flow [in anticipation]. The food is often served with a big plate... Putting a piece of goose meat into your mouth, you will immediately discover the delicate flavour (along with the spicy taste). The thick and fragrant soup in the dish undoubtedly greatly increases people's appetite. The appearance of this dish is good, golden and red in colour... The fantastic taste attracts people, just as the Sichuan cuisine and Guangxi cuisine do." (Boya Network)

Although not as conspicuous, family cooked delicacies undoubtedly contribute to the diversity of Nanxiong cuisine. Homemade delicacies include dried beef, fried fish, fried meat (intestine of pork, beef) with sour bamboo shoots and pickled vegetables (Shaoguan Tourist Centre, 2014)

"Dried beef is an expensive food. It is a [local] custom that every household prepares the dried beef which is served as a luxury for guests during the Spring Festival. Chewing the processed beef, [diners enjoy] umami and spicy tastes and strong texture; the best way is for [diners] to drink rice wine after a bite of the delicious beef." (Shaoguan Tourist Centre, 2014)

Apart from these signature dishes, a wide range of rice snacks greatly enrich the foodscape of Nanxiong county. These rice snacks vary in material (normal rice, glutinous rice, rice flour), wrap (bamboo leaf, banana leaf), colour (yellow, white, green, grey), cooking and preparation method (steaming, oil-frying, frying, grinding, striking), supporting material (plant ash, young moxa leaf, soybean), and stuffing (peanut, sour bamboo shoot, chilli and eggplant) (Liu, 1995: 51-53; Office of Nanxiong Historical Records, 2011).

3.5 Conclusion

Nanxiong is a non-pure Hakka county (meaning that Hakka people make up somewhat less than 90% of its population) located in the border area of Guangdong, Jiangxi and Hunan provinces. Because it is the spiritual homeland for many lineages in the Pearl River Delta region, this county has strong kinship as social capital and socioeconomic relations with the heart of Guangdong Province. It is a rapidly urbanising and modernising county. Nanxiong cuisine can be said to integrate the local natural environment of the county and the features of Hakka cuisine. Further it has developed

its own character and spawned the invention of new dishes. While local nature provides the material context – for example, chilli pepper and (sour) bamboo shoots – Hakka elements mean that traditional rituals, identity and physical surroundings are also incorporated (Chen, 2016).

This chapter has offered an overall description of Nanxiong county and Nanxiong cuisine and laid the foundation for the discussions to follow in the empirical chapters. Chapters 5 to 8 will explore in more depth the food practices and ethnic elements underpinning the cuisine in both daily and special occasions, with an emphasis on the relations between Nanxiong cuisine and place. The next chapter (Chapter 4) will discuss the methodological and data analysis tools that are used to do so.

Chapter 4 Ethnographic methods in cuisine studies

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the choice of research methods and describes the practical techniques employed in the fieldwork stages of the research. An appropriate research method is needed if we are to analyse the material constitution and sociocultural discourse of the cuisine. Many regional cuisines have their own general flavours. As discussed in Chapter 2, cuisines do not develop by themselves, but evolve over time in accordance with a region's natural environment and social context. My research does not just aim to describe the pure material character of cuisine. Rather, it also analyses people's everyday practices and the special occasions associated with it. It is beneficial, therefore, to use methods commonly used in cultural geography research such as photography, witnessing (McCormack, 2003) and interviews. Ethnographic techniques have given new perspectives that advance the qualitative methods in the context of contemporary cultural geography (Crang and Cook, 2007). Doing ethnography focuses on people's lives and their relations with the environments they encounter in everyday routines rather than on rational behaviour and causation. Choosing ethnographic methods was appropriate given the exploratory nature of the thesis and the scarcity of similar fieldwork on Chinese cuisines, particularly rural-style cuisines. The following section (Section 4.2) justifies the use of mixed ethnographic methods in research into cuisine. Section 4.3 discusses the way I recruited participants and accessed various special occasions. Section 4.4 describes the various methods used in the fieldwork, and the nature of the data obtained. Section 4.5 discusses related ethical issues, my own position as a Nanxiong Hakka and the dilemmas I encountered. In the conclusion (Section 4.6), I raise some methodological insights that come out of my fieldwork.

4.2 Researching cuisine

Cuisine is more than blending food ingredients and seasoning, and "tasting cuisine" is more than chewing food; indeed, it is often referred to as an art. Therefore, qualitative research methods inevitably form the bedrock of my research. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the categorizing of recipes in order to measure factors such as frequency of use, clustering, and distribution is useful for comparing differences and similarities (Kular et al., 2011). But it seems that there are limited cuisine-specific quantitative research methods. Considering that the aim of the thesis is to go broader and deeper to the 'soil' giving life to the cuisine, ethnographic methods, or doing ethnography in cultural geography, are appropriate for the fieldwork. And because the material, social and cultural contexts are complex and there exists a divided narrative of everyday and special occasion, a way of mixing different ethnographical methods is needed.

4.2.1 Types of data collected in the fieldwork

Before choosing the fieldwork methods, I considered what data I aimed to collect for the research which was consistent with the research aims and themes listed in Chapter 1. On that basis, I outlined four significant types of fieldwork data. In first place, the initial consideration for the fieldwork was to allow for a material analysis of Nanxiong cuisine, particularly key ingredients (both vegetable and animal) and seasoning. Like kimchi and its role in the culture of Korea (Chung et al., 2016), chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoot occupy a central role in Nanxiong cuisine, which I sought to explore. Other than fresh ingredients, processed and pickled foods such as dried salted duck also shape the flavour of the cuisine.

The second source of data was practice-related. Domestic cooking and restaurant eating are two major platforms for everyday cuisine. The fieldwork thus sought information about strategies, occurrences, habits and social relatedness of family meals. For instance, what does a typical housewife cook for dinner (presuming, that is, that a woman in the household does cook the dinner) and how are non-Nanxiong dishes included? Moreover, there are both traditional Chinese festivals and Nanxiong-specific festivals. Therefore, I needed data for how Nanxiong people modified their festivals according to local features and modernisation.

The third group of data I wanted to collect was concerned with tasting, sensing and other embodied experiences (Longhurst et al., 2009). Due to the significant role of mountain products in Nanxiong cuisine, I also wanted to collect information about local people's involvement and stories of their material environment – mountains, rivers, the weather, and so on). Also, I hoped to understand the atmosphere of various occasions, particularly special occasions.

The last type of data was associated with social and cultural meanings in Nanxiong and Hakka, and how these have changed in recent times, especially in relation to events such as feasts and banquets. Special occasions are a key arena in which to analyse Nanxiong cuisine. As people get richer, it becomes necessary to explore issues such as couples' wedding choices (whether they choose rural venues or hotels, for example), whether traditional rituals and meanings are in decline or being modified and the nature and range of new 'banquet-scape'. During banquets and feasts, the social and spatial environment and physical surroundings used – for example, tables, benches, dining spaces -- were observed. Finally, I was keen to understand how local Hakka lineages influence ancestor worship in terms of festivities, narratives and stories.

4.2.2 Choosing mixed ethnographic methods

The research methods should allow for collection of all the data listed in the previous subsection. Therefore, mixed fieldwork methods were deployed in this research. Crang

and Cook (2007: 1) argue that at least "participant observation, interviewing, focus group, and/or video/photographic work" can be defined as "ethnographic", and Valentine suggests that the advantage of the focus group is that it "can be designed to empower participants and democratize the research process in a much more radical way, allowing participants to not only speak for themselves, but also to have a say in interpreting the 'data' they produced" (Valentine, 2001: 49).

To make them more amenable to a study of this kind, traditional research methods should be adjusted so that they can explore sensory experience and emotions. It is said that doing so will "deepen and extend the geographical research agenda" (Bondi, 2005: 434). Ethnographic methods for research on cuisine should thus selectively record interviewees' feelings and people's likes and dislikes in different situations, such as when cooking, at the dinner table and when purchasing food (McCormack, 2003). Longhurst et al. (2009: 336) conducted "research led by our stomachs", using a mixture of interviews, focus groups and participant observation. They entered into participants' homes and organised sessions where research participants prepared dishes and where all people "ate with a variety of different utensils and shared food in a variety of different ways" (ibid.: 337). Interviews and discussions were recorded during the cooking and eating processes.

In addition, researching cuisine and its relationship with place requires a research design that is relatively comprehensive so that different contexts can be covered (see in Chapter 1.1). Doing ethnography allows for this kind of *in situ* perspective. What is more, ethnographic methods should be flexible and well integrated. For example, in order to explore the ethics of everyday family consumption, Hall (2011) conducted a detailed ethnography that focused on "ethnographic observations inside and outside of the home", using "group/family and single-person" interviews, participatory activities such as tours of the kitchen and photo diaries (631). Her methods altered and developed over time according to "the choice and availability of the participants" (631).

Therefore, in designing my fieldwork, I aimed to be flexible and 'tailor-make' my ethnographic methods on cuisine and its relation to place (Myers, 2010: 329). As shown in detail in Section 4.4, I used food- and cuisine-oriented participant observation and various interviews, and adjusted these methods for particular contexts.

4.3 Recruitment and access

The following section introduces the fieldwork sites, the research timeframe and ways in which I recruited participants and gained access.

4.3.1 Fieldwork sites and period

Nanxiong is a typical southern Chinese county consisting of a central settlement, suburban towns on level ground, and remote (mountain) towns and village. I covered different sites, including Zhuji Lane some ten kilometres north-east of the central settlement, which, as mentioned in Chapter 3, is also normally referred to by the county name of Nanxiong. There is a Nanxiong restaurant at Yuebei Mansion (*yuebei dasha* 粤北大厦) on Dongfeng East Road in Guangzhou city, and I undertook several group interviews at the restaurant for the convenience of participants. Yuebei Mansion is the one of a very few Nanxiong restaurants in Guangzhou, and it is a convenient place to organise tasting group interviews (see Section 4.4.2) that involve both non-Nanxiong Guangdong and non-Guangdong participants.

The fieldwork was conducted between December 2015 and early June 2016. The reason why I chose this period was because it included many important festivals such as New Year, Tomb-sweeping and lineage festivals, during which a large number of people who work outside Nanxiong return home. A second reason was that in the modern age, young couples increasingly prefer to organise their wedding ceremonies during the New Year holidays or on or around the Labour Day holiday (1 May).

Before the fieldwork, I consulted with a number of Chinese academic experts, who were able to provide valuable tips for doing food research in the context of China. In the first two months (December 2015 and January 2016), my goal was to get in touch with my acquaintances and obtain access to possible respondents. I attended a wedding banquet in a rural town and did two 'tasting' group interviews in Guangzhou. I visited Sun Yat-sen University Library and Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province, two of the largest libraries in South China. The New Year holiday falls between the end of January and the middle of February, during which time most workers and students return home, and Nanxiong county becomes much more populated. This provided me with a very good opportunity to approach fieldwork participants.

Besides this, I attended two rural weddings. After the holiday, I also undertook part-time work at a restaurant (Section 4.3.3) and engaged in participant observation during the Tomb-Sweeping Festival. From April to the end of May, I also undertook repeat interviews and some family-kitchen observations. Trust and rapport with new friends was made, which assisted my fieldwork. Agricultural practices in spring and changes in the village were observed. I visited friends in other parts of Shaoguan Prefecture, seeking out their opinions so that I could make comparisons with Nanxiong cuisine. Comparison with other (neighbouring) cuisines was found to be inspiring. Apart from

¹⁵ Source: http://www.zslib.com.cn/lang/eng/index.aspx

tasting food in Shaoguan, I also attended a wedding banquet in a grand hotel in Guangzhou city centre.

During the whole period, I seized every chance to eat meals at people's houses and in restaurants, chat with people and keep notes unobtrusively. For example, I accompanied a relative of mine to participate in a banquet hosted by a friend of his to celebrate the friend's move to a new house in a neighbouring town; this opportunity offered me the chance to observe typical rural banquets. Throughout the fieldwork period, I carried on conducting in-depth interviews and collecting useful secondary data in the form of books, records, newspapers, brochures. In addition, I used my leisure time to walk around the city, with the aim of observing and sensing embodied experiences of city life, foodscapes, the pace of living and working, and so on. Although I am an insider (Section 4.5.2), these random walks allowed me to familiarise myself and deepen my understanding of the street, people's way of living and restaurants in Nanxiong city.

4.3.2 Recruitment and access strategies

For convenience, the languages used in the fieldwork were Hakka language, Nanxiong dialect, and Mandarin (Sagart, 2001). Given my familiarity with them, the choice of these languages meant there was no linguistic distance between myself and the participants. I used three ways to recruit potential participants. Firstly, I actively asked personal contacts, friends and relatives for assistance during my fieldwork. On an everyday level, I participated in diverse meals (*fanju*) as often as possible in order to gain access to various informants. After gaining permission, I entered into family kitchens, observing everyday meal preparation.

Secondly, I also used snowball sampling via "organic social networks" (Noy, 2008: 340). Initial interviewees were acquaintances and through their suggestions I arranged subsequent interviews. For example, through an introduction from a friend, I got to known a female anchor from Nanxiong Broadcasting Station. By inviting her to a local restaurant for an interview, I obtained information about her food show on Nanxiong TV and the family name festival at Zhuji Lane. I was accompanied by another informant to eat at a locally-renowned goose restaurant in Meiling town (22 kilometres from the city centre), during which I got the opportunity to speak with the restaurant owner.

The third way was by simply walking around. For example, it was during a random visit in Zhuji Lane that I encountered the lineage (Zhu) festival, which provided me a chance to see such 'invented' lineage events first hand. Local markets were the main sites at which I observed local food commodities and chatted with stall owners. During special occasions, I wandered around villages, event sites, and so on, in order to take notes, take photos and search for potential informants.

As discussed in Chapter 1, identifying and participating in special occasions (ceremonies and festivals) was a critical part of this research. Therefore I kept notes during and after the events using my mobile phone's recording and note functions. During special occasions, I tried, wherever possible, to participate from the start to the end. Rural weddings were crucial occasions during which I could experience authentic rituals and banquets; therefore I entered into the kitchen whilst the banquet food was being prepared. I also obtained access to key people involved in the ceremony such as the bride and groom (for weddings), the clan leader (for lineage narratives), banquet cooks, assistants and servers (for rituals), knowledgeable informants and geomancers who have knowledge of funerals and taboos (Lutz and Lutz, 2015). For example, I regularly visited the elderly member of one clan, who is also the geomancer of the village, at his house and accompanied him on tomb-sweeping activities.

I also used banquets and rituals as an occasion to speak to potential respondents. For example, I identified one of my former classmates who had just held his wedding at a hotel. I contacted him and had a short interview at a bar with him and his wife during their New Year stay in Nanxiong. In addition, I was fortunately invited to participate at the wedding of another friend and witnessed the whole process. On the morning of the wedding (30 April 2016), I arrived at the wedding service company where my friend and his father allocated tasks for the welcoming team. I accompanied the groom in the same wedding car as he headed to the bride's village. Alongside that, I also participated in the following processes: the banquet; collecting the bride; returning to the city; welcoming and serving the guests at the hotel restaurant; and toasting.

4.3.3 Working at a restaurant as an ethnographic method

By working part-time as a waiter at a local restaurant I was able to supplement the fieldwork (Kim, 2012: 173-174). I identified a local restaurant of some renown called *Jinyuange* (金缘阁) (Figure 4.1), situated south of the city centre. The head chef, who is also the owner, has won medals in a number of culinary competitions; the medals are proudly displayed at the front of the restaurant. I sent a text message to the owner's son, asking if I could work part-time at his father's restaurant as part of my research. He replied positively telling me that I could work there flexibly. The next day I walked into the restaurant and, without difficulty, the chef accepted me and introduced me to his staff.



Figure 4.1 Jinyuange Restaurant. Source: author.

For two weeks, I worked as a waiter from 10 am to 3 pm. I assisted every basic service except cooking the dishes. The chef, or his wife, would go to the local markets to purchase fish each morning. ¹⁶ The restaurant opened around 9 am; the work in the morning included preparing ingredients and spices (such as cutting dried chilli pepper and peeling garlic), cooking rice and killing fish. ¹⁷ I was able to observe and work alongside four people, participating in their conversation and establishing a rapport with them. In one of his special dishes, the chef would half-cook goose meat in a pressure cooker so that he could quickly serve the dish without the customer having to wait too long. ¹⁸ When the customers arrived, together with the two waitresses, I served the table with a large-capacity plastic kettle of restaurant-made tea and a saucer of peanuts. Within the kitchen, I had the opportunity to communicate with the chef and observe professional cooking. I did not receive monetary payments for my service, but the chef

¹⁶ A fish dish called *tese huangmen xiongtou xiongdu* 特色黄焖雄头雄肚 is one of the restaurant's signature dishes.

¹⁷ The chilli is cut into 1-2 centimetre-length for good shape. The aim of cutting dried chilli pepper is to filter the chilli seed that it is not scorched while cooking as this would inconvenience the customer's chewing. The cutting work was done consistently on a prodigious amount of chilli pepper.

¹⁸ This dish is called 'special feature royal goose' (*tese e'wang* 特色鹅王).

kindly included me in their lunch (at around 2 pm, after the customers had left) in exchange for my labour.

4.4 Data collection and analysis

In this section I describe and summarise the data collection tools used in the fieldwork (which included both first-hand and secondary data). Fieldwork methods were mixed and integrated, and were designed to better explore the themes of food, cuisine, practice and rituals. The data analysis process will also be discussed.

4.4.1 Participatory observation

I attended two rural weddings and two hotel weddings, as noted above. I also observed a festival of the Zhu clan lineage. I also participated in and ate at the associated banquets, keeping notes. The other main foci within the observations are listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 What I observed during the special occasions.

The occasion	Relevant elements	
Rural wedding	Ritual: gift and ritualised items (including food), dowry, clothes, ritua and ceremony, date and timing, speech, welcoming team and car, firecrackers, etc.	
	Banquet preparation: organiser, division of work, food ingredient purchasing and preparing, physical setting of the kitchen, role of the cook, cooking, timing, etc.	
	Banquet eating: ritual, worship, format and space, table and bench, seating order, atmosphere, guests, dish serving and consuming, toasts, conversation, duration, etc.	
Hotel wedding	Ritual: serving the gods (in the village), bride-welcoming team and car, costumes, the ceremony, speeches, welcoming guests, etc.	
	Banquet: space and format, table and seating order, dish serving and consuming, wine (drinks) and toasts, duration, atmosphere, etc.	
Tomb-sweeping	Date, terrain and orientation, people and tools, sacrifices, processes, rituals, atmosphere, speeches, conversations, etc.	
New-Year	Holiday and duration, people, activity, rituals, festival preparation (including food preparation and purchase), decoration, etc.	
	Meals: cooking and serving, dishes, attendees, interactions, atmosphere, etc.	

The observation included two periods: the New Year period (about 1 month) in the city and village and the tomb-sweeping period (about 15 days) in the villages. I did as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 1) suggested, "watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research".

The purpose of attending various occasions was to allow for reflection and comparison. Concerning my position as researcher, I tried my best not to disturb the event, other than by introducing myself and providing basic information and a personal statement (for academic purposes) at the beginning. I recorded information (by taking quick notes) or memorised things and wrote them down when I returned home. What stood out for me were the sounds, for example trumpets and firecrackers. The trumpeters are part of a traditional instrument band which plays at various occasions, including ceremonies,

tomb-sweeping and when moving to a new house (see Chapter 8.4.2). Fortunately, a friend who was also a member of the village trumpet band assisted me by explaining the melodies. Alongside this, I kept a field diary when I engaged in participant observation, as suggested by Crang and Cook (2007). In the diary, I wrote down my understanding and feelings about the event and tried to note the difficulties faced during the observations, which not only helped me to extend my vision and thoughts after I returned to the university, but allowed me to think about the fieldwork later. In addition, I also took photos and videos when necessary, in order to record important points and easily forgettable things.

As well as special occasions, I surveyed domestic food practices. For example, with permission, I entered a friend's house and observed her cooking meals. She is a full-time housewife with two children. I accompanied her to the local market, and observed her washing, cutting and cooking food. I also helped her cook chicken soup and stir-fried duck, gaining embodied culinary insights.

4.4.2 Group interviews

I divided my group interviews into two parts: one normal and one 'tasting' group meeting. In total I conducted 11 normal group interviews, the duration of which lasted between 1 hour and 2 hours, with from 4 to 9 participants (no children were included). In order to make it as convenient as possible, they were conducted in offices, in the open air, in restaurants, bars, night-snack stalls, and in people's houses. An introduction to my fieldwork was made before each interview. Most of these group interviews were audio-recorded (after participants' permission had been obtained); at the same time, I also kept note of special points that cropped up during the group interview. In cases when interviewees were unwilling to be recorded, I did not record the group conversation and took notes instead. I took quick notes of the occasion as much as possible, and, with the help of interviewees, recalled and added additional notes immediately after the interview.

The other form was the 'tasting' group interview. I used the 'tasting' group style interview in order to better understand Nanxiong cuisine, because while eating around a table and seeing particular dishes, it was possible to easily trigger participants' memories and allow for them to make comparisons with other cuisines, and elaborate upon their experiences and feelings. A good way to conduct cuisine research is to invite participants to taste delicacies (Longhurst et al., 2009: 337-338). With that in mind, I arranged three groups. The duration of the interviews varied between 45 minutes and 2 hours. Prior to the meal I gave a short introduction to my research and outline of questions, and the interviews were recorded using my phone, with permission. I, with other Nanxiong participants, assisted the non-Nanxiong participants in understanding the menu, introducing the dishes, warning of any dishes that were particularly spicy. The

majority of the dishes we ordered were signature dishes of Nanxiong cuisine. I invited each participant to express their opinions about each dish and, at the same time, I observed participants' behaviour and choices during the meal, especially those from outside Nanxiong, some of whom were not used to eating chilli pepper (Table 4.2). These observations were recorded in field notes after the interviews. One advantage of 'tasting' group interviews is the easy atmosphere that is created; people who were not speaking can eat food, reducing possible embarrassment for informants.

Table 4.2 Taste group interviews.

	Table dishes	participants
Tasting group interview 1	Taro soup, countryside fish, braised duck with sour bamboo shoots, pepper salt loach, stir-fried pork, stir-fried pork intestines with sour bamboo shoots, the 'royal goose'	4 from Nanxiong, 3 from elsewhere in Guangdong, 2 from beyond Guangdong, plus the researcher
Tasting group interview 2	Jiaoleici, stir-fried pork with pickled cabbage	3 from Nanxiong, 1 from outside Guangdong, plus the researcher
Tasting group interview 3	Jiaoleici, countryside fish, braised duck with sour bamboo shoots, stir-fried pork with pickled cabbage	1 from Nanxiong, 2 from elsewhere in Guangdong, plus the researcher

A semi-reported note was drawn up immediately after the meal by each attendee. For example, the outlines I listed for group 1 (see Appendix A) included dining experience and feelings, preferred dishes and attitudes to Nanxiong flavour. In total I received 14 self-reported notes, which "are likely to capture how a participant perceives or experiences certain activities" (Broege et al., 2007: 121). Although these notes were not formal, they could address some of the gaps in the data obtained from the group interview. For instance, participants could elaborate or corroborate their feelings, views and comments. Once all the interviews were complete, I kept in touch with the participants and presented my initial findings to them.

4.4.3 In-depth interviews

Steinar Kvale defines the research interview as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996: 5-6). All interviews used in the fieldwork were conducted in Nanxiong dialect, Hakka dialect and Mandarin, according to the needs of different participants.

I repeated interviews with key respondents to "study the problem in different situations or timings" (Cauvery et al., 2003: 143). For example, one participant is an experienced housewife as well as part-time canteen cook. Besides cooking for the whole family, she also cooks and sells lunch to students at a local driving school. I interviewed her when she was cooking in the kitchen six times in six days (some days were consecutive), focusing on questions such as: What are the favourite dishes of her customers? How does she choose and purchase food? What is her culinary experience and skills? One advantage of repeating interviews is gaining better trust with the informant because, according to Brewer (2004: 316), "trust continually needs to be worked at and reassurances given". Information about these three repeat interviews is shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Repeat interviews.

Respondent, gender, age	Occupation	Repeat count, total hours
Male, 60s	geomancer	3 times, 4.5 hours
Female, 40s	housewife, part-time cook	6 times, 5 hours
Male, 70s	lineage elder, formerly village leader	8 times, 6 hours

Lastly, in-depth interviews were also employed. The prior step for conducting these interviews is to create contact and proper rapport with respondents (Cauvery et al., 2003: 134). As discussed in Section 4.3.2, I talked with potential respondents and with their acquaintances, or purchased foods from respondents who were food sellers. In total, I conducted 35 interviews, the length of which varied from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. The interviews were mostly done in homes and offices, but some were done on-site and involved the respondents cooking, shopping (at local markets) and eating at night-snack stalls. Literature and second-hand information about Nanxiong county and Nanxiong cuisine was scarce, which meant the "perfect" interview outline was unobtainable. Therefore, with the outlines I made prior to the interview in mind, I kept the interviews flexible and open-ended.

I employed flexible skills for the interviews, according to different topics and interviewees. I prepared question outlines before the interview but, depending on the situation, focused in more detail on interesting points or issues raised in the discussion (Valentine, 2001). When it came to everyday practices and meals, I encouraged people to describe how they purchased food, prepared meals, and what they had eaten in recent days. I also encouraged people to recall stories and memories, particularly concerning rituals and banqueting experiences. For those villagers who didn't have much interview experience, before the interview, I started with natural conversation in order to calm their nerves. I maintained communication after the interviews with most participants, except those who do not use the Internet and social media.

4.4.4 Finding secondary data in an archive-poor county

For a relatively under-developed county like Nanxiong, governmental records for county affairs (on histories, customs, products, sub-cultures, etc.) are insufficient. Professional records covering the county are rare. Even those data which do exist are usually unavailable online. Therefore, I needed to find various ways to collect secondary data. The two main means I employed during my fieldwork were by going to Zhuji Lane and reviewing the archives of the *Shaoguan Daily* 韶关日报. Zhuji Lane is the main tourist destination within the county and contains stalls selling some rare books and other materials including historical records, lineage books and tourist brochures. When I had time, I usually went there and had a look for any interesting materials. Second, since there was no county-level 'Nanxiong Daily', I turned to the prefecture-level *Shaoguan Daily* and its archives. Electronic archives are available from 01/05/2009 onwards and I searched all available articles on their website, http://sgrb.sgxw.cn. For previous issues (between 1999 and 2008), I went to Shaoguan Library and selectively searched for useful articles (with key words such as Nanxiong, food, recipe).

Archival and documentary data are valuable for illustrating the overall situation in Nanxiong county (see Chapter 3) and particular ceremonial rituals and festivities in the county (see Chapters 7 and 8). The data differ from general narratives of Hakka ceremonial rituals and festivities, which are recorded in the Hakka studies literature, the sub-discipline founded by the scholar Luo Xianglin (Xie and Zheng, 1994). I found that the county-specific narrative differs in nuance from more generalised Hakka accounts.

For food studies, finding a wide range of recipes is crucial. The traditional way to transfer knowledge of culinary tradition or train a cook in China is through a master-apprentice relationship rather than using a cookbook (Hu, 2016). Particularly in small-cities like Nanxiong, recipes of local dishes act as "taken-for-granted knowledge" and are rarely detailed in books. Particularly in small cities like Nanxiong, recipes of local dishes act as 'taken-for-granted knowledge' and are rarely detailed in books. In addition to participant observation in the restaurant and family kitchens, I found that social media, especially

WeChat articles, were a good source for collecting these recipes. I searched on social media and followed a public WeChat subscription account (*gongzhong hao* 公众号) specialising on Nanxiong. In this way, I got fruitful data. I should say though that the accuracy and authenticity of the recipes on social media cannot be guaranteed, but that integrating these recipes with fieldwork data greatly assists our ability to understand local cuisine.

4.4.5 Data analysis

Audio-recordings were transcribed from the Hakka dialect into Mandarin and the transcript documents were stored on a computer and protected with a password. The typing process helped me to re-familiarise myself with the data I collected in the fieldwork. I felt that it was more efficient not to translate all the transcripts into English, but I selectively translated into English myself those that might be useful (for a sample, see the Appendix C).

I used NVivo 10 to assist me in organising and dealing with conceptual themes. Using categories and subcategories means that the conceptual theme framework is useful for organising and situating my data and ideas. I used manual coding in the analysis process as I was not very familiar with the software, but also because of the existence of multiple synonyms and different ways of expressing terms. What is more, even NVivo analysis needs manual scrutiny, otherwise there will be a partial loss of information (Welsh, 2002). The transcripts and notes were broken down into text units in chronological order. I read the transcript again and again, coloured critical texts and added notes beside paragraphs, which helped me develop my ideas. I interpreted the data, identifying a pattern or a theme; Mincyte's (2008: 6) experience rang true for me: "The themes identified in the first round of analysis were confirmed by the second and third iterations". Careful conclusions and discussions were made, which helped in the interpretation of the data.

Other materials included fieldwork diaries, photos and videos, self-reported notes and some collected recipes. As photos and videos are examples of vivid and direct evidence used to reflect upon fieldwork data, I added some descriptive and interpretive notes and comments to each of them. Self-reported notes from participants were coded alongside the corresponding interview transcripts. Some discussions were returned to the participants when their comments were unclear. Recipes, whether first-hand or second-hand, were accompanied with relevant pictures (and videos, if any). Common features, differences, language used (and discourse behind) were noted by "breaking down the recipe into its narrative components" (Cotter, 1997: 64).

With the aim of highlighting the generational differences, and for convenience, I divided the informants and interviewees into three categories: young (age 18-30), middle-aged (age 31-60), and elderly (age above 60).

Throughout my fieldwork, in order to recruit informants and interviewees who could better answer my research questions, I considered their age, gender, professional, education and culinary experience. The first-hand data I collected contained the volume and diversity necessary to address and analyse the research questions (see Appendix A). In terms of home location, the participants included both villagers, urban households, people from elsewhere in Guangdong, and people from other provinces.

4.5 Ethical considerations, positionality and limitations

In this section I discuss the ethical considerations encountered, my researcher positionality and difficulties I encountered during the fieldwork. Consideration of ethical issues is critical when doing social science research and are discussed in Section 4.5.1. My identity as a researcher, insider and participant became clear in the fieldwork and thesis writing stages, and are discussed in Section 4.5.2. Finally, I outline the difficulties I encountered doing the ethnography.

4.5.1 Ethical issues

The confidentiality of all participants has been strictly protected. All respondents who were involved in the interviews were over 18 years of age, and I used pseudonyms for all names. All participants were free to withdraw consent at any time during the research. I kept all the data (both transcript and audio-recordings) in encrypted files. During the transcribing and quoting process, I was very cautious not to leak any personal information that could be traced back to respondents.

Before the interview, I informed participants about ethical issues and consent. Both written and verbal consent were sought. For group interviews, I sought the consent of potential participants when I invited them for the interview. Verbal consent was more feasible than written consent during my fieldwork. People mostly were impatient when reading the written material and some were illiterate. However, the written consent form (see Appendix B) was given on request.

During my fieldwork, I found that audio-recordings were generally accepted and understood by younger, more educated people and those who I knew prior to the interview. I got the feeling that some elderly villagers were reluctant to be interviewed and audio-recorded. I was told that informants might be less likely to take part if using the word *caifang* (interview) or *diaocha* (survey), maybe because these two words have political undertones. However, overall, topics such as Nanxiong cuisine are 'safe' in the Chinese context and people have a lot of say.

4.5.2 Positionality

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Personally, I am a Nanxiong Hakka, which is proved by the genealogy recorded in the Lin lineage book. I am a 137th generation descendant of the Lin lineage started by Bigan 比于 (1125-1063 BC), and my clan is said to have moved from nearby Renhua county in Shaoguan prefecture to Nanxiong two hundred years ago. This position as a Hakka allowed me easier access to some special occasions and gave me an insider perspective during the whole fieldwork process. I thus adopted the role of both researcher and participant, which is important given that during ethnography one should not be afraid of becoming involved in the social setting (Brewer, 2004: 312). Despite my own social and cultural background, I attempted to be 'objective' during respondents' interviews and discussions, and also be 'unbiased' when analysing and writing up.

My identity as a young, UK-based PhD student was met with praise from respondents during the fieldwork. However, my identity as a researcher also to some degree created distance between myself and those lacking in academic experience. I was often asked: "Why do you study Nanxiong cuisine in the UK and not in China?" However, I established a rapport with potential respondents by engaging in group activities with them (such as playing sports, eating night-snacks, etc.). Most food-related labours in Nanxiong (as elsewhere) are carried out by women. As a male researcher I encountered a few difficulties based on gender difference: for example, I was not familiar with some kitchen and ritual phrases, and I was an outsider to some cooking practices due to being a man. I did help with some simple kitchen work to gain rapport with female respondents. However, there were some advantages, too: for example, as the geomancers and banquet cooks were male, I easily discussed with them. I drank some alcohol at the tables where I easily participated in conversations with male eaters.

The flexibility of the interview allows the researcher to observe how the interviewee talks about their experience and situations which helps to generate rich data. The ethnographic method focuses on people's everyday lives, including daily quarrels, jokes, family discussions, and so on, in order to discover the social facts with the researcher present and participating. By talking, interviewees could express their emotions and feelings and, as researcher, I sometimes helped them to organise and express their experience on the taste of food, their emotions and so on. As a researcher I was respectful and very grateful to participants and respondents.

4.5.3 Difficulties encountered in the fieldwork

There were some difficulties encountered during the fieldwork process. First, there was the unavailability of festivals (like the Ghost festival) and funeral ceremonies. The date of the Ghost festival is 14-16 the Seventh Month of the lunar calendar. It would have been difficult (and impolite) for me to gain access to a traditional funeral ceremony. A way around this was to add additional questions during interviews with elderly participants and geomancers and to reflect on my own past experience.

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The second difficulty was that it was inconvenient to participate in other lineages' tomb-sweeping activities, especially given my position as a Hakka. This was because deceased ancestors do not 'shelter' outsiders. However, I was able to chat with some participants and watch their tomb-sweeping from a distance. Additionally, there were often news sources describing the event through which I could gauge the differences and nuances of the tomb-sweeping of a number of lineages. For example, the Hou lineage reported their new tomb-sweeping event on their website (and included news, images and videos), recording the decoration of the ancestor hall, antithetical couplets (a written form of counterpoint), the address, genealogy, regulations of the lineage, tomb-sweeping activities, rituals and the banquet.

A third difficulty was that I was not able to visit Taiwan, where Hakka studies (and food) are common. I planned to visit some scholars, listen to their ideas, and copy some literature from local universities. However, due to a visa issue, I could not make the trip. To work around this, I searched the database of the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan for interesting literature related to my topic.¹⁹

4.6 Conclusion: Learning from the field

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology for this study. According to "the triangulation of data and methods", a researcher needs multiple methods and sources of data to collect and interpret (Cope, 2010: 32). In the context of the overall aim of this research -- to contextualise the cuisine of Nanxiong county 'in place' – it was considered that integrated ethnographic methods were appropriate. When I participated in various occasions, whether day-to-day cooking, eating, rituals or celebratory banquets, I observed proceedings, discussed with people, and wrote dairy entries. During my participant observation, I also gained new understandings about traditional affairs and embodied experiences, for example Hakka-style banquets, which assisted me in the analysis and writing-up process. In particular, the styles of serving and consumption during banquets was one focus of observation that produced new insights.

The second and most significant method was using a variety of interviews, which were flexibly adjusted according to particular situations and the needs of participants. There are distinct advantages in combining participant observation with interviews. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 132) write, "What people say in the interviews can lead us to see things differently in observation". The interview method was targeted to focus on food and cuisine, and also to discuss things like memory, embodied experience and practice. Alongside various on-site interviews, group interview members were brought together around the restaurant table for a meal and asked to write their own

¹⁹ Source: http://etds.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gsweb.cgi/ccd=EytkSI/webmge?switchlang=en

notes of the experience. However, ethnography does not end once interviews and observation are finished. Establishing a rapport with respondents benefited the research, and this helped with snow-ball sampling, which was an important way to recruit participants. I also retained good lines of communication with many respondents after the fieldwork. Fieldwork experience and understanding also shaped the data analysis and writing process. The fruits of this research process are the main focus of the empirical chapters that follow.

Chapter 5 The flavour principle and material context in Nanxiong cuisine

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 to 8 present the analysis of my empirical material. They provide an ethnographic analysis of cuisine and place in Nanxiong. This chapter starts with a focus on taste and flavour, discussing mountain wild food as food choice and Nanxiong cuisine as low cuisine. One frequently used saying in Europe is 'you are what you eat'; in contrast, one frequently used saying in China is that 'the unique features of a local environment – soil and water – always give special characteristics to its inhabitants' (*yifang shuitu yang yifang ren* 一方水土养一方人). This is concerned with material factors. Ru (1992: 36) argues that Southern Chinese flavour (*nanfang fengwei* 南方风味) is loosely characterised as being sour, salt, sweet and bitter. Moreover, taste perception is "a cultural, as well as a physical, act" (Classen, 1997: 401) and Southern Chinese flavour becomes a particular worldview enhancing an understanding of nature (represented by soil, water, mountains) in South China.

There are two main themes in this chapter. The first is to re-interpret the connotation of regional cuisine through the lens of flavour and taste. One of the core research questions in cuisine studies is what defines a cuisine. The idea of the flavour principle, first discussed by Rozin (1973), approaches cuisine in terms of frequently-used and familiar flavours and tastes which result from local flavouring, seasoning and ingredients. The flavour principle extends into ethnic/cultural acceptability (Stallberg-White and Pliner, 1999), such that "each ethnic group has their own distinctive cultural taste in food which expresses individual identity" (Yamamoto, 2017: 13).

The literature on cuisine has analysed both the seasoning ingredients of archetypal dishes and recipes (Ahn et al., 2011) and "artefacts associated within certain cultures" (Yamamoto, 2017: 60). However, this literature has rarely paid attention to geographical factors and differences. It fails to provide sufficient explanation of what and how place-based differences influence local people's perceptions of, and the ways they identify with, particular flavours and tastes. Yet, especially for regional cuisine (rather than ethnic cuisine), there is potential to develop an analysis of the flavour principle through a focus on narratives implicit in the local environment and through a comparison of how identities differ vis-à-vis cuisine and dishes between insiders and outsiders. This chapter focuses on the role that key seasonings and spices play in place-making. I argue that particular contrasting or striking flavours may cause culinary boundary conflicts. I argue further that there is some mismatch between identities surrounding Nanxiong cuisine and the sense of belonging and cultural identity of Nanxiong people.

This discussion contributes to an understanding of cuisine that sees taste as an ongoing activity at the intersection of food and the diner and which employs other sensations, such as smell and sight (Miele, 2017; Mojet et al., 2003). The chapter uses this lens to provide an in-depth exploration of the flavour principle and seasoning ingredients used in Nanxiong cuisine, one that considers different groups of people (including outsiders). It also explores, for the purpose of comparison, people's tasting experience and identity as they relate to neighbouring cuisines. In so doing, it contributes to a place-embedded and embodied understanding of the flavour principle. I argue that place and its difference from other neighbouring regions account for and re-affirm the familiar flavours and tastes, which are vital shapers of cuisine.

The second major theme in this chapter involves characterising Nanxiong cuisine as rural or low cuisine (Lyons, 2007). Local food frequently involves the use of salted or pickled vegetables and meat, which "impart a distinctive flavour, [and which] are low in caloric values" (Li and Hsieh, 2004: 147). Mintz (1996: 103) writes about the social roots of Chinese (low) cuisine: there are "agreed-upon ways" of good food and cooking and "such agreements seem to surmount differences in region and social rank". This chapter analyses Nanxiong cuisine at different times (past and present), which provides an empirical basis for our understanding of low cuisine in transition. Wild mountain foods (including both animal and edible plants) are a good case in point. People's attitudes and tastes vary at different times and the preference for wild mountain foods is not constant. This chapter argues that oil, seasoning and spices have played an important but easily overlooked role in recent decades, when people escaped from the difficult living situations caused by the turmoil of the earlier period of Communist rule (see Chapter 3.2.3). The chapter also shows that despite recent rapid urbanisation, Nanxiong cuisine continues to be characterised by its rural-style features and tastes.

Section 5.2 analyses the key seasonings and particular flavour combination of Nanxiong cuisine and discusses people's embodied experience, identity and place-making in this context. It compares neighbouring cuisines' flavours, arguing that seasoning (spice) is important to understanding the tastes and flavour principles of terroir, or the nexus of local food and local environment. Section 5.3 explores the fluid roles of wild mountain foods as special food choice at different times (in both the recent past and contemporary era). Wild mountain foods characterise Nanxiong cuisine as rural cuisine. Following this, Section 5.4 discusses the rural features (including the style and taste) of the cuisine during urbanisation and shows that local people tend to prefer this kind of rural cuisine as it enables them to reaffirm their identity.

5.2 Framing the flavour principle

Scientific explanations usually distinguish five tastes: sweet, sour, bitter, salty and umami (Chandrashekar et al., 2006). Some regions may have slight differences in taste variety: "Taste perception varies according to context" of culture, condition and environment, and personal experience (Chandrashekar et al., 2006: 293). In this respect, we can analyse the regional taste preferences and flavours in Nanxiong. Traditionally, the Chinese have seven basic tastes: salt (xian 咸), sour (suan 酸), sweet (tian 甜), spicy (la 辣), bitter (ku 苦), umami (xian 鲜) and astringent (se 涩) (Zhao, 2006: 333). Following some research, I have translated xian 鲜 as umami not fresh because xian in Chinese cuisine refers not just to the freshness of food, but also to the delicious and harmonised taste and flavour drawn from "dried foods, fermented products, seasoning" (Nakayama and Kimura, 1998: 257). Spicy has been promoted into one of these basic seven tastes as a result of its prevalence in several regional cuisines.

Focusing on Nanxiong cuisine and its difference to neighbouring cuisines, this thesis contributes to an exploration of "subtle differences in taste preference from one region to another" in China (Nakayama and Kimura, 1998: 257). This section begins by discussing the role of chilli pepper (Section 5.2.1) and sour seasoning ingredients (Section 5.2.2). Subsection 5.2.3 analyses another feature – fragrance in cooking and style. The last subsection (5.2.4) constructs the flavour principle of Nanxiong cuisine. I argue that Nanxiong cuisine derives, unlike haute cuisines, not from grand restaurants or the palaces of the nobility, but from flavour principles formed by a particular combination of spicy and sour tastes produced in household kitchens and local restaurants.

5.2.1 The prominent spicy taste: The roles and narratives of chilli peppers

I begin by discussing local narratives surrounding spicy tastes in Nanxiong cuisine, set in the context of South China. The discussion in this section sheds light on how Chinese cuisines construct the spicy taste as a basic taste feature. Spiciness is not generally recognised as a basic taste in Western cuisines. However, it has for some time now been regarded as one of the seven tastes or flavours in China, as noted above. Thus, spicy tastes or flavours warrant further exploration in the Chinese context.



Figure 5.1 Chilli peppers sold in the marekt. Source: author.

The consumption of chilli pepper is well suited to Nanxiong's ecology, and is said to build resistance to cold and defence against the wind and damp. Zhuzhu, a middle-aged man, further explained this idea:

"Why does this place, Nanxiong, have this eating habit? It's because it's cold, with strong cold air [in the winter]; you will not feel that cold when eating chilli." (Interview, 15/05/2016)

Similarly, this eating habit is equally suitable for neighbouring Hunan and Jiangxi Province, which have both been "wet and wild regions" throughout history (Ru, 1992: 327). Nanxiong county too has historically been 'wet and wild' and has close geographical proximity to two cuisines featuring spicy flavour profiles. Although I could find no documentary proof that the consumption of chilli pepper is influenced by neighbouring Hunan or Jiangxi provinces, when I asked why Nanxiong people like to eat chilli pepper, a few informants mentioned the county's geographical proximity to these two other provinces. Chang, a middle-aged chef, even argued that Nanxiong cuisine is a synthesis of Hunan and Cantonese cuisines (interview, 25/02/2016).

On the other hand, there are also narratives that distinguish Nanxiong's chilli pepper and spicy taste from those in other provinces in South China. The southern part of China – and more specifically Hunan, Sichuan, Jiangxi and Guizhou provinces – is regarded as a 'spicy zone'. Yet within this zone, the material qualities of chilli pepper are said to be distinct, in line with the local weather and soil. This difference strengthens people's perception of different cuisines. Guihua, a middle-aged woman who was born in Guizhou Province, made the following comparison:

"Chilli peppers in [Guizhou] have a good-looking red colour, but your chillies have no good colour but are very spicy. The chillies in my parts are longer in shape. The species [that grow in these two places] are distinct, and the weather is different." (Interview, 02/03/2016)

"[Compared with chilli peppers from neighbouring Hunan Province], they are different. The sunshine and temperature are different. [Hunan] is colder." (Jianjun, elderly man, interview, 18/05/2016)

"It is extremely beneficial to eat chilli peppers in the winter to keep warm. Actually eating chilli peppers is good for your health. They act as antibodies and make you look young. After eating chilli peppers, your face turns red, and you becomes good-looking. You can see that people from Sichuan who eat chilli peppers have good skin and [I believe] eating chilli peppers is one reason." (Jianjun, elderly man, interview, 18/05/2016)

"It cannot be completely attributed to the weather. The habit of eating chilli peppers is related to people's personality. People from Hunan and Sichuan have a straightforward personality." (Zhangju, young man, group interview, 14/05/2016).

The above quotations slightly extend the idea of Rozin. Given that chilli pepper has "oral irritant properties", Rozin argues that whether people like the taste of chilli pepper is down to cultural and physiological factors: "[that is] cultural processes lead to a hedonic reversal in which an innately aversive sensation becomes a pleasant sensation... They consume it because they like it" (Rozin, 2010: 402). In the quotation above, Jianjun connected consumption of chilli pepper with good-looking skin in Sichuan – the region often depicted associated with beauty. Zhangju and Weiwei, two young adults, connected consumption of chilli pepper with the personality of straightforwardness. Although there are no scientific proof for these two connections, the ideas inform local cultural narratives surrounding consumption of chilli pepper.

Turning to the provincial scale, that of Guangdong, chilli pepper is one common way that outsiders represent Nanxiong, located in the far northeast part of the province. According to Zhuzhu, the consumption of chilli peppers is one of the most obvious features that distinguishes Nanxiong from other parts of Guangdong. From the

quotations below, we can see that Nanxiong cuisine challenges general perceptions among Chinese people that 'Guangdong people don't eat spicy food'.

"Today is my first time eating this kind of cuisine, and until now I didn't realise that there are Cantonese people who eat spicy food. Some dishes are even hotter than [well-known] spicy Sichuan dishes. My previous perception was that both Cantonese and Hakka people avoid chilli peppers." (Qianqian, young woman, group interview, 09/01/2016)

"It [the royal goose (see Chapter 3.4.3)] is a famous dish in Guangdong [Province], and is a particular case in Guangdong cuisines. Because Cantonese food features light [taste], steaming [skill] and fresh [preference]... If the royal goose is well-promoted, everyone will want to try it and wonder what this spicy Guangdong dish is?" (Junjun, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

Guangdong people from outside Nanxiong generally find the spicy taste of Nanxiong dishes unpalatable at first. In my interview at the Yuebei Mansion restaurant in Guangzhou which serves Nanxiong cuisine (see Chapter 4.3.1), before the meal, Gangan from Gaozhou in west Guangdong, expressed concerns about the spiciness of dishes and his tolerance of intense spiciness. After trying pieces of spicy braised duck, he stopped and complained about the burning sensation of the chilli pepper (see also Rozin and Schiller, 1980: 3):

"I am not going to eat [more duck]. It is too spicy. I didn't realise it was spicy so I carelessly put the duck into my mouth faster and faster. I felt my whole mouth burning... The first bite was OK, but the second bite was too spicy." (Gangan, young man, group interview, 09/01/2016)

One of my informants, Kaikai, pointed out that Nanxiong borders on Jiangxi and Hunan Provinces, where chilli pepper eating habits are similar (young man, interview, 09/01/2016). However, Nanxiong is located in a Hakka region, its inhabitants are predominantly Hakka, and local customs are for the main part Hakka customs. That is to say, chilli pepper contributes to shaping Nanxiong as a non-pure Hakka county (see Chapter 3.3).

When it comes to strong stimuli, people's perception of embodied spicy tastes is distinct and can draw sharp or striking bodily responses (see Chapter 2.3.2). As Yoshioka et al. (2004: 991) write, "Capsaicin, the pungent principal of red pepper, is known to enhance energy metabolism via a stimulation of the sympathoadrenal system". This statement is supported by my fieldwork data: after the meal, one informant, a non-Nanxiong Guangdong person, felt that "spicy taste turned my belly upside down" and another participant said that he felt hot and found it difficult to urinate. This connects to Rozin and Schiller's argument that "the development of a chilli pepper preference is

accompanied by an affective shift" (Rozin and Schiller, 1980: 90). Taste for spiciness is cultivated as the eater becomes accustomed to it.

Zhuji Lane attracts tourists from the Pearl River Delta region for ancestor-worshiping activities (see Chapter 3.2.2). In this regard, to people from the Pearl River Delta, the identities they associate with Nanxiong as a place arise from their previous whatever struck them about their dining experiences of eating spicy dishes. When I asked about the situation of restaurants at Zhuji Lane, a local informant answered:

"Tourists are accustomed to eating here [in the restaurants]. They order dishes such as bean curd, fish, vegetable, goose. The goose here is good, but too spicy. Why do so many tourists still eat goose? [Because] they have this experience of eating intense spicy goose, which leaves a deep impression. Even the belly hurts after eating. Next time they will also bring friends to visit the restaurant again because of the good taste." (Zhuzhu, middle-aged man, interview, 15/05/2016)

It is possible that in the context of low or rural cuisine, people's opinion nowadays about food and taste tends to be less influenced by taste-makers such as journalists and cookery writers and more influenced by 'normal' diners, who have the power to construct narratives of taste. The case of Nanxiong extends the idea about terroir – the relationship between taste and place (Trubek, 2008: 21). As is reflected in the above quotation, the intense spiciness felt by outsider diners and this impressive and striking experience can to some degree function as a regional divide or boundary. That is, narratives of spicy taste are more apparent when making comparisons.

A blend of tastes includes an intense spicy taste and other seasonings (for example, sour bamboo shoots and the use of oil and salt), drawing a boundary around Nanxiong's overall flavour. van den Berghe (1984: 395) writes that ethnic cuisine "only becomes a self-conscious, subjective reality when ethnic boundaries are crossed". Similarly, this shows that the difference between flavours can be well appreciated when considering opinions from outsiders or people with experience of cuisines elsewhere. Qianqian is a young woman from Sichuan Province who spoke about chilli pepper in different cuisines in this comparative way:

"It is less oily and less salty than Sichuan food, so the spicy flavour is more prominent. However, this [style of] spiciness is not the same as the fresh spiciness in Sichuan cuisine; it is like the one in Hunan cuisine – a dry spiciness. Take the fried duck today as an example; the first bite is hot on the tip of the tongue, and the spicy taste is obvious. However, with fried duck in Sichuan, the first feeling on the tongue is salty, fragrant and crisp, and then slowly the spicy taste begins to spread out, which I call 'fragrant spicy'. So I think there's a temporal and hierarchical difference between the two cuisines." (Qianqian, group interview, 09/01/2016)

"I think the spicy taste in the dishes differs from that of our dishes: here I felt a spicy taste on the tip of the tongue and there is no Sichuan pepper in Nanxiong cuisine; while in my hometown, taste intensity of the spice is not strong so that the spiciness doesn't reach the tip of the tongue." (Qianqian, group interview, 09/01/2016)

Apparently, the spicy or hot flavour caused by capsaicin is a strong stimulus, which varies in effect in terms of age, region, and cultural background, in learning or acquiring of a taste for it (Anderson, 1988: 165). Many informants agree that a preference for spicy tastes can be learnt; as Gangan said:

"The capacity to eat spicy food can change. Someone who is not used to eating chilli peppers can learn to eat them when they go to a spicy region. It can be learnt gradually." (Young man, interview, 09/01/2016).

This echoes the view that the habit of eating chilli peppers is also influenced by family members from a young age (Rozin, 2010: 403). Cooking skills also influence the intensity of the spicy taste. One informant described how to cook chilli peppers:

"Stir-fry the chilli pepper until the spicy taste spreads out and then put the duck into the pot so as to get a very spicy duck. You won't get the pretty spicy taste if you don't stir-fry the chilli pepper in advance" (Qiqi, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 08/03/2016).

In sum, geographical nuance and association matter in narratives of eating spicy food in Nanxiong cuisine. The analysis of a set of neighbouring (regional) cuisines can provide insights into the narratives of difference in chilli pepper and spicy taste between Nanxiong cuisine and other cuisines in South China. This subsection has shown the situation of the contrasting and similar taste of chilli peppers between cuisines. It has argued that diners' understandings and experiences of familiar and frequently used ingredients impact upon their identities, and distinguish a regional cuisine from its neighbouring cuisines. These nuances reaffirm the distinctiveness of the cuisine and connect it to regional and local identity.

5.2.2 The impressive taste of sour bamboo shoots

"I like sour bamboo shoots very much." (Gangan, young man, group interview, 09/01/2016)

"My favourite is sour bamboo shoots, which are richer in flavour." (Qianqian, young woman, group interview, 09/01/2016)

"Sour bamboo shoots are also a characteristic ingredient of Nanxiong cuisine. I guess that it is because the mountain resources are not rich, and the sour and

spicy bamboo shoots can be appetizing." (Kaikai, young man, group interview, 09/01/2016)

All three informants above are from outside Nanxiong. Sourness is usually seen as a taste opposite to sweet (Auvray and Spence, 2008: 1018). At least in north China, perhaps due to the alkaline soil or lack of salt, people historically have preferred to eat sour food (Ru, 1992). Zhao (2006: 324) contends that sourness is the second most important (basic) taste after saltiness, adding that the sour "tastant" has an anti-corrosive function. Moreover, sourness is reported to have a refreshing mouthfeel and appetite-stimulating effect (Labbe et al., 2009: 2). To date, no social science research has discussed the distinct flavour attributes of sour bamboo shoots and their contribution to defining Nanxiong cuisine.

As we saw in Chapter 1.2.1 and Chapter 3.4.3, sour bamboo shoots represent another feature of Nanxiong flavour, and are a special sour tastant. They are particularly used as a seasoning ingredient in the south, where bamboo grows. And almost every cook is familiar with how to pickle it.

"The ways to make sour bamboo shoots are: First, collect cold water on the Winter solstice and add some salt. The reason for choosing this day is that the water on this day is believed to be the best for making sour bamboo shoots. Then add some old sour water used for pickling bamboo shoots last year." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 08/02/2016)

Obviously, sour bamboo shoots in Nanxiong cuisine challenge the western idea that "bitter and sour are evaluated negatively" (Osawa and Ellen, 2014: 87); rather, many locals believe sour bamboo shoots are fragrant. Chef Chang, the owner of a local restaurant, Jinyunge, told me, "Sour bamboo shoot is the tradition [of this place]". However, people who have never eaten them before are divided about their flavour: some like them very much but some find their smell repulsive.

To others, the smell of sour bamboo shoots is stimulating and impressive. It is frequently mentioned when discussing Nanxiong's household kitchens and restaurants, representing an embodied character or identity. One informant told me that,

"In Guangzhou or Shenzhen, if you smell this odour [sour bamboo shoot plus chilli pepper], you know it comes from dishes cooked by Nanxiong people. When I lived down there, I didn't know the neighbours, but I smelt the odour and I knew it was a Nanxiong household". (Xueyu, middle-aged man, interview, 08/03/2016)

The smell of sour bamboo shoots is an odour signifier of Nanxiong family kitchens. The dislocation of the odour signifier in Pearl River Delta cities (Guangzhou and Shenzhen in the above quotation) reaffirms the familiar flavours of Nanxiong cuisine. In fact, quite a few young informants who work in Pearl River Delta cities spoke of their memory of

the odour and taste of sour bamboo shoots during their occasional conversation about "eating back" at Nanxiong (Duruz, 2010). The smellscapes (Porteous, 1985) of sour bamboo shoots can be found in sites such as local restaurants, household kitchens and even Nanxiong Bus Station, where vendors sell *jiaoleici* and other foods.

"Personally, I am a disgusted by this taste and smell. I have a kind of fear of it. If the restaurant is not high level, when you go in, you will smell the odours of oil-smoke and sour bamboo shoots. It is these frequent odours that put you off." (Gang, middle-aged man, interview, 13/05/2016)

"I used to come back home on the long-distance bus. [I knew I was home when] I heard vendors shout the words – 'sour bamboo shoot, chilli pepper' [sunguo lazi 笋果辣子] at the service area." (Guang, young man, interview, 13/05/2016)

In addition, a taste of sourness can also be achieved from other foods, such as pickled vegetables like cabbage, eggplant, long beans, garlic and taro seedlings. These sour products are important because they represent Nanxiong's past food practices, which dealt with seasonal availability of vegetables, and particularly of food storage in winter.

Embodied food memory becomes denser as age increases. As Wu (2015) writes about a local saying: "When there is taro [served] for guests, the taro does not displease the throat. One bowl of taro is not too little; two are not too many [binjia you yuhe, yuhe bu yahou. Yiwan bu xianshao, liangwan bu xianduo 宾家有芋荷,芋荷不呀喉。一碗不嫌少,两碗不嫌多]". Taro sprouts are a popular appetizer for Nanxiong people, who relish their special flavour. Numerous local children grew up eating taro sprouts and have memories of their sour taste and chewiness, and many people fondly remember these childhood tastes.

Clearly, these strong and dense tastes, especially sour and spicy tastes, which cause sensory relocation by their traits of stimulating salivation, make it easier to generate an impressive sensory experience for building a "web of memories, stories, objects, tastes, processes, people and places that bridge time and space" (Choo, 2004: 212). My interview data show that several dishes, like braised duck, Meiling royal goose, dog, *jiaoleici* (yellow dumpling stuffed with pickles) and Nanxiong's flavoured seasonings, like sour bamboo shoots and taro sprouts, are valued for their unique tastes and missed by Nanxiong people when living elsewhere.

5.2.3 Constructing fragrant (xiang) taste in Nanxiong

The Chinese are said to have rich experience and deep knowledge when it comes to distinguishing between textures, taste intensity, taste combinations and odours.. Gao (2007: 1) writes that "Fragrant [yang] and umami [yin] which in combination formulate taste are two Chinese-cuisine-specific binary value standards". Fragrant taste is ambiguous and yet, to some degree, self-evident in the Chinese context. Fragrance

(xiang 香) is the most frequently used word to describe Chinese food within Chinese literature and on an everyday basis (Miller, 1984; Zhao, 1991: 23). Fragrant comes to refer to good taste and delicious dishes, with varied and fluid connotations under different conditions and to different people.

Another feature frequently mentioned during my fieldwork was that the Cantonese generally like "light and mild" tastes (Klein, 2007: 521), whereas Nanxiong people like to eat chilli pepper, a flavour-profile contrasting to those of other regions in Guangdong Province (see Chapter 1.2.1). In terms of taste intensity and amount of spice (seasoning), this can be framed as an apparent contrast or divide in overall flavour between heavy and light (see also Klein, 2007: 527). Some scholars discuss the divide between "a taste for the light versus a taste for the heavy", and link light with refined, urban, high status and heavy with substantial, rural, low status (Atkinson and Deeming, 2015: 877; Purhonen and Heikkilä, 2016). Three ideas were expressed by non-Nanxiong participants in the tasting group interview:

"It can be seen from the appearance that it is a heavy dish, and almost every dish has a deep dark colour, and we can see chilli peppers serving as the basic ingredients of the dishes." (Zizi, young woman, group interview, 12/01/2016)

"Accustomed to light and mild Cantonese dishes, I have really fallen in love with fragrant, spicy and salty Nanxiong food." (Caicai, young woman, group interview, 12/01/2016)

"In terms of taste, it is distinct from mild and light Cantonese and Chaoshan cuisines; [Nanxiong food] is rich in oil, thick in taste, and fragrant." (Chong, young man, group interview, 09/01/2016)

From the above quotes, we can see that Nanxiong cuisine and its featured dishes such as Meiling royal goose, duck with sour bamboo shoots and stir-fried field snails are experienced by respondents as very spicy and are described as having a heavy, fragrant taste profile.

Golden brown colour is often used as a visual indication of fragrant and heavy tastes. Cooking skills and ingredients themselves contribute to this sensory connection. Stirfrying the meat, fish and poultry such as duck and goose until it is golden brown, with lots of oil, is a primary step for many dishes, including soups; within this frying process, the fragrance from the meat fills the air creating a pleasant smell for people entering the kitchen. The skill of braising, a main cooking technique in many Nanxiong delicacies, is to cook the meat, vegetables, spices (e.g. various chilli peppers, star anise) and seasoning (e.g. soy sauce, rice wine) on low heat for a long time; braising generally makes the meat and vegetables turn brown or yellow in colour. Indeed, this is also spelt out in several places in the restaurant name and menu itself, including the two

characters for 'yellow' and 'braised', for example yellow braised duck, yellow braised fish. This can be partially explained with reference to "colour-induced taste enhancement", which means that, like written information and labelling, colours can evoke expectations that "affect taste intensity judgment" (Schifferstein and Verlegh, 1996: 102). Colour and taste connect in the eating experience and certain colours connote certain tastes.

"You can take a picture of dried duck. The golden yellow colour looks good." (Datou, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

"Jiaoleici is golden yellow and has a good-looking shape." (Fufu, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

The heavy taste discussed above is not a basic taste but a material and conceptual amalgamation of tastes, sights, textures, feelings and emotions. Overall, fragrant spiciness (*xiangla* 香辣) can be summarised as Nanxiong cuisine's major taste characteristic; in one newspaper article, Pu (2015) further refines four tastes/flavours of Nanxiong cuisine – sour, spicy, fresh, and fragrant. For another view, as chef Chang suggests,

"Nanxiong dishes are spicy and the spicy taste is strong and not static; it has an aftertaste in which you can feel the fragrance afterwards. And the aftertaste of spiciness differs from the fragrant spiciness in Hunan cuisine." (Middle-aged man, interview, 25/02/2016)

I will use some other cases to explain this further. First, when making braised meat (kourou 扣肉) one dices the pork and adds sliced taro and dried pickled cabbage. This dish is fatty but not greasy; it has a soft texture, which is particularly suitable for those elderly people with few or no teeth. Second, a recipe for fried dried rat mirrors the fragrant taste profile of the cuisine. Yeye, an elderly man, reported a typical recipe:

"Without many spices, you put together fried egg and fermented soya beans, chilli pepper, bean curd and cabbage. Stir-fry with rat meat. The dish is fragrant, spicy and very delicious." (Hakka, interview, 20/05/2016)

Other factors influencing the degree or intensity of fragrant taste are cooking skill, time, cooking devices and the use of firewood. One typical opinion is that that:

"The longer the time for braising or stir-frying meat, the more fragrant the meat will be." (Shengbo and Yunyun, middle-aged people, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016).

However, Nanxiong's fragrant taste and people's perceptions of it have changed along with the transition to modernity. This change comes about because of the availability of new seasonings, including MSG and sesame oil, as well as the import of other regional and foreign cuisines, which makes the foodscape more complicated. Because pickled

and dried cabbage is now consumed rarely, many adult informants point out the fragrant taste of these foods. Take dried cabbage's thick fragrance for example:

"Dried cabbage is made from seasonal vegetables; dry the vegetables [in the air or under sunlight] to remove 80% of the moisture, then chop and seal them into a bamboo joint for one to two months for the acidification process to take place. The best way is to cook it with bamboo shoots and you can smell the thick fragrance of the dish; it is also very resilient. If you transport the cooked dish to Guangzhou on a bus, on the road everyone can smell the fragrance coming out from it." (Gugu, elderly man, interview, 08/02/2016)

The skills of braising and stir-frying, perhaps more than anything else, reflect Nanxiong people's liking of a variety of tastes and textures – fragrant, soft, oily – within one dish, which is contrasted with the Cantonese preference for steaming and frying. The combination of fragrant with spicy and sour comprises the taste profile of Nanxiong cuisine and distinguishes it from neighbouring cuisines, especially Cantonese cuisine and Chaozhou cuisine. Referring to the taste literature, Nanxiong people's understanding and practice of fragrant taste provides a positive cultural and sensory representation of food and taste preference and consolidates cultural identity and distinctiveness (Falk, 1991: 757-758).

5.2.4 The flavour principle

Previous subsections have discussed the tastes of chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoots and the feature of fragrance in Nanxiong cuisine. This subsection combines these discussions. In terms of the flavour principle (see Chapter 2.2.1), as I discussed above, chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoots have been constructed as "notable ingredients" (Sajadmanesh et al., 2017) in Nanxiong cuisine, which serve to define the cuisine's overall flavour. The overall flavour gives the impression of one cuisine, both within the minds of locals and within the perceptions of outsiders:

"When the chili pepper meets sour bamboo shoot, the aroma of pepper and freshness of sour bamboo shoot are instantly activated; customers only feel combinations of pungency and freshness, freshness and aroma, aroma and acidity, acidity and sweet. Biting a piece of duck, customers will feel these tastes in the mouth and nasal cavity; they [tastes] are strong and thick.

Braised duck with sour bamboo shoots can be found somewhere, but only in Nanxiong it becomes a specialty. Because of the addition of sour bamboo shoots, spicy taste and pungency are improved and strengthened. Your appetite opens and you cannot stop putting the duck into your mouth. If you leave it and eat it during the following meal, serve it hot, then, you will find infinite [thick/delicious] flavour of this dish."

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These two paragraphs, extracted from the website of the Shaoguan Tourist Centre (2014), provide a general illustration of how the tastes of chilli peppers and sour bamboo shoots positively enhance their mutual intensity. Green et al. (2010: 732) write that "Studies have generally found sub-additivity, i.e., the sum of the perceived intensities of the component stimuli when tasted alone exceeded the perceived intensity of the mixture". Similarly, Nanxiong people think that with sour bamboo shoots, the intensity of spiciness is *stronger*. The quotations above about the blend of these two tastes illustrates what is often seen as "the hallmark of Chinese cuisine,... the complex web of tastes that combine and blend" (Nakayama and Kimura, 1998: 259). The mutually enhanced seasoning ingredients provide empirical evidence for how "a few key ingredients with specific flavors" of a regional cuisine can work together (Ahn et al., 2011: 4). Therefore, it may be argued that cuisine is predicated on a collective cultural understanding of a taste combination not just a single taste (Narayanan, 2016: 4).

The combination of these two seasonings is used widely in both family meals and restaurant dishes, and undoubtedly constitutes a "standardisation of taste" (Stahl, 2002: 930) in Nanxiong, but one which is not led by industrialisation, rather by everyday food practices of the local population. The chilli and sour bamboo shoot tastes are compatible, and are familiar tastes and flavours for local people within Nanxiong. What is more, using Rozin's idea of the flavour principle (1973), the combination of these two tastes has been abstracted, constructed and refined as the flavour principle for Nanxiong cuisine and its recipes. The flavour principle of these two characteristic flavours guides the cooking of (new) ingredients and dishes, which enlarges the 'culinary possibilities' of this cuisine. For example, as with the recipe for braised duck with sour bamboo shoots, people can cook goose, chicken, dog, field snails and even wild animal meat (instead of the duck) in the same recipe, and as a result, they can have a similar flavour

"Nanxiong has picturesque scenery, and is suitable for raising good-quality duck whose meat is thick and soft. Duck is braised with sour bamboo shoots and chilli peppers: the first step is to fry duck pieces until they become golden brown, and then stew them until they are well done, so that the sourness of the sour bamboo shoots and pungency of the chilli peppers completely immerse the duck pieces. In the end, the dish smells good, without a fishy smell, and is acid but not greasy, and increases your appetite." (Shaoguan Tourist Centre, 2014)

The foundational seasonings of local cuisine are used as "a kind of cooking technique to simplify the cooking activity" (Sukenti et al., 2016: 195) – they come to signify Nanxiong cuisine no matter what is cooked, or how. Moreover, the case of Nanxiong suggests that the seasonings can even be abstracted and simplified as the signifier

²⁰ Shaoguan is the prefectural city of which Nanxiong county forms a part.

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of a cuisine, household kitchen, restaurant and even the place itself and its people. It was not uncommon to hear that Nanxiong is known for sour bamboo shoots and chilli peppers (*Nanxiong jiu shi sunguo lajiao* 南雄就是笋果辣椒). This might be due to the easily recognisable taste and smell of these two seasoning ingredients and their ubiquity, especially in the archetypal regional dishes.

This is not to say that other common spices in Chinese cuisine do not contribute to the flavours of Nanxiong dishes. The most frequently used spices are ginger, anise, dried tangerine or orange peel, garlic, cinnamon and cardamom (*caoguo* 草果). Commonly used seasonings include soy sauce, oyster sauce, liquor and edible starch. The cuisine is sufficiently flexible to accommodate other tastes, but these do not over rule the flavour principle.

However, Kaikai, a young man from Huizhou in Guangdong Province, believes that the flavouring skills in Nanxiong cuisine are not as complicated as in some cuisines such as that of Chaozhou. Chaozhou cuisine from the east of Guangzhou Province is "known for its seafood, sweet dishes and the numerous condiments that go with the cooking" (Chen, 2001: 22). By comparison, after tasting Nanxiong dishes in Yuebei Mansion in Guangzhou, Kaikai opined that, "Generally speaking, Nanxiong cuisine mainly uses chicken, duck and goose, and doesn't use many aquatic products; it is heavily oiled, and frequently uses ginger and onion. The seasoning is salty." The question of the apparent simplicity of Nanxiong cuisine relates to the discussion below about rural and 'low' cuisine.

Nanxiong people like to use the dialect term 'cu flavour' (*cuwei* 杂味), which lacks an adequate translation even in Mandarin.²¹ It broadly refers to flavours being mixed in a harmonious way. Wusan's understanding of *cu* flavour is:

"Spicy, fragrant and salty, heavy taste, full of colour, fragrance and taste. The *cu* is Nanxiong's sour bamboo shoots, chilli pepper, sand ginger, anise, fragrant leave, fragrant fruit, *yujiao* 鱼椒 [a local aquatic plant leaf]. That makes for a very strong taste." (Middle-aged man, interview, 17/04/2016).

Wusan argued that it is this taste of Nanxiong that is liked by Nanxiong people. Chef Chang explained that "Nanxiong's local flavour is invented". The expression and narrative of *cu* flavour greatly synthesises Nanxiong's flavour principle.

In sum, other than the particular flavour combination of chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoots, the emphasis on fragrance is another significant feature of Nanxiong cuisine. On the whole, *cu* taste, a blend of various seasonings and spices, is the common expression and narrative used by local people to refer to Nanxiong cuisine. The flavour

 $^{^{21}}$ Cu is the transliteration from Nanxiong's dialect. The Mandarin pronunciation of this character is za 杂.

principle and *cu* flavour in Nanxiong cuisine reflect a key feature of Chinese cuisine – "a balanced flavor spectrum" (Nakayama and Kimura, 1998: 259). This section has provided narratives of diners from inside and outside Nanxiong regarding the flavour principle, and argues that a boundary with neighbouring cuisines is drawn from material differences and diners' embodied experience of these familiar seasonings and ingredients.

In particular, it extends our understanding of the flavour principle (Ahn et al., 2011; Rozin, 1973), and suggests in particular that if there are contrasting or striking flavours, they easily draw and re-affirm the boundary between cuisines. This is seen in the case of Nanxiong, where the striking flavour of spiciness causes conflicts in terms of people's identity with the cuisine. On the one hand, in terms of administrative divisions and people's identity, Nanxiong people are Guangdong people, and most informants believe Nanxiong cuisine belongs also to Guangdong cuisine. On the other hand, since there are contrasts between Nanxiong cuisine and other Guangdong cuisines, and similarities between Nanxiong cuisine and neighbouring provinces' cuisines in terms of flavour, many informants agree that Nanxiong cuisine is peculiar in Guangdong and strongly influenced by neighbouring provinces' cuisine. I have seen from my own informants that this situation is enhanced by the pursuit of fragrance (from frequent use of stir-frying) and similar food choices (such as depending more on wild foods and less on seafood, see the next section) and geographical proximity. The case contributes to the understanding of culinary boundary conflict as it is worked through via the preparation and consumption of food (Cesaro, 2000).

5.3 Food choices and the mountain context

The previous section talked about Nanxiong cuisine from the perspective of the flavour principle. However, discussions on the flavours of regional cuisine should be extended from basic tastes, into food preference and food choice. Collective food habits or preferences are shaped by the ecology and culture of a place, and reflect the "wisdom of culture" (Fischler, 1980: 938). In addition, locality is also an important factor in food choice when analysing Chinese regional cuisines; Chen (1994: 226) writes that, "Regional differences and types in terms of material resources influence food ingredients and people's flavour and habits". There is a famous Chinese saying: "[those living] close to mountains eat [wild] mountain [foods]; [those living] close to the sea eat sea [foods] (kaoshan chishan kaoshui chishui 靠山吃山靠水吃水)".

This section discusses the role of wild mountain foods, including animal and edible plants in Nanxiong cuisine (Section 5.3.1). With a focus on both past and present, I discuss how the consumption of wild food (particularly animals) reflects people's requirements and desires for non-common food. Section 5.3.2 discusses people's

involvement with the mountain context. We will see that people's involvement with the environment and experience of collecting and consuming wild food shape place-making.

5.3.1 Preference for wild mountain foods

Some other cuisines in China (particularly in the south) adopt wild mountain foods like bamboo shoots, mushrooms, wild boar, river fish, brown pepper and anise as part of their culinary culture (Anderson, 1988: 166-167). As we saw in Chapter 3.4, Nanxiong has developed a preference for and dependence upon mountain wild foods, which is one of the features of Hakka cuisine (Rao, 2014). Frequent use of wild animals and plants makes Nanxiong cuisine distinct from seafood-dependent Cantonese and Chaozhou cuisines, for example.

Most informants agreed that wild mountain wild foods taste better. Wusan, a middleaged man quoted above, discussed the taste of river fish from his cooking and eating experience. When I asked him what the difference was between sea fish and river fish, he responded,

"[Sea fish] have a more resilient texture, which tastes like canned fish... River fish have the taste of fresh air. River fish soup is also whiter; you can get all-white soup without the need to add any [spice or seasoning]." (Wusan, interview, 17/04/2016)



Figure 5.2 Catching river fish. Source: author.

Guo (2003: 5, 7) says that Guangdong people consume one third of total consumption of wild animal meat in China. They believe, further, that the consumption of wild animals is fashionable, and even 'green'. One reason I heard during my fieldwork is that local people are bored of normal meat, so they try hard to get something 'odd' to satisfy their stomachs. This is easily seen with the fast-growing prices of various wild animals.

"The price of wild cattle [shanniu 山牛] meat is at least 160-200 yuan per kilogram which is at least double the price of normal beef. It is said that if caught hunting and selling wild cattle, you will get fined 200 thousand yuan and the meat will be confiscated. Nowadays, once one wild cattle has been hunted, all the meat is quickly bought over the telephone; wild products are so popular that you will find little wild cattle meat in the market." (Baibai, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 21/02/2016)

Consistent with families' growing economic well-being, many informants were enthusiastic about broadening and changing regular and daily food choices, from wild

food bought in the market to raised animal like dog in the village, from river fish caught by themselves or friends to new foods imported from other regions and from abroad. They were moreover *experts* in cooking these rare foods:

"In a dinner for five to six honoured guests, Wusan prepared rare foods: fresh river fish and bitter bamboo-shoots collected by friends in the countryside. The host family constantly toasted the guests to show the family's hospitality." (Field note, 17/04/2016)

"My wife is good at cooking spiny frog [shiwa 石蛙]. There are two ways to make Chinese spiny frog – deep-frying and steaming. You can steam it with egg or deep-fry it with chilli pepper. You get two different good tastes." (Xiaoxiao, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 17/04/2016)

There are some special preparation skills spreading across the county used in the cooking of wild animals. For example, dry straw collected after the rice harvest is essential fuel for burning field rat (as well as snake) before cooking. Local people, particularly the middle-aged and elderly, had much to say in terms of stories, strategies, and information about wild animals, which they circulated among their peers and in their friendship circles (see also Drury, 2009: 151). Those who are knowledgeable gain 'face' (mianzi 面子), a type of social capital. Frequent talk about wild animal meat within this peer circle responds to Klein's argument (2007: 514) that "this discourse [talk about food] is crucial to the maintenance of a cuisine".

"[To kill the pangolin] you have to fling it on the ground because it shrinks into itself like a basketball. When its body loosens, cut its tongue. Do not cut its neck. Its blood is a treasure and good for pregnant woman to produce breast milk." (Bobo, middle-aged man, group interview, 08/04/2016)

Because hunting and collecting wild animals is arduous and dangerous and because sometimes it happens at night, this job is always done by men. The knowledge of wild animals is obtained through people's experience of collecting different kinds of animals and is handed down from generation to generation; it forms part of daily conversation among Hakka men. These behaviours and embodied experiences as local culinary practices are however disappearing with urbanisation. For example, one man discussed with me different ways to catch deer and wild boar.

"[If caught in a mouse trap], a deer dares not move because it is afraid of being hurt. If its foot is pinched by the trap, the wild boar loosens its foot and escapes. It can walk off using three feet. The best way is to put cloth in an [iron] trap in order not to pinch off the animal's foot." (Bobo, middle-aged man, interview, 14/04/2016)

"Wild boar bones are stronger and bigger; it is difficult to cut them, even with a professional knife. It sparks when cutting... To escape from enemies, wild boar are

known to fart, and stand their hair on end." (Fangfang, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

In terms of food knowledge, some women told me they obtained information, either consciously or unconsciously, about the geographical distribution of mushrooms in their everyday work in the mountains. This is because Hakka women participate in more outdoor work than their counterparts of other groups, earning a reputation for being industrious. They know the material character of food such as its colour, shape, form, taste, and so on. This information is shared with other women in the village or region as domestic female knowledge. However, young people might not have enough patience to walk into the mountains and push through bushes to collect mushrooms.

"There are no mushrooms in deeply decayed wood. Mushrooms tend to grow on less decayed wood... [Mushrooms] are delicious... As for young people, they probably complain about the difficult journey involved in walking in the mountains." (Chanchan, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 19/03/2016)

We should not neglect the role wild-plant collecting has on the construction of local identities and experience. In Nanxiong streetscapes before New Year, lots of local stores sell wild mountain foods, including dried mushrooms (the most popular mushrooms are from Youshan, a mountain town in Nanxiong county); the taste of mushroom contributes to the construction of a 'New Year Taste' (see Chapter 8.4.2). Nowadays local people collect wild edible plants as a hobby on an occasional basis: Wusan and his family picked mushrooms whilst on a drive in the down mountains. This way, they enjoyed a delicious wild dish, adding 'freshness' to the everyday meal.

Particularly in the past, collecting wild animals and edible plants were everyday activities in rural life. In winter people usually climbed the mountains to dig for bamboo shoots or collect mushrooms. Other animals included clam, crab, rice-field snail, loach, shrimp, Chinese spiny frog and snake. They found them in the mountains and in rivers and ponds (Nanxiong, 2016). Rural households endowed these foods and their collection with emotions and local cultural identity, particularly because they were born of economic hardship and food scarcity (Knight, 2014: 184). As Qiqi described:

"Catching loach followed the ploughing work in April and May. At night, as a group of kids we went to nearby fields to catch loach... It's funny, very funny... My sister used the special tool to seize the rice-field eel and then put it in the basket. And I caught mud crabs. It was all dark and we would fall over and get wet because we were too young to keep our feet." (Middle-aged woman, interview, 18/04/2016)

The role of wild mountain food in cuisine has changed over time. The preference for mountain products was not as strong in previous decades as it is today, even if these foods made up a larger proportion of people's diets in the past than they do today.

Although there was greater availability and a greater range of wild food previously, one reason for its lower level of popularity was that people could not cook good quality wild-food dishes because they did not have access to the necessary range of seasonings, spices or oils to get various good flavours. Oil is a good taste enhancer (Nakayama and Kimura, 1998: 258). For those with memories of eating mountain food out of necessity, there was little to relish:

"We didn't have oil to cook the spiny frog dish, so we didn't eat it. Without oil, the dish would be fishy. To tell the truth, in the past we collected field rat, and without oil, it was not good… We didn't have spices like anise [bajiao 八角], sand ginger [shajiang 沙姜] and fragrant leaves with which we could stew wild meat. We just boiled it in hot water. People didn't cook the soup as they do now." (Lange, middleaged man, Hakka, interview, 25/05/2016)

"There used to be lots of spiny frogs. They lived in places with lots of grasses and plants. Using fire as a light to catch frogs might burn the plants and nobody could put out the fires. For river crabs, the shell is stiff; only those diners ready to pick at it would eat it." (Gugu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 19/03/2016)

"We were too well fed to eat spiny frog. In the past, we caught small frogs that weighed two *liang* [0.1 kg] and cut them in half. When they were cooked, their feet still shook. That made me almost vomit." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

For the younger generations, however, wild mountain foods have become fashionable, carrying culinary cultural capital and being associated with specialised food knowledge, the taste of local distinctiveness and novelty. To this extent, the meanings of these foods has been reinvented from necessity to luxury and from tradition to novelty (Warde, 1997). This revaluing must be understood as relating to the context of Hakka place-identity.

5.3.2 The mountain context

Another name for Hakka is mountain guest (*shanke* 山客), indicating their intimate relations with the mountains. As described in Chapter 3.2.1, Nanxiong is a mountainous county, which provides a natural context for Nanxiong cuisine and human-place relationships. The elderly and rural people in particular have many stories and have developed intimate emotions, identities and memories in the setting of hometown mountains and rivers. To start with, it is obvious that the living environment and activity space of people largely overlap with those of animals and plants, creating inclusive and corporeal human-nature interactions (Peyton, 2015: 16). Three male villagers told the stories of catching Chinese spiny frogs, and the vivid experiences they had of the dangerous conditions, natural environment, landscape, and embodied knowledge:

"I saw a spiny frog squatting in front of a stone wall. I took a stone and hit the frog. When I brought it back to the house, it slowly came back to life, because frogs have very strong vitality." (Lulu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 04/04/2016)

"Several year ago I was catching spiny frog with another villager. We heard there was a frog on the river bed, and we slowly approached it. I was just trying to get my hands on a river's edge with the help of my mate and to avoid getting my shoes wet. At that moment I raised an eye upwards to see a ratsnake crawling down the branch of a tree; we were both so scared then." (Baobao, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 04/04/2016)

"Snakes start to wake up around the time of the Tomb-sweeping Festival. Hunting snake is a scary task. Nowadays we usually wear long trousers and socks to catch spiny frogs to cover our bodies and to avoid the snakes. Snakes are dangerous and sensitive to wind and heat brought on by people's movements. There is even one kind of local poisonous snake that is not afraid of fire. They eats grasshoppers, rats and tiny snakes." (Baibai, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 04/04/2016)

Mountain elements like bamboo and water are also used in local food practice, creating a number of specialities. Bamboo is abundant in this region. When asked whether a plastic bottle or bamboo container is a better for making pickled vegetables, Yunyun said that:

"Large-size bamboo containers are better and more authentic; they contribute to the flavour of the pickled vegetable." (Middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 08/02/2016).

With regard to making sour bamboo shoots, Sensen, middle-aged man, said the water should be "well water" and should ideally come "from mountains in the hottest period of summer" (middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 08/02/2016). Here local resources are a further benefit for the local cuisine.

However, local people have complicated attitudes and identities towards catching wild animals. Fangfang and Chiji, two informants who had experience of catching various wild animals said that people should be cautious not to catch and kill too many. Another experienced hunter stopped catching wild animals after he saw a deer which he felt was crying like a human baby. Embedded in rural living, there are some stories associated with wild animals that influence people's behaviour and beliefs. Therefore, not only locality and food ingredients, but people's perceptions of local context exert an influence on the cuisine and on food practices.

"But it is OK if the deer is killed by a dog; otherwise you had better release it. It is not auspicious to catch and eat a deer that appears in the village. The story is that once upon a time, one deer escaped into the village, chased by a tiger. It was

hidden and saved by a villager. Later, the village had a landslide and [the mountain] was about to collapse; this deer appeared again and fought with another deer at the entrance to the village, which attracted all the villagers to watch the fight. Once everyone had come out, the hillside collapsed and the village was buried underneath. The deer saved the village." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

To sum up, the fact that Hakka people live close to mountains and eat mountain foods is reflected not only in their preference for wild foods (including both animals and edible plants), but also in their close, embodied relationship with the natural, mountainous environment. It shows that people's attitudes and tastes for wild mountain animals have been fluid over time. The variety of oil and other spices used nowadays partly contributes to this change. The changing situation follows Weiss' understanding of interconnections of taste and place as a "given feature of locality and foodways" (2011: 441). Nowadays, with the great increase in meat consumption, wild foods as local delicacies are widely welcomed, cooked with various oils and spices that were unavailable to earlier generations.

This section questions the existing literature on wild foods (Drury, 2009; Kang et al., 2012; Marouf et al., 2015). According to these studies, people generally think wild meat is a prestige food, delicious and healthy, that shows off wealth and status making it a good gift in maintaining relationships. This section shows that these positive connotations were not always evident, however; wild food is not delicious if cooked without oil, for example, or if eaten through necessity rather than choice.

5.4 A taste of rural cuisine

Nanxiong cuisine is definitely not haute cuisine. It is composed by the people who have lived in Nanxiong county over many generations, having moved there as part of the great migration of Hakka people from the Central Plains of China (see Chapter 3.3). This section analyses the features of cuisine which mirror this sense of Nanxiong's rurality. This is because country ways are significant a feature and image of Nanxiong cuisine. Section 5.4.1 discusses the countryside and rural material features with regard to the cuisine. It discusses the attitude and identity of local people towards country-style ways of living and rural culture. Section 5.4.2 deals with modern changes; the pulses of modernity can be seen to be shaping the image of the cuisine.

5.4.1 Roles of the rural in Nanxiong cuisine

The rural context of Nanxiong is itself seen to contribute to the local cuisine's distinctiveness. Natural feedstuff and local weather are seen as enhancers of a food's flavour. This echoes the view that weather and the local environment (soil and water in

the Chinese context) add to the distinctive quality of local food products (Mansfield, 2003). Here is two examples for what make good duck and sausage. Here is a WeChat article discussing what make good duck and sausage:

"It must be a farm duck, and it must be raised for more than half a year. It must be fed with grain, grass and green vegetables. Pork sausage must be made from locally raised pig and only pig's small intestine should be used. [The intestine] is cleaned from the inside and retains only a thin layer of skin. Stuffed meat is preserved with salt, soy sauce, sugar and over 50 percent proof *erguotou* spirit [a type of Chinese spirit]. So compared to that in southern parts of Guangdong, Nanxiong dried sausage has stronger texture and taste, with low taste intensities of salt and sweet. [The best weather conditions are] frost, sunlight and windy days. That's when we can get the most salty and umami dried foods." (Wu, 2015)

Note that the duck 'must' be a farm-raised animal fed on local produce, the pork for the sausages must also be local, and the weather conditions are seen to directly affect the taste of the product. Perceived natural traits make sense, gradually forming the "agreed-upon ways" for good food and cooking amongst almost all of the population (Mintz, 1996: 103). These traits are partially constructed. For example with goose dishes (see Chapter 3.4.3), the bird has always been depicted by restaurant owners and chefs as free range: geese are raised in natural ponds, rivers and fields and fed with water plants, etc. The slow-growing nature and strong body of meat and poultry products are constructed as free range traits and linked to locality. According to some informants, the best goose is locally raised in Meiling town.

"My goose was raised from last May and [after one year] it is four or five *jin* [two to two and a half kg] now. I set the price of up to 150 *yuan* per goose. Good-quality livestock must not be too heavy. It is difficult to catch a goose because when you try to catch it, it is scared and flutters away. When I feed it, I regularly whistle; my way to catch it is to use the whistle to trick it." (Jiang, middle-aged man, interview, 02/05/2016)

Rural cuisine in the contemporary period is not necessarily equivalent to poor-quality food ingredients. Notions like free range revalue traditional rural ways of raising livestock. In Europe, free-range meat is believed to have "juiciness and other organoleptic qualities" (Miele, 2017: 2076), to involve higher levels of animal welfare and to be more environment-friendly. For Nanxiong locals, there are some distinctive characteristics frequently associated with free-range foodstuffs: compared with industrially raised livestock, people associate free-range livestock with more 'fragrant' flavour, the mouthfeel of textured-meat and stronger more fragrant smell (for both soup and meat).

Although by no means unique to Nanxiong county, the countryside image or flavour of the cuisine is further strengthened by material kitchenware. This is particularly true when

it comes to dishes cooked in the villages. Generally, they use rural-style soil-brick stoves and large pots, firewood collected in the mountain (for example, dried bamboo and pine needles) and wooden cutting boards made from large trees. The properties of this kitchenware are in line with the dish itself: for example, cooking with a big pot on a brick stove provides enough space and heat to fry ingredients on all sides, achieving a different effect to a normal pot, as one informant, Long told me (middle-aged man, interview, 10/02/2016). Kitchenware and cooking techniques take on rural characteristics as much as ingredients and dishes: they are country ways of cooking.

There are no records, and no documents outside the kitchen to archive these culinary habits; the cuisine has been developed by local people over many generations rather than by professional chefs for the royal court or as haute cuisine (Rao et al., 2003). The participants I spoke with value the material taste itself and do not pay much attention to the dish's appearance, nor to the serving and eating environment, which can be referred to using words such as simple, earthy and unelaborate. For example, royal goose is served in an unelaborate iron pot. Unlike Cantonese cuisine, the dish is usually served on large plates, which was said to show Nanxiong people's hospitality and honesty. These features were related by my respondents to past times of economic hardship. On this note, Ming, a young man, focused on historical Hakka traits:

"But looking at the royal goose in Meiling, it should be massive, rough, and served in a basin. If cooked in the Cantonese style, it is impossible to get this effect: no original taste can be achieved, although [using Cantonese skills] can make it beautiful. The key feature of this dish is its [big] size and the fact that it is unelaborately made." (Ming, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

"Uncle brought me to eat fish at an unimpressive restaurant in the city-centre market. The restaurant is his favourite. The restaurant is actually a normal street-side shop, with two rooms; it is very simple and the toilet is badly maintained. Because it is close to the busy market, the front of the restaurant is dirty. Uncle said the fish was really good compared to other restaurants and his friends introduced it to him. He said that if he was inviting a guest or government official for dinner he would change to a better-decorated restaurant. He seemed not to care about the poor restaurant environment but instead cared about the taste." (Field note, 25/01/2016)

The restaurant dining environment is not led by professional or school-trained chefs and is not as refined as haute cuisine. At this stage, the image of the countryside is also strengthened by wild foods and associated stories discussed in the previous section.

As in Japan, the image and taste of the countryside is the representation "symbolizing nature with soil and water" (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994: 120). Cheung (2005) concludes, in the context of Hong Kong, that cuisine mirrors the urbanites' search for "home". Low

cuisine or rural cuisine has developed its own aesthetic and pursuits in the context of modernity and urbanisation. My informants had their own attitudes regarding the material feature of ingredients, which might be ignored by outsiders. For example, Yeye thought transversely sliced cuttlefish had a curly shape that made it look beautiful; Fufu said the sliced pieces of pork in braised-meat dishes were placed well. We can understand this in terms of locals' attempts to romanticise countryside image and taste, a notion compatible with rural tourism's efforts to "satiate people's desire to experience the romanticized charms of rural living" (Che, 2015: 85).

"[In terms of appearance] red chilli pepper is easier to match with other ingredients than green chilli pepper... The white of tofu, brown of fried fish, red of chilli pepper and the colour of vegetables construct a colourful picture. It's beautiful." (Qiqi, middle-aged woman, interview, 18/03/2016)



Figure 5.3 "Beautiful" image of combination of bean curd and fish in the eyes of Qiqi. Source: author.

We can see from the quotation above that the combination of the shimmer from the use of oil, different colours from the different ingredients used and the inclusion of various spices are all example of a harmonious combination. Yet the impact of urbanisation and modernity can be seen to threaten rural traditions (Cheung, 2013). As urbanisation proceeds, there is a need to selectively preserve some ingredients, culinary skills and pragmatism-based aesthetic in authentic Nanxiong cuisine. The revaluing of rural

culinary culture by younger generations offers this possibility of preserving country ways and encouraging new audiences to enjoy these traditions, as discussed below.

This subsection analysed what rural features and styles contribute to the nature of Nanxiong cuisine and how the local population perceive these. The cuisine features rural styles, such as natural feedstuff for raising livestock and growing vegetables, home-style cooking, natural firewood, unrefined and unaesthetic appearance of the dishes. These rural features contribute to the construction of ideas about the natural quality of food ingredients and authentic dining environments.

5.4.2 When rural meets modern

According to my informants, the abundance of wild mountain foods, especially wild animals, is decreasing. Frequently mentioned animals at danger are wild cattle and pangolin (chuanshanjia 穿山甲). Binbin, a middle-aged man, said, "There were wild cattle and pangolin in the past, but now there aren't any. Only a few animals have not become extinct. Nowadays there are still wild boar and goat". However, regulations exist today that protect the pangolin and other rare wild animals, and some restaurants providing these foods have been fined by the authorities. The absence of wild animals has a twofold effect. One is soaring prices. Liang, a middle-aged man, said that the price of a tortoise is as high as 2500 yuan (around £300) each. Two middle-aged men talked about these changes to the material environment:

Bobo: At that time [1980s] there was still pangolin, but since the disappearance of pine forests, the number of pangolin has declined.

Binbin: Pangolins appeared everywhere, including in bamboo forests. Since the disappearing of tea-tree forests in the 1990s, the number of pangolin has declined. (Group interview, 08/04/2016)

Another effect is that the younger generations do not have many embodied experiences of observing, catching, and eating these animals. For instance, the younger generation do not know how to kill a pangolin. At the same time, the preference for rural ingredients is changing according to living standards. For example, Yunyun argued that they used to prefer pork from pig raised with fodder in a factory rather than free-range pig. The former contained more lean content and was believed to taste better a decade ago, when people didn't frequently eat pork. But now the situation has reversed: people prefer free-range pork.

Animal organs are popular as food ingredients. Apart from pork intestine and stomach, cattle organs (stomach, lung and intestine) are popular delicacies. In a low cuisine in an urbanising and modernising environment, the practices of "making use of every part of the animal" change from a sole necessity to a culinary cultural habit (Gvion, 2006: 309). Ping referred to his preference for fish bladder: "Particularly for those big fish that weigh

10 to 20 *jin* (5 to 10 kg), the bladder tastes pretty good and has a good texture, like pig intestine". Again, we see here that elements of 'low' cuisine can be revalued and repositioned as delicacies for culinary adventurers.

Consistent with rapid urbanisation, the natural and countryside traits of the material ingredients are threatened by pollution:

"These fish are farmed in the pond... People say that you had better not eat the fish sold by guys from Shaoguan and Youshan [a town in Nanxiong county]; their ponds are close to highways. On raining days, all the oil leaks from vehicles and is mixed with rain and flows into the ponds. In this case, the fish taste like diesel and gasoline. The taste is so obvious that you want to throw it away after one bite." (Qiqi, middle-aged woman, interview, 21/04/2016)

As urbanisation proceeds, local people begin to romanticise about rural lifestyles and rural cuisine (Che, 2015: 85). There are various changes brought on by modern living that modify or undermine the ingredients and the cuisine such as a reduction in the number of wild animals and the spread of pollution.

To sum up, Nanxiong cuisine is a low, rural and pragmatic cuisine. This section responds to Cheung's concept of 'low' cuisine (2005). He contends that low cuisine implies the use of "inexpensive, ordinary and local homestyle food" which is "prepared simply and served and eaten daily" in local neighbourhoods (Chan, 2010; Cheung, 2005). Nanxiong cuisine devalues the significance of stylised food preparation and presentation, which is inconsistent with the most frequent Chinese judgement of what constitutes a good dish, with its emphasis on colour, aroma and taste (e.g. Zhu, 1999). We should see some local ingredients, culinary skills and pragmatism-based aesthetic as cultural heritage at the centre of authentic Nanxiong cuisine and in need of preservation – though its rediscovery and revaluation by younger generations suggests that the country ways of cooking may survive, even thrive, under modernity (Cheung, 2013).

5.5 Conclusion

Nanxiong cuisine has the particular flavour principle of spicy taste (chilli peppers) and sour taste (sour bamboo shoots). Nanxiong people like to use the dialect phrase 'cu flavour' to summarise the main flavour principle of their cuisine. This refers to a blended or mixed taste that involves the use of a number of seasonings and spices. Nanxiong cuisine also stresses fragrance. Many informants agree that Nanxiong flavours are similar to those in neighbouring spicy cuisines such as those in Hunan and Jiangxi provinces and think this spiciness makes the cuisine highly distinctive within Guangdong Province and Hakka. The habit of eating chilli peppers contributes to shaping Nanxiong as a non-pure Hakka county.

The use of wild mountain foods (animals and edible plants) is another feature of this cuisine and highlights one feature of Hakka cuisine: that is "depending on mountain foods" (Rao, 2014). People have developed close embodied relationships with natural, wild mountain foods, including sharing knowledge and stories about them. The principles of wild mountain foods and seasoning ingredients co-celebrate "the qualities of *terroir*" (Jacobs, 2009). In addition, Nanxiong cuisine has a countryside and rural style; cooking utensils, for example, are based on rural living and the rural environment. Moreover, Nanxiong cuisine emphases natural foods, inexpensive ingredients, and focuses more on taste than appearance.

The chapter elaborates people's understandings of and identity in relation to the flavour principle (both single flavour and particular combination). It concludes that the role of seasoning is not just to simplify the cooking (Sukenti et al., 2016: 195), but can be abstracted and simplified as the important signifier of the cuisine, whether cooked and eaten in the household kitchen or at a local restaurant. Flavours and seasoning become connected with the place and people themselves. This is probably due to the easily recognisable smell of the seasonings that are used (for example, the strong, pungent smell of sour bamboo shoots), which mean that one can smell them from a distance. Nanxiong people express a positive attitude regarding this particular flavour combination: some informants even suggested that Nanxiong (the cuisine and the city *is* sour bamboo shoots and chilli pepper.

The case contributes to our understanding of culinary boundary conflicts (Cesaro, 2000: 233-234). Wu (2005: 272-273) argues that differences in certain festivals and special foodways create a "local regional boundary" or "exclusive regional and lineage identities". I argue that contrasting and striking flavours contribute to the construction and experience of boundaries between neighbouring cuisines in everyday food and eating too. The striking flavour of chilli pepper embeds its cuisine firmly in Nanxiong as place and makes it very different from other general Hakka and Guangdong cuisines.

The second conclusion from my discussion in this chapter is that the consumption of and preference for wild mountain foods as local delicacies is not fixed, which goes against prevailing arguments in the existing literature (Drury, 2009; Kang et al., 2012; Marouf et al., 2015). Most of the existing literature portrays wild animals and edible plants as rare, nutritious, healthy, delicious foods or gifts. I argue that these portraits are not given, and that people's preference for wild meat changes across time (Section 5.3). Until recently, wild meat was not rare; it was cheap and it complemented poultry and domestic meat; informants such as Lange said that, without oil and other seasoning and spices as taste enhancers, the wild meat was not good. Nowadays, the re-fashioning of wild meat can be partly attributed to the boredom people have with domestic meat

consumption and the greater availability of oil and spices, as well as with the search for culinary novelty and nostalgia for past traditions.

The third conclusion is that Nanxiong cuisine is described by informants as best experienced when served in local households or country-style restaurants, adding to its image as a form of home cuisine (Yoshino, 2010: 7). This feature partly explains why it may be difficult to polish or refine low or rural cuisine (also see Chapter 6.2.2). Low cuisine implies that it uses local, ordinary, inexpensive ingredients that do not involve professional culinary skill and that it is not served in fine dining spaces, in contrast to haute cuisine (Chan, 2010; Cheung, 2005: 261). Instead it comes from domestic kitchens and local restaurants rather than grand hotels. We can see from the case of poonchoi (diverse layers of foods in a bowl) in Hong Kong (Shing, 2007), there is potential to popularise and refashion this cuisine in the urban context. This is because, with refined skills and increasing amounts of seasoning, rural cuisine can provide tasty and healthy food and its outlets become a desirable eating environment for urban people. The modern changes to the foodways of this cuisine will be discussed in Chapter 6.1 and 6.2.

In terms of the first of the cross-cutting themes that I introduced in Chapter 1.4.1, I argue here that, especially in an everyday context, place is a vital shaper of cuisine, more so even than ethnicity. Spicy taste is rare in most Hakka cuisines in other regions, and Nanxiong people develop a strong identity based on the particular combination of spiciness and sourness and the spicy signature dishes in local restaurants and home cooking. The flavour principle should be understood in relation to place and identity, as well as ingredients and tastes.

Chapter 6 Changing practices and food-related lifestyles in Nanxiong

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the flavour principle, special food choices associated with wild mountain foods, and the ways that Nanxiong cuisine embodied countryside and home styles. However, the flavour principle and foodways have to be analysed in everyday practices, given that "'Cuisine' in a more practical sense ... is regional" (Mintz, 1996: 97). In fact, the relations between place and cuisine not only lie in static tastes and flavours, but also in how people construct the cuisine both in an everyday context and through special occasions. This is because, as Beer (2008: 160) argues, "Food is never consumed in isolation; it is always in context". Special occasions will be discussed in Chapter 7 and 8; this chapter seeks to examine daily foodways, people's attitudes, knowledge and preferences with regards to food, and modern influences on food practices within the Nanxiong county.

There are three themes in this chapter. The first is an exploration of contemporary cuisine via changing eating habits and practices in Nanxiong. This is because a cuisine is composed of a set of principles for selecting, preparing and eating foods (Klein, 2007: 513-514). In fact, changing eating habits or patterns influence family relations, activities, and rhythms, and vice versa (Kjærnes, 2001). There is much literature talking about world cuisine in global cities (Cook and Crang, 1996). However, at the level of remote and developing cities, the interaction between foodways and modernisation differs from that in global cities. In a remote city or county such as Nanxiong, it is possible to analyse the processes of selecting, preparing, cooking and eating. In this chapter, I uncover what has significantly changed in the daily foodways of Nanxiong people (Section 6.2) and what influence this change has had on contemporary cuisine in Nanxiong (Section 6.3). In doing so, the chapter contributes to discussions on identity in cuisine and changing food practices. I argue that urbanisation and modernisation are leading factors behind changing cuisine, but that changes are not equally and uniformly affecting ways that food is prepared, cooked at home or eaten in restaurants.

A key focus for this discussion is eating outside the home, in commercial settings such as restaurants. In terms of eating out, the primary motivations include tasting exotic and new cuisine, dining pleasure and social entertainment or networking (Beriss and Sutton, 2007; Veeck and Burns, 2005). Eating out is shown to be an increasingly popular pastime – and way of getting fed – that reshapes food practices, knowledge and tastes. Socio-economic and demographic changes associated with modernisation and urbanisation are transforming foodways, including the places where people eat as well as the food they consume.

There is some research that has sought to understand the ways in which local cuisine interacts with, borrows from and adjusts to other cuisines (Augustin-Jean, 2002; Wu, 2002) and how local cuisine is re-invented and re-shaped in the process. Here, I analyse the major external cuisines appearing in the city's eating places and examine their features and flavours with regards to traditional and local food. I argue that those cuisines most popular in the city are those from regional cultural centres and those with similar (overall) flavour.

The second theme is an exploration of the fluid eating habits and attitudes across generations in China (Bøe, 2013; Yu, 2014). This is associated with the first theme concerning eating patterns and eating out. Mintz (1996: 103) commenting on the social roots of Chinese (low) cuisine, writes that there are "agreed-upon ways" of understanding good food and cooking and that "such agreements seem to surmount differences in region and social rank". However, intergenerational differences should not be neglected, particularly in rapidly urbanising cities such as Nanxiong. In this chapter, I examine how attitudes, habits and identities change between the middle-aged generation (who tend to favour local cuisine) and the younger generation (many of whom are predisposed towards new styles of food).

The third theme in this chapter builds on the proposition advanced by Warde and Yates (2017: 18), who argue that "an expansion of snacking might have a range of consequences for the social organization of meals", posing challenges to existing meal patterns. In China, snacking, which often happens in the evening, "played a small role in the diets of individuals of all ages until 2004" (Wang et al., 2012: 255). Around this time, the frequency of snacking significantly increased. The night-snack is popular in many Asian regions (particularly those that have mild winter nights) (Henderson, 2000; Shih, 2010). The existing literature discusses the features, risks and spatial development of night-snacking and food stalls. However, there is a scarcity of literature linking night-snacking and food-related lifestyles, despite the possibility that nightsnacking will challenge and re-fashion contemporary cuisine. With this in mind, I analyse eating behaviour patterns and food identities surrounding night snacks. This chapter argues that night-snacks are an informal meal; it attempts to understand what nightsnacking means to Nanxiong's cuisine and people. Since Nanxiong is a small city where other entertainment activities are not as diverse as in big cities, I argue that nightsnacking has become a featured lifestyle choice for the local population, despite its relatively short history.

The chapter outline is as follows. Section 6.2 starts by discussing each aspect of foodways in the context of urbanisation and modernity. The goal is to analyse what has changed significantly with regards to food provision, domestic cooking and restaurant eating. Section 6.3 focuses on how attitudes, habits and knowledge within the local

population have changed and how these relate to changes in foodways. It focuses attention on intergenerational differences. Section 6.4 discusses the popular phenomenon of night-snacking. It analyses how night snacks have become a favoured custom among local people.

6.2 Changing foodways

In contrast to the recent past, the living standards of Nanxiong's population have improved significantly (see Chapter 3.2.3). In China as a whole, people used to live on a low-fat diet; however those with high incomes have been "shifting [to a] Western-diet [and a] high-fat diet" faster than their rural and low-income counterparts (Popkin, 1999: 1910). As a result, food markets, home cooking and eating out have also changed dramatically in Nanxiong.

This section explores the influence of traditional living, modernity and consumerism. Section 6.2.1 talks about food provisioning and local markets. It shows that personal links with villages and home-grown food remain in fact. Section 6.2.2 talks about meal patterns, cooking and eating in domestic settings, and finds that those households who were interviewed welcome modernisation and external culinary influences, and that some traditional foods (after refinement) become delicacies. Section 6.2.3 talks about restaurant types and eating out, and suggests that both Guangdong cuisine and the spicy cuisines of Hunan and Jiangxi provinces are most popular. It argues further that the influences of modernisation and urbanisation are not uniform in every aspect of Nanxiong foodways.

6.2.1 Home-grown and home-processed: Food provision and local markets

Food provision is the basis and foundation of foodways and lifestyles. As a small Chinese city and traditional Hakka county, Nanxiong has developed various important approaches to food provision, including home-grown vegetables and domestically reared animals, and local markets. Home-grown food does not enter the commodity chain and is not sold at markets. As a result, food is produced solely for consumption by the family or as a gift to others (Gale et al., 2005; Mougeot, 1993). Although a declining trend, this kind of home-grown food still plays a significant role in rural areas, particularly when it comes to vegetables (Gale et al., 2005: 4). According to a report by Nanxiong County Government, at least two factors lead to the decline of this type of food production: the shrinking rural population and the increase in the number of young adults working in other cities, particularly in the Pearl River Delta region (Wang, 2016a).

In the context of urbanisation, households' food provision reflects frequent and close social connections between Nanxiong city and its subordinate rural areas in terms of the

provision of vegetables, domesticated animal meat and wild foods. Food growing should be considered alongside the urbanisation of the county:

"Vegetables are grown by all families, and all have many fields. Nobody buys vegetables. This may be related to soil and water. For example, the taro [from our field] can be cooked to become a very slippery taro paste; but the taro paste made from [taro purchased at the markets] is granular in texture. Some people live in the city, but they take back with them chilli, green vegetables, taro, sweet potatoes from their hometown... in order to save some money. Now I also live in the city, and I feel that those delicious foods [the vegetables] can't be purchased in the city." (Gang, middle-aged man, interview, 13/05/2016)

As people move to the city, relations between family members have also changed. Instead of clan relationships as in the past, work colleagues and friends play a more important role in food provision. For example, Qiqi, a middle-aged woman, heard that her husband's co-worker produced good-quality hand-made fermented bean curd at his family home; she bought several jars for her family. I observed another household who were sent wild edible fungus collected by their friend in a rural town. These situations are not uncommon, as the following comment indicates:

"That night [my friends] caught river fish using electrical equipment at *Maozifeng* [a mountain town in Nanxiong county] and got a good catch. They sent more than ten *jin* [5 kg] to us for a dinner in the city." (Yifa, middle-aged man, group interview, 17/04/2016).

I also noticed that there are quite a few professionals who work in rural areas but live in Nanxiong city. Therefore they have close relations with rural people and timely information on rural products, so it is probable that they buy fresh vegetables and meat from local markets or directly from farmers.

Health consciousness has also increased. Scholars argue that the rising health and nutrition consciousness amongst the Chinese is impacted by modern Western nutrition sciences (Yao, 1995; Zhao, 2006: 74). In rural Nanxiong, growing vegetables enables families to reduce the amount they buy and to provide healthy, nutritious and organic foods for their family members. The same is true with animals reared at home, which include pigs, chicken and ducks. These used to be prepared for special occasions and festivals but have become everyday foods as living standards have improved. In preparation for the New Year Festival, pigs are usually slaughtered at the end of the year, and pork is sent to relatives and friends as treasured festival gifts, maintaining bonds and connections between families. This kind of seasonal food provision for New Year and frequent personal relations is distinct from organic farming in big cities like Hong Kong, which is used for holiday farming and to provide healthy food (Cheng, 2009: 42).

Apart from home-grown foods, purchasing food in the local wet market (Blake, 2018; Cheng, 2009) is the most important way for city residents to buy food and is becoming increasingly important for rural people (Hu et al., 2004: 557-558; Sang, 2007).

There are three major local markets in Nanxiong city. We can see from the Figure 6.1 that these markets are wet and messy due to the large number of people that pass through and the fact that poultry are slaughtered onsite. Local markets and the snacks that they sell are significant platforms for triggering food-related memories amongst the local population. The memories and emotions can be exclusive to insiders.



Figure 6.1 Guanming Market, Nanxiong city. Source: author.

"Pickled cabbage dumpling is called *jiaoleici* in Nanxiong dialect and is the most common snack. Pickled cabbage dumplings are sold in markets and on the streets, packed in a throw-away lunchbox; a full pack is about five yuan and is cheap and delicious. A lot of people buy a box of pickled cabbage dumplings on their walk to school or the office in the morning; they eat while walking... [Nowadays] we always go to the stall we know at Xincheng Market, where they still use a traditional preparation technique. This is the true authentic flavour of pickled vegetable dumpling." (Dong, 2006: Food diary: Fragrant and spicy Hakka dishes in Nanxiong)

"Jiaoleici, for example, is a local favourite, but many outsiders don't really like it. When I was in college, I brought some dumplings over to the dormitory. Roommates from Guangzhou and Chaozhou didn't like them very much." (Guoguo, young man, interview, 29/05/2016)

These statements echo Blake's observation (2018: 11) of wet markets in Hong Kong as socialised space. Local markets are also the place to buy home-made food and wild mountain foods. One can also buy foods processed using traditional skills such as pickling, air/sun-drying and salting. They are important and authentic constituents of local markets. Products made in this way include pickled cabbage, fermented bean curd and dried salted duck. Home-made foods are similar to organic rural foods, which are often hand-made and convey memories of people's past activities; they are often deemed to be xiang (fragrant) (see Chapter 5.2.3) or delicious and 'green', especially by local people (Xu, 2001: 464-465). Moreover, although the frequency with which processed foods (salted, pickled, dried) are eaten has dropped, these home-processed foods have increased in popularity in urban families and have become treasured delicacies. These foods can serve as reminders of earlier harsher times (Ashkenazi and Jacob, 2000: 3-4), and are eaten in a spirit of nostalgia. In addition, according to Lange, a restaurant owner and chef, local markets are an important source of a diverse range of spices (both traditional and modern) and therefore play a significant role in the flavour principle of Nanxiong cuisine (interview, 25/05/2016) (as discussed in Chapter 5). Hence, given their emphasis on small scale production and localism, these local markets occupy a more important and prominent position in the urban fabric and food provision than local wet markets in many big cities. They also offer a reliable alternative to the sometimes arduous task of home-growing food.

"Sometimes I prefer to purchase vegetables in the market rather than relying upon self-grown vegetables because vegetables sold at a market stall are cleaned of soil and dirt before the sale. When it is raining, I must wear waterproof shoes to pick vegetables in my garden and clean the vegetables, which requires much effort. It's hard work." (Qiqi, middle-aged woman, interview, 22/04/2016)

This subsection has shown that Nanxiong households remain connected to rural and wild foods. Many households use personal links to get home-grown foods. Local wet markets and the foods sold there play an important role as well. The food provision connected with rural areas reflects Nanxiong cuisine as rural and low cuisine (see Chapter 5.4).

6.2.2 Domestic meals

In this section, the focus is on meal patterns, meal formats, ways of cooking, and meal components in the domestic context (Bugge and Almås, 2006; Van Esterik, 2008). Given that I observed many different influences on domestic meals, a short discussion of how

family meals in the past were conducted is necessary. Elderly and middle-aged informants said that they lived a difficult, simple but 'smart' agricultural life. Yet their memories of daily meals in days gone past are usually negative and they feel gratitude for the great variety of food that is available today.

According to their description, informants typically ate meals at the following times: one meal was eaten at around 8 in the morning, one at noon and one at around 6 to 8 in the evening. In line with Hakka tradition, the three meals were similar and even the breakfast was comprised of rice rather than congee, which could not provide enough energy for heavy agricultural work. Frequent daily ingredients involved in cooking were homegrown seasonal vegetables, simple and cheap commodities purchased at the nearest town market, such as salted fish, fermented soya beans and black olives (see also Deng, 2010). When it comes to the actual preparation of the food, there was a heavy reliance on steaming and braising rather than stir-frying because oil was typically hard to get hold of. According to many informants, the purpose of everyday meals was not for enjoyment but to provide the necessary nutrition to complete agricultural work. Therefore, minimising cooking time was a priority.

"In the past, people had to do farm work and so didn't have time to chop ingredients into small pieces. [When eating their meals] people picked up a lot of food from the shared dish all at the same time, to save time." (Qiqi, middle-aged woman, interview, 18/04/2016)

"In the past, things were cooked thoroughly, until they were sweet and soft. Although some people paid attention to taste, most of the dishes were not as delicious as they are today." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 23/03/2016)

In the past, processed and pickled meat and vegetables were consumed all year round. Occasionally, there was fresh meat. In particular, pickled and dried cabbage worked as 'famine foods'. Nor were the meals consumed typically refined:

"It depended on economic capacity. If you had money, the meals were richer. But generally speaking, it was vegetables with steamed rice. Some craftsmen might eat salted sea-fish." (Ping, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

Things have improved a lot in recent years. As part of a lasting transformation, "indigenously-driven" transition processes (Wu and Ma, 2004: 234) have seen greater diversity of ingredients, spices, seasoning and kitchen appliances. They have also seen a growing awareness about the need for good quality – delicious food as a source of pleasure.

Households today have more time to cook quality meals and have more access to spices. Obviously, their cooking skills have improved considerably. As they free

themselves from the burden of rural work, people have begun to pay more attention to elaborate family cooking and are more willing to spend time cooking. Pang, a middle-aged woman, was proud of her cooking skills at home but, compared to restaurant cooking, she was still not satisfied with her dishes: "I can also cook meat like fish, dog, steak, but the tastes are not the same each time. This time it is good, but next time it turns out bad" (group interview, 27/02/2016). The cooking skills of family cooks have improved and there are more dishes on the table than in the past (see Figure 6.2). Domestic meals and cooking have become more refined in accordance with modern skills and kitchenware as well as the availability of more diverse ingredients and culinary knowledge (Klein, 2007: 524).

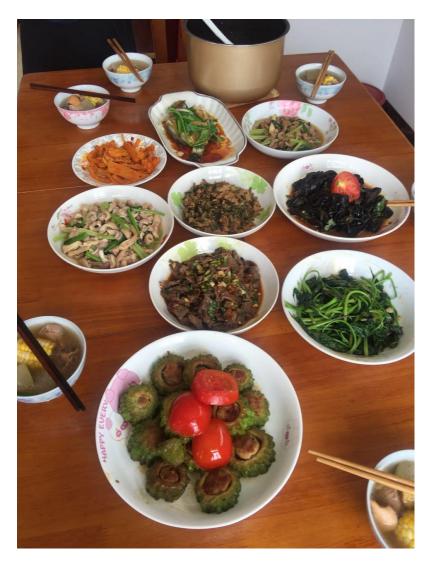


Figure 6.2 A typical lunch or dinner. Source: author.

Diversification happens in domestic practice and involves changes to meal formats and cooking techniques. For example, in the city people have more choices for breakfast. Housewives cook congee or noodles in the morning. Or the whole family goes to a

breakfast stall or vendor to enjoy popular duck rice noodles, wonton or steamed rice rolls, made according to local recipes.

Households retain traditional foods and ways of cooking family meals, however, even after they move into the city. Ingredients such as pickled vegetables and sour bamboo shoots are still a feature of city dwellers' home meals. Qiqi, a middle-aged woman living away from a village, pickled three plastic jars of sour taro stems, garlic and cabbage in the kitchen, which she used as daily seasoning. The traditional processing techniques mean that she can retain "their special flavors or delicate textures", something which cannot be achieved using industrial methods (Li and Hsieh, 2004: 154).

In Nanxiong cuisine, domestic recipes are very important. Alongside the flavour principle of a region, basic ingredient combinations are an important feature for distinguishing different cuisines. I call it 'basic' because the combination is frequently used and mentioned in everyday foodways within the region and because it is usually simple. Example dishes include stir-fried pork intestine with sour bamboo shoots, stir-fried pork belly with dried daikon, and fried grey rice cake with cauliflower (huishuici 灰水糍). They are so common that they do not appear on the menus of restaurants and are categorised as jiachangcai (home-style dishes) (Cheung, 2005: 261). We can see that the basic combination often involves vegetables and meat, and that at least one of the ingredients is a local speciality. In north-east China, for comparison, people like to combine pickled cabbage, pork and rice noodles.

Domestic cooking is increasingly absorbing external styles. Local people welcome new foodways, such as buying dishes from restaurants for consumption at home, and adoption of hot-pot and barbecue. Nanxiong hot-pot is in the Guangdong style, which places emphasis on freshness and is particularly popular in winter (Xu, 1994: 43). As one newspaper article contends,

"Dabianlu 打边炉 [the Guangdong term for hot pot] is suitable for both old and young. Taste is fresh, and it is economical. It has been gradually integrated into the everyday life of Shaoguan people [because] it is easy to learn how to make it. Nowadays, we not only eat in hot-pot restaurants but also learn to make it at home. The family is round the table and chats, enjoying delicious food. This is a great feeling. It's a great choice on cold days." (Wu and Xu, 2010)

Contemporary domestic meals have responded to changing work-life balance. For example, as Dong (2006) suggests in Section 6.2.1, eating breakfast while walking is common amongst students and office workers. In particular, Nanxiong city attracts a large number of rural students, from kindergarten through to high school, which highlights the "studentification" of this small Chinese city (He, 2015; Wu et al., 2016). Parents or grandparents buy food in the markets and cook meals according to school routine, reflecting child-centred family life (Liu, 2017: 572).

"Town and village schools are being closed and therefore [farmers] send children to city schools and buy houses. Those who cannot afford to buy a house rent one.... Schools in the city are better than in those in the towns... No, there are only a few students in rural schools now; there used to be plenty... The one-child policy was tight and, now a family has only one or two children, so schools don't have so many people... In Nanxiong city, it is usually the grandparents or mothers who take the child to school. It is the aging effect. Young people earn money in the Pearl River cities but spend money in Nanxiong city. Jobs inside the city are limited." (Jiang, middle-aged man, interview, 02/05/2016)

This subsection has argued that the taste and standards of domestic meals have greatly improved as a result of the increasing amount of time available for cooking that has been made possible due to the transition from agricultural to non-agricultural ways of life, the greater availability of goods (particularly seasoning and spices), and the adoption of cooking skills from other cuisines. Home-style dishes used to be common, but did not taste very good. These have been re-fashioned into delicacies; flavour has been added into daily meals. However, many households have preserved traditional ways of preparing food, including pickling, drying and salting. Like Malay cuisine, these traditional ways of processing food and preparing home-style dishes (*jiachangcai*) contribute to the development of the image of home cuisine because Nanxiong people may think Nanxiong cuisine is "considered best when served" in local households (Yoshino, 2010: 7). Yet increasing numbers of meals in the county are consumed out of the home.

6.2.3 Restaurant eating

Eating out has become more popular all over the world, which naturally leads to a decrease in domestic eating (Fox, 2003; Xu and Feng, 2015: 107). This is particularly apparent in China, where restaurants are numerous and range from "expensive restaurants to cheap roadside hawker stalls" and where restaurants are a perfect occasion for "entertaining and socialising with others" to build informal relationships and social capital (Wright et al., 2001: 351; see also Siekierski et al., 2013; Zhang, 2007). There is a popular Chinese term for dining out – *fanju* 饭局 (eating party). As different regions interact and modernise, there are more and more restaurants catering to different cuisines.

This subsection discusses restaurant types and the varieties of dishes they serve. The aim is to understand the influences that other cuisines have had on the Nanxiong foodscape. With respect to Nanxiong, different restaurants are emerging and growing. Dianping.com 大众点评 is "China's leading O2O [online to offline] platform for urban and lifestyle services" (Dianping, 2018a). I used the 100 most popular restaurants listed on the website as a sample, the vast majority of which are in Nanxiong city (Table 6.1).

According to the definition in (National Bureau of Statistics of PRC, 2017), roughly 70 are formal style restaurants, ranging from simple and poorly-decorated sidewalk booths (dapaidang 大排档), modern restaurants within shopping centres to grand and exquisitely decorated hotel restaurants. Fast-food stores are not that numerous, even western chains such as KFC. This is perhaps because Nanxiong is not a fast-paced city with large numbers of workers. Spicy Hunan-Sichuan cuisine and Cantonese cuisines are generally served in modern-style restaurants. The same is true of modern snacks, desserts and drinks; hotel restaurants are inclined to serve mixed cuisines. The types of restaurant on offer are not as diverse as those in big cities.

Table 6.1 Varieties of the 100 most popular restaurants in Nanxiong (Dianping, 2018b).

	Nanxiong cuisine	Guangdong cuisine (except Nanxiong)	Spicy cuisine (Hunan, Sichuan)	Mixed cuisines	Western and Japanese food	Modern snacks, desserts, drinks
No. of restaurants	37	7	12	14	6	24
Typical dishes	Goose, braised duck with sour bamboo shoots, country- side fish,	Chaoshan hot-pot, seafood porridge, roasted goose, steamed rice rolls,	Fish fillets in hot chill oil, poached pork with chilli, chuan-chuan-xiang (串串香)	Various Nanxiong dishes, Hunan, Sichuan dishes and Cantonese dishes	Steak, pizza, spicy chicken wings, pasta, sushi, salmon	Various cakes, milk tea, sandwiches, puffs, lattes
	stuffed tofu	morning tea				

Restaurants serving Nanxiong dishes dominate. 37 out of the 100 restaurants listed in the table only offer Nanxiong cuisine, and 14 of those which offer mixed cuisines also offer Nanxiong dishes. Many of these restaurants are small street or sidewalk booths and restaurants. Nanxiong's signature dishes can be found on their menu. One interesting phenomenon is that these restaurants do not provide breakfast. Other booths and stalls serve breakfast instead:

"Almost every breakfast restaurant provides various rice noodles; the most famous is duck noodle. Side dishes are free and made of local products, including pickled

vegetables (cabbage, eggplant and long bean), chopped peppers and spicy kelp. These side dishes are very popular and every customer loads them on a saucer or plastic cup while waiting for their noodles. Restaurant breakfast and side dishes elicit nostalgia for Nanxiong people outside this city." (Field note, 02/02/2016)

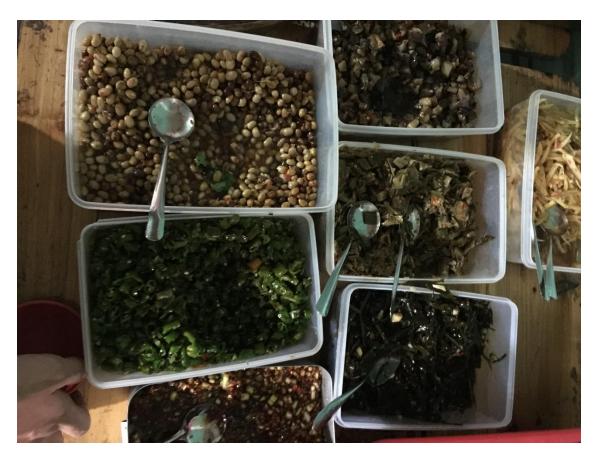


Figure 6.3 Side dishes, including diverse pickles, in Nanxiong breakfast. Source: author.

The six months of fieldwork I conducted led me to conclude that people like to eat in restaurants serving Nanxiong cuisine. It is not just that they are cheap and convenient; these sidewalk booths or small restaurants are ideal sites for eating out at lunchtime, especially for students and workers. In response to the expansion of Nanxiong's tourist industry (especially gingko-leaf sightseeing), growing numbers of (local) restaurants are emerging in order to meet tourists' needs within the city and across major tourist sites (Chang et al., 2010: 989).

"Lots of tourists visit Nanxiong for the gingko-leaves and there are many farm restaurants at tourist sites. They always serve local cuisine." (Bobo, middle-aged man, interview, 14/04/2016)

"Xinhuacun is a big restaurant, it does a very good business and is definitely the best restaurant in this old town. Three dishes -- gingko and chicken pot, steamed

mountain fish, fried romaine lettuce -- were particularly delicious.... The mountain fish was better than what we ate in the Shunde Hotel restaurant in Guangzhou: the quality of meat was very good and pretty tender. The dishes were so delicious that we all agreed to eat lunch there the next day.... The weather was wet and cold, and we were all famished. But good food always gives people a feeling of satisfaction, which made it worth us driving up to 800 kilometres there and back." (Wanshuo, 2017)

Chef Chang of *Jinyuange* restaurant said that he is proud of his dishes, particularly goose, fish and pork trotters, and does not need to advertise (Figure 6.4). Instead he relies upon word-of-mouth from frequent customers.

"Author: Your restaurant is inside a long alley, which makes it difficult to notice from outside.

Guoguo: That's right, but I don't think this location affects the business.

Jinjin: Nanxiong is a small place, people can easily know about this restaurant via word of mouth." (Young man, interview, 29/05/2016)

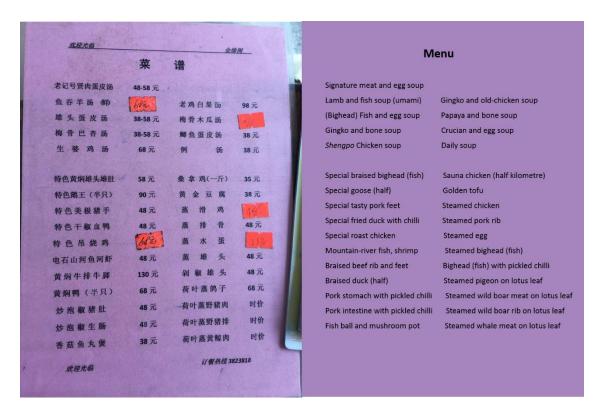


Figure 6.4 The menu from *Jinyuange*. Source: author (English translation on the right, also by the author)

Finally, we have the farm restaurants. These are typically in suburban or peri-urban areas and usually serve local Nanxiong dishes. This kind of restaurant includes mahjong

tables, which are popular with the local population. This is an indication of the slow pace and lifestyle in this city, which is in contrast to the fast pace of life in many large Chinese cities (Su, 2014).

"The [farm] restaurants are located on banks of the river at the edge of the city. Around there, it is easy to get to by car, and the air is fresh. They serve up rural flavours and the tastes of wild meat, using traditional cooking techniques, more family-style. This is a feature of Nanxiong's food. Restaurants serve Hunan cuisine, but also cook Nanxiong dishes." (Binbin, middle-aged man, interview, 14/04/2016)

"Since Shunde cuisine is not spicy, people who do not eat chillies like this flavour. For the local Nanxiong people who think this flavour is light; one alternative [for Nanxiong people] is to order some small plates of fried pepper sauce. They pick meat from the shared plate and put it in the pepper sauce to 'add taste'" (Field note, 03/05/2016)

Guangzhou and Hong Kong are the cultural centres of South China (Tam, 2007: 81). Cantonese cuisine has an impact on Nanxiong's foodscape and recipes. Chef Chang's restaurant incorporated Cantonese dishes, including *jinyu mantang* chicken 金玉满堂鸡, into his recipes. We can see from the field note above that Nanxiong people have a conservative attitude towards Cantonese cuisine. As the only spicy region in Guangdong Province, Nanxiong has lots of spicy dishes.

"I was working in Foshan when I met some Sichuan colleagues.²² At first, I ate Cantonese food, but it had no taste. Their Sichuan dishes containing chillies tasted better, and I liked them." (Jianjun, elderly man, interview, 18/05/2016)

"Compared with Sichuan cuisine, I think Nanxiong cuisine is more like the peasant's stir-fry [style] in Sichuan cuisine and has a country flavour. (Qianqian, young woman, group interview, 09/01/2016)

From Table 6.1, we can clearly see the important position of Sichuan, Hunan and Cantonese cuisines. There are hardly any restaurants that offer food from the other two major cuisines, those of Huaiyang and Shandong (Chen, 1994). This is easy to understand when we consider Nanxiong's location. Most of the informants I interviewed like to eat Sichuan cuisine; Nanxiong dishes and Sichuan cuisine have a similar taste and spicy flavour. Hot-pot restaurants have begun emerging. They have developed a culinary familiarity with spicy food and are adapting their recipes and menus to suit local tastes. In addition, the spread of Cantonese restaurants is not strange, given that Nanxiong – administratively – belongs to Guangdong Province.

²² In Foshan, a city in the Pearl River Delta region, people eat Cantonese cuisine.

In sum, Nanxiong's contemporary cuisine is undergoing a transition. The modernising and urbanising influences on foodways are not equally and uniformly felt in food provision, domestic cooking and eating out. Home-grown and processed food ingredients still play an important role in Nanxiong – indeed, are undergoing something of a revival – and the provision of rural food remains the urbanite's personal link with rural areas. Due to the increase in cooking oil and meat consumption, domestic cooking has quickly welcomed modern refinements and has improved considerably, while some traditional skills and foods have been retained. There are increasing numbers of restaurants and outlets supplying other cuisines.

The case contributes to our understanding of changes in foodways in a developing city confronting modern influences and external culinary influences. In particular, it illustrates the fusion of different cuisines and the atrophy of culinary traditions (Yamamoto, 2017). In contrast to developed regions, where there is common interest in the revival of traditional preparation methods and ingredients and traditional ethnic foodways as cultural practice (Bech-Larsen et al., 2016: 249), modernising and urban lifestyles have been the leading factor in bringing changes to Nanxiong's contemporary cuisine. In addition, my analysis suggests that the influence of external cuisines is not simple, and has been greatly shaped by geographical factors, including geographical proximity to other cuisines, the impact of regional cultural centres and an increasingly wealthy population. Those restaurants that have been successful in Nanxiong are those that serve food which has similar flavours (Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan cuisines) or offer food from regional cultural centres (Cantonese and Hong Kong cuisines). This conclusion echoes the argument in Chapter 5.2 over conflicting identities towards contrasting flavours between Nanxiong and neighbouring cuisines.

6.3 Changing attitudes, habits and ways of life

In Section 6.2 overall changing foodways (food provision, meal patterns, domestic cooking and eating out) were the focus of attention. In this section, I look at food habits and the ways that people talk about food, as well as the overall lifestyle of the population. I also focus on how attitudes, habits and identities have changed across generations.

This section begins by introducing food habits and preferences and discussing daily behaviours (see Section 6.3.1). Section 6.3.2 turns to people's attitudes towards Nanxiong cuisine and their knowledge about food. We will see that people, particularly middle-aged and elderly people with memories of the difficulties of the past, have 'unconventional' habits and culinary knowledge and that this serves as an important basis for Nanxiong cuisine. Section 6.3.3 talks about the influence of modernisation and the younger generation's changing attitudes towards food. We will see that the younger

generation exhibit critical and conservative attitudes towards local cuisine that has led to the modification or modernisation of the cuisine itself.

6.3.1 Changing habits and preferences

Nanxiong people had some interesting eating habits in the past, which seem odd to modern viewpoints. I heard a number of elderly informants say they are fond of eating poultry rump, which is tender and juicy. In harder times, eating habits reflected the larger family size common at the time. When a duck was killed for a meal,

"The duck weighed two to three *jin* [1 to 1.5 kg]. Legs and wings were to be chopped ford the four youngest kids; older kids were not given leg or wing.²³ Elderly people were given two pieces of duck breast. Grandpa, who didn't have teeth, had to eat breast and rump. There was little meat, so I too was bold and ate the rump. One day my uncle gave me a big piece of rump of duck [*ya pigu* 鸭屁股]. It was delicious and I was satisfied." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 15/04/2016)

In a relatively short period, there have been a number of changes to eating habits and preferences. One reason for this is the structure of the food itself. As urbanisation has taken hold, the Chinese diet as a whole has changed from a low-fat one to a high-fat one, dependent upon "higher meats, edible oils, and other fats and refined carbohydrates and [low] fiber" (Popkin, 1999: 1910). Bitter bamboo shoots are today more fashionable than they were in the past. Yunyun, a middle-aged woman, explained this trend using the example of bitter bamboo shoots (*kusun* 苦笋). She told me that,

"In the past, people didn't have meat to eat and were malnourished. So people didn't like to eat bitter bamboo shoots, the bitterness of which caused discomfort. But nowadays people can eat a lot of meat and they are prepared to eat bitter bamboo shoots". (Hakka, interview, 15/04/2016)

There are intergenerational differences in taste. From my observations, I noticed that elderly people did not want meat cooked or steamed until tender and soft, whereas younger people prefer fragrant flavour imparted by stir-frying. The elderly are inclined not to eat food that is too spicy, because light food benefits their bodies. Age might be a factor in explaining the habit of eating 'unconventional' foods.

Author: I like duck blood but I used not to.

Zhangju: The same with me. When I was a child, I hated eating liver and other offal, which tasted odd to me. I could not understand why [adults] liked them. Once I had grown up, I gradually came to like them.

²³ Before the introduction of the One Child Policy in the early 1980s, it was common for couples to have many children, sometimes up to ten.

Weiwei: When I was a child, I resisted [eating] these odd things. (Zhangju young man; Weiwei, young woman, group interview, 14/05/2016)

Some people seem to be increasingly picky when it comes to eating. For these people, taste is the most significant factor when choosing a restaurant. For picky customers, Chef Chang is cautious when preparing his featured dishes:

"My three signature dishes – goose, pork trotters and braised fish – are cooked by me. Other dishes I can let my assistant prepare... Why is my goose distinct? It's because the goose and each of the spices is weighed so that every goose I cook maintains the same flavour." (Chang, middle-aged man, interview, 21/02/2016)

In Chapter 5.3, I discussed the importance of wild mountain food in Nanxiong cuisine. When talking to my informants, I discovered that although there are laws and regulations governing the consumption of wild animals, they expressed enthusiasm for finding wild meat and coming up with new ways to discreetly eat it.

Nannan: Do you have any wild animal [meat to serve] now?

Chang: [smiling] No matter how much you want, I can provide the amount. Just give me a call ahead of me, because my goods are not stored in the restaurant. You know, these goods are illegal. (Middle-aged man, group interview, 27/02/2016)

"I never heard of anyone being put in jail for eating wild animal [meat], but I know someone who was fined and the goods were confiscated. Maybe the animals in Nanxiong are not high-level protected animals and the government just turns a blind eye. Nowadays, even when you eat wild animals, you should not speak about it and the restaurants do not say they are engaging in this business." (Xing, young man, Hakka, interview, 19/03/2016)

Rare tastes and foods can trigger a dinner party, acting as a medium or catalyst for communication. Bang, a businessman, invited nearly ten of his friends to his house for a dinner party. The centrepiece was a goat he recently bought from a farmer. Although the same all over China, particularly in the countryside, the meal table is a collective rather than private domain. Chinese dinner parties have a strong social interactive element:

"Friends meet seldom and they would suggest getting wild animals for dinner parties, which will add to the flavour." (Jiang, middle-aged man, interview, 02/05/2016)

Popular particularly in rural areas, usually around New Year, there is another form of informal dinner party called *dapinghuo* 打平伙 in which, in turn, people donate and share rare and tasty meats and cook them in someone's family kitchen to consume with friends.

This *dapinghuo* not only provides a chance to satisfy one's hunger, but also enhances relations and ties amongst circles of friends, and helps to solve disputes. It also showcases a sense of rural hospitality and commensality (Sun, 2015).

"I felt that around the dinner table, the Chinese tend to be noisy. There were about ten adult men eating around the table. Everyone spoke loudly, chatted to each other and interrupted one another. People got used to this situation and didn't feel offended." (Field note, 08/04/2016)

Consumption of wild meat might have political implications for government employees. Chang's restaurant used to have various government employees as customers. These customers were clearly significant consumers of wild animal meat. But since the introduction of XI Jinping's strict policies on official consumption, this kind of meal has become much less common.²⁴

"I used to have customers from 15 government work units who ate here... They once spent as much as 18,000 yuan [around GBP 2,000]" (Chang, middle-aged man, interview, 21/02/2016).

"Office sector workers still consume wild meat secretly." (Pang, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 27/02/2016)

"Government employees do not like to eat in grand hotels; instead, they like to go somewhere where they are not noticed." (Jinjin, young man, interview, 29/05/2016)

6.3.2 Attitudes and knowledge

The previous subsection showed that food and eating are both influenced by people's improved living situation and social communication. This subsection discusses people's changing attitudes and (traditional and modern) culinary knowledge, both of which are influenced by modernisation and Western scientific development. These have influenced people's understanding of cuisine.

"I am not interested in a village family name book. Our place is not pure Hakka... As for Nanxiong air-dried duck, I don't think it is a specialty and it appears all over China. The skill is drying the duck in the air and sunlight in Nanxiong, whereas in Hunan, Sichuan and in South China, they smoke the duck instead... The food culture in our place is mixed; it is influenced by Ganzhou city in Jiangxi Province." (Congcong, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 21/02/2016)

People like Congcong have critical views about Hakka and Nanxiong cuisine as they have more information and experience about different regional cuisines across China.

²⁴ Strict policies that seek to regulate official consumption are part of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive and aim to improve the behaviour for CPC members.

"There are lots of articles on WeChat discussing Nanxiong tourism and Nanxiong's delicacies. The scenery is beautiful... The foods are delicious, but they don't look good. I share landscape photos on my WeChat moments, but I am too ashamed to share food photos." (Junjun, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

In the discussion from which the quote above is taken, respondents acknowledged the poor appearance of Nanxiong cuisine. As a cuisine with rural styles, Nanxiong cuisine prioritises taste over appearance (as discussed in Chapter 5). The frequent use of braising means it is difficult to make the food look good. Fufu, a young man, said that "dishes like duck and goose do not look good, and the [red] chilli pepper turns brown a long time after the braising process". The large number of ingredients used (green vegetables, bean sprouts, sour bamboo shoots, and so on) make it difficult to achieve a good looking dish. Fufu added that there is a trade-off between taste and appearance — it might not look good, but that does not mean it will not taste good.

There were a number of middle-aged men I spoke to who had lived a poor life and who had experience of eating wild animal meat in their younger days. They can be categorised as 'lay experts' in Nanxiong cuisine because they are equipped with embodied and contextualised knowledge concerning the preparing, cooking and eating of wild animals. Although they do not involve themselves in growing, buying or cooking food, they tend to be picky and critical diners who put more emphasis on taste than appearance of the food or dining environment. These picky diners know what counts as good taste to them. Klein (2007: 519) writes that in Cantonese culture, "knowledge about where to eat what has become a crucial form of cultural capital"; likewise, I argue that, for these middle-aged men, 'knowing how to kill or cook wild animals' becomes a form of cultural capital. This translates into their preference for taste over appearance in their choice of eateries too.

Food practices in local circumstances reflect different understandings of some concepts. For example, freshness in Europe refers to something that is not frozen or canned. Urban Chinese perceive freshness as involving vegetables "that were picked that morning" and meat "from animals that are slaughtered earlier that day" (Grunert et al., 2011: 359). Nanxiong people have their own understanding of freshness when it comes to vegetables: the best and freshest vegetables are those collected from the farm earlier that morning after a frost. These vegetables are said to be the best tasting and very sweet. Often, around the dates of Lesser Snow (*xiaoxue* 小雪 22 or 23 November) and Greater Snow (*daxue* 大雪 6, 7 or 8 December), the weather of South China is getting cold and in the morning farmers feel that it is worth collecting frosted vegetables (most

²⁵ WeChat moments (*pengyou quan* 朋友圈) is a function of the smartphone app WeChat, mainly showing pictures, statuses and websites.

typically cauliflower and romaine lettuce) for family consumption or sale, even though their hands and feet might be frostbitten (Qin and Liang, 2014).

I noticed that my informants selectively engaged with and practiced Chinese traditional food beliefs. They believe in nutritional concepts such as *yi xing bu xing* (see Chapter 3.4.1), which is connected with Nanxiong's material and culinary resources. Binbin provided pizzles (bull's penis) cooked in the Nanxiong style (braised with chilli pepper) for his guests at one of his dinner parties and the guests were all aware that the purpose of this dish was to strengthen their kidneys (known as tonification).²⁶ Almost all people in the dinner party know this agreed-upon ideas (Mintz, 1996: 103).

Some of my informants have adjusted the traditional Chinese dietary therapy (see Chapter 3.4.1) to local circumstances. During childbirth confinement, Fenfen argued that since the child's hair is very dirty, certain strands of hair (yumisi 玉米丝) can be used to boil to make tea; after drinking this tea two or three times, the child's hair becomes cleaner. For pregnant women who cannot walk because of swollen feet, "put some watermelon and green bean to boil as a soup for drinking". When I asked where she got this knowledge, Fenfen responded that "I was told these methods by many people when I played mahjong..." (Middle-aged woman, interview, 05/05/2016). This knowledge is circulated within friendship circles.

In the meantime, health concerns play a role. As modern scientific knowledge spreads, certain ingredients such as chilli peppers and pickled and processed foodstuffs are perceived to pose a threat to the human body and people reject the frequency with which they eat them. This is reflected in the following practice: my informants avoid adding too much chilli pepper and other hot spices (such as anise or ground ginger) when cooking meat on summer days. In Nanxiong, as elsewhere in China, food scares have become significant personal and social concerns (Jackson, 2010), and media coverage and people's conversations focus on issues such as excessive pesticides in vegetable growth and chemical additives in making preserved duck (Liang and Jixun, middle-aged man, group interview, 03/01/2016).

Qiqi: I heard people say that they shouldn't eat much preserved meat otherwise they can develop cancer. The same with salted duck.

Author: Oh, it is better not to eat large amounts of dry foods; just try a little. (Qiqi, middle-aged woman, interview, 18/04/2016)

"People should use the boiling water to scald the wild meat and should consume less of it. I am scared, [because of potential viruses.]." (Pang, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 17/04/2016)

²⁶ Tonification is a technique used in acupuncture to strengthen body organs.

Food-related knowledge is undergoing a transition; traditional knowledge, skill and experience are being contested by modern beliefs and practices, reflecting intergenerational differences. Huahua and Fenfen are mother and daughter. Huahua is an elderly woman who used to prepare basic plain meals for the family but who is not equipped with the skills necessary to cook tasty meals that satisfy family members' tastes today. Fenfen is a middle-aged housewife who uses various methods and ingredients to cook modern domestic meals that are enjoyed by family members and friends. On the other hand, Huahua has much experience and knowledge of pickling, salting and drying various meats; she also taught Fenfen the traditional approach to dining in the confinement period during pregnancy.

The restrictions traditionally placed on Hakka woman have mostly disappeared. Yunyun told me that in the past a young woman eating outside the house would be criticised for misbehaving by village elders. Nowadays, women are free to eat meals in public spaces and, as will be described in Chapter 7, participate in ceremonies and banquets.

In sum, in Nanxiong cuisine, a low cuisine, there are some agreed-upon and well-known beliefs, especially among middle-aged and elderly generations, which constitute the social basis of the cuisine. Similar to the argument about influences on peers in Rozin (2010: 407), these beliefs are communicated and circulated by peers amongst the local population and guide people's eating habits. Moreover, expanding Mintz's argument (1996: 103), such agreements can be in the form of food philosophy or ideology, surmounting regional differences. As a result of urbanisation, both traditional culinary knowledge and scientific health concerns play a more important role.

6.3.3 The influence of modernisation on the younger generation

Supermarkets and commercial and imported foods have also begun appearing in Nanxiong. Between 26 November and 10 December of 2017, RT-Market, the largest supermarket in the city, held the Nanxiong's first Global Food Carnival, showcasing many foreign commodities (RT-MarT, 2017). Undoubtedly the commercial food exhibition offered information about and access to global foods and culture for local people, many of whom had never eaten or encountered these foods before. The growing variety of modern products and foreign foods and the emergence of the modern shopping centre partly contribute to the construction of cosmopolitan consumerism in the small city of Nanxiong (Kendall, 2015).

Group buying, take-away services and payment on mobiles are particularly popular amongst young urban Chinese and are welcomed by those who do not want to cook themselves (Meituan-Dianping, 2017). Guoguo used these new ways to promote his products and said, "Nowadays, before customers decide where to eat, they will read the reviews of the products and restaurants on Meituan", a famous online group buying website in China (see also Wang et al., 2016).

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As we saw in Table 6.1, there are a number of restaurants that now serve western-style and Japanese food.²⁷ These are often located in the city centre and in shopping centres, providing an image of cosmopolitanism and a sense of being modern (Schein, 2001). The snacks, desserts and drinks offered are numerous and varied and show how international and western food is influencing local tastes.

The younger generation may develop their own individualised sets of rules. Young adults of their generation are popularly called the *balinghou* 八零后 (young people born in 1980s) and *jiulinghou* 九零后 (born in 1990s) generations (Yu, 2014: 13), and they are usually the pioneers of novel cooking techniques and tastes (including fashionable food products) and are behind the introduction of modern appliances into domestic kitchens, both of which challenge domestic food discourses and practices. Take Chiji, a young man, for example: he is good at cooking fish fillets in hot chilli oil (a dish typical of Sichuan cuisine) for his family and he tried to show off his newly learnt way of making roast duck using his newly purchased oven from Taobao (the most famous online shopping platform). This increased engagement in cooking by the younger generations may change the status and format of family meals (Bugge and Almås, 2006).

Some young informants I interviewed said they had changed their dietary behaviours and habits. Take eating chilli as an example. Those who do not have regular experience of eating chilli say that their tolerance of intense chilli flavour has declined. More than one informant told me that eating chilli is a learned skill; after they got used to eating non-spicy Cantonese cuisine during their years of schooling in the Pearl River Delta, the capacity to eat chilli and tolerate extreme spicy flavours seemed to have significantly decreased. Their bodies could not tolerate chillies as they used to, (see also Colls, 2007: 363) and on returning home they were considering requesting that their families change their traditional recipes:

"During my weekdays in Guangzhou, I could take my own food into the office, and I usually bought food in the supermarket. I don't cook Nanxiong food. Instead of chilli pepper, I use yellow pepper which is not so hot... With my family in Nanxiong, because my parents are in poor health, we eat raw chilli pepper." (Linlin, young man, interview, 23/01/2016)

"Nanxiong is cold in winter and the climate is the primary reason why Nanxiong people eat chilli. But eating chilli in Guangzhou doesn't fit. I think lots of Nanxiong people get used to Cantonese cuisine." (Xiaodan, young woman, interview, 23/01/2016)

²⁷ Western food, in the Chinese context, refers generally to French, British, American, Russian, German and Mediterranean cuisines. Source: Baidu encyclopaedia: https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%A5%BF%E9%A4%90/1459143?fr=aladdin

Young adults do not just welcome modern and fashionable food and food philosophy, however, and do not necessarily want to break with traditional culinary history. Rather, they re-interpret and re-make tradition according to their circumstances. Sites of food consumption are a particularly suitable space for them to explore the tension "between cultural 'tradition' and innovation" (Thomas, 2004: 54). This can be reflected in popular restaurants for the young: for example, one informant commented that in Dianping there is a newly opened restaurant that "is easily spotted by the river side" and "is decorated according to a young theme", where the dishes are "fresh, hot and comfortable" with a good flavour. This restaurant is clean and provides diverse choices in attractive surroundings that include spicy (Nanxiong-style) dishes, hot-pot, seafood and wines (Dianping, 2018b). Indeed, most young adults I interviewed were proud of Nanxiong cuisine and its outstanding flavours, yet they enjoyed other cuisines too. In other words, they are not as taste oriented as the older generation.

The younger generation tend to have their own aesthetic for food and dishes, because they have physically encountered or used the internet to learn about cuisines from around the world. In this way, more 'scientific' and 'objective' viewpoints towards Nanxiong cuisine develop. Three informants aged from 25 to 30 expressed their viewpoints about the appearance of Nanxiong's typical dishes (see also Chapter 5.4.1).

Ming: There was an article about a Beijing woman married to a rural Jiangxi man.²⁸ The man's family served food on stainless-steel plates, just like my family. [The woman] didn't have an appetite when she say the poor aesthetic of the dishes served. You see, this is how people elsewhere perceive our cuisine. However, as locals we don't even think about and realise this.

Datou: Cantonese cuisine is much better in appearance. Using techniques of Cantonese cuisine, [the chef] serves the goose in a small bowl to make it look good. However the authentic feeling of the goose is lost.

Fufu: Nowadays many young adults like to cook [and decorate] food to make it look beautiful but in a way that keeps the original taste. (Young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

The last statement, by Fufu, contrasts with the views of the older men discussed earlier, for whom taste completely outweighs appearance. For the younger generation, making the food look good enhances the 'original taste' rather than detracting from it. In summary, Nanxiong people have changed the way they eat food in a short space of time. Due to difficult living conditions in the past, middle-aged and elderly people retain some 'unconventional' eating habits, and as living standards have improved, they have

²⁸ Rural Jiangxi is similar to rural Nanxiong, due to its similar economic level, geographical proximity and cultural similarities.

become increasingly picky and inclined to pay more attention to the taste of food rather than the environment in which it is eaten. They are also experts on local cuisine, including wild foods. As for culinary knowledge, both traditional and scientific ideas now play a greater role. As the younger generation develop increasing awareness of external cuisine, they are usually the first to put into practice new modern techniques and styles even as they continue to value traditional tastes.

Overall, this case illustrates Mintz's opinion about non-haute cuisine formation. The core is an agreed upon idea that "There is also a remarkable consistency from top to bottom of the society in regard to the agreed-upon ways to produce good food, and about the patterned relationships among foods, among courses, among dinners" (Mintz, 1996: 103). These construct the conventions or collective discourses and practices surrounding food and meals (Kjærnes, 2001: 35-36; Narayanan, 2016: 4). However, this section showed that these culinary 'agreements' are not homogeneous across generations, but instead are influenced by urbanisation and modernisation and the lived and imagined experiences of other cuisines. Middle-aged and elderly generations are the authority for what constitutes conventional good taste in Nanxiong cuisine, whereas the younger generation have a more critical view.

This section shows that in Nanxiong the eating practices and habits of local people (usually middle-aged and elderly generations, but also the young) in the settings of the household kitchen and local restaurant maintain, improve and re-invent traditional flavours and dishes of the cuisine.

6.4 The practice of night-snacking

As introduced in Section 6.1, the expansion of snacking can impact upon traditional meal patterns. There is potential for night-snacks to bring about a significant change in local people's food habits and behaviours. The night-snack (yexiao 夜宵) is one major part of any night market, and these are particularly popular in South China and south Asian countries, where even the winter seasons are suitable for outdoor eating and other activities (Henderson, 2000; Hsieh and Chang, 2006; Shih, 2010). Thus night-snacking can be contrasted with formal banquet eating; Shih (2010: 2) argues that snacking is "informal, friendly and leisurely eating", and a "graceful and exquisite idea" that involves "close friends and relatives gathering".

Nanxiong night-snack practices reflect changing foodways and have become an important dining option for the local population. Thus, this section explores what night-snaking means to Nanxiong's cuisine and people. Section 6.4.1 discusses spatial features of Nanxiong night-snacks. Section 6.4.2 discusses typical dishes and how they derive from Nanxiong cuisine. Section 6.4.3 discusses night-snacking as a collective

lifestyle. It shows that night-snacking is gradually abstracted as a cultural signifier of Nanxiong cuisine.

6.4.1 Situating night-snacking

The history of Nanxiong's night-snacking is not a long one. The emergence of night-snacking as a practice and related food outlets happened in the last decade. It reflects the growing level of consumerism in the city. Using Shih's categorisation (2010: 10), Nanxiong night-snacks sit in the urban night-market category. Eating sites consist of vendors and sidewalk booths and are distributed in central squares, on both sides of main roads and streets, but currently these have not yet evolved into a night market. These dining outlets are increasing in number, but in a haphazard way, in central locations but also in urban neighbourhoods. As the majority of customers are local residents, reputation and word-of-mouth are important factors in night-snacking.

Because they are part of the informal night-time economy, the eating outlets draw little governmental and media attention and therefore few regulations have been introduced to contain their spread or manage potential health risks. Respondents sometimes viewed these vendors negatively.

"No, I never go. Although the food smells good, you should not go [eating snacks] because the ingredients and cooking techniques used are poor. Ah, they [vendors] might use dirty oil [digouyou 地沟油]." (Liang, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 01/05/2016)

In order to accommodate more customers, almost all restaurants (sidewalk booths) extend their space and lay out tables so that they occupy part of the sidewalk (Xue, 2012) (see Figure 6.5); in the winter, they set up tents on the sidewalk to block out the cold air. Just as with Singapore's food courts, which "are seen as intrinsic to the Singaporean way of life and a fundamental aspect of the nation's identity" (Henderson, 2014: 911), the stalls form an interesting night streetscape based around night-snacking and represent the small size and slow pace of life in the city.

Night-snacking has gradually evolved over the last decade to become one of the most significant meal formats. The general opening time for night-snacking outlets is around 9 pm. Before this, the streets are normally full with cars and day-time business traffic; after 9 pm is when traffic slows down and is thus the best time for vendors to set up their stalls and booths on the sidewalks. Night-snacking outlets usually stop serving at around 2 am, slightly earlier than in big cities like Guangzhou. It used to be the only commercial activity and nowadays is still the most popular leisure activity at night. However, according to the *Shaoguan Daily* (see Chapter 4.4.4), night-snacking generates waste-

²⁹ The other two categories are rural night-market and tourist night-market.

water, rubbish, pungent cooking smells, noise (cheering, laughing, gambling and so on.) and poor parking, all of which lead to complaints from neighbours (Rao et al., 2011; Xue, 2012).



Figure 6.5 Night-snack booth occupying sidewalk. Source: author.

6.4.2 Night-snacking as a Nanxiong delicacy

"I feel the taste and review it from a customers' perspective. I don't add MSG. My restaurant used to serve night-snacks, but gradually I started serving dinner, and make beef offal pot in the afternoon... Most of the customers ordering pots of beef offal are young. The spicy beef offal pot might only exist in Nanxiong. Many places don't like this flavour, and some don't like their food spicy." (Guoguo, young man, interview, 29/05/2016)

Different cities have different signature foods for night-snacking. The delicacies offered by night-time vendors are an important component of local cuisine and usually develop in line with local characteristics (which in turn are based around available products, spices and skill) (Shih, 2010: 2-3), such as in Nanxiong stir-fried river-snail, beef offal pot, and stir-fried pork intestine with sour bamboo shoots. They are craft foods and local delights attracting both locals and tourists (Hsieh and Chang, 2006: 140). Unlike formal

meals, the night-snacks are small in size; generally no rice is consumed. Unlike well-known night markets in Taiwan, where there is a diverse range of snack foods, drinks, desserts and refreshments, most foods in Nanxiong are typically stir-fried and served on temporary tables besides the stall. They are also a good match with beer and Chinese liquor.

"So you see now what we eat in a midnight snack: chicken feet, chicken wings, duck feet, and pork tripe, beef tripe. And [the style] includes hot pot, take-away." (Junjun, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

"There are many households cooking river-snail on a mid-autumn day. Yes, it is the custom of Nanxiong. For me, I don't like mooncake because it's greasy. I prefer to eat river-snail." (Xiaodan, young woman, interview, 23/01/2016)

Night-snacking has become a critical way to solidify Nanxiong cuisine. From Xiaodan's statement above, we know that stir-fried river-snail is a traditional snack at home and has evolved into a night-time snack. Consuming this dish as a night-snack confirms the authentically Nanxiong character of night-snacking.

"The restaurant only does dinner and night-snacks. We just ordered a fish, in the form of hot pot, and the side ingredients were bean sprout, oil bean curd, dried bean curd roll and pork blood." (Jiang, middle-aged man, interview, 02/05/2016)

Night-snack foods draw their flavours and cooking skills from Nanxiong cuisine. According to Ling and Hu (2010), two core ingredients of rural or countryside dishes are chilli pepper and sour bamboo shoots. The three major skills are braising (*men* 焖), stirfrying (*chao* 炒) and oil-frying (*jian* 煎). Therefore, most dishes are served hot, different from snacking in the UK (Warde and Yates, 2017: 23). For example, beef offal pot emerged not long ago and has become a symbol of Nanxiong night-snacking in recent years. Ingredients include various beef offal (lung, intestines, stomach), radish, chilli pepper and sweet-potato noodles, which are braised in a casserole.

During my fieldwork, I encountered some extremely spicy night-snack dishes such as duck noodle and roasted chicken wing. Jinjin, a young man I spoke with, guessed that vendors provide extremely spicy foods so that customers buy more drinks (interview, 22/04/2016). There are also other new emerging dishes incorporated into Nanxiong night-snacks, for example various barbecued meats and seafood congee. The use of barbecuing has been imported from other places and is typically conducted by young vendors, which enriches Nanxiong's night-snacks. These imported dishes often exist in harmony with local delicacies, constructing a night-snack foodscape that combines tradition with novelty.

6.4.3 Night-snacking as a lifestyle

In summer, the temperature and humidity at night is much more conformable to the human body than daytime. Night-snacking is distinguished from other eating occasions because it provides a relaxing open-air dining environment for local customers and tourists. The facilities include a square table equipped with four chairs.

"The most popular are those vendors opposite Zhuji Hotel. In the past, the stalls didn't spread beyond the road; nowadays, as customer numbers increase, the crossing is occupied by stalls. This site is populated all year round and the price [of the food] is expensive." (Jiang, middle-aged man, interview, 02/05/2016)

Night-snacking breaks up daily meal routines and is an important part of daily life (Li, 2006; Wang et al., 2012). From my observation I saw that it is not uncommon to skip supper to night-snack instead. Night-snacking (*chi yexiao* 吃夜宵) has become a common daily conversation and behaviour involving friends and family members. The boss of a restaurant explained the situation. It reflects a key feature of the Chinese, who in every place and every social class do not begrudge spending money in the pursuit of delicacies (Erlich, 2004).

"Nanxiong's night-snacks are very popular and wonderful. Almost all eating sites are packed with customers on weekends. [This is because] Nanxiong people are pretty fond of eating and they are willing to spend a lot of money on eating." (Guoguo, young man, interview, 29/05/2016)

Night-snacking has a functional and conceptual impact. Night-snacking and its outlets are important places "for public meetings and social gatherings" and constitute an important part of the social urban fabric (Chang and Hsieh, 2006: 1276). They create a "sphere for stories, since gossip, commercial intelligence" (Bell and Valentine, 1997: 125), life and work complaints, the dissemination of news and information, and so on. Unlike in many tourist-oriented night markets in Taiwan, which have gone the way of "commercialisation" or even over-commercialisation (Shih, 2010: 121), the majority of customers are local people who have deeper emotional ties and identity links to local night-snacks. Night-snacking, along with the outlets and stalls that sell them, have become particularly significant to those Nanxiong people who live outside Nanxiong because they can trigger their embodied memories and hometown nostalgia. The slow-pace lifestyle in Nanxiong contrasts with that of the cities where they currently live. Many young informants claim that one of the first things they do when returning to Nanxiong is to eat night-snacks with friends. This supports Shih's suggestion (2010: 121) that locals tend to have a more emotional relationship with night markets than tourists.

Although they are an informal meal, night-snacks have even greater significance than formal meals. The night-snack then has become a cultural signifier for Nanxiong cuisine and is discussed in everyday conversations and on websites and blogs. This is perhaps because it is a *light* and *leisurely* activity, thus conforming to Nanxiong's slow-paced

way of life. According to many young adults, it is night-snack and breakfast on the streets rather than lunch and dinner that they most fondly remember and eagerly anticipate. One paragraph from an article introducing night-snacking (Nanxiong Home, 2017) says,

"In Nanxiong, without eating night-snacks, how can you fall asleep? Night-snack is the best sleep inducer".

Leisure, flexibility and randomness are critical characters for night-snacking (Li, 2006: 10). It is informal in style, and there are few rules and manners to observe, which may be an important factor for customers. The fact that the food is eaten outside is an important draw for customers keen to enjoy the fresh air free of the noise and pollution from traffic and pedestrians. They may also be able to enjoy river scenery whilst doing so. These characteristics make night-snacking very suitable for friends and family seeking to find a place to chat and relax. Given that outlets are typically within walking distance, night-snacking makes the experience of night-life comfortable. Another characteristic is that it provides diners opportunities to feel free to eat many things at any time in the evening they like.

"Every Friday, around 9 pm, I and four or five close classmates head for the stall at Jiaoyu Road. We each order one pot of beef offal, and we asked the vendor rice noodles rather than radish. We get one plastic container of iced tea served... After eating our night-snacks, we walk over Henan Bridge." (Yang, young man, interview, 02/05/2016)

Night-snacks are an inclusive style of consumption and leisure (Shih, 2010: 1). Night-snacking in the open air is a good occasion to drink and play games with friends, diversifying people's social lives. Given the fact that there are not many night activities within the city, some young workers even contend that night-snacking has become their main hobby and entertainment. Conversely, during holidays, when large number of people return to the city, the absence of other night-time activities has enhanced the popularity of night-snacking. What is more, as increasing numbers of tourists appear in the city, both the government and local people promote night-snacking as the city's selling point.

However, some respondents voiced concerns or criticisms about the night-snack trend.

"I no longer eat night snacks. However, I used to eat them every day with my husband for a time last year. It was often late at night and I was criticised by my father-in-law. Plus it is bad for the body: drinking beer every night can make you sick. We used to drink seven or eight bottles each time." (Guan, middle-aged woman, interview, 13/05/2016)

Many people complained about the high price of night-snacks, which they felt might harm perceptions of Nanxiong night-snacking. The relatively high price of night-snacks is "unacceptable to both visitors and residents" (Henderson et al., 2009: 537) and influences people's experience of this activity and local life. There were a large number of comments and complaints about the soaring prices; take beef offal pot as an example: according to Jiang, a middle-aged man, the price has increased to between four and six times the level it was ten years ago. However, the prices increase a lot during holidays. Some complain that the 'taste' of beef pot has also changed: even though the price is high, there are fewer pieces of beef in the pot than there were, and vendors have added more vegetables. The soaring prices have reduced the frequency with which local residents visit and lowered their appetite for night-snacks in general. Therefore, the high price also undermines the image of the city, undermining its hospitality, openness and honesty (Shu'er, 2013).

In summary, Nanxiong night-snacking has emerged as an integral part of local ways of life. Its distribution, flexibility and laid-back manner indirectly mirror and link with the laid-back, consumption-led way of life in the city (Shaoguan Forum, 2016). The weather is hot and people are irritable in the daytime, meaning that night-snacks, alongside breakfast, are the ideal meal for Nanxiong people (Guo et al., 2011: 477). This section has shown that night-snacking is gradually being abstracted as a cultural signifier of Nanxiong cuisine. However, prices have soared and at times the industry has become overly commercial, which is having a negative effect on how people view and experience it (Shih, 2010: 121).

As Kular et al. (2011: 43) suggest, albeit in the context of French cuisine, it is the preparation of food rather than the material ingredients that define a cuisine. I argue that the way of consuming (night-snacking) partly defines Nanxiong cuisine. The case of night-snacking in Nanxiong (and more widely South China and South-East Asia) provides one perspective for a deconstruction of the typical 'three meal a day' pattern (Warde and Yates, 2017). Night-snacking not only has a rhythm (ibid.: 23), but can be a socialising occasion and a smaller eating occasion representing the pursuit of slow pace and leisurely lifestyle. During my fieldwork, a number of informants told me how much they enjoyed eating night-snacks and that despite constant change associated with modernity and urbanisation, it has become a key site to sense and experience the authenticity of Nanxiong cuisine (for further discussion of food authenticity in Nanxiong see Chapter 8). Despite being a relative newcomer to the foodscape, night-snacking has found a niche that both fits with and enables food-related lifestyles. Akin to the growing interest in street food in Western cities, and in line with night markets and food vending in many parts of the urban world, night-snacking can here been seen to reinvent culinary and social practices, sitting somewhere in between the intimacy of domestic eating and the formalities of restaurant dining. Despite concerns over food safety, price rises and over-commercialisation, night-snacking seems to have established itself as a major site for experiencing Nanxiong cuisine today.

6.5 Conclusion

In order to understand the modern changes to everyday Nanxiong cuisine, this chapter has analysed food preparation, cooking and consumption in the domestic sphere and in restaurants and has summarised some of the most significant changes to eating habits and practices amongst the local population. In Section 6.2, I examined various aspects of foodways which are impacted by modernity and urbanisation. As a small city, Nanxiong has developed various modes of food provision, including home grown and processed food. Contemporary food provision retains rural traits and has close connections to life in the villages. Domestic meals and eating out are increasingly diversified and incorporate new ways of cooking and eating. Compared with the recent past, the taste of domestic meals has improved and there are more influences from Cantonese cuisine and spicy Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan cuisines appearing in Nanxiong.

In Section 6.3, I introduced changes in people's food knowledge, habits and attitudes towards Nanxiong cuisine. This discussion shows that the local population have developed some distinctive food habits such as particular ways of cooking. Wild meat can act as a catalyst for social communication, which is circumscribed by current laws and regulations. People begin to introduce new techniques to improve both the look and taste of home-cooked meals.

In Section 6.4, I discussed night-snacking as an informal eating occasion. The night-snack is ideal because the night sees milder weather and Nanxiong people are willing to spend money on food. The tables are located on the main streets of the city, and night-snacking is a popular night-time activity for both local people and tourists. Local delights and delicacies associated with Nanxiong cuisine still dominate night-time snacking. It also has leisure and socialising components and occupies an important role in local people's memory. At the same time, Nanxiong's night-snacking is open to adopting some external and modern elements, such as barbecue and various beers. In this regard, night-snacks can be abstracted as an important cultural signifier for Nanxiong cuisine and are an opportunity to re-fashion and present the cuisine to outsiders (tourists).

The first conclusion of this discussion is that urban lifestyle changes and modernisation have been the leading factors underpinning the development of the city and its culinary culture. When discussing the modernisation of cuisine, the general view is that cuisines inherit culinary skills and influences from the past and absorb new and imported skills and dishes (Cheung, 2013: 353; Henderson, 2014). The chapter concludes that modern change to foodways and culinary traditions are not equally and uniformly distributed across all aspects of a cuisine, for example food preparation, domestic cooking and eating out. On the one hand, refined and modern cooking skills and the greater

availability of food choice improve a household's everyday living standards and satisfy the increasingly picky appetite of some family members. In contrast to leaner times in the past (which in rural areas existed perhaps until around 2000, according to Congcong and Liang, two middle-aged men I spoke with), people seem to be very 'realistic' and eager to accept every new influences to improve their meals. On the other hand, some traditional culinary skills and food are preserved, becoming less frequently consumed but in turn becoming delicacies. Picky middle-aged diners seek out wild and processed (dried, salted and pickled) foods via personal links or at specific restaurants in order to diversify everyday flavours. However the recipes for these traditional foods (both in the home and at restaurants) are re-adjusted due to the increasing availability of oils, seasonings and spices (see Chapter 5.3.1). Therefore the taste of these home-style dishes (*jiachangcai*) is improved and refined.

When it comes to eating out, popular restaurants usually serve cuisines from the regional cultural centres and which have a similar (overall) flavour. In Nanxiong's case, Cantonese cuisine (i.e. that from Guangzhou and Hong Kong) and spicy cuisines (i.e. those from Hunan, Jiangxi, Sichuan) are major external cuisines in the city. These cuisines (except for that from Sichuan) are in close geographical proximity. Mintz (2009: 8) has said that when it comes to local, low cuisine in changing societies "the possibility of radical change and eventual standardization of some food habits on a global basis certainly exists". This chapter provides some clues to elaborate upon this argument.

The second conclusion is that eating habits and attitudes, understood as culinary 'agreements' or conventions and a form of collective discourse and practice (Kjærnes, 2001; Mintz, 1996; Narayanan, 2016) are not homogeneous across generations. First, it is usually middle-aged and elderly generations who retain their preference for homestyle dishes and wild mountain food. They have developed their particular style and knowledge for preparing and cooking food. In contrast, young people who have experience studying or working in other regions may want to modify or refine recipes (by introducing new cooking methods and new ingredients). They express critical and 'objective' views on the cuisine. Their eating habits, taste preferences and tolerance for spiciness may change or degenerate, which in turn shapes domestic eating practices (e.g. the avoidance of chilli pepper in everyday meals). This conclusion responds to the features of low cuisine outlined in Chapter 5.4.

The third conclusion is that the emergence of night-snacking has altered Nanxiong's character, both objectively and conceptually. The lifestyle surrounding night-snacks, particularly in small cities, is naturally connected with the slow-paced way of life, which is treasured by many residents from big cities (Su, 2014) and missed by those who have left. Kjærnes (2001: 7) notes the contradictory assumption of eating patterns as "a matter of individual choice of lifestyle, or as strongly influenced by social structure and societal

institutions". If night-snacks becomes a fourth daily meal for at least part of the population (in Nanxiong and many cities in wider South China and South-East Asia alike), this reflects potential linkages between two sides of this assumption. Individual choice and collective eating habits are merged perhaps in those smaller places where night activities are (or perhaps were) relatively monotonous and people believe eating events should be about socialising more than private occasions.

The findings of this chapter relate in part to the cross-cutting theme of modernity and authenticity (see Chapter 1.4.1). The changing foodways in Nanxiong are far from simple. On the one hand, they show that modernising and urbanising factors have improved and refined various aspects of foodways. On the other hand, although the tastes of some traditional foods and wild foods have been 'improved', these foods and the skills involved in their processing (salting, pickling, drying) or the ways they are provided (e.g. through personal link with rural household) still represent a culinary legacy that stands in contrast to external (and even foreign) cuisines. In addition, this chapter suggests that night-snacking has the potential to build local people's authentic lived experience and, when they move to another city, has the potential to influence their daily life.

Chapter 7 Hakka ceremony, rituals and banquets

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 discussed the flavour principle, wild mountain foods and home-style cuisine. Chapter 6 analysed changing foodways, food habits and attitudes across generations, and night-snacking as a food-related lifestyle. This chapter focuses on the special occasions of which food and cuisine form a constituent part and in which the social roots of the group are made visible. It echoes Mintz's claim (1996: 96) that "a cuisine has a common social roots". In this chapter, I do not discuss all the ceremonies in Nanxiong life but instead pay special attention to weddings, because they are the most spectacular ceremony, involving a number of celebratory banquets that showcase the rituals and heritage of the Hakka group.

There are two themes at the heart of this chapter. First, it is a reflection on the nature of rituals and ceremonies in terms of their relationship to food culture. This chapter closely analyses ethnic food rituals and shows that they are multiple and contested. I examine various cultural meanings and the ways that (food) rituals function and evolve into local customs. Food rituals are one way of defending against the erosion of tradition (Avieli, 2005; Stevenson, 1972), yet the rituals themselves evolve through time. I investigate the cultural meanings and roles that food items, whether cooked or raw, are endowed with and play in ceremonies. Meanwhile, focusing on verbal signification (Ogunkunle, 2013), I look at the Chinese language and the role that its literary culture plays in ceremonies, banquets and rituals. The Chinese language has many homophones through which cultural meaning is transferred. I argue that due to the feature of these homophones, both Mandarin and the Hakka language provide a verbal analogy that connects special food gifts with auspicious meanings. The rich symbolism of food used in wedding banquets illustrates the role of food (and language) in performing identity.

We saw in Chapter 2.4.2 that rituals and ceremonies may have greater social meaning and roots than religious devotion (Van Baal, 1976). This is true in a number of East Asian societies including China, where the religious symbolism of food is not as prominent as in Europe. Kwon and Tamang (2015: 8) compare religious ethnic foods in a number of Asian societies. For China they write, "Confucianism underlines the morality and behaviour of people, including rites of passage, and Taoism provides for the needs and healing of the sick and is the basis for regulating festivals." It is interesting to look into the socio-cultural meanings behind such beliefs. In East Asian societies, banquets are the most significant collective food event and culinary legacy (e.g. Anderson, 1988: 157; Cheung, 2005; Raji et al., 2017). In this chapter, through a critical lens, I investigate the cultural and social meanings that remain and those that are changing. In so doing, I focus on the ways that these events are organised, the role of table manners, and the

order in which food is served, with a particular focus on the village context. I argue that the food rituals that underpin them are more conservative than modern and represent the adapted legacies of Nanxiong Hakka.

Chinese ceremonial rituals always convey social messages about the gendered division of labour, seniority, kinship, authoritarian systems and gods/deities. For example, Zhao and Bell (2007: 457-458) write that "it is the women who predominate in actual ritual practice" and in things such as food preparation. Using empirical data drawn from my fieldwork, I further interpret relationships such as physical setting, religion and group, gender and dining experience in these ceremonies and banquets.

Second, this chapter considers the cooking skill and ethnic dishes which enrich the banquet cuisine. Given the need to prepare food for many people at the same time, the skills and preparation techniques used in banquets differ from those used in daily cooking. This chapter explores the distinctive flavours that appear in banquets, with daily cooking used as a comparison. This makes sense, because it enriches the literature about the roles that banquets play in the broader cuisine and, on the other hand, reinterprets ethnic cuisine in an era of change (Arvela, 2013; Raji et al., 2017). It also highlights the need for further empirical research into Chinese banquets. I argue in this chapter that the practice of banqueting and the dishes used in banquets showcase Hakka cuisine, skills and traits; these remaining culinary legacies are refreshed and arguably become more important in the face of modernisation and urban change.

As we will see below, Hakka culture adds distinctive elements to Hakka cuisine, separating it from other Han Chinese cuisine. These include special features such as seating order and taboos, reflecting the way that Hakka people have adapted Confucian rituals. The wedding occasion provides an historical clue and space for ethnic cuisine and reflects an emotional politics within the group (Huang and Yeoh, 2007). This chapter argues that even cooking utensils and skills reflect some distinct flavour and authenticity. Before the analysis begins in earnest, a brief introduction to the wedding ceremony is necessary.

We saw in Chapter 3.2.2 that Hakka weddings are one of the most important social rituals and reflect Hakka history and identity as an orthodox (*zhengtong* 正统) Han group (Guo, 2014b). The rituals and steps involved in weddings vary across different regions and have changed over time, and there are variations between weddings in urban and rural areas. The traditional style weddings are informed by the Rites of Zhou (*Zhouli* 周礼), conventionally thought to have been composed in the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), and reflect the Han tradition. The steps include matchmaking, sending gifts, selecting a wedding date, preparing a dowry, bringing the bride back, formal ceremonies and rough horseplay at the wedding.

First, according to Huang et al. (1993) and Garrett (1980), and supported by my own observations, matchmaking involves the man's parents requesting a matchmaker to visit the woman's house. In the process, the matchmaker introduces the man's personality, appearance and family. Second, the man's family offers money and engagement gifts to the woman's family. The gifts include different foods, fruits, vegetables, plus clothes, shoes and so on. Third, having selected a wedding date, the man's family send gifts — mainly food — to the woman's family on a number of occasions until the formal wedding. Fourth, the woman's parents prepare a dowry for their daughter. Fifth, the groom, together with his team, goes to the bride's home and brings her back with him. Sixth, in the groom's home, the ceremony and banquet are organised.

Traditionally, weddings last for three days: the first dinner before the wedding day is called the 'warming-the-sedan banquet' (*nuanjiaojiu* 暖轿酒). The formal banquet on the wedding day itself is called the 'Ceremonial banquet' (*jinqinjiu* 进亲酒). The third day is the 'good-bye banquet' (*sankejiu* 散客酒). Fangfang, a middle-aged woman, told me that nowadays weddings in rural areas have been shortened to one day and guests no longer stay in the village for two nights like they used to. This may be because of the greater ease with which people can nowadays travel to and from villages. In urban areas, the ceremony can be even more abbreviated, foregoing traditional elements and incorporating a greater number of western elements such as white wedding dress (Tillman and Tillman, 2015).

There are also rituals that take place after the formal wedding. For example, on the first New Year after the wedding, the new couple visit the bride's parents' home; in this period, the village shows hospitality towards the groom:

"The whole village was very united in the past. When the groom and bride revisited the bride's village, every family in the village would take it in turns to welcome them with food." (Fangfang, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

Section 7.2 below talks about the roles and cultural meanings of the special foods served in traditional weddings. Food has a ritualistic role and is a form of material and symbolic exchange. This section therefore looks at how food rituals are materialised, contextualised and shaped, with an emphasis on Confucian influence. Section 7.3 looks at how cooking skills and (ethnic) dishes served in banquets enrich the ethnic cuisine of the Hakka people. Section 7.4 talks about the ways that these kinds of banquets differ from everyday occasions. It also reflects upon how Nanxiong Hakkas' version of seating order, serving order, taboos and dining atmosphere shape the experience of the wedding banquet as a performance of authenticity.

7.2 Food rituals within Hakka wedding ceremonies

Food and rituals are platforms by which Hakka today remain distinct and connected and thus help to reconstruct group boundaries and collective selves and identities (Wilk, 1999: 245). This section aims to uncover the cultural meanings and functioning roles that food items, whether cooked or raw, are endowed with and play in the ceremony. Section 7.2.2 analyses the role of food rituals; in this aspect, foods act as the essential constituent parts. Section 7.2.3 analyses modern changes, particularly with regards to the rise in hotel wedding ceremonies, an increasingly popular choice for young couples.

7.2.1 Sociocultural meanings

As a non-pure Hakka county (see Chapter 3.3), wedding customs and rituals in Nanxiong are heavily influenced by ancient beliefs from the Central Plains. Put simply, it is the belief in $li \not = 1$, rituals rooted in Confucianism, in particular that play a role. Traditional marriage rituals inherited from ancient Han China are: first kowtow to Heaven and Earth, second kowtow to parents and third make a mutual bow (Tillman and Tillman, 2015: 85). However, some steps involved in ceremonies in Nanxiong differ from these. I asked respondents about the differences. Long, a middle-aged man, replied:

"There are few of these rituals in our place. No one organises these [old] wedding rituals. These rituals are replaced with others: each guest steps forward and gives a red packet [containing money] into the basin placed in front of the altar and then both the bride and groom bow to say thank you. They don't kneel down. It is more flexible here." (Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

Apart from money, food items are an important part of the gifts sent to the bride's family. The groom's family are responsible for food provision at the banquet, which is held in the bride's village. The amount of food offered should be negotiated beforehand between the two families.

"Yeah, the groom's team are going to pick up a load of foods like pork and fish. They should provide each family [of the bride's clan] with food for one meal. It's a big burden." (Ping, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

Because people lack the money, livestock, which is endowed with social meaning, is a very significant component of the engagement gifts that are offered (see also Garrett, 1980: 127). The livestock offered is typically raised by the family and is an important family asset. It is interesting to note that duck is forbidden as a wedding gift because it has an inauspicious meaning.³⁰ Some gifts are exchanged back and forth, symbolising

³⁰ As will be discussed in Chapter 8.3.2, duck is used in the Hungry Ghost Festival.

a harmonious relationship between the couple. These meanings can be interpreted as local intangible heritage.

"A rooster will be sent to the bride's family and the bride's family will send a hen as a return gift. This symbolises the couple. Likewise, the groom's family sends a towel and the bride's family return the towel.... The goose is for the bride's clan. For example, her grandma³¹ and aunts³² who made the bed as the dowry receive goose. The number of geese they receive is dependent on the number of beds they made." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

"The goose is the 'grand' gift." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

As the quotations show, the goose is the noblest gift and is given to certain relatives. For other relatives, chicken is sent instead of goose. This reflects respect for the mother's clan. And the ritual of food gift (goose or chicken) declares in symbolic form a proper family power relationship (Wu and Hu, 2010: 107). The family who receive the gift can readily interpret the meaning that it conveys.

As well as symbolic meaning, some food gifts carry a practical use. My informants told me that vegetables like daikon and bamboo shoots are used as banquet foods by the bride's clan.

"It is important to send cabbage. Banquets mostly serve cabbage... And cooking cabbage is convenient in a large pot; a large pot can cook tens bowls at a time." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

In reality, these gifts do not strictly follow the correct ritual observances. Rules are flexible and can be tailored to specific situations. According to Houhou and Yeye, two old men, each village possesses several hand-written copies of ritual records that describe the particulars of various rituals. If they lack sufficient funds, people can develop 'smart' strategies to earn face at weddings (Jang and Lamendola, 2006: 182).

³¹ In Chinese, the relatives are referred to by different terms depending on whether they are on the father's side or the mother's. For example, the father's mother is *nainai* 奶奶 and the mother's mother is *waipo* 外婆. Grandma refers only to the mother's mother in this context.

³² Aunt refers here only to the wives of the mother's brothers (jiuma 舅妈).

For example, various rice cakes are prepared as gifts and Yunyun discussed a way to make the gifts look plentiful,

"In our place, pieces of bamboo stem are put in the middle of the basket [forming a division between the upper and lower space]. Rice cakes and biscuits are placed onto the pieces of bamboo. The effect is that it looks like the basket is fully loaded, but actually the bottom is empty. The host thinks the basket is heavy but when lifted up, it weighs little [laughs]." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

Gift sending can also be understood in the context of Hakka life. For example, oil-fried cakes are often made to be sent as a gift. According to Houhou, an elderly man, the 'stealing' of the rice cake by passers-by has developed to become an everyday joke amongst local people. This narrative is regional rather than ethnic, social rather than religious.

"In the past, there were the oil-fried rice cakes. There were up to 900 or 1000 packed in baskets. Additional cakes had be prepared because passers-by would 'rob' the oil-fried rice cakes and eat them as you travelled to the bride's family. These were not beggars. Anyone who did farm work or just encountered the people carrying the cakes could eat them. The people carrying the baskets didn't dare complain... Among the rice cakes, there was a big one called the 'head oil-fried rice cake', which was uncooked. It was meant to be hidden at the bottom of the basket so that it would not be stolen." (Houhou, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

In this quotation we see that it was the responsibility of the team who bring the bride back to make sure the head rice cake was not stolen. Hakka families always want to give the impression of being rich, regardless of their actual economic position. Food rituals help develop an understanding of proper and harmonious family and clan relationships.

7.2.2 Roles of food rituals

"The ritual of colouring the groom's face is to measure the tolerance of the groom, educating him not to be stingy in his future life. It means that even if your face is painted with dirty things, you should not disagree and swear... Attendees mix daikon and winter-melon skin with pork oil and plaster, as the 'brush' to paint the groom's face; sharp items are not allowed." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

Special food and food rituals occupy a significant role in traditional wedding procedures. In the quotation above, colouring one's face during the wedding ceremony is described. This ritual involves the use of vegetables as they will not scratch the groom's face.

Huang et al. (1993) describe an example in the Hakka context: food can even serve as an unspoken expression. When it comes to matchmaking, as Chinese women are often shy and find it difficult to accept invitations to marry, particular foods can be used to express a mutual response and acceptance. If they agree to the invitation to marry, the woman's family accept two bags of pastry from the man's family. If the man's family reject the woman, they refuse to eat the meal provided by the woman's family (Baidu Wenku, [no date]).

Some special food practices are applied as rituals to complete the wedding ceremony, especially in the context of reproduction and the continuation of the family and clan lineage (Tillman and Tillman, 2015: 94). Rituals such as pulling sugarcane in the process of bringing the bride back imply a blessing for the fertility of descendants, especially boys.

"The eggs were red and green, coloured with red or green paper, and the bride's family cooked the eggs and let the groom's family take them home. The groom's family inserted some toothpicks into the eggs for the bride to eat and said 'there is bone in the egg'". (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

"The chicken leg used for deity worshipping rituals is cut for the bride to eat, and then [the rest] is brought back to the groom's family to honour the deity. Chicken meat is also cut for the bride to eat. Coloured eggs are served to the bride and groom during the mutual toasting after the ceremony." (Field note, 15/02/2016)

As Wu and Hu (2010: 106) write, when it comes to rituals, "The key element... is the reliance on ritual activities over language as a means for understanding and transformation". Without using words or language, the ritual of eating chicken legs conveys a harmonious relationship between the deity and the new couple (ibid.: 107); the coloured eggs imply intergenerational relationships: the groom's father and mother's blessing for new babies to be (soon) delivered by the bride.

The quotation below highlights the importance of fish in the wedding of Yanyan, a new bride. Fish $(yu \, \underline{\oplus})$ is a homophone of surplus $(yu \, \underline{\div})$, suggesting wealth. The following quotation shows that, in the wider context of a Chinese wedding, food rituals centre around interpersonal relations within clan and family rather than people-object relations.

Author: I observed that in Yanyan's wedding ritual, the groom's family brought fish, cooked chicken, and red eggs. Fish was distributed to families of the clan.

Yunyun: This is called the three domestic animals basket.³³ It is used to serve deities... When the basket was brought to Yanyan's house, her family didn't dare

³³ Three domestic animals, or sansheng 三牲, literally means three domestic animals used in deity-worship ritual (more see Chapter 8.3.1).

take all the fish. [They] cooked half of the fish for the bride to consume, and left the other half for the groom's family to take home and cook for the couple to eat together. (Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

"On the day after the marriage, a kettle of rice wine is delivered to the bride's family. It is consumed by her uncles. However, people aren't allowed to drink all the rice wine: instead they pour half away and send the other half back to the grooms' house. Nowadays, the rice wine can be replaced by a bottle of liquor." (Qiuqu, elderly woman, Hakka, group interview, 19/02/2016)

Folk religious symbolism also plays a role in Hakka weddings and rituals. The Kitchen God plays an important role: when the bride, who is often carried on her brother's back, leaves home, she salutes the Kitchen God and her ancestors. This is because the Kitchen God is the "guardian of the family, protector of the hearth" (Simoons, 1990: 26). From my observations, I saw that before the bride enters into the ancestral hall (see Chapter 3.3.1), a round bamboo sifter (*mishai* 米筛) is used to cover the bride's head. This is because in daily life the bamboo sifter is used to filter out detritus and dust from harvested rice. Therefore, this procedure is an attempt to 'eliminate' misfortune and impurity from the bride (Quanzhouwang, 1991).

Three pairs of green onions are wrapped in red paper to drive away evil and troubling spirits, even though the exact spirit to be driven away might not be clear to people nowadays:

"When sending the bride to the groom's family, the matchmaker takes some green onions and throws one pair of onions across a road, street, ditch or river. Well – this is to dispel evil.... The groom's family get a pig's head and send it to the bride's family. And the bride's family invite clan families to consume it." (Houhou, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

"The groom's family get a pig head and send to the bride's family. And the bride's family would invite the family of the clan to consume the pig head." (Houhou, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

A rich dowry empowers the bride in her new family role, showing that she does not economically rely on her husband's clan. This is true for Hakka women, who make a bigger contribution to domestic affairs than their counterparts in other Han regions (Xie, 2000). During my fieldwork, I was told that basins and wooden trays are two essential dowry items. They indicate support from her original clan and reflect inter-clan relationships. In addition, according to Lulu, there are two practical uses of the basin and wooden tray: for holding wine, cups and dishes during the banquet, and for holding red packets during the wedding ceremony.

"[Preparing a rich dowry meant that] the married daughter doesn't have to beg from the man's family. When the bride arrives at her new family, the wedding ceremony begins. The tray and basin are taken out from the room and are essential for completing the ritual. The banquet begins at night, the tray is cleaned to use for toasting." (Lulu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 21/03/2016)

One ancient rule which still works is auspicious numbers and timings. Numbers and timings associated with the wedding should not imply auspicious meanings. This is a defence of traditional Hakka legacy in a changing context (Stevenson, 1972); the violation of auspicious numbers and timings would lead to misbehaviour and bring bad fortune. Yeye suggested that the quantity of most food gifts should be in double figures and even numbers and that there is a ritual record in the village that records the number of food gifts that have ever been given. Similarly, the temporal context of the ceremony matters. For example, according to Yingying, a new bride, the bride should not leave her original family at noon, but instead should leave before or after. The banquet should also start before or after noon.

This subsection has shown that food rituals can be the conveyor of social meaning, declaring proper and harmonious relationships between families and clans (Wu and Hu, 2010). There are also religious influences on rituals and food gifts, but the deity to be honoured and evil to be driven away are not entirely clear and do not always play a key role today. While some details concerning the meaning of ritual foods have been lost, and while rituals might diverge from descriptions in ancient records, many elements of food ritual are retained in the structure of weddings – though further modernisation is arguably eroding these legacies.

7.2.3 Modernisation and legacies

In the context of modernisation, the importance of rituals decreases. In the course of my observations, I noticed that the copies of ritual records seemed out-of-date. For example, many wedding gifts and dowries have been replaced by money or modern consumer goods. This represents a transfer from "a simple item of barter" to "a commodity" (Oxfeld, 2017: 116). This is easily explained: the (food) gifts recorded in the ritual records have little practical value now and modern products are instead a better alternative, particularly when people move to the city. For example, Yingying's father offered a motorbike and washing machine for her dowry. Like the red-coloured egg, the dowry is wrapped with red paper. This suggests that auspicious meaning remains a core component of wedding rituals, even as the ritual object changes. I also observed that the insistence upon auspicious (even) numbers has been loosened.

The increasing number of young couples who have begun to have their weddings in hotels has further led to a simplification of the rituals involved. However, ancestor- and deity-worshipping is retained for wedding ceremonies. Cooked food is frequently served

for deities. Unlike Tillman and Tillman's case of a couple who were not satisfied with the "authority of the parents" and wanted their own modern style (Tillman and Tillman, 2015: 89), in my case, Fufu, who works in Hangzhou wanted to save time and effort, like many other young people, by opting for a hotel wedding because his holiday time was limited. Although influenced by modern practices, the young groom and his father still believed in the time-honoured Hakka ritual of sacrificial food for the god and ancestor:

"We went into the hall just to light a candle, to honour our ancestors. We did not perform those rituals because god-worshipping is particularly troublesome, and in our place we needed a pig's head and pig's tail." (Fufu, young man, group interview, 16/02/2016)

To the younger generation, ancestor worship and religious rituals are local customs rather than religious practices. Organising weddings at a hotel involves "a moderate position of simplifying ancient rituals to accommodate social realities" in the village (Tillman and Tillman, 2015: 96). It is not a reflection of household economic capacity, but undertaken to save time and energy. Many wedding rituals and practices, however, are disappearing as modernisation takes hold (Carstens, 2007: 33). Rituals that are disappearing include the crying bride, the Candle Deity (*zhushen* 烛神). For example, traditionally, those officiating, called 'people for the Candle Deity', were supposed to include the bride's brother. However, during one ceremony I observed, it was the bride's uncle who took on this responsibility. A number of village elders who witnessed this felt ashamed about this rule violation but expressed a tolerant attitude.

So modernisation leads to a number of questions: Why have some food rituals and taboos been forgotten (O'Connor, 2008: 168)? And how do local audiences perceive this situation? Beyond the specific impact of modernisation and personal associations discussed above, I believe the answer is that people are not simply regretful or scared of allowing rituals to decline in popularity (Carstens, 2007: 59). Instead, as living standards improve, people show a pragmatic attitude towards these legacies. Quite a few traditional rituals, as Fufu described them above, are complicated and troublesome. Similarly, some traditional foods and snacks have fallen out of favour. According to Yunyun (a middle-aged woman), no one would eat the large number of oil-fried cakes that were typically offered at weddings, leading to considerable waste. There is no need for such extravagant rituals any more. Houhou, an elderly man, complained about the complexity involved in writing wedding invitations (huntie 婚帖), which must be tailored to each guest.

"Honestly speaking, it was bad to have so many rituals in the past. The ritual records record lots of rituals. It's bad." (Interview, 16/03/2016)

Another reason lies in the secular education of the younger generation. They tend to classify "traditional rituals as *mixin* (迷信) or superstition" (Carstens, 2007: 54).

To sum up, the wedding ceremony is where audiences can come into contact with many rituals and ritual foods. However, the extent to which these rituals are performed and ritual foods are offered has declined, as increasing numbers of people opt for weddings in hotels instead. As many symbolic elements like landscape and the Hakka dialect are on the decrease in the modern context (Chen and Liu, 2009), it is the food and rituals used in ceremonies that can define 'Hakkaness' and become inter-linked with various Hakka regions.

With that in mind, this section has contextualised social roots, especially traditional rituals and ritual (food) practices, the goal of which is harmonious relations between the two families and the unification of the couple. In line with modernisation, the importance assigned to rituals declines (Carstens, 2007: 33). Gifts with more practical value replace those that are no longer relevant. However, core elements and rituals are retained. People do not fear the disappearance of rituals, however; rather, they favour the elimination of inappropriate ones and the 'modernisation' of those that seem to have lost their relevance. Overall, the case of Nanxiong weddings shows the way that Hakka tradition is adaptable yet also conservative. Even the younger generation retain key elements of the wedding rituals, even if the form and meaning of these has changed over time.

7.3 Ceremonial banquet preparation

The following two sections focus on the banquet itself. Drury (2009: 49) writes that "in China, celebrations invariably involve feasting". Feasts or banquets are intimately connected to ceremony (Dmitrieva, 2016) and include "rituals of preparation, odours…tastes, and folkways" associated with the consumption of food (Gillespie, 2003: 7). With the broader food literature we can find discussion of religious explanations for feasts. In reference to an Italian feast that took place in Canada, for example, Cumbo (2000: 49) contends that there are two functions: "Devotional, feasts are also a practical means for advancing the family's material and spiritual well being… Another important similarity in the feasts is the communal associations and local … identities that sustain them." Chinese banquets have their own characters, "reflecting Chinese philosophy stressing harmony and balance and the concern with balanced diversity" (Anderson, 1988: 156-157).

In the context of Nanxiong Hakka village life, this section finds rural banquets are distinct from normal meals in terms of their constitutive features. More specifically, they differ in terms of the way that they are organised, the conventions upon which they are based and the culinary practices and knowledge that they draw upon. With that in mind, section 7.3.1 explores how banquets are organised and section 7.3.2 explores the way that the

food served at banquets is prepared and cooked. We will see that traditional skills, utensils and knowledge are disappearing in rural Hakka areas.

7.3.1 Organising the banquet

In his book *Hakka Food Culture*, published in 1995, Wang provides a general description of the origins and contents of Hakka banquets, but what his book does not offer is an empirical case study. Wang (1995: 134-143) distinguishes between official banquets and folk banquets, and notes that the richness and variety offered at banquets depends on the host family's economic capacity. Banquets are very significant for the Nanxiong Hakka cuisine in a number of respects. For most local people, banqueting used to be an occasion in which they could eat the richest and most diverse range of foods, meaning they could "improve the nutritional value of local diets" (Ohna et al., 2012: 11). More important than their nutritional value, however, is their symbolic content. In terms of the number of dishes offered, for example, banquets can involve eight, nine, ten or twelve courses, all of which are lucky numbers.

Preparing banquets represents "the local uniqueness of a lineage-oriented social structure" (Cheung, 2005: 263). Banquets organised by the village are a collective endeavour, involving all village and clan members, who engage in mutual assistance and solidarity. Days before the banquet, family members invite villagers to prepare the food. People are allocated a number of tasks, including chopping, cooking, assisting, washing, killing livestock, and receiving guests. In the past, the Hakka village represented and maintained lineage cohesion, largely through ceremonies and banquets. A few of my respondents suggested that lineage was more cohesive in the past than it is nowadays.

It is the host family's responsibility to prepare and buy ingredients for the banquet. The wedding banquet involves a lot of work and is a big burden for a normal household. A number of ingredients are essential: four seafood flavours were frequently mentioned during my fieldwork. However, regional differences are reflected here.

"According to traditional rules, four seafood flavours are important: black fungus, squid, shredded oyster and cuttlefish. If there is no oyster, use shreds of bamboo shoots and dried bean curd and shrimp instead. We do not have oyster in our region, but we have sleeve-fish." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

Cattle contribute to agricultural work and so, traditionally, beef is not consumed in formal banquets and pickled meat is rare. Fresh-water fish is a traditional item in some regions away from the sea. In the past, there was little fish offered at banquets; only those rich enough were able to offer one whole fried fish to each table. Sensen, a middle-aged

villager, explained that it is only recently that techniques have been developed to keep fish fresh and this has changed the place of seafood even in inland wedding banquets.

Food provision is local. Particularly in poorer households, banquets typically involve vegetables, most of which used to be domestically grown and seasonal. Historically, in South China there was "greater variety of vegetables and fruits and probably a more elaborate cuisine" than in the north (Anderson, 1988: 51). There are seasonal differences: for example, leaf mustard and its stem in the spring, daikon in the summer, and bamboo shoots and mushrooms in the winter. Several informants told me that because of poverty, families could not provide sufficient meat for banquets. Where this was the case, vegetables were offered instead.

"We don't have enough money and meat. Daikon were filled in two bowls as two dishes". (Ping, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

Banquet cooks are trained and work within a region rather than exclusively in a clan. Yeye, an experienced cook in the Lin clan, said that an elder of his clan requested him to learn cooking skills from a senior cook of the Hou clan village. Banquet cooks occasionally work at wedding banquets of other clans, receiving pork and red packets of money for their work. The banquet cook is honoured at banquets. They even play a role in the ceremony rituals themselves. According to Yeye, the master and the banquet cook together kill the rooster, during which procedure the master chants. This happens before the bride enters the ancestral hall. I was surprised to find that banquet cooks are the agents who know rituals, procedures at weddings and the cultural meanings attached. Long, an experienced banquet cook, was confident that he had mastered all aspects of banquet cooking, including culinary knowledge, ways of serving food and food rituals. The banquet cook is one of the last agents of the Hakkas' culinary legacies.

7.3.2 Preparing the banquet

This subsection explores how banquets contribute to the culinary legacy of the group and enrich Nanxiong cuisine. The 'kitchen' is usually temporarily constructed out in an open court in front of the ancestral hall and is typically an extension of the host's kitchen. The kitchen space for the banquet exudes a *busy*, *harmonious* and *joyous* atmosphere. I observed this during my fieldwork.

"In the morning, as kitchen work was scheduled by the host family the night before, women and men in the village headed to the host's kitchen to make the banquet. Because the kitchen was too small, one temporarily-set simple board was placed outside the kitchen and I saw some women and a man chopping meat and working on the board. Everyone was chatting happily, talking about things like where the groom was from and the different rituals followed in each town. There was plenty of meat to chop, including chicken, duck and factory-processed duck kidneys. Two

women were killing several chicken beside the tap. The experienced chief cook, who was also the bride's uncle, masterminded all the kitchen work. Time was tight, because the host had told him all dishes had to be finished before 12 pm, otherwise the ritual bride-collecting would be disturbed." (Field note, 10/02/16)



Figure 7.1 Preparing meat for banquet. Source: author.

Within the "cuisine of poverty", Gvion (2006: 303-304) argues that women are central actors and carriers of culinary practices. In the context of Nanxiong's Hakka banquets, their role is slightly different because of the existence of banquet cooks. I observed however that women are responsible for most of the culinary work, except for the actual cooking and serving of dishes.

One significant point is that some cooking utensils only appear during banquets. Rare utensils include large pots, large-capacity wooden baskets for steaming rice (fanzeng 饭甑) (Figure 7.2), jars (jiuweng 酒瓮) and tin kettles (xihu 锡壶) for rice wine. Mintz (1996) writes that "As a Chinese banquet, for instance, no rice is served, a clear signal that it is a banquet" (103, emphasis in the original). However, from my observation, one featured item in banquets was rice steamed in the wooden baskets mentioned above; many informants at the banquet remarked on the taste and mouth-feel of the steamed rice. In view of Mintz's comment, this reminds us of important regional and local

differences in banqueting across China. What is more, I noticed that these traditional cooking utensils do not just embody a tangible cultural heritage; foods cooked with them have a distinct flavour. Quite a few informants remarked that rice steamed in traditional wooden baskets is sweeter and tastes fresher than rice cooked in an electric cooker.



Figure 7.2 Wooden baskets for steaming rice. Source: author.

According to Yeye, in order to prepare a large banquet, a host family normally has to borrow bowls, chopsticks, tin kettles and so on from their neighbours even though the bowls are likely to have their owners' names marked on them. These traditional utensils and ways of preparing food contribute to the authenticity of the wedding foodscape. The clan usually has its own collective assets, such as *wantou* 碗头, a traditional ceramic bowl, as well as desks and tables.

As Houhou (an elderly informant) said, rice wine is at the heart of the banquet and helps to 'warm the atmosphere'. The consumption of the banquet is in fact commonly called 'consuming rice wine' (*chijiu* 吃酒). The jar holding rice wine is heated in the open court. Local dried straw, a by-product of the rice-growing industry, is used for cooking and heating. I was told that a stone or brick stove was constructed on site.

"The uncooked rice wine is in a wine jar. Then it is stewed [with a burnt straw]. The wine is then ladled with a bamboo spoon into a tin kettle. In the past every family had one or two tin kettles. The tin kettles used in the banquet are borrowed from [neighbouring] families. But nowadays the tin kettle has disappeared and has been replaced by a porcelain pot." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 04/05/2016)

It is not just the physical setting that is important; the preparation and cooking skills needed differ from those used for everyday foods. For example, meat should be chopped in larger pieces than normal, which shows the hospitality of the host family and makes the meat more suitable for the large cooking pot.

Accordingly, the cooking skills required for the banquet are not the same as those required for everyday cooking. For example, Baibai, who has experience as a banquet assistant, said that:

"If you cook a larger quantity of pork at the same time in one large pot, it's actually easier to cook it well. The more meat, the better the taste." (Middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 10/02/2016).

Distinct skills are needed to cook simultaneously the large amount of ingredients used in a banquet. As a result, a distinctive flavour is achieved, though not every informant seemed to relish this.

"It is more difficult to fry food in a large pot because of the amount... More food contains more water and the fire does not get hot enough. Therefore however you cook it, the food cooked in a large pot is not very good... The old way of making 'ancient meat' [gulaorou 古老肉] is to make a square of it - as an entire piece, very beautiful… It's not the same as braised meat [kourou 扣肉], but they are similar. It requires steaming. You can eat it with chopsticks… The square shape indicates tradition." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 10/02/2016)

Ancient meat is tender and it is butchered in a very distinct way. There are few occasions in which people eat this dish, especially as the choice of food available increases. Ethnic cooking skills adapt to modernisation, and this is evident in the banquet. Long, the banquet cook, argued that cooking skills evolve from generation to generation but that a diverse range of methods and new skills enrich the culinary expertise of the banquet cook. Lange, the restaurant cook, told me that his knowledge of steaming fish for a banquet was acquired when his son worked as an assistant hotel chef in Guangzhou (middle-aged man, interview, 25/05/2016). This suggests that culinary skills are expanded as locals increasing interact with non-Hakka people.

The responsibility of banquet cooks is not to make sophisticated, refined and novel dishes, but rather to provide enough decent food for a large number of diners. They make good use of every food provided by the host family. Country banquets sometimes

employ hotel chefs to take care of the cooking, which allows the guests to enjoy both the atmosphere in the village and restaurant-standard dishes, as is the case in the banquet remembered by Ping:

"Additional vegetables were used to replace the meat. The cook covered the bottom of the bowl with noodles and put rice and other ingredients on the top. Then one dish was complete. Another dish was meat soup jelly, which was common in the past. And the third dish was squid with daikon; ... a fourth dish was also daikon. The fifth was rice noodles covered with shredded bean curd and garlic." (Ping, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 20/02/16)

The above banquet took place in a restaurant in a rural town. While restaurants can provide this kind of service, this is in the process of change. Lange, who owns the restaurant, said:

"I cooked for one host family in the village last October. In the village I cooked for eleven tables. I used a motorbike to carry bowls, chopsticks, tables and chairs there... It is like organising a banquet at a restaurant but it is actually at home; relatives and friends did not need to go into town." (Middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 25/05/2016)

In summary, the preparation of banquets is a rare occasion when families and clan members work together in a joyful setting and showcase their group cohesion. The meat and vegetables used are mainly reared, grown and produced at home. The banquet used to be an important chance to improve the nutritional value of local diets and increase the amount of meat that people ate (Ohna et al., 2012). The non-professional cook at a banquet, always a man, is actually the agent maintaining traditional culinary legacies and ritual knowledge. The skills and methods involved in preparing and cooking banquets are important practices in low cuisine, given that banquets are rare occurrences. This section has shown that traditional cooking utensils and skills are not just part of a culinary heritage, but add distinct flavours to the banquet that are exclusive to Nanxiong cuisine. However, we have also seen that restaurant cooks are sometimes brought in to prepare wedding banquets, shifting both practices and meanings of food preparation for this central symbolic ritual.

7.4 Eating at a banquet: Rituals and table rules

The wedding banquet is usually held in the ancestral hall (Figure 7.3) or in an open space. The construction of ancestral halls is a reflection of ideas associated with *fengshui*. Ancestral halls are often made up of two or three smaller halls in a line, the upper, middle and lower hall (see Chapter 3.3.1). Overall, although this ritual is becoming less rigid nowadays, the upper ancestral hall houses pictures of deities.



Figure 7.3 The ancestral halls of the Hou clan in Baishun town. Source: author.

At the start of the banquet, when everyone sits down, firecrackers are set off and assistants begin to serve the dishes. This is particularly true of rural wedding banquets that serve Hakka dishes (see Chapter 3.4.2).

This section is divided into three parts: Section 7.4.1 discusses the physical setting and seating order of a traditional dining event. These mirror the ideas that the Hakka have inherited from 'mainstream' Han Confucian culture. Section 7.4.2 discusses the order of service during banquets, which largely reflects clan relationships. Section 7.4.3 discusses the dining atmosphere constructed by diverse elements. Traditional banquets are compared with modern banquets held in hotels.

7.4.1 Seating order

The physical setting of the banquet plays a role in creating a celebratory atmosphere and reliving the memory of Hakka ceremonies. Hakka villagers eat off square tables and use wooden benches that can seat up to two people. The square table, or Table of the Eight Immortals (*baxian zhuo* 八仙桌), is an old-fashioned style of table that can seat eight people (Yuan, 2005: 247). It is clear that this is a legacy of Hakka origins in the

Central Plains. Two interviewees discussed the square table, and the equally important square tray:

"There are regulations on the size and material used in the Table of the Eight Immortals. The knowledge was transferred from a master carpenter whose last name was Lan. He was a true carpenter from Jiangxi province who officially knelt in front of Luban.³⁴ [He told me that] the length is two *chi* and three *cu* [0.76 metres] and the table must consist of three wooden boards... My Table of the Eight Immortals is a standard one, which is very rare now. It was carved with the name of its first owner, and is around 130 years old." (Dalin, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 21/03/2016)

"My wooden tray was made along with another one sent as the dowry for my daughter. The two trays were made by Master Zeng. I showed him a small one as inspiration. It looks like it is composed of two boards. Look closer; actually it is composed of one wide board with a carved seam in the middle. It's a good one. My tray is the only one in this style in the village." (Lulu, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 21/03/2016)

Dalin and Lulu can identify the features of their Hakka-style possessions, with reference to their history, size, craftsmanship, and the masters who made them. They are proud of their possessions because they think these old-style items can distinguish their families from others who do not have them.

There are banquets organised by the clans of both the bride and groom, but the rituals and seating order in both are similar. For the sake of clarity, the banquet discussed in this section is one organised by the groom's clan.

The restrictions placed on women are not as strong as, for instance, in traditional Hawaiian banquets, which "barred women from enjoying the most esteemed luxury foods" (O'Connor, 2008: 158). I was told that in the past, women did not sit at the same table as men, as Yeye explains below. Another general guide for seating order is that the guests are seated in more prominent places that the hosts, and the same for older people relative to younger people.

"[At the wedding banquet for our son] the women sat in the lower hall, and the men in the upper hall. At the wedding of our daughter, the women sat in the upper hall and the men in the lower hall." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 04/05/2016)

³⁴ Luban 鲁班: the earliest originator of carpenter. Kneeling in front of Luban is a traditional ritual for apprentice carpenters.

We can see here that formerly – but no longer – the "separation of men and women pervaded the provisioning, preparation and production of food as well as its consumption" (O'Connor, 2008: 156-157).

There are some special local guidelines in the case of Nanxiong. The clans of the groom's mother and grandmother are the most honoured guests in the entire seating arrangement.³⁵ The relatives from the mother's clan are called *shangqin* 上亲 (literally, respected relative), while those from the grandmother's (mother's mother) clan are known as laoqin 老亲 (literally, old relative). According to many of my informants, the banquet is not allowed to start until the arrival of the groom's uncle (the mother's brother, *jiujiu* 舅舅). Unlike in many other regions, the bride's parents are not supposed to attend the banquet. In contrast, the groom's clan, including his father and grandfather, as hosts serve food during the banquet, thus they have lower priority in the seating arrangement. Despite ongoing waves of modernisation, this seating order representing ethnic identity and clan relations have been retained.

"If grandpa [mother's father] comes to the banquet, then the uncle [mother's brother] doesn't sit at the most honoured table. Otherwise, the uncle is the first to sit at the honoured table... At the wedding dinner, the great-uncle [the brother of the father's mother *jiuye* 舅爷] is invited. He is allowed to sit in the seat of honour beside the grandpa [the mother's father] on the same bench. These two [honoured] seats are called the peaceful bench [heping deng 和平凳], which means the two seats are equal in priority." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

"Each table has one person [from the host's clan] to serve the guests. He or she pours wine into the guests' cups, fills their bowls with rice and encourages them to eat more." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 04/05/2016)

Nowadays though, for the sake of convenience, a round table often replaces the traditional square table. However, the usage of round tables undermines some traditional seating guides.

When it comes to contemporary hotel weddings, social relationships within consumption space have been modified from 'traditional' clan-based one to more modern one. According to my observations, colleagues and senior people in companies where a new couple works and former classmates of the couple become significant guests. The seats of honour tend to be given to company bosses and other important guests such as government officials and friends with high social and

³⁵ In this section, the relations are described from the perspective of the groom.

economic capital. The entry of these people challenges traditional orders of seating in which the bride's clan enjoy priority.

7.4.2 Dishes and serving order

Hakka pay little attention to the naming of dishes and they use plain words. In Meizhou, another Hakka region of Guangdong Province, names of dishes are alike three meatball courses (san yuan 三圆), two steamed courses (liang zheng 两蒸), two fried dish courses (liangchao 两炒), and one cold course (yi lengpan 一冷盘) (I-am-Hakka, 2015). Likewise in Nanxiong, there are banquet dishes that include four seafood flavours (sida haiwei 四大海味). Unlike in Cantonese cuisine, this way of referring to dishes is rustic, which contributes to the culinary authenticity of the banquets. Fatty and meaty food is a critical feature of Hakka banquets, in contrast with the simple vegetable-based daily meal. Braised pork, pork trotter and fish are frequent dishes in banquets. Many informants suggested that the dish of braised pork indicates the generosity of the host family. According to Lange, pork trotter should actually consist of the whole shank as well as the foot itself. Sensen describes the pork dishes at a recent banquet:

"There were four to six bowls of braised pork. It was fatty pork... Three to six pigs were raised [for the banquet], so a lot of pork was available. All of this was to make braised pork." (Sensen, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 21/02/2016)

My participants agreed that the food served at banquets in the past were poorly cooked due to a lack of seasoning and oil. In contrast, they told me that nowadays the overall taste of food served at banquets have improved. This is a part of "wedding banquet 'inflation'" in Hakka regions (Oxfeld, 2017: 126). During my participant observation of hotel weddings, I noted that beautiful plates and bowls were used, the tables were round rather than square, and all the dishes served were refined and beautiful.

Jixun: Honestly, in the early 1980s, there were few families organising grand banquets. At that time, the braised pork was cooked white because the meat wasn't fried or dried enough. Meat fried for a long time would shrink, meaning that the portion looked smaller.

Liang: It was not fried for a long time but was just basically boiled, and then flavoured with some soy sauce. (Middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 03/01/2016)

There are some specific flavour features that distinguish Hakka banquets from those in other Chinese regions. Hakka banquets rely on wild products, large servings, vegetables and rustic styles (Jixiang Meiruyi, 2014).

The rules and orders for serving dishes mirror specific Hakka blessing rituals. The way in which banquet food is served follows strict regulations, which reflect hierarchical distinctions. Like wedding gifts, banquets pay attention to (good) omens, in ways that

rely upon both verbal and nonverbal communication. The quotation below is from a blog about Hakka people from Ninghua County in Fujian Province:

"The banquet of 'eight course' [badawan 八大碗] is massive in amount, with a particular flavour. The first course is chicken – usually boiled chicken… Chicken is the 'head livestock' [tou sheng 头性] and probably seen as the 'food of wealth' by Ninghua folk. The noodle dish is water noodles… The noodles, which are long, symbolise longevity. The third course is called swallow [yan], which is the most popular dish amongst guests. Yan is exquisitely prepared, cut and cooked and is made with sliced pork skin, sliced bamboo shoot, sliced mushroom… It is often when the bird's nest course is served on the table that the host starts to toast the guests, and the atmosphere reaches its climax, thus reflecting the cultural connotation of yan [swallow (yan 燕) is a homonym for banquet 宴]… The last dish – lotus seed soup or rice sweet soup – contains a sugar and honey concoction, which implies a sweeter future." (Jixiang Meiruyi, 2014)

The eight-course structure, pursuit of auspicious meaning and toasts are similar in Nanxiong. In Nanxiong, however, the rules are simpler. Therefore, like Hakka identity (Heggheim, 2011: 2), Hakka ethnic ways of serving are not fixed but rather depend on situations and surroundings. In Nanxiong, the dishes are served on a wooden tray (Section 7.2.2) by kitchen assistants. From my observation, four or six bowls on the tray contain the same food and are distributed first to the tables containing the most important guests and then to the others. Normally, people, usually from the host's clan, pick one bowl from the tray. According to Long and Yunyun, before the banquet starts, a few small plates of cold dishes like peanuts, salted duck, dried sausage and melon seeds are served. According to my informants, the banquet normally starts with chicken – considered lucky in China.

"First there is livestock, the chicken... The second dish is the large meat dish – braised pork. The third dish should be a soup dish. If there is no soup dish, stir-fried pork with wood-ear mushrooms and normal mushrooms is an alternative. Then four sea foods will be served... There are no rules for what follows." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

The banquet always ends with a bean dish, containing various types of bean. When this dish is served, guests interpret it as the end of the banquet.

"Generally, serving braised meat implies that half of the banquet dishes have been served." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

"We used to end with a bowl of beans. One can use winter beans, sweet peas, broad beans, and so on." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

The order in which dishes are served changes from region to region and represents collective culinary practice for special occasions. They are actually ethnic styles of serving, which showcase Hakka understanding of celebratory banquets. In this regard, the serving orders and seating orders (in previous section) are undoubtedly significant constituent parts for ethnicity and perceived authenticity (Mohammad and Chan, 2011).

"According to past tradition, those playing the *laba* trumpet would refuse to play the instrument when they noticed the wrong serving order – for example, when it should be pork but the chicken was served." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2016)

The order in which the dishes are served is in accordance with the rituals surrounding toasting. It is after the third dish is served that the new couple and the groom's father in turn proposes a toast to each guest from the first-ranked table. The guest who is toasted would then refuse to drink the rice wine poured by the bride and would offer a blessing to the new couple, such as a blessing for many children. This would be one of the nosiest and most exciting moments in the banquet, and carries its own social conventions.

Long: One aim of the toasting is to introduce the guests to the bride and groom. One uncle or brother carries the kettle on a tray and accompanies and introduces guests to the [bride and groom]. New couples offer a toast to guests in turn. Otherwise the guests would not give a red packet.

Fangfang: When toasting, the guests generally stop eating. Otherwise they might be perceived as hungry and poorly behaved. (Long, middle-aged man; Fangfang, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2014)

The banquet is a rare occasion when people can enjoy many traditional dishes, especially Hakka dishes. Wedding banquets are occasions that allow one to appreciate the best of Nanxiong cuisine. The way in which dishes are served is part of the culinary legacy of the region, and this will become more important as people seek their ethnic roots in the contemporary period.

7.4.3 Consuming the banquet

There are some rituals and even taboos when eating that showcase the influence of religion. The host family are very cautious, trying their best to avoid damage or 'bad luck': if a guest breaks a bowl carelessly, the host family collects the fragments, wraps them with red paper and puts them back in the kitchen (Wang, 1995). Intergenerational differences exist too: elderly and middle-aged generations know and obey taboos, whereas the younger generation rarely know them. These taboos seem to fade away

especially quickly as banquets move to hotels. Traditional rules and taboos are difficult to respect in this new setting because the serving order, dishes and utensils differ.

Courtesy and table manners are important too. During the banquet, it is only after the honoured guest has sat down on the noble seat that others are able to eat. Guest should not eat all of their dishes either – they should leave some for the host. Doing so indicates happiness and fortune for the host family.

The buzzy atmosphere of the banquet forms part of the non-linguistic experience that lingers in the memory of attendees. In the ancestral hall, people sitting on benches around square tables, hearing sounds of firecrackers, are viewing authentic ethnic rituals which are special and novel, particularly to the younger generation, who have not experienced them often before. The hospitality of the host can also be showcased through the dishes themselves: a number of informants described the food using the term 'honest', meaning that the servings are big enough. A few interviewees mentioned that one bowl of cooked pork on the table can weigh up to two *jin* \mathcal{F} [one kilogram].

Banquets used to be the most affluent meal that normal villagers would consume. Therefore, in contrast to simple and vegetable-based everyday meals (see Chapter 6.2.2), a number of my informants had vivid memories of consuming banquets. They were particularly eager to eat the meat so that, as Sensen said:

"Even four to six bowls of braised meat would be eaten up quickly by diners." (Middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 21/02/2016).

There is an interesting practice amongst women when eating at a banquet. On the table where women sit, meat is distributed evenly after the banquet. This is because left-over food is taken home afterwards for domestic consumption. According to Qiqi, a middle-aged woman, this is partly because the banquet leftovers are collected by the host family and are distributed to guests and neighbours afterwards in order to share the happiness. Nowadays due to modernisation and improvement of living standards, such practices have tended to disappear, reflecting a disruption of old-fashioned familial care.

Zhen: Women bring bags with them to attend the banquet. They eat the same dishes, but some dishes are allocated and packed in a bag before eating.

Cheng: The situation is the soup dishes are eaten up, and the dry dishes are packed into bags for each woman. (Middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 03/01/2016)

"Food will be allocated – for example, certain pieces of meat -- to each woman to take home." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 08/05/2016)

The banquet atmosphere depends on country food (Chapter 5.4). The dining experience at collective banquets differs between village and hotel banquets. Xing, a young man who just had his wedding in a village during the New Year festival, said that:

"Holding the banquet at home is noisier, especially during the New Year festival; there are more people and it is more friendly." (Hakka, group interview, 19/03/2016).

One informant stressed the central role that busy, or *renao* 热闹, atmospheres play in traditional Hakka banquets (Oxfeld, 2017: 178). He described the dining atmosphere and experience as 'freely', 'enthusiastic', 'familiar':

"It's more casual in the village than in the hotel... In the past in the countryside, the dish was eaten up soon after it was placed and served on the table; people were not polite or modest at table [when eating]. Relatively speaking, it is harder to organise a wedding dinner in a village. In a hotel, to be honest, a lot of dishes should have been finished; but for polite and modest reasons, one carefully chooses food and feels embarrassed to be the first one to start eating." (Jiang, middle-aged man, interview, 02/05/2016)

"People are not so polite at rural wedding dinners, which I think contributes to a busier and more enthusiastic atmosphere. People in the village are familiar with each other. But in a hotel, you may only know some of those sharing the same table. It is more likely you don't know all of them." (Field note, 02/05/2016)

As we can see from the above quotations, banquets at hotels are more formal and poor behaviour is deemed to be shameful in this environment. What is more, the sound of firecrackers is rare and there are no bands playing traditional musical instruments. It is not a 'warm' atmosphere. On one hand, the style of hotel banquet improves the quality of foods (cooked by a professional chef); on the other hand, it removes the authentic dining atmosphere.

Banquets at hotels also reflect a destruction of 'traditional' temporal layout. For example, in earlier days, the banquet was not allowed to start unless the groom's uncle had arrived and was seated (Lulu, elderly man, interview, 21/03/2016). Nowadays the banquet at the hotel starts when the modern style of wedding ceremony ends.

As we saw in Section 7.2.3, there are increasing numbers of young couples organising wedding banquets at hotels rather than in villages. Qiqi, a middle-aged woman, discusses these two types of banquets: "It is better to organise in hotels. Guests can leave the banquet after they finish eating [so it is more convenient]. However, it is more expensive". A hotel banquet allows the flexibility to adapt and preserve traditional elements, rituals and values while also improving the quality of the banquet and suiting the tastes of guests.

In summary, this section has discussed how square tables, seating orders, the serving order of dishes, rituals and taboos during banquets reflect the Hakkas' heritage. It has also shown that the banquets are made up of lots of Hakka dishes and are noisy. Therefore, the banquet occasion retains contents (Hakka dishes) and intangible heritage (seating and serving orders, collective dining atmosphere) surrounding ethnic cuisine. As more young couples organise their wedding banquets in hotels instead of in the village, the culinary heritage mentioned above is in danger. The young generation rarely knows or cares about banquet traditions. The modernisation of banqueting relies on fewer taboos and more refined dishes and suggests that banquets are influenced less by Hakka sense of religion nowadays.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the special role that ceremonies play in the context of cuisine. It has discussed the role of food items and the cultural meaning of food rituals, which still occupy a very significant role in Hakka ceremonies. It did so through a focus on wedding banquets.

I first examined the role of food gifts and food rituals from the perspective of ethnicity and clan relationships. The functional, practical and symbolic role of special food items can be fully understood only by considering its relation to inter-clan relationships. Normally the groom's family provides special gifts like goose and chicken and offers them to certain special relatives such as the grandmother or aunt. There are also special requirements when it comes to quantities and properties of ritualised food. The general aim is to offer blessings that convey auspicious meanings and which ward off evil.

I also explored the ways in which the clan, a basic unit in Hakka groups, cooperates to prepare a good banquet. Collective participation when preparing the banquet shows group cohesion. When it comes to the cooking, the banquet relies upon lots of traditional cooking utensils and skills, such as steaming rice in wooden baskets. This means it is different from day-to-day cooking.

Section 7.4 discussed the ways that food is served and consumed at these banquets and the way that this relates to the social roots underpinning Hakka banquets. The seating orders and meanings ascribed to them undoubtedly reflect Nanxiong Hakka's adaptive heritage and its Confucian roots (see section 7.4.1). In this regard, seating order and manners people prepare and serve their banquets are significant to ethnic authenticity (Mohammad and Chan, 2011). Eating a Hakka banquet in a clan's ancestral hall conveys feelings of being in the countryside, being free, being enthusiastic and being happy, as well as providing a link to one's roots. These sentiments are not as easily conveyed in hotels. Village banquets are one of the last bastions of traditional Hakka style dishes.

The first conclusion to be drawn from my analysis is that banquets and rituals (particularly weddings) are not built around religion but around "clan relationships and local context". In the face of modernisation, the disappearance of religion's influence is quicker than that of people (and lineages). This is reflected in the increasing number of young couples holding their banquets in hotels, regardless of the traditions surrounding rituals and taboos (Section 7.2.3 and 7.4.3). This is because the belief system of Hakka (and many other Chinese people) is based upon a pragmatic philosophy. This echoes arguments that religious beliefs surrounding food in Chinese societies are not profound and prominent The taboo surrounding gender (and the role it plays in rituals) is less strict here than, for example, in Hawaii (O'Connor, 2008: 157-158). The core philosophy guiding weddings is Confucianism, which instructs people (and clans) to perform correctly (Sigurðsson, 2012). Some religious rituals have developed into 'local customs'. However, nowadays the existence of new social relationships such as colleagues and highers-up in the companies where couples work, challenges the traditional order of seating and the traditional social relationships they conveyed.

The second conclusion is that ceremonies and banquets are conservative and reflect an adaptation of Nanxiong Hakka legacy rather than "adaptive revitalizing tradition" (Tillman and Tillman, 2015: 80) (Section 7.2.3 and 7.4.3). The modernisation of engagement gifts and dowries are easily accepted, but the cultural legacy is not as easily changed. In this sense, food rituals and banquets can be seen as one of the most rigid rituals that remain and are important in solidifying a lineage's cohesion and bonds. However, the food rituals and the cultural meanings they represent are what defines 'Hakkaness' and allows for links and beliefs to be retained across various Hakka regions. Although there have been some changes involving the introduction of banquets at hotels, in the order of seating and cultural meanings, ethnic Hakka dishes to a great degree retain their original flavours and symbolic significance.

The third conclusion is that banquets are 'extravagant' food events in the context of a relatively poor and 'low' cuisine, and thus they serve to enrich the ethnic Hakka cuisine (Cheung, 2005; Ohna et al., 2012)). Banquets rely upon traditional cooking utensils and techniques which are not only the culinary tangible heritage of the group but also add a distinct flavour. The banquet as discussed here develops Gvion's idea (2006: 303) of "practitioners of cuisines of poverty". For example, the banquet cook replaces ingredients (for example, meat with seasonal vegetables) and engages in various strategies to prepare an appropriate banquet. Some traits of Hakka cuisine, like non-exquisite cooking and decorations and salty, oily and meaty flavours (Chapter 1.3), are becoming less common in everyday meals but are retained in banquets.

A fourth conclusion focuses on Chinese language and its culture of words (with many homophones, like *lianzi*, *ji*, *yu*), which offers a different way to convey food rituals. This

is achieved using linguistic or verbal analogies between food and blessings as a means to interpret cultural signs at traditional weddings (Ogunkunle, 2013). In reality, this phenomenon reflects the symbolic meaning of the item. Correspondingly, the partners involved interpret the cultural connotations, with the aim of securing harmonious relationships.

Through a detailed focus on wedding banquets, my analysis has opened up a number of key themes surrounding the practices and meanings of food in a ritual context. This is in contrast to the exploration of everyday, domestic eating in Chapter 6. Questions of adaptive tradition, authenticity, the role of food in social relations and ethnic identity have all been flagged here; these themes will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Chapter 8 Festivals, food and authenticity

8.1 Introduction – festival cycles: Agricultural, ethnic, religious/cultural categories

"First, the cyclical organization of events provides a predictable rhythm of reunion and dispersal which generates a sense of the endurance and indestructibility of community and subculture; second, the cycle provides a sense of cultural continuity through acts of commemoration which keep historical memory vivid and alive in the present; finally, the structure of the festival cycle provides a cosmological framework (and metaphor) for the understanding of human experience." (DeBernardi, 1992: 261: writing about the Chinese festival cycle)

Chapter 7 discussed wedding banquets as a way to explore the role that ceremonies play as collective events and the way that the banquets that accompany them convey the most important aspects of Hakka knowledge, rituals and traditions. I discussed the role of food rituals in collective events and how the banquet is the most significant dining occasion for the group. In this chapter I further develop this line of argument by discussing the links between agriculture, food-related ritual, family behaviour and festivals. In this chapter I explore this idea in the context of festivals as particular food events.

Festivals always have a fixed date and, according to DeBernardi (1992: 247), the Chinese festival cycle is "central to the practice of Chinese religion". This cycle has close links with agriculture; indeed, many festivals are organised when the workload in the agricultural sector is light and a number of festivals celebrate the growing and harvesting of food. As we can see from the quotation at the start of this chapter, the Chinese festival cycle regulates space and time. The main festivals in Hakka Nanxiong are described in the following table.

Table 8.1 Nanxiong's festival cycle through the year.

Festival	Date and Season ³⁶	Features
New Year Festival	The Twelfth Month and First Month, Winter	Most important festival, many traditional rituals
Lantern Festival	15 th of the First Month, Winter	Joss-stick dragon dance, eating rice dumplings (tangyuan 汤圆)
Spring Equinox	21 - 23 March, Spring	One of twenty-four solar terms, representing ploughing, sowing seeds and agricultural irrigation ³⁷
Qingming (Tomb-sweeping Festival)	21 March – April 5, Spring	A series of spring tomb- sweeping activities
Dragon Boat Festival	5 th of the Fifth Month, Summer	Hanging wormwood, preparing <i>zongzi</i> 粽子 to ward off devils
Lineage festival (<i>xingshijie</i> 姓氏节)	Varies according to lineage	Honouring local deities, visiting relatives
Eating newly harvested rice	23 rd of the Sixth Month, Summer	Newly harvested rice, worship of rice deity (wugu dashen 五谷大神) or local god of the land (tudi shen 土 地神)
Hungry Ghost Festival	14-16 th of the Seventh Month, Summer	Influenced by Buddhism; burning paper money to ancestors and wandering ghosts
Mid-Autumn Festival	14-16 th of the Eighth Month, Autumn	Eating field snails; folk activities, such as singing mountain-songs
Winter Solstice Festival	21-23 December, Winter	Making wine from harvested crops; killing and pickling chicken and duck, worshipping ancestors
Kitchen God's Day	23-24 th of the Twelfth Month, Winter	Preparing fruit and cake to worship the Kitchen God, bidding farewell him to heaven

 36 Most festivals accord to the Chinese lunar calendar ($zhongguo\ yinli\$ 中国阴历). The Chinese lunar calendar is a different calendar system and is strongly linked to agriculture. It also has twelve months. In this thesis, lunar months are referred to as First Month, Second Month...up to Twelfth Month.

³⁷ Solar terms (*jieqi* 节气): UNESCO defines it as "knowledge of time and practices developed in China through observation of the sun's annual motion" (UNESCO, 2016). In the Chinese agricultural cycle, there are twenty four solar terms. These are based on the solar calendar.

Some festivals convey a strong sense of ethnic and lineage/clan belonging, which is a notable feature of Hakka ethnicity. These festivals include the Tomb-sweeping Festival, the Hungry Ghost Festival and the lineage festival. At these festivals, ritual and sacrificial food are used to communicate with supernatural beings including deities and the souls of ancestors (Falassi, 1987: 3; Siu, 1999). Another important feature are solar terms and festivals. The two are interrelated. We can see in Table 8.1 that some solar terms have developed into festivals. In solar-term festivals, people engage in ritual activities or celebrations relating to agriculture and crop harvests. In addition, many festivals convey cultural and religious beliefs; these include the New Year, Mid-Autumn and the Dragon Boat Festivals. These traditional festivals convey profound meanings of family reunion and cheerfulness, and blessings for good fortune and well-being (Falassi, 1987: 2).

A number of different foods represent the festival cycle. For the Dragon Boat Festival people make *zongzi*, rice cake wrapped with banana-leaf for the lineage festival and for the 5th October festival taro cake. Solar-term festivals also have food-growing rituals and ethnic festivals always involve sacrificial foods. Other traditional festivals involve sharing meals and snacks. For the Mid-Autumn festival, Nanxiong people are in the habit of eating field snails.

Relations between authenticity and food experience conceived in terms of culture, ideology and context form a recurrent theme in this chapter (Beer, 2008: 159-160; Grayson and Martinec, 2004: 299). My analysis views festivals as a site to interrogate food experience and authenticity (Robinson and Clifford, 2012). Festivals are opportunities for the stories and rituals surrounding food to be enacted, developed and showcased. I argue in this thesis that a sense of authenticity is sought by the people of Nanxiong, partially in order to 'sanction' certain festivals, but that authenticity is an elusive concept, especially when it confronts the social and technological forces of modernity. Therefore, this chapter explores how collective practices and festivals shape the atmosphere and sense of authenticity, with a focus on modernisation and urbanisation. It also focuses on the functioning of ethnic and traditional elements. It argues that the festival atmosphere is heavily influenced by modernisation and urbanisation and that, for example, the once distinctive New Year Taste is beginning to fade (Section 8.4.2).

This is related to the re-interpretation of ethnic food. As shown in Chapter 2.4.3, the meaning, emotion and experience embedded in food and festivals are dependent on cultural belief. In the Nanxiong Hakka context, the ethnic belief in ancestor-ghosts is a main theme in some festivals. Some scholars have examined memorialisation practice, exchanges between ancestors and descendants, graves and social relationships in a political context (Bennett, 2015; Kong, 2012). This chapter contributes to this thinking by considering lineage, clan narratives and identity, and gendered experiences in

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festivals and activities. Lineage and clan narratives, activities and identities are important in the context of ethnic food in many societies in East Asia. This chapter contributes to and advances this discussion by exploring how lineage and clan differences matter in this context, and by focusing on how food authenticity and women's experiences are influenced by these differences in the context of modernisation. We see that food rituals and associated banquets are tied up with gender relations and relationships between and within lineages.

A third point is to explore how agriculture impacts on individual and social life in the context of food rituals. Agriculture provides the context for regional cuisine and it is a means through which people can experience authentic local cuisine. The chapter departs from thinking about precisely what elements of the local agricultural sector serve as legacies in people's life and affairs (Bessière, 1998: 21). I argue that symbolic meaning, ritual and festival banquets tied up with the local agricultural sector can reaffirm the authenticity of Nanxiong's (rural) way of life. Thinking in this way has implications for our understanding of the authenticity of Chinese agricultural living.

Section 8.2 explores agriculture and agricultural rituals. It shows how the agricultural sector and the farming year impact on individual and social lives through food and rituals. Section 8.3 explores ancestor worship, which is the main theme of tomb-sweeping activities and the Hungry Ghost Festival. It discusses lineage and clan narratives, activities and identities, and discusses the gendered nature of some festivals. Section 8.4 turns to the New Year Festival, when households celebrate family reunion and good fortune for the following year. It argues that urbanisation and modernisation have led to changes in people's tastes in the context of the New Year festival.

8.2 Agricultural festivals

When we talk about the attachment and connection of regional cuisine to place, then land and agriculture are unavoidable components (Costa and Besio, 2011). In this section the agricultural festival is the focus of attention, particularly how it functions "as a multifaceted icon for life itself" (Reinschmidt, 2007: 96). Section 8.2.1 discusses the relations between solar terms, agricultural work and daily life. It explores agricultural living and the way that agricultural heritage shapes people's understanding of authenticity. Section 8.2.2 discusses associated rituals and the role of food. Although increasing numbers of people no longer engage in agricultural life, it nonetheless plays an important part in the festival cycle and the rituals and foods that accompany particular festivals.

8.2.1 Temporality and festivals: Authenticity and agriculture

Siu (1999: 67) argues that "No matter [whether in] a hunting, a collecting, or an agricultural society, the everyday life of Chinese is closely related to *nature*" (emphasis in the original). The Chinese festival cycle adopts both the solar calendar and Chinese lunar calendar system: the solar calendar includes twenty-four solar terms and guides agricultural production, whereas the lunar calendar is used to mark and remember familial events (Ren and Zhang, 2003). It is the elderly in particular that use agricultural cycles to record things in this way. Huahua, for example, said the birthday of her youngest daughter occurred during the period when mustard leaf was planted (elderly woman, interview, 28/04/2016). Festivals related to agriculture include the Spring Equinox, Ploughing festival, Awakening of Insects (jingzhe 惊蛰) festival, Eating newlyharvested rice festival and the Winter Solstice. The message and meaning that these festivals seek to convey involves the blessing of a good harvest. The twenty-four solar terms determine key timings for seasonal transitions, guide agricultural activities across the four seasons and further promote the development of a number of beliefs, taboos and rituals (Xiao, 2015). For example, the Beginning of Spring (*lichun* 立春) festival marks the start of agricultural work (ibid.: 13).

I found this to be the case in my observations. The middle-aged and elderly generations in particular have experienced these solar terms earlier in their lives. Tomb-sweeping activities are conducted from the Spring Equinox normally until the 5 April, probably because this period would not conflict with the spring ploughing work (You, 2007). It becomes part of individual and household living rhythms and way of life. Houhou, an elderly man, told me that it is after the Spring Equinox that people start to arrange tomb-sweeping activities freely (interview, 16/03/2016). This flexibility extends to non-agricultural activities: a woman said that she was urged by her daughter to finish tomb-sweeping earlier so as to take care of her granddaughter in Dongguan and relieve the daughter for work (Qiuqu, middle-aged woman, interview, 19/03/2016). Solar terms thus become part of everyday life and embodied knowledge.

"Making *huishuici* 灰水糍 [a kind of Hakka rice cake] is seasonal: local experts start their *huishuici* business only after the Beginning of Autumn or Beginning of Winter so that the products they make don't go bad." (Congcong, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 21/02/2016)

"Weddings are usually held in August, September and October. When farming work is busy, people seldom hold ceremonies. Plus, the dishes easily go bad in spring." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 19/05/2016)

The dates of solar terms and festivals are widely known. Therefore, the festival cycle and solar terms also guide peasants' agricultural and social life, and become local knowledge about nature (Xiao, 2015: 12). When I asked the best time for collecting waxberries in the mountains, for example, one elderly woman replied that it as when

rice seedlings were transplanted. In Nanxiong, there are many sayings reflecting this. For instance, "If tomb-sweeping is in the Second Month, seeding work should be delayed by ten days; if it is in the Third Month, it should be bought ahead by ten days" (Liu, 1995: 69). This reflects the temporal relationship between agriculture and solar terms, which is drawn from collective experience in the past. Authenticity in the use of this knowledge is not easily experienced and felt in the cities. An informant also expressed an opinion about timing and agricultural growth:

"Crops are not growing well this year, and almost all my vegetables are dead. [Thus in the market] vegetables are more expensive than in recent times. This is because of insect infection. This situation always occurs when there is a leap Eighth Month in the lunar calendar. In leap months there are not enough vegetables to eat, even in rural areas, because of insects." (Ping, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

This shows the continuing effect of agricultural living and beliefs: even though many of my interviewees have left agricultural work or talk about things other than agriculture, the solar terms are still used in their everyday behaviour and conversation. Solar terms thus have an on-going effect within the group. These festival cycles and solar terms set the background in which people experience and perceive authenticity – the way authenticity is "produced and appreciated in everyday life" (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 122).

8.2.2 Agricultural rituals

Zhang (1993: 13) writes that "China has been an agricultural country; the people have lived on rice and they have relied on the earth on which corn grows – so they have worshiped and offered sacrifices to the local god of land". Below is a description of the Liao Lineage's Spring Cattle ritual in Nanxiong. This ritual activity involves the blessing of the agricultural harvest and is a reflection of past tradition.

"Formation: 37 people, one big cow and one small cow.

Features: Three people dance [while holding] the cow's head, body and tail, and one [acts as a] peasant who holds the plough tool and follows behind. They use vivid dancing movements to represent the image of hardworking cattle, such as cattle leaving the fields, walking uphill and downhill, ploughing, etc.

Meaning: Symbolising good wishes for harvest and for a hardworking and progressive life.

History: Over 200 years." (Tourism Bureau of Nanxiong, 2016)

In the case of the Hakka, He (1998: 329) writes of worshipping the rice field deity: "On the first time they work in the fields after the Beginning of Spring, peasants bring some paper, joss sticks and candles and burn them in front of a stone Bodhisattva [shigong pusa \Box \Box \Box \Box at the sides of their rice field. Or [they] put them on the corner of the rice field to honour the bodhisattva and make a wish for a good harvest". This is a quasi-religious belief.



Figure 8.1 Joss stick inserted into newly ploughed field. Source: author.

Some cultural objects such as New Year scrolls express symbolic meanings associated with agriculture. I noticed that New Year scrolls and couplets are often written expressing wishes related to agriculture, such as wishing that humans and livestock are safe (*rencu pingan* 人畜平安) and have enough suitable wind and rain (*fengtiao yushun* 风调雨顺). All of these present strong symbolic meaning deriving from old agricultural cycles (Reinschmidt, 2007).

Looking deeper into relations between various crops from the perspective of sacred Hakka rituals, we can see that although the Hakka have migrated from the Central Plains, many sacred rituals remain unchanged. For example, there is a rice deity ritual recorded in the literature and Ye (2000), in his book *Lingnan (Guangdong and Guangxi) Folk Culture*, talks about a similar ritual that involves asking the Purple Goddess (*zigu* 紫姑) to forecast the future. There have however been local adjustments to these rituals in Nanxiong: people use distinctive tools (baskets, sifters and chopsticks) and rice and flour, as well as sandy soil. They also worship different deities, reflecting their particular link with local history and geography.

"There is a belief in a rice god in our place. People put rice on the bamboo sifter and put a model of a chicken on the rice. This is to ask the god to predict the outcome of the harvest, good or bad – whatever people plan to do." (Zhuzhu, middle-aged man, interview, 15/05/2016)

"The period [of worship] lasts up to five days around the Mid-autumn Festival. I heard from the elders in the village that we worship seven goddesses [qi xian gu 七仙姑] in total and the eldest goddess is honest, the second and seventh are smartest. Because they are goddesses, it is the women who perform the ritual practice." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

Food or snacks also have a role in ritual practices. There are several festivals celebrating harvest, such as the Eating newly-harvested rice festival after the 'Slight Heat' (the 11th of 24 solar terms) and the Hakka Xiayuan Festival (*xiayue jie* 下元节) on the 15th of the Tenth Month. Newly-harvested rice that has just been milled is cooked, offered to the rice deity and ancestors, and consumed by the family. The types of wrapper people use to wrap the rice cakes are also different for each festival. For the Dragon Boat Festival, bamboo leaves are used and for the lineage festival in summer, banana leaves are used (Huahua, elderly woman, interview, 28/04/2016). In this situation, this rice cake is distinct with different types of wrappers.

Baishun, a town in Nanxiong county, has its own festival, the Harvest festival (*fengshou jie* 丰收节). Although its main purpose is to celebrate the harvest, nowadays ingredients are usually bought from the market rather than grown at home. According to Long, a middle-aged banquet chef, the banquet is rich: "There were braised meats, chicken, duck, bean curd, bean sprouts, cabbage and so on." This indicates that, although the harvest celebration remains, the source of food has been quietly modified, from homegrown to commercial food. This echoes a point made by Lewis (1997: 73), who writes about the festival's impact on community identity: "The food festival … likely rests on similar mythic reinterpretations of reality that define these events as existing almost outside the constraints of reality itself – community can be both invented and celebrated

at such festivals". The local villagers also exaggerate the festival's history to bolster local pride. When I asked the origin of this harvest festival, Long responded:

"The Harvest festival has a history of over a thousand years and is held every fifth of May. Well, I think that the one-thousand-year history is a bit of an exaggeration because the villagers hadn't migrated here at that time." (Long, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 10/02/2016)

In summary, this section discussed the role that agricultural festivals and solar terms play in everyday life and how they help people keep a record of things and develop agricultural knowledge. The authenticity of these practices and knowledge is experienced, perceived, and felt within agricultural life. Some rituals and activities, snacks and banquets associated with the agricultural sector bestow blessing on and celebrate the harvest. However, urbanisation has had an impact. Take the harvest festival banquet for example: although rituals and symbolic meanings remain, the foods served at the banquet are no longer 'authentic' (home-grown and newly harvested) but instead are purchased at the market. The symbolic content of the festival remains intact even as its material content is transformed.

The section showed that the agricultural sector remains as a central structuring feature of people's everyday life: the symbolic meaning and rituals associated with agriculture extend into people's lives and affairs. Even in the modern period when most people no longer work in agriculture, there is the perceived authenticity of agricultural time: the symbolic meanings, rituals and festival banquets relate the agricultural sector to a specific local context and reaffirm authentic elements of agricultural life in Nanxiong.

8.3 Lineage and ancestor worship

Shun and Fine (1995: 535) argue that "much ethnicity is made real through cultural transactions: a viable ethnic identity depends on a set of symbols and signs, products of interaction with other groups". As shown in Chapter 3.3.1, many festivals and activities revolve around ancestor worship. In the literature, we see that festivals tend to be closely intertwined with ethnicity. Ancestor worship is central to Chinese cultural practices and to Chinese religion (Xiao, 2010a). It is particularly prominent in the Tomb-Sweeping and Hungry Ghost festivals.

This section explores the influence of ancestor worship on food practices and argues that ancestor worship has been a major factor shaping the authenticity of these activities. The festivals involve perceptions of ghosts and the souls of ancestors. Through these events and the use of sacrificial foods, these elements – rituals, foods and fantasies – create a festival atmosphere and showcase a clan-based ethnicity and mentality. Section 8.3.1 discusses tomb-sweeping activities and the preparation of the banquet,

which mirrors the socio-cultural features of lineage. It argues that lineage-exclusive identities and experiences are important features underpinning the authenticity of festivals (Wu, 2005). Section 8.3.2 looks into the relations between gods, ghosts and ancestors during festivals and the space they have co-created in the past and present (Chakrabarty, 1991), with a focus on food and meals.

8.3.1 Tomb-sweeping

Ancestor worship is related to the collective memory of the historically impoverished status of Hakka people. To some extent, the tomb-sweeping day is even more important than the New Year Festival. The festival, which sees villages repopulated, is one of the busiest times of the year. Ping, an elderly villager, told me that:

"If you do not return home on tomb-sweeping day, you are a bad guy; if you do not return home at New Year, you are a successful guy." (Hakka, interview, 01/04/2016).

This suggests that not returning home on New Year means that a person makes a lot of money and has bought a house in the city, whereas not returning home for tomb-sweeping suggests that he has forgotten his ancestral roots.

"Almost everyone who works outside [Nanxiong] returned. On [tomb-sweeping] day lots of cars arrived, and [they] parked in two lines, taking up much of the road over a long distance. (Aigo, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 04/04/2016)

Ancestor worship is especially apparent in Hakka areas; this can be evidenced by the higher number of ancestral temples here than in most Han parts of China (Lagerwey, 2005). Many festivals reflect this feature too. John Lagerwey (2005 a scholar of religion among mainstream Han and Hakka, argues that both Tomb-sweeping Festival and the Hungry Ghost Festival, together with a second tomb-sweeping activity in August and September, show the higher role assigned to ancestors and the deeper emotions surrounding ancestor worship in Hakka regions than in other areas. Additionally, the New Year festival is also a clan and ancestor-related event and incorporates the related ritual of dajiao 打醮, a Taoist ritual to drive out the devil. This shows the Hakka belief that ancestors' blessing and protection leads to a rich and powerful clan.

In Hakka areas, unlike other Han areas, villages are often developed around one clan which shares the same family name. The tomb of the earliest ancestor is the material basis for clanship ethnicity, which "manifests an ancient Chinese value attitude toward oneself and the world in which one resides" (Chen, 2017: 27). Tomb-sweeping activities help to cultivate a stronger sense of belonging to a lineage's history. The lineage festival helps to foster pride in the lineage and a sense of timelessness for descendants.

As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, I seek to explore lineage activities and narratives surrounding Tomb-sweeping day and the contribution these make to the

construction of authenticity in Nanxiong. I start by looking into the role that food and sacrifices play in tomb-sweeping activities. In Chinese folklore, the most common sansheng 三牲 (literally, three domestic animals) are sheep, pig and cattle – frequently described as essential sacrificial foods across China. During my fieldwork, I found that the sansheng is however often composed of chicken, pork and fish. It is possible that in earlier times sheep were very rare in South China, that cattle were needed to pull the plough in the fields and that animal meat was expensive for poor families and clans. In addition, I was surprised that on many occasions people only used one of these three meats as sacrificial food. It is probably because village households used not to have enough resources for rituals; this behaviour is retained nowadays and becomes a local custom even though the economic conditions have improved. As shown in the following quotation, food is an important part of tomb-sweeping in several respects. Symbolic foods serve as a medium to link descendants to ancestors. This differs across different areas, however. When I asked Houhou and Lulu, two elderly people, about the constitution of sansheng, they responded as follows:

"They are pork, chicken and wine... However, nowadays some people even refuse to bring the [other two] sansheng – only chicken." (Houhou, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

"Since I was a child, *sansheng* meant rice, tea-leaves in a cup and wine... As for rich clans, they would bring a big rooster..." (Lulu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 18/03/2016)

In the sacrifice ritual, authenticity does not depend on the container or plate but on the quality or properties of the sacrificial food. The containers for tea-leaves or drinks change over time too. More importantly, it is the preparation, nature and cultural meaning of sacrificial food that contributes to the construction of authenticity. Lulu told me that when the sacrificial rice is steamed or cooked, it must be scooped out before people start to eat. This suggests that ancestors eat first and take the first bite (elderly man, interview, 18/03/2016), echoing what Janowski (2007: 13) writes that "Dead kin are also fed by the living". Lulu told me that the pork is cooked medium, so that it looks stiff rather than soft. Bacon which is not fresh should be avoided because it might lead to the misfortune of the lineage (Van Baal, 1976: 172).

"Whatever happens, tea leaves are OK. Anyway, people don't drink the tea [laughs]. Fresh pork is necessary but bacon is not allowed because using bacon in tomb-sweeping would cause the lineage descendants to get a disease." (Lulu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 18/03/2016)

³⁸ Sheng 牲 has the sense of both 'domestic animal' and 'sacrificial animal'.

"Wine can be replaced with wine residue. We used to use a ceramic cup but didn't have to fill it up; [now] plastic cups are good... Rice used to be steamed in a traditional wooden rice-bucket; but now rice is cooked in an electric cooker." (Lulu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 18/03/2016)

The rules surrounding sacrificial food are strict and this knowledge is embedded within the clan lineage. However, Lulu's second statement reveals flexibility in utensils and techniques. What matters here is the food items themselves. Respondents also discussed additional ritualised foods and items. These include dried bean curd, yellow paper and firecrackers. And, there are rules guiding the use of these items. Lulu said that tea leaves can be soaked in a little hot water, so that they will not be blown away. It has been argued that ritualised food often acts as a medium through which identities are created and shaped (Holtzman, 2006: 372).

I observed that people's practices when it comes to tomb-sweeping present identities in a reflexive way: setting off firecrackers and lighting candles guide the souls of ancestors to the food, and descendants invite the souls to 'consume' it (see also Formoso, 1996: 225). These rituals and practices create a spiritual connection between the ancestor and descendant and provide space for remembering and awakening lineage and family consciousness and historical memories, and, in a broader way, bolstering Hakka ethnicity.

Sacrificial roosters are another example. The rooster needs to be as strong as possible, reflecting the material wealth of the lineage. I observed that the rooster is killed in front of the tomb and firecrackers are set off. When killing the rooster, blood is then splashed on paper hung around the tomb (see Figure 8.2). As the process unfolds, people whisper and communicate with the souls of ancestors about their wishes for the family's fortune and well-being. Subsequently, the dead rooster is brought back and cooked for the banquet.



Figure 8.2 Killing a rooster in front of the tomb. Source: author.

Ancestor worship occupies an important role. It is the earliest ancestor that is worshipped by the highest number of linear descendants.³⁹ The order in tomb sweeping is hierarchical: it should start with the earliest ancestor and finish with the most recent one (Lagerwey, 2005). The location of tombs is recorded in genealogical records. Take the tomb-sweeping of the Hou lineage for example (Laoji, 2018): nearly two hundred people attended the tomb-sweeping ceremony, accompanied by the sound of trumpets. Through these rituals, the "notion of seniority among males" is maintained and strengthened (Chan, 2010: 174). After rituals in front of the tomb, the lineage sacrifice ritual took place in the lineage hall: people lined up according to their *zibei* 字辈, rank in the lineage. A speech was given that focused upon the lineage's history, honouring ancestors and regulating and discussing descendants. In this sense, the worship becomes a "usable past" evoked at local level (Adema, 2006: 24).

"Yes, well, on that day, red triangular flags filled every corner of the village. We bought the flags ourselves. The young children held up the red flags, following the adults to worship the ancestors. We had finished the ancestral tomb-sweeping the

³⁹ The notion of earliest (or 'founding') ancestor (*kaijizu* 开基祖) is actually relative. It usually refers the lineage ancestor who migrated to this region.

day before. The ancestral tombs are nearby the village and the tombs are very spacious. A huge group of people participated, lining up all the way from the ancestral tomb to the village along the road like a row of ants. And the order was as follows: the old men come first, followed by the trumpet band, and then the children. There were also several people carrying baskets filled with fireworks who were responsible for setting off fireworks on the road. The children were very happy and ran around. When engaging in tomb-sweeping, the old men kneeled before the tombs, but the children didn't" (Wuwu, elderly woman, Hakka, interview, 07/04/2014)

Although women in general are allowed to participate in this kind of activity (Formoso, 1996: 229-230), married daughters are prohibited from taking part but daughters-in-law of the lineage are not. This is because the daughters of the lineage who are married represent the interest of the husband's lineage and family name.

"A married daughter doesn't participate in tomb-sweeping. If a married daughter goes to the tomb to pray to her ancestors, the ancestor 'shelters' the daughter; the son goes, and 'shelters' and blesses the son. So the daughter is not allowed to participate the activity [to win ancestors' blessing]." (Huahua, elderly woman, Hakka, interview, 28/04/2016)

This is because, in Chinese philosophy, after the funeral ceremony the dead become ancestral gods. One of their functions is to shelter and bless the material fortune of the clan. This is a religious feature from which the grandson (the daughter's son) is prohibited. This exclusiveness to 'outsiders' who do not belong to the lineage adds to the special quality of the festival. One informant, a woman in her forties, expressed an interesting opinion when it comes to emotion and feeling towards tomb-sweeping activities: she was fearful of new tombs, ancestral tombs of other families, and tombs away from the village. This shows that people's emotions in relation to tombs are affected by kinship distance, physical distance, and time distance. The quotation below further elaborates on the fears which some women have:

"I don't dare go to the tomb, which is far away [from the village]. The old tombs of distant ancestors are not as scary as the newly buried ones. If the tomb is new or only several years old, I dare not go. Tombs belonging to other families are more frightening, while my own family's tomb is less so. Although I am in my forties, I am scared of these things." (Aigo, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 04/04/2016)

A banquet follows collective tomb-sweeping activities, and is an important occasion for strength lineage cohesion. One aim of the activity is to educate the younger generation. The Hou lineage's instruction (see Figure 8.3) is: "Living at home, you should obey the rules. Working for the government, be loyal. Living in the village, be kind to the family and neighbourhood. Working outside, love the nation and your hometown. Dedicate

yourself to kind-heartedness and justice. Do not clash with your brothers. Observe laws and be selfless." This reflects hierarchical (kinship) relationships (Janowski and Kerlogue, 2007), an extension of lineage culture and a blessing for the lineage's bright future.

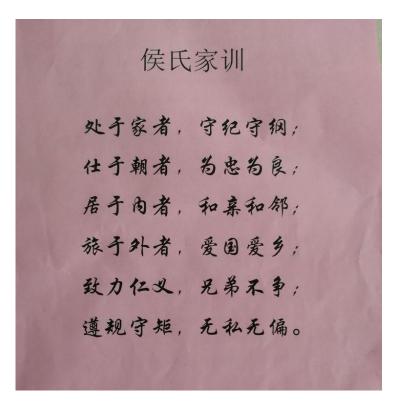


Figure 8.3 Hou lineage's instructions. Source: Laoji (2018).

The banquet follows a predetermined structure. Different from a wedding banquet, it is supported by clan assets and income and households' donations (Houhou, elderly man, interview, 16/03/2016; Yong, elderly man, interview, 01/04/2016). Clan assets include collective fields and mountain land. During my fieldwork, I often heard people saying that bean curd was a common food for such banquets. This is probably because it is an inexpensive choice and is easily produced at home (Mintz and Tan, 2001: 125). In the banquet, a special form of *poonchoi* is served (see Chapter 2.2.1).

"Money came from clan assets, and there is a requirement on the weight of the beans. The bean curd was made by the households. If you're appointed to prepare the banquet, you're in charge of purchasing pork. Then the elder of the clan instructs you on how to prepare the banquet". (Yong, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 01/04/2018)

"The family responsible for preparing the banquet might collect two baskets of bamboo shoots in the mountain." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 07/04/2016)

"The meat and vegetables were served in a basin. Everything is mixed, [including] pork, bean curd, cabbage, everything... We were seated with some kids, so the basin of poonchoi was not eaten up... My whole family occupied one table in the middle hall. The trumpet [team] sit in the lower hall." (Wuwu, elderly woman, Hakka, interview, 07/04/2016)

Dealing with collective affairs is one purpose of the tomb-sweeping festival. Lulu told me how in earlier times the tomb-sweeping banquet was an occasion when drunk villagers quarrelled with one another about everyday problems. Big issues, like repairing the lineage hall, are also discussed on this day because it is the time when most members return to the village, especially the rich and influential ones (Aigo, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 04/04/2016). Given the rapid pace of urbanisation, the festival is more important as a way of attracting people of the lineage.

The rituals and practices change across neighbouring lineages in the region. The level of abundance at banquets varies according to a lineage's economic capability. Some lineages have a rich harvest from their fields that is stored in public warehouses. For example, the Ye lineage used to have the task of allocating meat to elderly local people at the banquet. This shows respects for old villagers. The lineage's generosity in this activity reaffirms the distinct role of the lineage within their region.

"What was the situation in richer villages? Take Ye Village, with their ritual of meat for the elderly, as an example. The threshold of the hall is nearly half the height of the door. On Tomb-Sweeping Day, without any help, the over 60s carried home as much meat as they could which was then distributed to the family. The village used collective assets to buy enough pigs and the pigs were killed for this ritual. The rest of the meat that seniors couldn't carry home was left for the village banquet. The elderly couldn't carry much meat because, in those days, the over 60s were not as energetic as elderly people nowadays." (Lulu, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 18/03/2016)

Another important ritual is the updating of the genealogy records (see Chapter 3.3.2), which show the preservation and extension of lineages. I was told that only a new-born son, rather than a daughter, would be registered in the genealogy records; and a rooster would be sacrificed for the tomb-sweeping activity for the banquet:

"Tomb-sweeping day is the time to observe the genealogy book. In order to register the new-born [male] baby's name, you should donate one bucket of rice and some money." (Baibai, middle-aged man, Hakka, interview, 21/02/2016)

In sum, tomb-sweeping elicits nostalgia for a lineage's past and is a chance to offer blessings for a better life. It is also a time to respect the elderly, celebrate new-borns and regulate lineage members. Kong (2012: 430) contends that descendants

periodically provide sacrificial food to 'support' ancestors in return for ancestors' assistance and shelter when dealing with everyday problems. We saw above that the banquet is an occasion where lineage and clan deal with collective affairs and maintain cohesion.

8.3.2 Fantasy and authenticity within Hakka ethnic festivals

The Hungry Ghost Festival in 2016 provides another example of ancestor worship. It is a suitable case to explain the "blend of fantasy with the real" (Rose and Wood, 2005: 294). in Hakka culture. The Hungry Ghost Festival is the occasion when ghosts (the souls of ancestors) 'come back'. This day generates a fantasy in which ghosts 'return' from hell to the village where they used to live. It is a truly emotional day:

"The Hungry Ghost Festival is the ghost's day. With the permission of the King of Hell [yanwang 阎王], on this evening ghosts return to the village from hell to collect paper money. On this day the ancestral hall is filled with envelopes of paper money from every family, and the outside of the envelopes are sprayed with duck blood because the souls of the ancestors need the ducks to carry them back over the Naihe Bridge (naihe qiao 奈何桥) into hell. After dinner, the family begin to burn the paper-money envelopes. Watching the paper ash from the burnt paper-money envelopes float up to the hall roof, one is reminded of the ghosts carrying money and going back to hell. In addition, at the time of this festival, there are many grasshoppers chirping outside the window, and the adults always tell us that the ancestors are transformed into grasshoppers and that we cannot beat them. When I was a child, I couldn't fall asleep on this night because I was so scared." (Field note, 11/05/2016)

Duck is killed especially for the Hungry Ghost festival. The blood of a duck is sprayed onto the paper money burnt for the ancestors and the particular dish eaten at the festival is duck. From my observation, even those who did not kill a duck on the day would request some duck blood from neighbours to use in the ritual. It is said that only a duck can deliver paper money to deceased ancestors across the 'Water' in the after life (huangquan 黄泉) (see also Xie, 2013). Rose and Wood (2005: 294) argue that "hyperauthenticity denotes viewers' reflexive consumption of an individualized blend of fantasy with the real". In the context of the Hungry Ghost Festival, ducks are the real elements and duck blood is the material element, representing ducks swimming across the river to hell, which takes a role in the construction of authenticity of the festival.

According to Formoso (1996: 230), one theme of ghost-related festivals is the purification of both the living and the dead on different occasions. He refers to Hsiu-Kou-Ku festivals and funerals, distinguishing them in terms of treatment of the living and the dead. However, there is more to it than that. Huahua, a middle-aged woman, had to burn paper money for her deceased father outside (rather than inside) the lineage hall

because her father belonged to another lineage with a different family name. She also burnt a small amount of paper money for the restless ghosts and whispered to the restless ghosts not to 'steal' the money from her father. The aim of this behaviour is actually related more to the treatment of the dead, at the same time as fulfilling the duty of the living to show filial piety.

The atmosphere accompanying the Hungry Ghost festival is the most serious of the year. It is a fearful time. According to my informant, this is particular true for children. Other rules contribute to this feeling of fear as well. For example, people are not allowed to wander around at night.

In addition, there are also lineage festivals in Nanxiong (see Chapter 3.2.2). They blend worship for the Gods and honour the lineage history. One significant feature of Nanxiong's lineage festival is that the dates of the festival vary across different lineages and might last for several days. The god worshipped at the local temple is carried to the village on the day to be worshipped in turn by each lineage.

"There are lots of guests coming on that day. Some thank god with offerings, for example, generally a rooster is needed. Guests from other lineages come to thank god at the hall in the village. Two households used to be responsible for cooking for the guests, with donated roosters and money. These two households were drawn by lots. Traditional music is played for [the meal]." (Huahua, elderly woman, Hakka, interview, 28/04/2016)

In summary, worshipping ancestors is a significant feature for Nanxiong Hakka, which explains the frequency of local festivals and affairs. An awareness of and imagined interactions between ancestors, ghosts and people shape "the ethos of life" in the region (Carstens, 2007: 54). Exclusion of outsiders who do not belong to the lineage is an important feature of these festivals. In this section, which sought to discuss food authenticity, we saw how these elements – rituals, food and fantasy – create a festival atmosphere and contribute to lineage-based ethnicity and mentality (Esterik, 1982). The festivals also extend the topic of authenticity from the aspect of fantasy of ghost. "The psychological depth, conflict, and fantasy components" of festivals constitute ritual experience (Rook, 1985: 262).

8.4 Cultural beliefs

There is potential to explore how the perceived authenticity of food is affected by modern cultural beliefs that are inserted into existing practices as the Hakka (and many other Chinese groups) undergo urbanisation. The New Year Festival affords a good opportunity for an examination of the influence of cultural beliefs on the household. It used to be a rare occasion when people could eat a lot of meat (see Chapter 3.3.3).

Anderson (1988: 146) argues that poultry is indeed festival food, alongside its use in sacrifices to the gods and visits by relatives. Meat and poultry was expensive in the past. It is generally believed that an abundant New-Year dinner suggests that the past year was fruitful.

Section 8.4.1 explores the cultural and religious beliefs surrounding the New Year festival. Section 8.4.2 explores activities connected with the festival and the atmosphere it conjures up. This section shows how the authenticity and identities associated with food and cuisine are developed and perceived.

8.4.1 Traditional beliefs and New Year Festival

The New Year Festival lasts for one month and includes several sub-festivals and rituals. On the 23rd or 24th of the Twelfth Month, people worship the Kitchen God: rituals include cleaning the whole house, which symbolises "getting rid of old things and thus of bad luck", and thanking the Kitchen God, and thanking the Kitchen God (Guo, 2014a: 57, 59).⁴⁰ In addition, this god is so popular in Hakka areas that, before many festival dinners, worshipping the Kitchen God at home is deemed essential.

There are both similarities and differences in New Year rituals between Nanxiong Hakka and other Hakka regions. One example is Pingtian town in Nanxiong county, reflecting the role of different local deities in festive life.

"Pingtian town... is in a small basin 500 meters above sea level. There are over 1,000 families living in this area, mainly with the family name Ye or Deng. In the centre of the basin, there is a time-honoured temple that is 100 square metres in size. A one-metre-high carved wooden Buddha surrounded by two 0.8-metre-high carved statues of General Chen and General Deng. The temple is said to be 'effective' and is highly honoured by nearby villages. In ancient times, Pingtian was divided into ten blocks, and each block held annual rituals including 'Welcoming God' [yingshen 迎神] and 'Thanking God' [xie shen 谢神]. 'Thanking God' took place from the 2nd to 12th of the First Month. Ritual activities included acting and dancing and dragon and lion dances; [the atmosphere] was very lively... Rehearsals for these ritual activities started around the winter solstice." (Deng, 2009)

In this sense, traditional festivals illustrate the celestial hierarchy of Chinese religion and the quotation above reflects the diversity of beliefs in deities among different Hakka groups.

⁴⁰ Cleaning the whole house (*chuchen yingxin* 除尘迎新): *chen* 尘, 'dust', is a homophone of *chen* 陈, 'old things'.

The New Year is dominated by sweet flavours and happiness. In fact, sugar implies happiness. Households prepare a range of sweet rice cakes for New Year. Yingying, a young woman, said that there is no reason for salty rice cakes because "the rice cake is round, [indicating] reunion; thus it is sweet." When I asked why chicken is used in the New Year's Eve dinner, Lanlan, an older woman replied:

"We feel honoured to eat chicken at New Year. It means we pray for good fortune in the following year. Chicken indicates riches and privilege." (Lanlan, elderly woman, Hakka, group interview, 08/02/2016)

Families spend a long time preparing diverse foods for the New Year Festival. Over the winter season, households might start to pickle, salt or dry vegetables and meat. Food activities for the New Year include collecting wild mushrooms and bamboo shoots, drying sausage and preserving meat or making meatballs and fishballs (Xiao, 2013: 243-244). A necessary festival dish is stuffed bean curd which is said to be a replacement for dumpling in Hakka cuisine (Rao, 2014: 9-11). However, using oil-fried bean curd rather than normal bean curd as the wrapper is a Nanxiong invention. During the festival period, households have more time to stay at home to prepare these foods:

"Stuffed bean curd needs pork and shrimps. If there is no pork, use [minced] taro, bamboo shoots and radish instead. No sour bamboo shoot is needed because stuffed bean curd is a light dish." (Ping, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 20/02/2016)

"Yeah, we liked to prepare stuffed bean curd for the New Year, and the bean curd we used is oil-fried bean curd, which is different from that in other Hakka areas. We used to like everything but in particular meat, and a typical dish was boiled pork. This dish is served in a basin and includes pig trotters, pig head and chicken. As gifts for guests and visiting family, we prepare 'Hakka grey rice cake [huishuici]', and the steamed huishuici with rape-seed flower is wonderfully tasty when you feel hungry at night." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, interview, 16/03/2016)

New Year's Eve dinners stress the themes of family reunion, newness, happiness and good luck. In Nanxiong, table- and food-related rules follow traditional Chinese ones, and food symbolises New Year themes and Chinese secularism (Fei, 1986: 7). Steamed fish is an essential dish for New Year's Eve dinner. This is a play on words, *youyu* means both 'have fish' 有鱼 and 'have something extra' 有余, and this dish suggests that 'every year we have enough money to spend' (*niannian youyu* 年年有余). New Year's Eve used to be the most prized and hearty meal, which everyone looked forward to throughout the year.

Yeye and Huahua discussed how their family used to welcome guests over the New Year period.

"We didn't have much to eat. Two *jin* [1 kg] of pork was purchased to welcome guests. We cooked pork soup, sometimes adding an egg. Other things were wine and oil rice cake. My mother used to prepare one bowl of pork soup for guests... When the next guest arrived we cut some pork, put an egg in and cooked it again." (Yeye, elderly man, Hakka, interview, 19/05/2016).

"We used an old-fashioned bowl. The pork soup had lean meat on the top and fatty meat at the bottom. Guests would finish the lean meat. They were too embarrassed to eat up all the pork soup because it was not good manners... In addition, they didn't have the appetite to eat so much pork, particularly during the New Year when every family prepared meat." (Huahua, elderly woman, Hakka, interview, 19/05/2016)

As the quotations above show, some households would use several strategies to strike a balance between welcoming guests and saving meat, reflecting local people's "wisdom of poverty" (Xiao, 2007: 131). Nevertheless, as Huahua says, sometimes these meals were characterised by an overabundance of meat — the symbolic value of providing the meat outweighed practical concerns about actually eating it all. The first day of the lunar New Year is the time to practise abstinence from meat and to "eat up the disasters of the whole year" (Huahua, elderly woman). This is because the act of practising abstinence from meat in Chinese is known as *chizhai* 吃斋, which sounds similar to *chizai* 吃灾, 'eating disaster'. As Xiao (2013) argues, these New Year food rituals reflect collective Hakka fears of food shortages. Worshipping and food rituals help to impart confidence in the future and ward off future scarcity.

8.4.2 Contested authenticity: Modern changes within festivals

Special rules governing entertaining around the New Year festival are also important. The concept of 'New Year Taste' (*nianwei* 年味) is a popular phrase to describe the New Year atmosphere and hospitality (Jia, 2008). New Year Taste has undergone a significant decline in recent decades as a result of modernisation. We often hear people complain about the dilution of New Year Taste. Wu (2008) contends that New Year Taste is a result of a decline in the popularity of traditional Chinese culture. For example, people do not hanker after New Year's Eve dinner nor visit relatives as they did in earlier days. At the same time there is an increase in the amount of modern and foreign foods that appear during the festival period. Reasons include economic development, the spread of city culture and fashion, globalisation and the import of Western culture (Wu, 2008: 107-108). Existing literature – for example, Muhammad et al. (2015: 301, 306) – has argued that the younger generation "are less interest, less able, could not care less and ignore about the festival food preparation [sic]" in the modern context of "technological advancement, commercialization and social advancement". The situation is not simple considering the 'improvement' in festive meals. People I interviewed

agreed that they have more choice, for example eating out at a restaurant, but they still felt that New Year Taste is declining. My fieldwork data delves deeper into this issue: dependence on mobile phones shows how people's role in managing social interactions has also contributed to declining New Year Taste:

"I remember that in the past, on New Year's Eve, after eating dinner, all the family members gathered together to chat with one another, play games or watch Spring Festival Gala Evening on CCTV 1. Nowadays, people -- especially children and youngsters -- no longer watch the Spring Festival Gala Evening and instead play on smart phones, communicating with friends far away via WeChat or QQ and grabbing 'red envelopes', which leads to fewer conversations among family members. We definitely feel that the New Year Taste is not strong as it was." (Field note, 08/02/216)

Zala, a young man, gave his answer to the changing atmosphere at the New Year. In the past, he said, people, particularly the young, were keen for the festival because they would be able to wear new clothes to welcome in the New Year, set off firecrackers and eat chicken feet with the family. Nowadays, they are not as keen, and the village is not as populated as it once was, which leads to a change in atmosphere. The change in New Year Taste can also be explained with respect to food practices and dining experience, which affects people's sense of the authenticity of New Year. These points were emphasised in the group interview that took place during the New Year festival:

Author: Nowadays affluent people like to buy mega and expensive firecrackers which are louder than normal ones and are meant to show off their riches and sincerity to ancestors and deities.

Zala: [Compared to the past] the atmosphere is in decline. The food has changed little and I think the cooking skills have also changed little. Nowadays we probably adopt the hot pot technique from Sichuan and northern China, but the taste and flavour are the same as before. For example we do not use hotpot condiments [guodi 锅底], and usually add oil and salt instead. Northern Chinese flavours have not made a strong impact.⁴¹

Sensen: [Cooking skills] are similar to those of the past and are part of Hakka tradition. The traditional dishes include braised pork, chicken, stuffed bean curd, pork feet. In the past, due to the large size of families, we used to serve the dishes in a large basin. Families used to kill the pigs they had reared for the New Year and dry the meat with salt. (Zala, young man; Sensen, middle-aged man, Hakka, group interview, 08/02/2016)

⁴¹ Northern Chinese flavours (*beifang kouwei* 北方口味) refers to the cuisine of north China in contrast to that of the south.

Serving in a large basin is done for convenience and is representative of the Hakkas' preference for simple food. The quotations above suggest that fragmented socio-economic conditions associated with modernisation lead to contested food identities and reshape the foodscape. Chhabra et al. (2003: 705) suggest that "people are nostalgic about old ways of life" and that "nostalgic collective memory selectively reconstructs the past to serve needs of the present". One interviewee referred to the contested food practices and identities that are strongly reflected in New Year festival. Congcong, a middle-aged man, explained modern changes to New Year's Eve dinners. Authenticity in this meal decreases when it no longer seems to be different from everyday meals.

"In the past we mainly ate vegetables, but nowadays if life is good you can afford meat or fish every day. Conditions improve; for example, we used to eat coarse salt with sand, while we now use healthy and refined salt." (Congcong, middleaged man, Hakka, group interview, 21/02/2016)

Raising poultry takes time and is seen by many as uneconomical. For households, people believe that free-range poultry requires lots of foods such as rice and vegetables; instead, households purchase poultry from rural markets to make salted and dried meat, which is essential for the New Year. Or, they directly purchase salted and dried meat products. Probably influenced by their past experience of raising and processing foods, they have developed their own skills to distinguish edible and flavoursome products:

Erer: You should smell it [before your buy]. If it smells fresh, it is fine; otherwise, it is not.

Ping: If it is bad inside the duck leg but good elsewhere, you can't smell it. If you didn't cut into the leg, it is likely that you bought a bad product. [This is because] the meat in the leg is thick and takes time to dry thoroughly. (Erer, elderly woman; Ping, elderly man, Hakka, group interview, 19/02/2016)

Many complained about a loss of lineage cohesion. The activities during New Year Festival were much more diverse in earlier days than they are nowadays. Three informants told me that there were collective activities, such as fights on the first day of New Year and competitions between bands playing traditional instruments. Although the New Year dinner is shared by the family, the atmosphere during New Year was extended to the whole village through these activities. The quotations show how these activities help to link people and improve morale:

"We played musical instruments including the trumpet, gong and drum in other villages and were welcomed with firecrackers. Everyone could follow the band and households in the village would prepare oil rice cake, salted duck and some hot rice wine for us. We didn't sleep the whole night and the kids in particular were very happy." (Long, middle-aged man, group interview, 24/03/2016)

"In the past, villagers usually went to each others' home, playing games – poker and mah-jong – and having a chat. Playing until 11 or 12 at night, the family cooked fried rice cake, rape flower and peanut. It was so delicious that even a half plate of [these foods] was eaten up." (Yunyun, middle-aged woman, Hakka, group interview, 24/03/2014)

The trumpeters do not necessarily play for just one clan village and their members are trained as apprentices. The playing of trumpets leads to a warm atmosphere. The activity of trumpet-playing crosses neighbouring lineages, forming a local custom.

New Year festivities are never fixed; they are constantly being refashioned and refreshed in light of changes to people's lives, attitudes and habits. This section has discussed the decline of New Year Taste as it is perceived by local people. First, in contrast with previous collective activities (for example, traditional instruments and competing with other clan villages), people see the decline of these 'traditional' activities and feel the loosening of clan cohesion. In line with the analysis of Autio et al. (2013: 566-567) on nostalgia for authentic local food, to the people I interviewed their personal involvement with and experience of previous collective activities endows them with knowledge and memories of the festival atmosphere in earlier days, which they see as having been more authentic. This illustrates the process of romanticising the past through the festival atmosphere (Autio et al., 2013: 568). Second, although the New Year's Eve dinner is much more diverse and abundant than it was previously, people say they lack the appetite, feeling and happy emotions that they had in earlier times. Probably this is because the distinction between New Year's Eve dinner and everyday meals is not as substantial as it was, to which can no doubt be added the sense of nostalgia that so often accompanies modernisation and urbanisation.

8.5 Conclusion

The chapter provides a case for understanding Beer's argument that "Food is never consumed in isolation; it is always in context" (2008: 160). The chapter has mainly discussed agriculture, ancestor worship and cultural beliefs and the way that each impacts upon food rituals and ethnic cuisine in Nanxiong culture in a period of change. I have talked about diverse rituals and festivals and authentic foods, festivals and atmosphere. Section 8.2 discussed the influence of 'traditional' agricultural heritage. Particularly for the elderly and those in the villages, agricultural timing and solar terms have an important role in structuring everyday behaviour and conversation. The symbolic meanings and rituals associated with the agricultural sector continue to have an impact on individuals and societies, even those who do not work on the land. The solar terms are concerned with knowledge of the weather and of crop growth, and generate particular fertility rites like Spring Cattle and the worship of agricultural deities.

Section 8.3 discussed festival activities and rituals -- tomb-sweeping, the Hungry Ghost and lineage festivals -- in the context of ancestor worship. They are performed at the clan and lineage level. The Tomb-sweeping Festival is more important than even the New Year festival. Given the importance of ancestor worship in Hakka culture, the worship is practised in food-related rituals and activities.

Section 8.4 analysed the New Year Festival, when the richest meal of the year takes place. The cultural beliefs behind the New Year Festival include family reunion, newness, happiness and auspicious meaning. New Year Taste is the popular phrase to describe the atmosphere of this festival, but it is argued that this has declined significantly in recent years.

Perhaps the clearest message from this chapter is that festivals and the atmosphere they generate are heavily influenced by modernisation and urbanisation. Take New Year Taste for example, which provides clues about the relations between modernity and authenticity: there exists a conflict between traditional elements (activities, games) and modern factors (mobile phones), leading to fragmented and contested identities and experiences of New Year Taste. When it comes to food and meals, New Year has improved a lot and absorbed new things. Many informants thought that, on the one hand, the New Year's Eve dinner is richer than in the past, but on the other hand that the joy of the dinner is not so pronounced. However, no doubt people romanticise the activities and atmosphere of the past; and authenticity is relative in the way that it is perceived (Akhoondnejad, 2016).

The second conclusion is that lineage narratives and markers and gendered experience should be considered when studying festivals related to ancestors and ghosts. This discussion deepens previous research (Formoso, 1996; Kong, 2012). If we view ancestor worship as a communal folk religion (Yang and Hu, 2012), the chapter has shown that ancestor worship and rituals around other deities such as the seven goddesses celebrate specific links with local history and the geography of a place such as the location of its tombs. Bennett (2015: 308) has argued in her doctoral thesis about state-managed mass graves that in death "social relationships and action... [are] narrated and performed in multiple and overlapping ways" and that these ways "not only enable people to deal with the past, but also to create a new future". This chapter shows that within-lineage relationships and hierarchy matter during tomb-sweeping activities and that women (namely the daughter-in-law, rather than the married daughter) of the lineage are allowed to participate in these activities. In the case presented here, women are more scared of the new tombs of recent ancestors than they are of the old ones. We have also seen that banquets bring together villagers and are an occasion for families to argue about important issues. This is because they bring people back to the village.

Thirdly, agricultural festivals and solar terms are undergoing a process of resignification. This contributes to the understanding of ways that cultural heritage is linked to agriculture and local cuisine (Bessière, 1998; Daugstad et al., 2006). The agricultural sector retains its multifaceted function for the celebration of life even though fewer people farm: it adds symbolic meaning and rituals associated with agriculture to current individual and social life. Solar terms are used by people to keep time and record things, retaining this role in society. Local activities, rituals and foods during agricultural festivals and solar terms set the context for people to experience and perceive authenticity, which in turn reaffirms authentic agricultural living. This can be seen in the harvest festival. As foods for the harvest banquet are purchased from the market and participants no longer undertake agricultural work, the festival and solar terms lose their previous meaning of blessing the agricultural harvest. Festivals provide us with a window into the negotiation between tradition and change. Key notions such as authenticity and nostalgia are useful here, enabling us to understand how material changes can be accommodated within the symbolic meanings of these ritualised occasions. Food is at the centre of this negotiation, just as it is at the heart of festivals.

Chapter 9 Conclusion: Grounded cuisine studies

9.1 Introduction

We know that the term cuisine does not just refer to food, recipes or cooking skills (Clark, 1975). Rather, it is a phenomenon or a process that "is dynamic and ever evolving" (Narayanan, 2016: 1-2). It is important to think about how a cuisine and its context interact and the ways in which ethnic identity, customs, stories, rituals and behaviours have been retained, produced and modified over time. This is why it is useful to explore the dynamic relations between taste, cuisine, locality and ethnicity in geographical research centring on place, all the more so in a non-Western and non-standard Chinese setting.

This thesis offers an empirical study of Nanxiong cuisine in South China, with a focus on the way it has changed and the influences on it. The overarching aim has been to explore the fluid relations between cuisine and place in the contemporary period. I have examined the 'soil' that cultivates (ethnic) cuisine and how the 'soil' interacts with the cuisine and food in the context of modernisation. I examined in more detail changing foodways, eating habits, food beliefs and rituals, and shown how local ethnic cuisines are not fixed, but instead are evolving, porous and contested, constantly being reshaped or re-fashioned. Nanxiong, the focus of the case study in this thesis, is a noteworthy developing and urbanising region with a large population of Hakka people. It is located on the border of Guangdong, Jiangxi and Hunan provinces. Its location makes it a natural observatory from which to examine changing local cuisine.

I employed mixed ethnographic methods in order to study various aspects and occasions of Hakka cuisine. The data collection process involved various interviews (indepth interviews, group interviews, repeat interviews) and food- and cuisine-related participatory observation. I collected a number of recipes, both in written and verbal form, and looked at online forums and social media relevant to my case study.

Chapter 1 introduced the research aims and principal themes of the thesis, while Chapter 2 presented a review of the relevant literature from the perspectives of concepts and practices of cuisine, meals, taste, modernisation and ethnic food. I introduced Nanxiong and its cuisine in general terms in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 introduced my fieldwork strategies, ethnographic methods, and the dilemmas I encountered during my fieldwork.

Chapter 5, the first empirical chapter, explored the relationship between place and cuisine in the context of the flavour principle, choices over the provision of wild mountain food, and the features of home-style and rural style cooking. It showed that Nanxiong cuisine has a particular flavour combination of spicy chilli pepper and sour bamboo

shoots. Wild mountain foods (whether in the form of animals or edible plants) used to be and still are important inspirations for the cuisine, although their roles have changed. Nanxiong cuisine clearly constitutes an example of low cuisine, which is a term that embodies home-style cooking relying upon simple, everyday skills that is less focused upon appearance and the dining environment.

Chapter 6 discussed how the cuisine is 'lived' and practised, with a focus on changing foodways, eaters' habits and attitudes and informal night-snacking. Within each discussion, the influence of urbanisation and modernisation were considered. I noted that the changes are not uniformly and equally distributed across, for example, domestic versus restaurant environments. Local people I interviewed talked about the importance of both traditional and new cooking and eating habits, although there were differences in this regard across generations. In addition, local people showed great interest in eating night-snacks, which are a newly emerging food consumption practice linked to changing lifestyles.

Chapter 7 focused on the context of ethnic Hakka cuisine, with particular attention paid to the changing rituals deployed in weddings, and the banquets that accompany them. Rituals, normally involving the serving of food, reflect clan and community relationships and embody auspicious meanings. However, the religious undertones in particular are in decline as more young people hold their weddings in city hotels. The banquet was typically the most abundant meal enjoyed by most rural people and is still today a collective event that maintains traditional culinary skills and Hakka dishes. Banquet eating mirrors the way in which Nanxiong has adapted to the heritage of Confucian rituals, and the dining atmosphere is an important occasion in which to experience authentic Hakka taste and style.

Chapter 8 analysed festivals and agriculture in the context of traditional clan life and rural living. Although increasing numbers of people have left the agricultural sector, its influences (whether in terms of rituals or symbolic meaning) still have an impact on people's lives. Tomb-sweeping, a typical festival associated with ancestor worship, still functions as an important clan activity that links ancestors and descendants. By examining this activity, we saw that ancestor worship still underpins many local festivals and affairs. The New Year festival, on the other hand, has succumbed to the influences of modernisation, meaning that the 'New Year Taste' (the festival atmosphere) has attenuated, interviewees suggested.

This final chapter is a conclusion to the thesis as a whole. It discusses the main findings and implications of this thesis and is organised as follows: Section 9.2 concludes the main arguments laid out in the empirical chapters and discusses their main implications, with reference to the research themes discussed in Chapter 1. Section 9.3 discusses

the main contributions to the wider literature and offers up a number of avenues for future research.

9.2 Main arguments and wider implications

9.2.1 Taste: Place, flavour and cuisine

This thesis has been concerned with the fluid factors and relationships that define cuisine. A central argument is that place is a vital shaper of cuisine, more so even than ethnicity. The thesis accompanies other works by exploring the relationship between place-making and local cuisine, thus "questioning the uncritical valorization of local foods" (Costa and Besio, 2011: 840; see also Liao, 2008). In the case of Nanxiong cuisine, although the majority of the population are of Hakka ethnicity, most well-known delicacies cannot be simply categorised as Hakka cuisine, which is light in overall taste. Instead, they share many similar flavours with spicy cuisines from the neighbouring regions of Hunan and Jiangxi. During my six months of fieldwork, when talking about Nanxiong cuisine, informants mentioned Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan cuisines many more times than Hakka and Guangdong cuisines.

The thesis, therefore, aligns itself with those who argue for a fluid and nonlinear analysis that focuses on the relationship between place and ethnicity in the context of regional cuisine (Pfau, 2017; Cwiertka, 1998). I argue that, at least in the case of Nanxiong, place is playing an increasingly significant role in defining cuisine, especially in everyday domestic cooking and during occasions where people eat out. It shapes the dominant food identity of local cuisine. The influence of ethnicity is becoming less important, but still has a role to play in special occasions and during more traditional social eating (banquets, food rituals, traditional snacks, and so on). Chapter 5 showed how ethnicity – in particular Hakka appreciation of wild mountain foods as a reflection of their history as a migrant group – relates to special food choices and eating habits, which have been re-fashioned and refined so that they incorporate increasing amounts of seasoning and spices and require more skill to prepare. The thesis discovered that within a changing ethnic region like Nanxiong, the attachment of local people to cuisine and traditional food rituals appears to be stronger than that to the regional culture as a whole.

In terms of relation between taste and place, this thesis discovered that the tastes of seasonings and combination of flavours that are familiar to local people are particularly easy to produce, shape and maintain people's conceptions and embodied experience to the local cuisine and this place as a whole. The thesis discussed the flavour principle, first mentioned by Rozin (1973), by linking seasoning ingredients with place. In so doing, it has shown that seasoning ingredients are not only used to simplify cooking (Sukenti et al., 2016: 195), but can be abstracted and simplified as important signifiers of local cuisine, household kitchens, and even people and place. These key seasonings

celebrate the qualities of terroir (Jacobs, 2009). Together with night-snacks, this flavour principle contributes to various forms of place-making that can be found in Nanxiong cuisine. The thesis reaffirms that the flavour principle demonstrates the distinctiveness of cuisine and character of place at the levels of community and society, rather than individual and family (Narayanan, 2016). And indeed people's conception of place overlaps, and sometimes interchanges, with that of the flavour principle associated with that place.

With the movement and migration of people (such as Nanxiong people working in Guangzhou), the absence of familiar tastes and eating practices in their current living place enhances the identity of the flavour principle in their hometown. That is to say, the Nanxiong case suggests that the flavour principle declares not just proper food and dishes, but proper, right tastes and dining experience as the subjectivities 'in place.' (Cresswell, 1996) This thesis agrees with Cresswell's notion of "place as a way of understanding" (Cresswell, 2014: 18) and, with the notion of flavour or taste of place, extends the idea that place can be also a way of tasting, smelling and sensing the world. Taste profile or flavour can feature a place, to which are attached emotions and memories of insiders and which draw outsiders to experience this place in the age of migration and mass tourism. Some people bring seasonings or food that underpin their home cuisine to their current place, and create a recipe that mixes these ingredients with outside elements. With embodied food experience, outsiders easily modify their perception and information associated with place that was imposed by generalised (often inaccurate) descriptions. For example, my informants from other provinces soon accepted that there are some places in Guangdong that have the dietary habit of chilli peppers, which in turn aroused the interest of these informants in the historical and geographical narratives of this 'specific' place.

In terms of culinary boundaries, this case study has shown that contrasting and striking flavours contribute to the construction and experience of boundaries between neighbouring cuisines. On the one hand, in the category of Chinese regional cuisines, Nanxiong cuisine belongs to Hakka cuisine, which is one of three major cuisines in Guangdong: Cantonese, Hakka and Chaozhou cuisines (Cai et al., 2011). On the other hand, the overall flavours of Nanxiong cuisine seem to differ from those in Guangdong cuisines. In this regard, Nanxiong cuisine undermines the category of Guangdong cuisines, showing the strength of cuisine in place-making and identity definition. This reminds us that the examination of the taste of place and flavours should be treated as fluid, as culinary (exclusive and inclusive) identities are more apparent when boundaries are crossed.

This conclusion rejects the over-generalisation of a regional cuisine – in this thesis, Guangdong cuisine (Chen, 1994: 229-231). In the context of Nanxiong cuisine (and

Guangdong cuisine in particular), if we consider the reference made by Junjun, a young interviewee (see Chapter 5.2.1), we can refute the general assumption that Guangdong cuisine is not spicy. There is potential for Nanxiong cuisine to present particular Guangdong flavours to the outside world.

9.2.2 Modernity and food authenticity

The thesis supports an argument found consistently in the general literature that what counts as authentic is transitory, constantly refashioned and refreshed by pulses of modernity. It supports the idea that authenticity is object-related, perceived and evolving (Akhoondnejad, 2016: 469). Take the atmosphere surrounding New Year, for example, which has been termed 'New Year Taste' (*nianwei* 年味). The fact that traditional elements (including activities and games) are in decline while modern influences such as mobile phones are increasingly pervasive has meant that the identity of New Year Taste and people's experience of it has become fragmented and contested. Some informants suggested that whilst the sense of abundance manifested during these festivals has increased, the atmosphere and overall experience is less convivial.

Although many people are no longer employed in agricultural work, my findings showed that in Nanxiong, agricultural life informs the perception and experience of traditions, rituals and festivals. The influences are reciprocal; many elderly and middle-aged people make reference to agricultural festivals and solar terms (see Chapter 8.2) when referring to their social and individual life, which reaffirms Nanxiong's identity as a traditional agricultural county. This finding complements existing literature on the linkages with the agricultural sector and perceived authenticity from the perspective of people's lives (Berno, 2011).

The changes to foodways in Nanxiong are far from simple. The findings showed that, on the one hand, domestic meals and restaurant dishes have improved and become considerably more refined because of new skills and seasonings imported from elsewhere. On the other hand, some traditional foods and processing skills – for example, salting, pickling and drying – still have a role to play and form an important, authentic culinary legacy. This contrasts with external (and foreign) and modern influences. For example, my informants sometimes romanticised the authentic constituents of traditional dishes such as their flavour, smell and appearance.

Night-snacking is becoming a key element underpinning the authenticity of Nanxiong cuisine. This echoes work on snacking by Warde and Yates (2017: 18), who suggested that the "expansion of snacking might have a range of consequences for the social organization of meals". Unlike formal meals, night-snacking links weather, open space, and social and individual life. It shows that some young people who study and work in

fast-paced, more developed cities (often in the Pearl River Delta) are more concerned with the authenticity of Nanxiong cuisine, particularly when it comes to authentic delicacies which they remember fondly (for example, a pot of beef offal), and that the night-snack evokes for them a typical Nanxiong lifestyle of leisure. The thesis concludes that night-snacking, as a 'lifestylised' food practice, can be abstracted and highlighted as a cultural signifier of a cuisine and of contemporary foodways. Through the creation of Nanxiong night-snacking as a food practice that could embrace change (absorbing, for example, the barbecue), external and modern forces turn from potential threats to Nanxiong cuisine and become instead agents acting for its renewal. In fact, the discussion in this thesis also provides insights for thinking about night-snacking in many other places, such as elsewhere in South China and in south-east Asia (Henderson, 2000; Shih, 2010), as well as the current fad for street food in the western world.

9.2.3 A deconstruction of ethnic cuisine

"Traditional and signature dishes should not be strictly restricted. Otherwise there would be no absolutely featured ones: for instance, braised duck with sour bamboo shoots might be found in Hunan cuisine. What is critical [for a cuisine] are the associated meaning, imagination, ideas and connections." (Haifeng, young man, Hakka, group interview, 08/02/2016)

This thesis has attempted to deconstruct the concept of ethnic cuisine and has shown that it is a porous, contested concept with multiple meanings. First, I discussed how wedding banquets, an extravagant food event, retain traditional elements and enrich ethnic Hakka cuisine. Some traditional cooking utensils and skills (such as the use of a wooden basket for steaming rice) are not representative of the tangible culinary heritage of the Hakka people but add a distinct flavour that is not found during other meals. In addition, as everyday meals become improved and more refined, the traits of Hakka cuisine, such as the fact that it is down-to-earth, salty, oily and meaty (Song and Luo, 2015), find themselves under threat. The banquet has become the last occasion in which these features are showcased. This discussion of banqueting resonates with the existing literature, which situates banquets or feasts as the core of Chinese cuisine. For example, Anderson (1988: 157) has argued that banquets should be seen as the occasion upon which the Chinese philosophy of harmony and balance is showcased. Ru (1992) has suggested that these are central to Confucian rites and rituals, and extend their influence to gender relations, guest-host relations and social class. My research provides one of the few ethnographic observations of how banquets serve to contextualise culinary philosophy and rituals and adjust to modern changes.

Second, I found that modernisation and urban lifestyles have been the leading causes of change to traditional cuisine in Nanxiong. However, the case has shown how

'traditional' foodways do not equally and uniformly change in terms of aspects such as preparation and consumption of domestic meals and restaurant foods. Nonetheless, ethnic culinary elements have come to embody modern refinement and improved technique: my study has shown that the greater availability of oil and other seasonings and spices have improved the taste of traditional dishes – these have been the ingredients refashioning common home-style dishes. The households I encountered welcomed modern refinements to domestic food. The preference for and popularity of ethnic dishes changes across time and place -- for example, in rural versus urban contexts. Overall, the prevalence of ethnic culinary elements is decreasing. Nanxiong's population seem to take a pragmatic approach to the influence of modernisation on ethnic culinary tradition, which supports Klein's finding that Guangzhou people tend to be pragmatic when it comes to food whether eating at home or eating out (2007: 516).

Nanxiong cuisine is different from other Hakka cuisines, which in turn are different from those found in the provincial capital Guangzhou and surrounding cities in the Pearl River Delta. This serves to remind us that generalisations about ethnic and regional cuisines (not to mention national ones) should be treated with caution and rebutted when necessary.

9.2.4 Food rituals and narratives in the context of ethnicity

Without some familiarity with its cultural context, an understanding of Nanxiong cuisine is not complete. I have explored the ethnic undertones of modern Hakka ancestor worship, arguing for its importance as a food-related ritual. We saw that lineage narratives or markers and gendered experience need to be taken into account. Tombsweeping activities for shared ancestors still draw most attention within the lineage (particularly amongst rich and influential people) – much more than other occasions do. Narratives of gendered experience and division in my case study slightly differ from the depiction put forward by Formoso (1996: 229) in that in Nanxiong women are allowed to participate in all aspects of ancestor festivals, though with some limitations. I further showed that women's level of participation and feeling of involvement vary across different contexts. These activities and associated banquets are where the big issues facing the lineage are negotiated. This theme illustrates Xiao's argument that "for thousands of years, what really stands at the core of the Chinese spiritual system is the worship of heaven and ancestor" (Xiao, 2010a: 165). The analysis of ceremonial banquets in this thesis contributes to research on food rituals and banquets in other Chinese regions.

I have argued that wedding rituals are increasingly not based around religion but instead on people and place. In the context of changing ways in the modern world, religious meaning and taboo seem to vanish quicker than social functions (people and lineage) and cultural meanings. This is because in China, Confucian rituals regulate interpersonal relationships rather than relations between people and spirits or gods (Sigurðsson, 2012). Overall, taboos concerning people and gender are less strict than, for example, in Hawaii (O'Connor, 2008). I noticed that my informants do not fear the disappearance of traditional rituals; instead they support the elimination of those that are impractical or outdated. This is perhaps because people are pragmatic.

This thesis accepts that we should consider ancestor worship as a form of communal folk religion (Yang and Hu, 2012) and argues that this belief is very important for lineage/clan cohesion and that it celebrates a specific link with the local history and geography of a specific current place such as the location of tombs. During tomb-sweeping activities, one aim of food rituals is to feed the ancestors (Kong, 2012); perhaps this makes this one of the last occasions in which ethnic tradition and identity is maintained. In other words, food rituals might not disappear even if other ethnic elements such as Hakka language and architecture do. This case suggests that, although some meanings may disappear, food rituals derived from networks of practice in Hakka history "retain a presence as enigmatic signifiers" (Thrift, 2008: 8-9). The completion of food rituals before ancestral tombs every year comforts the descendants who participate in the activity, even though they do not inhabit their hometown any longer.

Food-related practice inherited from the past matters conceptually as well. The Chinese language is rich in homophones. Indeed, many food items get their meaning from homophones like lotus and children (*lianzi* 莲子 and 连子) and chicken and auspicious (*ji* 鸡 and 吉), or near-homophones like eating vegetarian meals and eschewing disaster (*chizhai* 吃斋 and *chizai* 吃灾). In particular, the elderly, banquet cooks and geomancers who lead rituals and carry traditional knowledge teach and remind descendants of their group. In this sense, collective food practice may involve some bounded authorities or actors that work at and embody temporal or cross-generational relations, which is different from other consumer practices like driving a car (Johnston, 2017: 277). This practice mirrors Drury's (2009: 53) idea that East Asian societies pursue auspicious symbolic value when it comes to food. This is thus a different way through which food items convey cultural symbolism (Ogunkunle, 2013) and through which participants --particularly brides, in the case of wedding banquets – re-interpret the meaning and familial obligations associated with the wedding ceremony (Wu and Hu, 2010).

9.3 Key theoretical contribution and directions for future research

This thesis calls for more academic attention to be paid to the association between cuisine and place. This reinforces Kwon's idea that food and the food industry "cannot

be separated from agricultural and cultural characteristics, including [the] people and religion [of a given country], and the nature of its geography, climate, and crops" (Kwon, 2017: 1). The thesis contributes to the broader food-place literature in at least four ways.

First, the thesis has extended knowledge of the fluid relations between contemporary cuisine and place. This builds on existing literature on local cuisine, including dynamic processes of transformation (Kim, 2015), incorporating outside flavours (Klein, 2007), and the impact of mass tourism (Bessière, 1998; Liao, 2008). The focus on a developing county (and the ethnic Hakka) in South China offers fresh insights into an underresearched, low cuisine (Chan, 2010; Cheung, 2005). In addition, previous literature has tended to focus on only a single case or only on big cities. Here, though, the focus has been on a wide range of contexts: ingredients and seasoning, daily practices (food provision, domestic meals and eating out), special occasions (weddings and festivals) and the agricultural sector. By analysing the influence of modernisation and urbanisation on local cuisine and local people, this thesis has painted a picture of the sometimes accepted, sometimes contested development of local (ethnic) cuisine.

In terms of future research, I argue that cuisine studies should pay more attention to the nuances and narratives of place. Because of urbanisation and modernisation, particularly in the context of regional cuisine, the material and socio-cultural aspects of local context and changing eating practices employed by the local population play an increasingly important role. These factors play a role on an everyday basis. I am not arguing that we should ignore ethnic and religious factors, but instead that we should see them as transitory, constantly refreshed and context-dependent.

Second, the thesis contributes to discussions about religious food rituals. The existing literature often links food rituals with religious or symbolic meanings and stories (Feeley-Harnik, 1995; Mintz and Du Bois, 2002) and sees religious food as a medium through which to represent a "divine-human encounter" (King, 2012: 442). Following on from the argument that modern culinary practices and new lifestyles have led to the disappearance of food taboos (O'Connor, 2008: 159), I argue that we need to focus more attention on the role of social function and place. We see that in some Asian societies (Mintz, 2002; Van Baal, 1976), rather than powerful religious codes, ritual offerings and gift-giving convey social meaning and profane interest and foster relations between clans and families, thus contextualising Confucian rituals. This tells us that the scholarship on rituals should increasingly focus on the influence of social function, social units (lineage/clan in East Asia societies) and profane interest in relation to religious meaning and taboos. We should see these factors as constantly evolving in light of modernisation rather than static and rigid.

Third, the thesis advances our ideas about culinary "agreements" or conventions underpinning a cuisine (Kjærnes, 2001; Mintz, 1996; Narayanan, 2016). Extending ideas

put forward initially by Mintz (1996: 103), I argue that such agreements can be seen as food philosophies or ideologies such as vi xing bu xing (Chapter 6.3.2) that surmount regional differences. This touches upon "the problem of defining and analysing a culinary culture" (Narayanan, 2016: 1) and supports the idea that the Chinese have adopted a (collective) mentality that sees them 'pursuing delicacy' across different social classes. Indeed, as Erlich writes that "an interest food is not the province of any particular social class" (2004: 127). As Guoquo, a restaurant owner, said "Nanxiong people are pretty fond of eating and they are particularly willing to spend a lot of money on eating" (interview, 29/05/2016). The existing literature has analysed a set of culinary practices and agreed-upon social conventions governing what constitutes good food. However, we should look into intergenerational differences in the population. My research has shown that within a low cuisine such as that in Nanxiong, culinary agreements do not remain homogeneous across generations. This has implications for future studies; perhaps it is those who create and engage with low cuisine who are best placed to form culinary agreements, as it is collective discourse that defines the cuisine itself. Intergenerational differences should not be neglected, particularly when the region is undergoing processes of modernisation and urbanisation.

Fourth, this thesis contributes to research on the consumption of wild food in East Asia. It is common practice throughout Guangdong Province to eat 'strange' things (Klein, 2007). Wild foods (edible plants and wild meats) have often been depicted as rare, healthy, nutritious and trendy foods in many places (Chen, 2003; Drury, 2009; Marouf et al., 2015). Existing research sees wild plant collecting as a social activity and has directed attention to the decline in traditional knowledge about such foods. However, less attention has been paid to the flavour or taste of wild food itself and the customs surrounding its consumption across time and regions. I have argued here that preferences for wild meat change across time. The increasing availability of oil and other seasonings as taste enhancers has influenced the preference for wild meat. Nowadays, being 'fed up with normal meat' is a frequently cited reason behind the increased popularity of wild meat, even as its production and consumption is ever more constricted by laws and regulations.

I therefore call for further empirical research on habits related to eating wild food in the modern era. Over-generalisation of the reason why people eat wild food and the identities and preparation methods that accompany it should be avoided as they depend so much on differences in local ecology, place and culture. In the meantime, however, it is necessary to consider the culinary skills, seasoning and spices used to cook wild food so that we can see how it influences local recipes and flavours and reflects the cultural history of people and place.

I believe that greater consideration should be paid to the contribution that Chinese and East Asian cuisines have made to world food and to food studies (Mintz, 2009). I argue that the preferences for certain skills and the subtle use of texture and taste can be important factors that define or distinguish a regional cuisine. For example, in Nanxiong people like to braise, stew and stir-fry in order to vary texture and taste within a particular dish. This makes it similar to Japanese food but different, for example, to Cantonese food (Ashkenazi and Jacob, 2000: 3).

Alongside this, the thesis's interventions open out certain concepts used predominantly in a Western context such as flavour, fragrant and fresh/umami to people in South China, making them more international and multivalent concepts. For example, as we saw shown in Chapter 5.2.3, *xiang* \clubsuit is actually not equivalent to fragrance (Gao, 2007) and it differs across people and place: Nanxiong people make reference to fragrant spicy flavours when describing the overall taste of some dishes.

To the best of my knowledge, most academic works on Chinese food and culture approach the subject from a historical or nutritional perspective (e.g. Anderson, 1988; Chang and Anderson, 1977; Chen, 1994; Simoons, 1990), with little emphasis on ethnography. In this sense, there is danger of over-generalising the regional context of cuisine and insufficiently considering the influence of modernity or local nuance and identity.

Because this thesis focuses on how cuisine in one region of South China is changing, it contributes to the wider scholarship on Chinese food in several ways. First, from a geographical perspective, it calls for the examination of the taste of place, key (local) ingredients and modern changes to local cuisine. This is because many regions in China -- particularly small cities and rural towns – are undergoing modernisation and urbanisation, meaning that in each region attempts are made to stake out a distinctive quality to the local cuisine in order to construct a culinary identity that is different from that of the neighbouring region (Cesaro, 2000).

In addition, in the context of research into ethnic cuisine, we are reminded that generalisations about ethnic cuisine and traditional rituals should be treated with caution (Wu, 2005). This is because different elements of ethnic cuisine and rituals may adapt in the face of modernisation rather than simply disappear. Recent changes to symbolic values, social functions and even religious meanings and taboos are not equal and uniform. I therefore call for more empirical work that focuses on the cultural practices surrounding food in China.

Finally, I believe my thesis helps to answer the question of why cuisine studies should set more store by place and context – should therefore be more grounded – particularly when it comes to the changes to regional cuisines and foodways brought about by pulses of modernity.

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Appendix A Table of interviews

Categories	Interviewees	Attributes of interviewees	Theme	Code	Date
'Tasting' group interview around the table (Total: three)	Qianqian, Kaikai, Gangan, Xinno, Aidu, Chong, Tanxiao, Wuchu, Nanfei, author	3 women, 7 men	What and how is Nanxiong cuisine contrasted to Cantonese, Sichuan and Chaoshan cuisines? How people from outside Nanxiong think of this cuisine?	T20160109	09/01/2016
	Zizi, Caicai, author	2 women, 1 man	What and how is Nanxiong cuisine contrasted to Cantonese cuisine?	T20160112	12/01/2016
	Xiaodan, Linlin, Qianqian, author	2 women, 2 men	How do Nanxiong people who work in Guangzhou perceive and do with Nanxiong cuisine?	T20160123	23/01/2016
Group interview (Total:11)	Liang, Jixu, Zhen, Cheng, author	5 men	What and how do diners eat and think of a banquet at restaurant in a rural town?	I20160103	03/01/2016
	Zala, Sensen, Yunyun, Haifeng, Yingying, Youyou, Peiyin, Lanlan, author	3 women, 6 men	What are traditional Hakka dishes retained nowadays in the village? What are traditional preparing techniques?	I20160208	08/02/2016
	Datou, Fufu, Junjun, Ming, Hehen, Lvping, author	2 women, 5 men	What do younger generation perceive and do with signature dishes?	120160216	16/02/2016
	Erer, Qiuqu, Ping, Mei, Congcong, author	3 women, 3 men	How do village prepare foods for New Year?	120160219	19/02/2016
	Sensen, Congcong, Yunyun, Peiyin, Yongyong, Baibai, Kang, author	1 woman, 7 men	Why is the village a Hakka one? How do households cook New Year dinners? What are traditional snacks?	120160221	21/02/2016
	Pang, Chang, Maomin, Nannan, Liusu, author	1 woman, 5 men	What are the situations of Nanxiong typical restaurants? How are signature dishes cooked?	120160227	27/02/2016
	Xing, Yanyan, Chanchan, Facai, author	2 women, 3 men	How are wild foods collected and cooked nowadays?	I20160319	19/03/2016
	Long, Yunyun, Fangfang, author	2 women, 2 men	What are weddings and traditional festivals? How and where is Ceremonial banquet is organised, cooked and consumed?	120160324	24/03/2016
	Bobo, Binbin, Liang, Nanzi, Jiao, Jingu, Laoshi, author	8 men	What do people collect, prepare, cook, and eat wild meat nowadays? What is the knowledge within?	120160408	08/04/2016

	Wusan, Pang,	2 women, 6	What do people collect,	120160417	17/04/2016
	Yifa, Qiqi, Liang, Juju, Xiaoxiao, author	men	prepare, and cook wild meat ?		,0 ,,2010
	Zhangju, Weiwei, Zengyu, author	1 woman, 3 men	What are Nanxiong delicacies? How are signature dishes cooked?	I20160514	14/05/2016
Chef or cook (Total: five)	Long	Middle-aged man with apparent Hakka heritage	What are traditional rituals and cooking techniques in banquets?	C20160210	10/02/2016
	Chang, Jiejie	Middle-aged man, middle- aged woman	What are the situations of Nanxiong typical restaurants? How are signature dishes cooked?	C20160225	25/02/2016
	Shanzhu	Middle-aged man	What are the Meiling Goose and its cooking skills?	C20160513	13/05/2016
	Lange	Middle-aged man with apparent Hakka heritage	What are traditional cooking techniques in banquets?	C20160525	25/05/2016
	Guoguo, Jinjin	Young man, young man	What is night-snacking in Nanxiong city?	C20160529	29/05/2016
Geomancer	with app	2 elderly men with apparent Hakka heritage	th apparent funeral ceremonies, lineage	G20160318	18/03/2016
(Total: two)				G20160321	21/03/2016
				G20160404	04/04/2016
			How and where is ceremonial banquet is organised, cooked and consumed?		
Clan elderly	Gugu	Man with	What are traditional skills for	E20160208	08/02/2016
(Total: 12)		apparent Hakka heritage	making pickles?	E20160319	19/03/2016
	3	Man with apparent Hakka	What are clan affairs, festivals, New Year meals?	E20160220	20/02/2016
		heritage	restivais, ivew real meals:	E20160401	01/04/2016
	Yeye	Man with	What are clan affairs,	E20160301	01/03/2016
	heritage V		festivals, New Year meals?	E20160407	07/04/2016
		What do you do in tomb- sweeping activity?	E20160415	15/04/2016	
		What do you do with wild	E20160428	28/04/2016	
			foods? Are there any skills?	E20160504	04/05/2016
			What are your memories back in the village? And about wild edible plants?	E20160508	08/05/2016
				E20160519	19/05/2016
			How and where is Ceremonial banquet is organised, cooked and consumed?	E20160520	20/05/2016
			How and what was eating habits and eating practices in the earlier days?		
	Houhou	Man with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals and so on?	E20160316	16/03/2016

	Qiuqu	Woman with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals, wild foods and so on?	E20160319	19/03/2016
	Dalin	Man with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals, wild foods and so on?	E20160321	21/03/2016
	Yong	Man with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals and so on?	E20160401	01/04/2016
	Baobao	Man with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals, wild foods and so on?	E20160404	04/04/2016
	Wuwu	Woman with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals and so on?	E20160407	07/04/2016
	Xiaojia	Man	What are differences between Nanxiong and Jiangxi cuisines?	E20160417	17/04/2016
	Huahua	Woman with apparent Hakka heritage	What are clan affairs, festivals, wild foods and so on?	E20160428	28/04/2016
			How to prepare New Year festivals in the previous?	E20160519	19/05/2016
	Jianjun	Man	What is the feature of chilli pepper and its growth here?	E20160518	18/05/2016
Middle- aged generation	appar	Man with apparent Hakka heritage	What do people think of traditional Hakka dishes?	M20160210	10/02/2016
(Total: 11)		nemage	What do you do with wild foods? Are there any skills?	M20160404	04/04/2016
	Guihua	Woman	What are differences of chillies between Nanxiong and your Guizhou?	M20160302	02/03/2016
	Xueyu	Man	What are eating habits and eating practices?	M20160308	08/03/2016
	Shengbo	Man	What are eating habits and eating practices?	M20160316	16/03/2016
	Aigo	Woman with apparent Hakka heritage	What do you do in tomb- sweeping activity?	M20160404	04/04/2016
	Bobo	Man	What are eating habits and eating practices?	M20160414	14/04/2016
				M20160415	15/04/2016
	Wusan	Man	What are the situations of household cooking, typical	M20160417	17/04/2016
			restaurants? How are signature dishes and night-snacks cooked?	M20160418	18/04/2016
	Jiang	Man	What are Nanxiong's eating habits?	M20160502	02/05/2016
	Gang	Man	What are eating habits and eating practices?	M20160513	13/05/2016
	Guan	Woman	What are the situations of Nanxiong typical restaurants? How are	M201605131	13/05/2016

			signature dishes and night- snacks cooked?		
	Zhuzhu	Man	What are the situations of ancestral festivals in Zhuji?	M20160515	15/05/2016
Younger generation (Total: six)	Yingying	Woman with apparent Hakka heritage	What are weddings, festivals and so on?	Y20160210	10/02/2016
	Chiji	Man	What is the habit of eating wild food in Nanxiong city?	Y20160422	22/04/2016
	Yang	Man	What do younger generation perceive and do with foods and cuisines outside Nanxiong?	Y20160502	02/05/2016
	Zengyu	Man	What do younger generation	Y20160503	03/05/2016
			perceive and do with foods and cuisines outside Nanxiong?	Y20160514	14/05/2016
			What is night-snacking in Nanxiong city?		
	Guang	Man	What are the flavours of Meiling roya Goose?	Y20160513	13/05/2016
	Jinjin	Man	What is night-snacking in Nanxiong city?	Y20160529	29/05/2016
Housewife	Yunyun	Woman with	What are eating habits and	H20160220	20/02/2016
(Total: three)		apparent Hakka heritage	eating practices? What are traditional dishes and	H20160323	23/03/2016
			techniques retained?	H20160415	15/04/2016
	Qiqi	Woman	What and how do you buy,	H20160308	08/03/2016
		prepare and cooking family meals? Do you have pickled	H20160318	18/03/2016	
			foods now?	H20160418	18/04/2016
			Do you grow vegetables by yourself even you live in the	H20160421	21/04/2016
			city? What do you think of	H20160422	22/04/2016
		modern culinary changes?	H20160429	29/04/2016	
			What do you think of restaurant cooking skills?		
			What are your memories back in the village? And about wild edible plants?		
	Fenfen	Woman	What and how do you buy, prepare and cooking family	H20160505	05/05/2016
			meals?	H20160511	11/05/2016

Appendix B Information sheet

Consent Letter

Hi, I am a PhD student of School of Geography in University of Leeds, UK. I am doing my doctoral-thesis fieldwork with the title of '*Taste and the Boundaries of Local Food*'. The aims of project are to explore everyday food practice in Nanxiong, traditional food in Hakka traditional event and gastronomic tourism. I like to invite you to talk about your ideas and attitudes towards these topics. The time for the interview will be around 1 hour. I will give you a sheet explaining main questions to be asked in the interview. In the survey, you can: ask any question about the research questions; refuse to talk about those you don't like to; stop the interview and recall the data any time you like. I promise all the information and data collected in the interview will be in academic use and all your personal information will not be in the thesis. Thank you for your participation.

同意书

您好,我是英国利兹大学地理学院的博士生。我正在做关于本地饮食的味道和边界的博士论文的田野调查。这个研究的目的是探讨南雄个人和家庭的日常生活饮食习惯,传统节庆的传统客家食物,以及旅游和饮食的关系。我想邀请您参与访谈:谈谈您对这些话题的意见和想法。这项访谈大概持续 1 小时。我会事先给您一张写有主要访谈提纲的纸张。在访谈中,您可以:问任何有关的话题;拒绝回答你不想回答的问题;在任何时间终止访谈或者收回您访谈所说的谈话。我保证:所有收集数据将会用于学术研究,您的任何个人信息都不会出现在论文上。谢谢您的参与。

Consent to take part in the research project

Content	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the nature and objectives of the project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
It is my decision to take participation into the survey and I know that I can withdraw data collected in my participation at any time I wish. In addition, I can answer any question I don't want to and I can stop the interview any time without giving reason.	
I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name and other sensitive information will not appear in the thesis and other outcomes, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or	

reports that result from the research. I also understand that any sensitive information in my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I agree for the data collected from the interview to be stored according to Leeds University guidance and used in relevant future research in an anonymised way.	
I understand that I am free to take the decision whether I agree to be photographed or my voice recorded.	
If I agree to be photographed or voice recorded, I agree for the recordings and photographs where I am identifiable me to be stored and used in relevant future research. I know this material will be kept confidentially.	
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Lead Researcher	Junfan Lin
Signature	
Date	

Appendix C A sample of an interview transcript portion

Date: 09/01/2016. Place: Yuebei Mansion

Chong: What are you trying to say? Diet, migration, or just Nanxiong or Hakka cuisines?

Qianqian: Actually, there are relations between people's migrations and food cultures.

Kaikai: There are macro and micro scales for studying into cuisine.

Qianqian: Are these dishes Hakka cuisine? Then why is Hakka food in Meizhou [famous Hakka region in Guangdong Province] very different from yours? They don't eat any spicy foods. Stuffed bean curd in Meizhou is made from soft bean curd [rather than oil-fried one like this].

Chong: Hakka people in your place [Nanxiong] may be the one neighbouring to Hunan Province.

Author: Meizhou Hakka dishes are not spicy and are real Guangdong cuisine.

Chong: In our region [in Sichuan Province] there are also Hakka population. The neighbour town to my place is Hakka one, and there is also stuffed bean curd which is different from this dish.

Author: Do they have the preserved duck like this?

Chong: Preserved duck is made across all over the country.

Kaikai: The nuances are different. You can see that the technique is smoking in Hunan; in regions like Nanxiong and our region [Huizhou], there are lots of windy days and thus the technique is air-drying.

Author: There are air-drying and sunlight-drying.

Chong: We also have a technique of air-drying. [I know] in some regions in Hunan Province, techniques include hanging meat directly next to the chimney, using smog to dry meat. Therefore, preserved meat in these regions is black in colour.

Qianqian: This kind of preserved meat [you mentioned] also contains an alcohol taste.

Gangan: There are much smoked meat in Hunan Province. I think [what you mentioned] is a flavour of cooking wine.

Kaikai: In order to get rid of a burnt flavour, it is necessary to add wine to make preserved meat. And there is a urine smell in pork and duck.

Gangan: According to a broadcast programme I watched, people paint some wine on preserved duck and then hang it in the air at the end stage. Oh, the dishes I just ate are so spicy and I need some rice [to comfort myself].

Kaikai: In fact, this is what we called people's food choices are subject to their surroundings. Geography and weather significantly influence the development of a cuisine.

Chong: In Heyuan Hakka region [in Guangdong], people do not eat spicy dishes. In my place in Sichuan, there are more than ten towns in a county and each county shares the same dialect. The population of two towns next to mine were majorly migrated from Hunan and Guangdong Province, and the population of my town were from Northern China.

I: Do people in different towns conflict with each other?

Chong: What conflict? No.

Xinuo: Population of one village is over 100 in my place and each village has a dialect.

Chong: Is it a case that people cannot understand a dialect if he or she rarely listens to it? In my place, although people speak different dialects, basically these dialects in Sichuan belong to northern Chinese dialects, or [are] branchs of mandarin.

Gangan: I just want to ask you what is your sensitivity to spiciness? Do you feel a spicy taste when you eat it? Can you tolerate this taste?

Author: You get a strong spicy taste in your mouth, right?

Gangan: Yes, I do.

Kaikai: It is because you do not get used to eating chilli peppers. [In some regions,] kids of four or five years old begin to eat chilli peppers, following the habits of their parents and grandparents.

Author: Exactly, since childhood, people start to eat chilli peppers and you gradually have tolerance to spiciness. It is a good memory.

Kaikai: In fact, preserved meat in Nanxiong is very different from Cantonese one which is sweet. They are totally two different types.

Author: Preserved meat in Nanxiong is salty. We do not put chilli peppers into preserved meat until we cook it.

Chong: The same situation in our place. But we sometimes put some chilli powder when making preserved meat.

Qianqian: In my place, Sausages are not spicy.

Aidu: What we eat now is milled taro soup. It's thick and delicious.

Aidu: This is countryside fish.

Author: Do you know what kind of fish is it?

Kaikai: Normally it is grass carp. Its borns is relatively large. By the way, do people eat dog meat in your place?

Author: Yes, we like to eat dog. There is the saying that "people eat dog in the summer". I am impressed with my first experience to eat dog: the meat was so hot [by nature] so that I had a nosebleed.

Chong: Do you eat snake soup? People would have nosebleed to eat snake and rice-field eel soup. Personally, I don't like dog meat because it is too stiff. Dog meat should be cooked for a long time [to become soft].

Qianqian and Chong: In this respect, foods in Nanxiong are similar to ours. We almost eat all that are edible.

Author: Agree.

Kaikai: It should be due to scarcity of foods [in the history] so that people ate all that they could get.

Gangan: We eat rats and cats.

Kaikai: Snakes, cats and chicken [indicating dragon, tiger and phoenix].

Author: Last month my uncle bought several kilos of dried rats. His mother told him not to eat rat because he was born in the year of rat, but my uncle didn't care about that.

Kaikai: Is what you just mentioned field rat?

Author: No, no, it's just rats that were caught inside the pit and were dried in the sunlight or by the smog.

Chong: So is there special market selling rats? Do you eat a bat?

Author: Yes, we do.

Qianqian: Woo, it is unconventional. Is it delicious?

Gangan and Aidu: No, I didn't eat it.

Chong: I only know that bats can be used in Chinese traditional medicine.

Kaikai: They are like rats and have two wings.

Gangan: There are two kinds: one has round teeth, like a rabbit; the other has sharp teeth.

Author: This dish that was just served is the royal goose, but its portion is so small. It uses a quarter of a whole goose.

Xinuo: You see its container is a large basin.

Qiqian: Oh, this is pretty special.

Author: This kind of basin can be bought for people to wash face.

Chong: Yes, people wash face with two towels inside basins. The basin is alike the container for fish fillets in hot chili oil in my place. The styles are similar. Actually many elements in Sichuan culture were influenced by migrations of Hakka group, particularly in Yuan, Ming, and Qin dynasties. The clan of my father were from Hunan, the clan of my mother from Shanxi. Sichuan was occupied by minority groups in the history.

Aidu: [Taro soup] is made from milled taro. At my family, we eat rice mixed with taro soup. The flavour is amazing.

Author: What do you think of appearances or beauty of this dish?

Chong: Good. It is natural.

Qianqian: It looks more like homemade or home-cooked styles, not very exquisite. It is not a grand-hotel product. The portions are not large.

Xinuo: It is simple, such as the dish [was served] in a large basin.

Aidu: For example, at last time we ate the royal goose at Meiling town, the goose was served in a large basin.

Chong: At an outlet like this, it is impossible to use large basin as container. The Yuebei Mansion has some political meanings and is an eating site where leaders from Shaoguan Prefecture invite guests or friends. It is [unsuitable] to use a large basin.

Author: I also noticed an interesting issue that we, Guangdong people, like rice to be served in a large bowl.

Qianqian: This should be different from restaurant to restaurant, with higher-level restaurants serve rice to guests individually.

Chong: We had cooked rice. There was no electric cook in earlier days and households put rice into the boiled water until it was half-done. Then steam half-done rice. This way is not just applied to glutinous rice but normal rice. And there's also rice soup.

Qianqian: Compared with Sichuan cuisine, I think Nanxiong cuisine is more like the peasant's stir-fry [style] in Sichuan cuisine and has countryside flavour. But the tastes slightly differ and I feel some dishes are spicier than ours.

Author: I have an interesting finding: it is, my father said that he purposely refuses to clean pork intestine completely so as to retain some pig-excrement smell. He thinks this is a better and authentic flavour.

Kaikai: Sichuan people should eat many Sichuan peppers and dishes here [Nanxiong] are pure spicy.

Author: In fact, the word fragrance is still an important evaluation indicator for judging a dish in China.

Qianqian: Dishes in Sichuan is more salty, even than ones in Nanxiong.

Qianqian: Today is my first time to eat this cuisine [Nanxiong cuisine], and until now I didn't realise that there were Cantonese people who [liked to] eat spicy foods. Some dishes are even hotter than [well-known] Sichuan spicy dishes. My previous perception was that both Cantonese and Hakka people avoid chilli peppers.

Chong: Actually in Sichuan, cooking food series of hot chili oil do not need any special techniques but to put much oil. It is so delicious.

Kaikai: [The steps are] Stir-fry chilli peppers until their spiciness comes out. Put duck meat inside a pot and a spicy duck dish is made. If you put duck inside the pot before stir-frying chilli peppers, tastes will be different.

Chong: I think pickled cabbage is one of your specialties.

Gangan: In fact, abilities to eat chilli can be learned. One person who goes to a different place can become more used to spiciness or become less tolerant to spiciness. Habits of eating chilli pepper are local customs.

Gangan: I am not going to eat [more duck], it is too spicy. I thought it was not spicy thus I was careless to have bitten the duck piece faster and faster; I felt 'burning across the whole mouth... The first bite was OK, but the second bite was too spicy to be accepted.

Chong: You should drink some rice wine to comfort yourself. Degree of alcohol are relatively high. Actually, the rice wine that we drink now can be used to cook dishes.

Xinuo: Rice wine is actually sweet. You cannot stop drinking more because of its sweet flavour. You will get drunk if you drink too much.

Qianqian: It is less oily and less salty than Sichuan food, so the spicy flavour will be more prominent. However, this [style of] spiciness is not the same as the fresh spiciness in Sichuan cuisine; it is like the one in Hunan cuisine – a dry spiciness. Take the fried duck today as an example, the first bite is hot on tongue tip, and the spicy taste is obvious. However, with the fried duck in Sichuan, the first feeling on the tongue is salty, fragrant and crisp, and then slowly the spicy taste begins to spread out, which I call a

'fragrant spicy'. So I think there's a temporal and hierarchical difference between the two cuisines

Qianqian: I think the spicy taste in the dishes differs from that of our dishes: here I felt a spicy taste on the tip of the tongue and there is no Sichuan pepper in Nanxiong cuisine; while in my hometown, taste intensity of spiciness [capsaicin] is not strong so that spiciness doesn't not reach the tip of the tongue.

Appendix D A number of recipes in Nanxiong cuisine

The Meiling royal goose

a whole goose or half goose	lotus roots
sour bamboo shoots	red cluster peppers
cooking wine	white rock candy
chilli bean sauce	sand gingers
anises	Restaurant-own flavouring (mizhi tiaoliao 秘制调料)

- 1. Wash goose and cut it into small pieces.
- 2. Wash and cut lotus roots. Slice sour bamboo shoots and red cluster peppers.
- 3. Heat oil, gingers and sand gingers. Stir-fry goose until brown.
- 4. Transfer all ingredients into pressure cooker. Add cooking wine, some white rock candy, anise and restaurant-own flavouring. Stew for half hour.



Figure: Meiling royal goose. Source: author.

Countryside fish

a whole grass carp	bean curd
red cluster peppers	green onion
Water starch	gingers
Soy sauce	

- 1. Wash grass carp and cut it into pieces.
- 2. Cut bean curd into pieces.
- 3. Stir-fry bean curd.
- 4. Heat oil, gingers, and red cluster peppers. Stir-fry grass carp until golden.
- 5. Add bean curd. Stew for 10 to 15 minutes.



Figure: Countryside fish. Source: author.

Stir-fried pork intestine with sour bamboo shoots

Pork intestine	sour bamboo shoots
red cluster peppers	green onion
Soy sauce	gingers
Cooking wine	garlic

- 1. Wash pork intestine and cut it into pieces.
- 2. Slice sour bamboo shoots and red cluster peppers
- 3. Stir-fry red cluster peppers, sour bamboo shoots.
- 4. Add gingers, pork intestine, soy sauce, garlic and cooking wine. Stir-fry all ingredients for several minutes.



Figure: Stir-fried pork intestine with sour bamboo shoots. Source: author.

Jiaoleici (yellow dumpling stuffed with pickles)

Glutinous rice	Plant ash
red cluster peppers	Pickled cabbages

Pickled eggplants

1. Put some plant ash into water. Soak glutinous rice in water with plant ash for two hours.

- 2. Mill glutinous rice into rice flour. Cook rice flour.
- 3. Pinch cooked rice flour into round shape as wrapper.
- 4. Stuff pickled cabbages, pickled eggplants, red cluster peppers into wrappers. Steam *jiaoleici*.



Figure: Jiaoleici. Source: author.