

**Sensory flows of Spice: A multisensory ethnography
exploring how spice influences home cooks' sense of belonging in Cape
Town**

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Anthropology at the University of Western Cape**



**UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE**

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Faulty of Arts

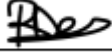
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Research Declaration

I, Rhoda Deers, hereby declare that the work contained in this mini-thesis for the fulfilment of MA in Anthropology, submitted to The University of the Western Cape, is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at this or any other university for a degree.

Signed:..... Date:...November 2023



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Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Chapter 1: Relations through Spicery Tales	5
Spicy trails and tales from within kitchens.....	10
Chapter 2: Recipe as a Critique	15
The Unlettered Koesiester	15
Twisted tales of origins.....	19
Chapter 3: The Koesiester, a retelling from Cape Kitchens.	27
Auwal Tyd Koesiester	27
Oemie Fadielah’s Koesiester	33
Chapter 4: Performing of the Koesiester Recipe	38
Chapter 5: Performative Acts of the Cape Koesiester	54
Acts of Naming	54
Act of Relocations (and Relations).....	59
Acts of Senses.....	64
Chapter 6: Poetics of the Koesiester	70
Koesiester Poetics.....	70
Reference list	72

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Abstract

The history of Cape Town is entangled with the spice trade, slavery, colonialism and orientalism. The Cape cuisine narratives often romanticize fixed cultural cuisines, as seen with the "Cape Malay" cuisine, which is only acknowledged for its connection to a spicy Asian origin story and celebrated for its traditional, authentic, and well-balanced aromatic dishes. These exotic narratives of "Cape Malay" kitchens reflect the past segregation programs of colonialism and apartheid, as the home of Cape Malay remains fixed within the rows of colourful houses at the foot of Table Mountain in Bo-kaap previously known as the Malay quarters. This embellishment of a spicy orientalist narrative of Cape history continues to silence the realities of complex overlapping identities that are held in "coloured" bodies in post-apartheid South Africa. It is these fixed cuisine narratives that begin to unravel when spice is used as a narrator for the Cape. I draw on the works of Edward Said's contrapuntal reading and offer a reading-back of Cape Cuisine to search for the complexities of social lives and lived experiences. To do this form of reading, I situate myself within the Worldliness of spice. I note that to follow spice is to understand its materiality in the doings with spice and to acknowledge the material agency of spice. This reading against the grain demands more than a visual inspection of texts, it demands a read of the unwritten multisensory world of the kitchen. In this ethnography, I follow spice as it entangles with Cape families in its uses and movements within and through the multi-site Cape kitchens. I centre memory as an inscription of unwritten history that is held within bodies living in Cape Town. I propose that a multisensory approach to navigate the Worldliness of spice from within kitchen spaces allows for new perspectives and the potential for new types of archival readings.

Keywords:

Cape Cuisine, Spice, Koeksiester, Koesiester, Multisensory.

Chapter 1: Relations through Spicery Tales

“When cargo ships enter Cape Town harbour, one could determine by smell whether they were carrying spices or slaves”

Cass Abrahams as quoted by Baderoon (2016:56)

The history of the spice trade and Cape Town is entangled with slavery, colonialism and orientalism. However, the Cape cuisine narratives tend to erase these entanglements through the romanticizing of fixed cultural cuisines such as Cape Dutch and Cape Malay cuisines. Interestingly these cuisines retain the boundaries of segregation and reflect the geographies and programs of segregation as inscribed by colonialism and apartheid. According to this mapping of the foodways the traditional Cape Dutch cuisine is scattered along the luscious Europeans-styled Cape Winelands (farmlands). In contrast, the exotic flavourings of “Cape Malay” kitchens are encapsulated along rows of colourful houses at the foot of Table Mountain in Bo-kaap previously known as the Malay quarters. However, these fixed cuisine narratives begin to unravel when spice is used as a medium to view the history of Cape Town. Spice allows for a broader analysis by adding a depth of flavour and colour into food cultures, cuisine categories and identities as spice becomes the slippery medium that defies and ignores the ambiguous boundaries founded on apartheid purist racial classifications.

Artist Berni Searle’s (2023) “Colour Me ” series is an attempt to illustrate through the narrative of spice, the complex and diverse entanglements of identities of Cape bodies by using her own naked body to represent a site of multiple convergences. The still visual exhibition named Red, White, Yellow, and Brown forming part of the “Colour Me” series becomes an interesting exploration of spice as a central narrative in Cape Cuisine. The spicy exhibit critiques the fixed purist ideologies of ethnic-nationalist categories that were an integral part of the colonial process and further the racial categories legalised by the apartheid regime. Robust-Red Paprika from Central Mexico, (Off) White Pea flour from the Middle East, Golden-Yellow Turmeric from India, and Earthy-Brown Jeera (cumin) from North Africa each have a turn to colour her face, torso, and limbs. Here spice becomes performative as it is applied to her naked body, positioned supine with her gaze slightly shifting towards the camera with each spicy colouring. These still visuals of four

photographs capture the performance providing evidence and mapping her colourful site of convergences. Thus, illuminating the vastness of movements and cultural exchanges that happened alongside the centuries of slavery and spice trade.

Paprika becomes an interesting addition to the exhibit, perhaps a choice made for practical applications in the facilitation of comfort during the performance by covering the exposed body with a milder version of the Chillie family (*Capsicum* species) while having a vibrant colour due to the high levels of carotenoids the pigments producing its robust redness. However, I choose to focus on paprika's spice travels as a plant species that originates in Mexico, and through the Spanish and Ottoman spice traders made its way to Europe and has since become a national spice for Hungary flavouring their cultural cuisines (Farrimond: 2018:164-165). When spice narratives are taken seriously, their origin stories and ways of travelling and cultivation in new lands, offer ways to destabilize Orientalist notions by allowing for a broader perspective of history. Spice navigates ways to rediscover and re-imagine the ways of cultural exchanges. Through the use of spice as a visual signifier, the exhibit allows for the colourful narrations of overlapping origin stories and identities that are hosted within Cape bodies that were racially classified as "Coloured". The four spices used provide a language for the artist's attempts to trace her mixed ancestral lineages that echo the merging of origin stories, movements, and cultural exchanges as noted within the spice's own origin stories. Yet, it also reveals the myth-making of origin stories and the ways in which tracing and mapping become difficult, particularly for those who embody mixed ancestral identities as a result of enforced slavery and migration that accommodated the spice wars, spice trades and colonial expansions.

Spice and its slipperiness (Morton, 2006) as it flows in different forms through multiple periods of time and space, become a destabilizer of fixed narratives and question ideals of authenticity and is often encoded by tracing singular purist origin stories for identities and cultures. However, it is to be noted that the enticing spices covering Searle's body transform her into a hyper-visible exotic subject. In fact, in a particular reductionist viewing, Searle becomes a representation of the exotic oriental, a neatly enrobed aromatic display where her body and multiple overlapping identities remain invisible, veiled from full viewing, and subjected to a singular silenced identity. de Beers (2012:39-41) notes that it is this misrepresentation between the visible colourful spices and invisible silences of merging

identities that continues to be upheld within South African cuisine categories. The “Cape Malay” cuisine is one such example that is only visible in its relation to the singular exotic Asian origin story that is praised for upholding its traditional and well-balanced aromatic dishes. In doing so, “Cape Malay” cuisine, as depicted in assumed canonical texts such as published cookbooks and culinary historical studies, retains the romanticized historical fixed allure as an embellishment of a spicy orientalist narrative of Cape history while continuing to silence the realities of complex overlapping identities that are held in “Coloured” bodies. According to Gqola (2010: 193-194), Searle’s creative use of spice invites the audience to engage with its multidimensions and to enter into a myriad of questions that are left unspoken within the representation of identities and the process of creolization that has occurred at the Cape. This is echoed by culinary historian Cass Abrahams (Baderoon,2007:120) who has proposed that “Cape Malay ” cuisine should be acknowledged as food from Africa, with influences from the diversity of the people that have merged at the Cape as an example of the first fusion food in the Cape. On the other hand, Baderoon (2014) motions toward the use of Muslim foods rather than “Cape Malay” cuisine, in an attempt to move away from the ambiguous fixed categorizations that Searle’s work criticizes. Although there is a common thread linking these authors through the acceptance or partial acceptance of the creolization of identities, cultures, and food cuisines at the Cape.

Creolization is defined as cultural creativity occurring under conditions of marginalization in which the construction of identity for subalterns incorporates elements of those of both ruling and subaltern cultures (Adhikari, 2003:160). The concept of creolization can be viewed as either a dualistic or dialectic process. Within the dualistic process, there is a placid process of accepting colonial dominant cultural elements by subordinate slaves into their new emerging cultural formation. In this light power is asserted by those capable of cultural preservation through the ability to retain and trace their ethnicity and ancestral origins. In the context of South Africa, the colonial regimes made classifications based on nationality and ethnicity namely; Europeans as settler citizens, Africans as natives, and non-natives as slaves, whereas those born into slavery at the Cape were defined as Cape (creole) slaves (Erasmus, 2011). This notion of the creolization of non-native slaves created the complexes of searching for origins through nationality and ethnicity. Thereby allowing for the apartheid

regime to differentiate black into different pseudo-racial classifications with the complex creole grouping being termed “Coloured”. The category of “Coloured” was further subcategorized into “Cape Malay” if an Asian origin could be proven or a further ambiguous “Other Coloured” if other factors and origins were considered (Jeppie, 1987). However, if one reassesses the creolization process through the lens of a dialectic process, one can move past the fixation of singular origin stories by emphasising and questioning the methods of power and resistance as well as creativity and innovativeness that occurred between the ruling power and subalternate groupings. A dialectic process is to re-image both groupings undergoing the process of creolization as cultural exchanges become a means of negotiation within their created worlds. In this way, I agree with Erasmus’ (2011: 649) notions towards a politics of creolization which allows for the inclusion of politics of Relation, one that acknowledges the larger global process of human existences that has and is constantly undergoing negotiations and renegotiations of power dynamics and resistance. Drawing on the poetics of Relation by Glissant (1997) allows for a refusal to accept the hegemony of lived human experiences that have been encapsulated in fixed narratives of ethno-racial categories set to suit colonial framings.

I draw on Erasmus's (2011) use of Relation theory and note that time scales and questioning of historical context become an interesting discourse within the creolization theory particularly within the context of South Africa. The South African historical archives have been manipulated over the centuries to suit colonial and political agendas and in fact, continue to influence the categorizing of people living within South Africa. These sterilized and uncoloured histories create simplified origin stories. In doing so, the realities of overlapping identities are ignored as well as the concept of merging of cultures and cuisines that occurred even before the European discovery of the Cape. An example is the simplification of the Spice Islands origin story used in “Cape Malay” cuisine where there is a misrepresentation of the complex and diversity of the cultures of the archipelagic state called Indonesia today. Morton (2018:27-30) notes that Malacca on the eastern rim of Indonesia was known as the Spice Islands with trade routes that spanned across Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe, and traders would converse in over eighty different languages. Petty Pandean-Elliott in her book *The Indonesian Table* (2023) highlights that the Indonesian region is highly diverse with over 17’000 islands and 13’000 ethnicities. While

each region hosts its own cultural cuisine yet, culinary exchanges were not rare. The Indigenous Indonesian spices such as clove, nutmeg, and mace began to flavour the world's food and in return, the Asian, North African, European, and Middle Eastern cultures and flavours integrated into Indonesian food cultures. In this way, the singularization and homogenization of "Malay" identity and culture by colonial authorities and the apartheid regime created a myth of the pure "Malay" culture that can still be seen within contemporary "Cape Malay" traditions and cuisine.

Thinking within a Relation framing and re-imagining pre-European Spice trades, I note Morton's (2018) acknowledgment of marine evidence of the trading by pre-Islamic Arabs in Southern Africa over two thousand years ago. Questioning the notion of cultural exchanges that might have taken place during this unwritten historical period which the apartheid regime's curated historical archives ignore. Mellet (2020) expands on this decolonized history of the Cape, allowing for multiple histories and complexities of merging identities and cultures to be revealed beyond the colonial narratives of the European discovery of Cape Town in 1652. Swanepoel (2021) notes that Mellet's attention to deep histories allows for the questioning of how identities have been formulated, assigned and described over time and in return how these identity formulations are still being used and perceived within our present. Lewis (2021) in reviewing *The Lie of 1652*, highlights that these hidden histories allow for a broader understanding of the Pan-African and African-Asian experiences, in that it unsettles the fixed narratives of timeless traditions and static societies such as the claims used for cuisines categorizations within South Africa.

However, scholars have cautioned that theorizing in South Africa has been overburdened by the analytic probes of politics, race, and struggle resistance to determine identity (Nuttall & Michael 2000). In light of this, I return to Searle's use of spice using the analysis of Keely Shinnars (2022:23-27) as she notes that to follow the materiality of a medium such as spice, means to be able to fully understand the multisensory material and to know them intimately in order to tell their stories. It is with these cautions in mind, that I emphasise Edward Said's notion of contrapuntal reading as a form of 'reading-back' to explore the canonical texts through both the dominant perspective as well as the potential discourses that remain subjected to silence through their concealment or marginalization within canonical works (Wilson,1994). Using this colouristic reading process allows for the

illumination of entangled and overlapping social experiences thereby avoiding tendencies towards reductionist reading and its attempts to categorize by de-colouring complex social lives. Said (2012 & 2013) emphasises the requirement to contextualize oneself within this process of contrapuntal reading and acknowledge the local geography and local Worldliness of the lived experiences. For it is the obscuring and dismissing of these local realities that precipitate the process of universalising an imperialist dominance of canonical texts (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2008:109)

I propose a contrapuntal reading of Cape Cuisine, using spice as a means to reveal the overlapping and entangled complexities hidden within Cape kitchens. Accepting the requirement as set out by Edward Said, I propose to situate myself within the Worldliness of the spice narratives at the Cape. Through these lenses I prepare to attune my senses, to explore the ways in which the materiality of spice continues to reveal stories within the ethnographic present. For this reason, I lean into the materiality of the aromatic essence of spice to include the multisensory readings of spice. I follow spice as it entangles with Cape families through its uses and movements within and through the contemporary Cape kitchen. Exploring the senses through seeing, tasting, hearing, smelling and touching becomes a means to centre memory as an inscription of history that is held within bodies living within Cape Town (Field et al, 2008). A multisensory approach that navigates the Worldliness of spice, allows for new perspectives as well as the potential for new types of archival readings to be explored. It is with these rationales that I deviate from the performance of Searle (2023), and the analysis by de Beer (2012) and Gqola (2010) as I intend to return the spice to the kitchen, beyond the textual and visual readings of historical archives and explore the ways in which a multisensory contrapuntal reading of Cape Cuisines opens up contemporary narratives to ways of being and belonging at Cape.

Spicy trails and tales from within kitchens

The kitchen being an intimate space within the home becomes a challenging ethnographic field site as it requires participants to be comfortable with the researcher entering their private homes. Here I contextualize the nuances that relate to studying Cape cuisine as the kitchen space is veiled by a cloud of mystery, secrets and silences particularly within Cape Muslim foods as revealed by Baderoon (2002, 2007, 2014). Noting that kitchen secrets are kept within families and close relations, I relied on my personal networks of friends,

colleagues and family for recruitment. Furthermore, I chose to work within communities that I reside in, by sharing similar family histories and being acutely aware of the cultural and religious affiliations to the local cuisine, I entered the ethnographic fieldwork through a horizontal approach. In this way, I adhere to the requirements of Said's contrapuntal reading by 'reading-back' Cape cuisine as I reflect on my own life experiences as a Cape Muslim coming from a family with a diverse ancestry who had settled in Cape Town for multiple generations. With this in mind, I read the spice narratives being told within Cape kitchens not through an exotic lens but rather through analysing the spices within their localized worldliness and in relation to the diverse bodies that work within the Cape kitchen to create spicy edible end-products.

My participants were females between the ages of 25 years to 72 years, all residing within the greater Cape Town metropole. Most participants noted that their families were originally from District Six, Claremont and Wynberg and were forced to relocate along the Cape Flats due to the apartheid's segregation policies. Most of my Participants have continued to reside within the Cape Flat in the suburbs of Grassy Park, Lotus River, Retreat, Mitchel's Plain and Manenberg. While others had moved to more affluent areas in Southern Suburbs such as Newlands, Upper Wynberg, and Rondebosch or further to Northern Suburbs such as Platteklouf and Parow North. Participants were given the option to self-identify and used a wide range of descriptors including "Coloured", "Cape Malay", "Indian", "Muslim-Indian", "Indian-Cape Malay", "Arab-Cape Malay", "Cape Malay & Coloured", "Capetonian", and "Muslim". This process of self-identification was always hyphenated, a flowing rhythm of this and that, rather than just one category as they grapple to place themselves within their 'given' categories yet resisting the singular notions it implicated. These self-identifications were often associated with oral mappings of their overlapping identities describing their unique *Jut*¹ or *afstamp*² (family tree). The complexities of these family trees resulted in many participants having undiscovered branches of their ancestry, a lingering result of colonialism and the slave trades across the Indian Ocean. However,

¹ *Jut* a Cape Muslim vernacular which may be a mispronunciation or elision of the Arabic word *Jida* meaning Grandmother. *Jut* is used to refer to one's family lineage.

² *Afstamp* a Cape Muslim vernacular which is a merging of two Afrikaans words *afstammeling* meaning descendant and *stamboom* meaning family tree.

categories of self-identities provided by the participants are a reflection of the popular myths that are internalised to create a 'complete' identity while the oral explanations reveal the lived sense of identity. These myths are not merely to be dismissed as false but rather seen in their attempt to compose a framing to understand the traumas of the past by providing a language to build a narrative to navigate their histories. In this way, identities can be seen as never pure or complete as identities are not objects to be quantified into measured categories instead, they are open-ended processes located within the context of time, place and space thereby allowing for complex entanglements of Cape family trees (Field et al,2008:10-11).

Interestingly when questioned about their home cooking many self-defined their cuisines as simply "huiskos" consisting of hearty family meals consisting of various types of curries with ranging spices and rice or rotis, stews, bredies³ and roast meats with vegetables. According to Chutel (2023:80) "Huiskos" can be used to define the complex histories and overlapping identities that get uniquely represented on a plate in Coloured homes. Here Chutel (2023) motions that the term Coloured within post-apartheid South Africa evolved from its racial classification into a broader social identity that can be found throughout the nine provinces, while each community holds its unique historical context in which a Coloured cuisine becomes a means to reflect the flexibility, creativity and multicultural becoming of "huiskos". Factors such as religion play a role in further defining meal choices as Muslim participants refrained from non-halal food sources such as pork, alcohol and for some certain shellfish whereas, some Sanatana dharma participants refrained from animal food sources products and certain types of allium species i.e., vegetables such as garlic.

All participants were from a working-class socioeconomic status which was an important factor as participants had the financial ability to choose their daily menus in contrast to the majority of Cape Town families living below the breadline that are not afforded this opportunity. It is to be noted that during the recruitment phase, I received many interested respondents yet many were hesitant of my ethnographic enquiry due to my medical background and active role within community health within the community. This resulted in

³ Bredies is an Afrikaans word for stew, yet within Cape Cuisine there is a distinction between stews and bredies in terms of their cooking methods. According to my participants Bredies requires a lower temperature and in turn a slower cooking process in comparison to stews.

issues of refusal to participate so as to not reveal their self-declared “unhealthy” food choices or those participating feeling the need to curate their daily meals to appease “healthy” meals. This highlights contemporary forms of silencing that occur within Cape Kitchen where “huiskos” and family recipes are reduced to nutritional benefits without considering the complex mean-making processes that accompany these food types. I focus on the aspect of mean-making within this thesis. However, I do acknowledge that an area of interest that becomes alarming and apparent during my fieldwork is the underlying violence that occurs when general nutritional guidance is applied to cultural food types and blanketly condemned as “unhealthy” (Tshukudu & Trapido, 2016) resulting in patients having to deal with complex feelings of loss and guilt when yearning for the comforts of performing recipes and offering their intergenerational edible-products to family and friends (Spence, 2022).

To gain a rapport with participants before entering their homes and the intimacy of their kitchens, a form of spice journaling was conducted where participants used photovoice, a process of taking photographs to document their spice storage areas in their kitchens. Spice journaling allowed for the exploration of spices used in the daily meals that they prepared over a four-week period. Thereafter I planned to join the participants in their kitchens and observe them through a multisensory lens as they guided me through preparing an everyday meal in their kitchen. I intended to document the real lived experiences of Cape kitchens by highlighting the role that spice played within the ordinary, daily and taken-for-granted meals.

The spice journaling phase resulted in a deviation from my proposed ethnographic enquiry as participants' use of photovoice showed the associations between spice and family recipes. Spice was not seen as an isolated object or ingredient. Rather spice was seen in an intimate relation (relative) encapsulated in particular dishes that were associated with family memories sweetened with the unwritten retelling of oral histories. Within the first week of spice journaling, it became clear that participants were not interested in showing me their daily meals as I intended. Instead, I entered a phase of deep listening as participants shared the use of spice in their multigenerational family recipes. Following the spice narrative, family histories travelling through five generations were revealed from the oral archives within the Cape kitchen. Spice allowed for navigation through time and space as spice became the constant that travelled in various versions of family recipes through

multiple movements of Cape families due to forced relocations to the creation of new social lives in Cape Flats and to the continued search for family homes in spatial segregated post-apartheid Cape Town. Within the two weeks of using a modified spice journaling phase, which had become fixated on discussions of family recipes, I became inundated with invites by participants to see the performance of their family recipes in their home kitchens. Eagerly, participants wanted to share with me the elements that were not able to be converged through written recipes or spoken words. I was required to come to their kitchens to attune my senses to use methods such as “Steel met die oog” (Baderoon, 2007).

Interestingly, a fairly common family recipe associated with spice was repeatedly mentioned during casual conversation with participants, the spicy oval-shaped fried dough coated with light sugary syrup and topped with coconut called a koesister. A plate of freshly syrup Koesisters on a Sunday morning is a common scene in Coloured and “Cape Malay” households, particularly within Cape Town crossing the socioeconomic divisions of Cape communities. Every neighbourhood has at least one house where the home kitchen turns into a production line to cater to the needs of this Sunday ritual, the house would have children lining up with plates or plasticware waiting for their warm sweet breakfast treat.

Searching for written works on the Koesister I find more omissions than answers.

Documentation of culinary history entangles the Koesister as a spicy version of the Koeksister, which is awarded the title of South African national delicacy. It is with this that my ethnographic enquiry shifts to undercover the spicy world of the Koesister. I enter a phase of contrapuntal reading in which I explore the canonical text on the Koeksister and analyse the ways in which the Koesister is depicted within this research. I then address the omissions of these studies and highlight new ways to read the texts. Further, I make use of two Koesister recipes and allow for their spice narratives to tell the tale of the Koesister beyond the textual by using the multisensory elements that I encounter within Cape kitchenscapes. In this way, I propose that the Koesister is a palimpsest (Colwell, 2022), in which multiple inscriptions and erasures occur over time and space. However, I propose that one can ‘read’ the multiple layers of inscriptions and those attempted erasures as faded inscriptions through the use of a multisensory approach to following the spice and its unwritten embodied sensory elements.

Chapter 2: Recipe as a Critique

The Unlettered Koesiester

In Afrikaans *ongeletterd* can be directly translated as “not having letters” and I want to offer it here in English as Unlettered. Ongeletterd means illiterate, to be unable to read or write or not having ability to gain skills to do either. The assumption of the supposed illiteracy of the people of colour within Cape Town results in the creation of catchwords and the quaint little mispronunciations and elisions used in the Cape vernacular. Further Unlettered suggests a class situation where the lower classes acquire cultural artefacts such as the Koesiester, in which the community innovates by adjusting, elision, misreading and corrupting the original artefacts by means of creolization. I want to argue that the elision of the “k” in Koesiester is far more than a mere signifier of an assumed class of illiterate and ignorant creolizations. In fact, the Koesiester can be used as a purposeful reading against the grain and the elision be seen as an act of defiance rather than mere unrefined mispronunciation. Thus, the work on the Koesiester has to take on the contrapuntal reading as suggested by Edward Said that was proposed earlier. To begin, I delve into the differences between the Koeksister and the Koesiester.

As stated above, the difference between a Koesiester and a koeksister could be seen as nothing more than the dropping of a letter “k” yet to people of colour from Cape Town, it’s seen as a violent misrepresentation and erasure of the entire food heritage and cultural history. The twisted fates go beyond a similarity in naming as these two sweetened confectionaries tell a tale of rich historical entanglements that span vast time frames from spice trade wars, the colonial rule at the Cape, British imperial rule, apartheid segregation, forced removals and the lingering legacies of these events for contemporary Capetonians.

It is not a novel idea that food can play a role in the recording and remembering of historical narratives. The Hertzoggie, a short pastry biscuit that is half filled with sweetened coconut filling and half with jam, provides a visual display of a hidden oral history that continues to be re-enacted in Cape kitchens and embellish Cape tea tables. Baderoon (2014) retells the coded messages of betrayal and the political movements that helped build the political foundations of the apartheid regime. Governor Hertzog made false promises to people of colour living in Cape Town and as narrated by Baderoon (2014) ensured that given their

support, he would make the *slawe* (referring to the descendants of slaves and lower socioeconomic demographics) equal to the whites, and to further provide the vote for all women. However, Hertzog turned his promise into a violent silencing for descendants of slaves as he secured the vote for white women only and used his political positioning to spearhead bills that laid the foundations for an apartheid regime that brought further violence and abuse to descendants of slaves and indigenous communities of South Africa. This resulted in the Cape kitchens protesting and showing their displeasure at being used as a political ploy through the invention of a new biscuit called the *Tweegevrietjie* (the two-faced), by covering the biscuit in two distinctive icing colours of pink and brown to visually depict the divide between whites and non-whites and the bitter betrayal of Governor Hertzog. In doing so, these Cape sweet confectioneries become a part of the hidden gastronomic and oral history as they remind people of colour about their shared slave histories, the beginnings of apartheid and the rise of an Afrikaner nationalist identity and the fallacy of racial purity which resulted in the segregation of communities into ambiguous racial groupings defined such as Coloured, Indian, Black and later as a further political ploy a category of Cape Malay for Western Cape Muslims (Baderoon, 2007).

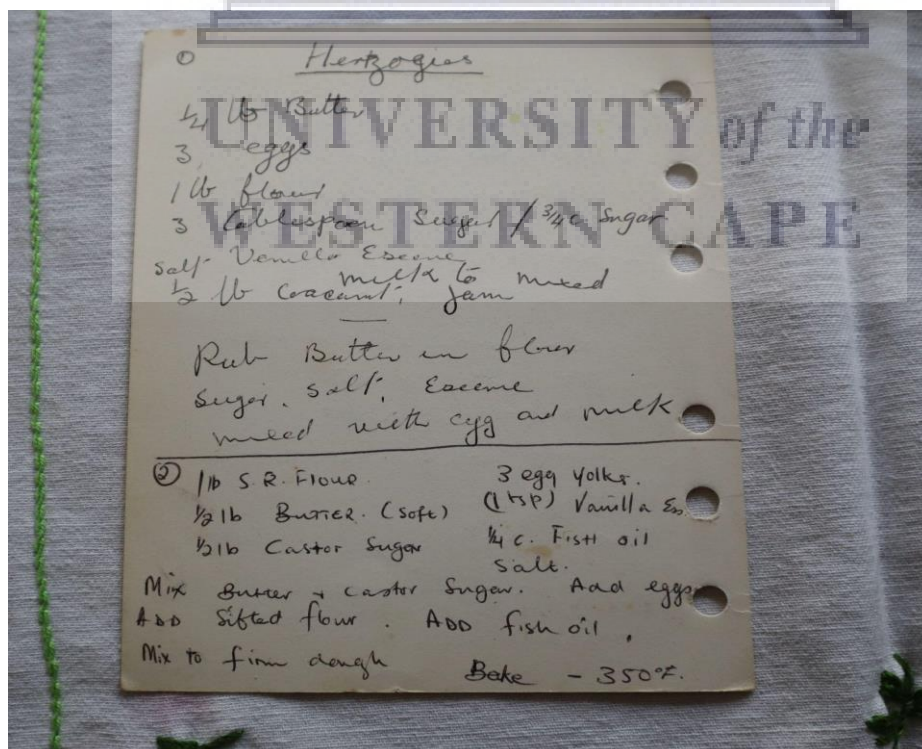


Figure 1: *Handwritten Hertzoggie biscuit recipe part of an encoded family recipe collection. Two versions are provided for the biscuit dough. While both lack instruction for final decoration of the biscuit toppings or evidence of the encoded history of its innovation.*

Photographer: *Researcher, 2023*



Figure 2: *An afternoon tea table set with a display of Hertzoggies on the Left with half jam and half coconut konfynt representing in part the colours of Union of South Africa's Flag and Tweegevrietjies on the right indicating betrayal of the two-faced Governor Hertzog.*

Photographer: *Researcher, 2023*

Using the Hertzoggie and the Tweegevrietjie as an example of the historical archive through oral storytelling within a confectionary form, I begin to question the difference between a koeksister and a koesister as these two confectioneries although being similar in spelling represent two different culinary and cultural identities within South Africa. The Koesister can in its material form be seen as a spicy version of sweetened fried dough and is often

associated with exotic "Cape Malay " cuisine and identity. The origin of the Koesister becomes entangled with the notion of the adaptation of the Afrikaner Koeksister with oriental influences by Cape Malays and remains within the historical narrative as an Asian heritage appeal.

The ambiguous nature of the "Cape Malay" identity created by the apartheid regime continues to uphold these linkages to oriental exotics which overlooks the diversity in those who identified and are currently identifying as Muslim within the Cape as the "Cape Malay" racial category had little to do with ethnicity and was an oversimplification of the Cape Muslim demographics (da Costa & Davids, 1994). In this way, debates remain around the origin of Koesister, as there is a trend to draw towards searching for oriental origins to uphold the ideals of the racial category defined as "Cape Malay". This "Cape Malay " origin story as noted in the first chapter, creates nostalgic connections of an exotic heritage while dismissing the complex ethnicities that lie within the history of slavery within Cape Town. In this way, the Koesister becomes trapped within a narrow orientalist narrative as a means to differentiate itself as the spicy exotic version of the Afrikaner Koeksister.

I have found within my fieldwork that people of colour involved in the making and consuming of the Cape Koesister, find the need to distance their sweetened oval-shaped fried dough from the Afrikaner koeksister resulting in the acceptance of this orientalist notion. This active distancing between cuisines is another legacy of apartheid racial segregation, as food choices were one of the many criteria used to categorize the population. Chutel (2023:71) noted that the apartheid Race Classification Board would interrogate people by asking what type of food they ate, and how they prepared their foods as a means to identify a signifier of culture and in accordance with apartheid ideology be a determinant for racial categorisation. These racial food boundaries were a driving force of division between the "coloured" and "black" categories where individuals who wished to gain slightly more benefits from the apartheid state would intentionally denounce their cultural foods and choose to consume foods that conform with a more European aesthetic, in this way distancing themselves from "black" foods and allowing for reclassification. These legacies of racial borders for food types continue to linger in post-apartheid South Africa where cultural food markers and signifiers become stained with the political pseudo-racial classifications. Further, Houston (2007), cautions that the ideals of a "rainbow cuisine" that

erases these legacies is in itself a form of cultural imperialism which speaks of harmonious diversity and multicultural cuisines to appease tourists. As a result, the need for participants to distance their Cape Koesister from the Afrikaner Koeksister acts as a reminder of the period of oppression and violence that the Afrikaner Koeksister and its cultural history resembles.

The tendency for "Cape Malay" to play into orientalist framing can be seen an ambiguous notion as it can be viewed as an act of defiance as noted above as well as acceptance of the exotic narratives which allow for the acceptance of the comparisons between the Cape Koesister and Asian confectionaries such as Goulaab jamum. This Indian sweetmeat with its spicy notes provides a more worthy and less hostile comparison than the Koeksister even though it has a less complex spice mix when compared to the Cape Koesister. Interestingly, the Goulaab jamum's dough is not yeast-based like the Koesister, making the final texture saturated with rose-infused syrup more similar to the Koeksister rather than the Cape Koesister. Throughout my fieldwork, I recognised that the Cape Koesister moves beyond the materiality of sweetened fried dough or as the sum of its ingredients, as noted in the sections above. The Koesister becomes a means to allow for the holding of multiple overlapping cultural identities and ethnicities. It is within the participants' performance of their family Koesister recipes that the Koesister, becomes a ritual for remembering and retelling the undocumented narratives of the Cape kitchen thereby giving an interesting exploration of the overlooked complexities of the historical and contemporary Cape kitchens.

Twisted tales of origins

To begin, I explore the Koeksister, the claimed Afrikaner version of fried and glazed fried dough. This sweet fried dough has had its elements of the invention and cultural linkages documented within South African culinary history, unlike the Koesister which remains muted and referred to as a spicy version of the Koeksister in other words cast as a mere derivative on the culinary foodscape of the Cape. To understand the significance of the Koeksister within South African cuisine, I draw on the works of Louw (2016) who highlights the Afrikaner cultural symbolism of the Koeksister to the extent that the syrupy three-braided Koeksister has its own two-meter monument in Orania unveiled in 2003. This Koeksister monument is to honour the Afrikaner women who used their honed baking skills

to generate funds through Koeksister sales. These women formed Koeksister brigades and collectives as a means to uplift and financially secure community institutions and services during the establishment of Orania as a secluded Afrikaner homeland near the end of the 1980 and early 1990 as the apartheid regime faced international sanctions and political power declined within South Africa. This heavily syrup-infused fried dough becomes a unifying element of endearment as the pride of nationalist Afrikaner culture.

Louw (2016) highlights the historical timeframe which set the course for the koeksister to be seen as an Afrikaner cultural marker. Noting that the Koeksister had been a free-form confectionary as archival recipes from cookbooks in the early 1920s have no affection towards the stringent braiding method that is resembled by the two-meter monument. In fact, many recipes have a title as Koeksister and Bollas with a simple differential beneath of adding spices such as cinnamon to make Bollas. However, the significance of the shaping details for Koeksister is found in 1950, a period which coincides with the uprising of an Afrikaner nationalist identity and the underpinning of an Apartheid socialism for “white” South Africans. The Koeksister received a detailed method for braiding of the three strips of dough with instructions to start braiding left over right then right over left which can be found in the publication of the popular South African cookbook; *Kook en Geniet* (Cook and Enjoy) in 1951. Since then, the koeksister braiding technique has been emphasised as the defining factor of a mastered skill for its status amongst South African fried dough. In fact, the artist of the two-meter Koeksister in Orania was required to redo the original sculpture as the braiding did not reflect the proper method of left over right then right over left (Louw,2016:7)

Tales of the origins of the koeksister recipe take us further than the free-formed koeksister of the 1920s or the strictly braided koeksister of the 1950s, when following the written recipes, we become aware that most ingredients like flour, sugar and spices were not indigenous to Cape Town. Following the ingredients, particularly the spice, one perceives a broader historical vantage of the koeksister recipe that highlights the entanglements of spice and slave trades that brought these ingredients to South African coasts. Classen (2003) while primarily focusing on Boerekos (Afrikaner foods) and the merging of culinary ingredients, provides an exploration of archival recipe texts to highlight two European recipes as the basis for the continued confusion and twisted fates of the three-braided

koeksister and the spicy cape Koesister. The first recipe is a 17th-century recipe of Stroopkoek (Syrupcake) from Holland. These sweetened cakes were also called Oliekoek (oil cakes) and it was made of a yeast-proofed dough containing fruit pieces such as raisins and apples and infused with spices such as ginger, cinnamon and clove, to which spoons laden with the runny dough would be dropped into hot lard to fry until golden brown. These fried balls are then covered in sugar before serving. It is suggested by Classen (2003) that this Oliekoek recipe travelled with the Dutch on their various colonizing quests including to the so called “New Worlds” of Americas where they developed into the classic powdered ring doughnuts.

When the Oliekoek recipe arrived at the Cape, a renaming of Oiliebolle was adopted by Cape Dutch settlers and Bollaas by enslaved Malay women whose kitchen labour resulted in the making of these sweet confectioneries for their Dutch madams and masters. Classen (2003) notes that the second recipe relates to the Italian crullers which can be traced back to the 15th Century. Different to the Oliekoek as Cruller was a non-yeast dough that was much firmer and could be cut into strips and shaped by either rolling or braiding before being fried in hot lard until golden brown and then covered in a cinnamon sugar mixture.

The twisted fates between Koeksister and Koesister can in one way be traced to the confusion created by mixing these two recipes of Oliekoek and Crueller and using either dough to make fried dough sweetmeats. This merging of fried dough recipes within the Cape kitchens resulted eventually in the unique twists of the South African koeksister as it was dipped into cold syrup rather than covered in cinnamon sugar, Whereas the Cape Bolla retained the raisins and spicy flavours while also finding itself dipped in warm syrup or covered in a cinnamon sugar mixture. Baderoon (2007) highlights these aspects of merging of culinary knowledge in historical Cape Kitchens and elaborates on the contributions of the overlooked and silenced stories of creativity and invention that Ayahs, a name given to the enforced slaves doing Kitchen labour, had brought to Cape Cuisines. Critiques of Classen’s work include the dismissal of innovation, creativity and culinary skills shown by enslaved women working in Cape Kitchens, where their culinary delicacy is noted in passing as mixing up two recipes. This is further highlighted by the final defining characteristics of the koeksister and the Cape Bollaas are not well documented within culinary history and I emphasise that it speaks to the silencing of the multi-ethnicities, merging culinary

knowledge and creative skills of Ayahs that worked in historical Cape kitchens. Most importantly it leaves a darkened void for the oval-shaped fried sweetened dough that's covered in a light syrup and covered in fine coconut known as the Cape koesisters that is eaten as a breakfast treat every Sunday morning. Here I would like to note that this Cape koesiester is different to the Cape Bollas in terms of its ingredients, spice profile, recipe methods and aesthetics. While these silences and misrepresentations also bring to mind the unspoken power dynamics held within culinary history studies. It also notions towards the questioning of the uses of a particular type of canon with recipes held within archives and published works such as cookbooks written prior to democratic South Africa. In turn questioning the political agendas and acknowledgement or dismissal of other types of canons such as oral histories and family recipe collections as noted by various scholars such as de Beer (2012), Baderoon (2014: 46-63) and Louw (2013).

The usefulness of tracing food origin stories through the recipe as a text reveals more questions than answers as one begins to uncover the deeply rooted entanglements of cultural cuisines due to the vastness of cultural exchanges that have occurred throughout historical accounts of ancient spice trade and the legacies of spice wars, colonization and slave trade which violently shaped multiple nations across the five continents. With this in mind, a question emerged of how one traces the origin of a recipe based on its ingredients and method as Classen (2003) acknowledges that the Dutch Olliebollen can be traced beyond the European origins. The methods for frying spiced sweetened dough in hot oil can be traced to the Middle East with recipe text for fried dough with similar spices to the Olliebollen, which have been found dating back to the 13th Century (Schwartz, 2009). While similar and older origin stories for fried doughs can be traced within the Asian continent with sweetmeats such as the Chinese bowtie which resembles the koeksister both in braided shape and saturated syrupy textures. According to Nabhan (2014: 207-208) the earliest records of sweetened fried dough recipes moved bidirectionally between the Middle East, Africa and Asia along the Maritime Silk Road creating an exchange of fried dough delicacies and various culinary innovative recipes were created such as the Zoolbiya in Iran, Zalabiyah in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt and jalebi in India. As the sweet delicacies travelled the world, its recipes adapted to new flavours and shape changes to satisfy different palates and the creative expressions of the cooks within the Kitchens. In this light,

it seems inevitable, when the dough meets heated oil a splattering of versions of sweetened fried dough recipes emerges. With this in mind, I reflect on the politics of engaging with creating an origin story for the Koesister and the silencing of the contributions of cultural exchanges, particularly within a country such as South Africa with a historical past deeply rooted in unequal power dynamics due to pseudo- ethno-nationalist-based political ideologies.

To answer these probing questions, I redirect my inquiry to the study of culinary recipes in order to establish the use of recipes as a form of critique. Firstly, to consider the recipe as a narrative form would in fact question the strict classifications of narrative structures. For food cultural critics the narrative of recipes is not contained in its textual structure; instead, it is dependent on the mode of reading. In this light, recipes cannot be read in isolation for their reading demands to be situated within time, place and lived experience. For this reason, it is common practice in published cookbooks to have introductions and epilogues to contextualize the historical and cultural background as a means to facilitate storytelling. However, this act of framing and contextualizing in itself could be problematic as it creates boundaries of specific perspectives and forces a particular mode of reading for the reader.

These forced narratives may be used to suit particular agendas that are prefaced within the para-texts creating archival accounts of “authenticity” which in turn limits the space for other contextualities and para-narratives to emerge. I offer Brian Richards's concept of pseudonarratives to describe recipes, within this thinking the recipe is seen in its unnatural narrative state allowing the reader to create their own reading mode in which there is no censorship for the author as a cook and the reader (Phillips,2020). This approach to reading recipes allows space for intergenerational, intercultural and complexities of overlapping identities to be explored which may be undocumented if strict narratives are enforced on recipes. Carew (2002) illuminates the differences between recipes contained within cookbooks and collections of family recipes, noting that the latter is a form of domestic dairy where the recipes should be considered as a dynamic text which requires a multimodal reading approach. With this vantage one may state that the family recipe collections act as a viewing of women’s domestic discourses.

The pseudonarratives concept allows for the shift from published cookbooks to family recipes as with written family recipes an additional element of encoding cloaks the textual

surfaces, one that when decoded reveals the lived experiences of the author cooks. These embedded codes speak beyond the written text of the recipe and enter the realm of the unwritten 'taken-for-granted' embodied sensory knowledge held within the kitchen. Handwritten recipes particularly blur the lines of textual literacy and orality thus becoming a multileveled cultural product that illuminates the multiple relations of social networks and the transmission of informal and formal knowledge (Illisecu, 2022). Furthermore, considering that textual recipes are scribed by oral performances of recipes, the act of transferring oral culinary skills into textual instructive scripts is a creative process in itself.

The act of transcription of recipes may be done through memory recall of the author as cook or through the complex process of dictation which involves multiple bodies and hence multiple versions of interpretations. It is this action of capturing the recipe in a language that allows for a readable text, noting to include the various codes and embodied nuances into a written format becomes difficult at best. This results in certain omissions, 'incomplete' recipes that have inaccurate measurements or missing methods sections due to the oral and performative nuances escaping the bounds of the written world. To this extent, Supski (2013) reminds us that recipes require not only a reading mode but also a 'thoughtful practice' in which the knowledge of the recipe only comes through the act of doing by allowing for exploration into the actual performance of the recipe.

I draw on Peter Kulbelka to note that the act of reading can become confined to a philosophical concept of art and communication, in which textual metaphors are abstract concepts whereas recipes describe the cooking process which results in tangible edible metaphors (Gaigg, 1999:89-90). It is these edible metaphors that are difficult to capture in textual context and textual reading modes, as they escape language. To read a recipe we are encouraged to use more than our eyes, reading recipes extends to other sensory organs such as mouth, nose and ears. Therefore, the performance of recipes allows for insights into the embodied sensory experiences and artistic expression of individual genius just like other art forms such as music, dance and painting which also escapes the textual confinements of language. For this reason, I highlight not only the written family Koesister recipes and the oral histories of these recipes but also place emphasis on the artistic multisensory performance of the Koesister recipe with Cape Kitchens.

I draw on Rebecca Johnson (2022) as she moves the study of recipes from the confines of silent libraries and archival studies into the heat of contemporary kitchens. She proposes that the recipe should be explored through the lens of reception studies, a concept borrowed from literature disciplines, where the recipe is never seen as a completed text. In fact, a recipe becomes a slippery element as it defies place, and timelines and refuses to be contained within text alone. A recipe in this regard becomes a textual translation of a meal that was created and no longer exists as evidence and the text can be seen as a receipt, one snapshot captured by the cook as an author. Furthermore, the recipe is an instructive piece, where the author provides a merging of bodies, senses and ingredients within the kitchen. In this way, the recipe is only partially known through reading its text, it is through doing and being and performing with the recipe that it allows for a deeper understanding of the recipe. For this reason, I propose to explore the Koesiester on its terms and provide an account of its narrative from the communities that continue the ritual of making and consuming Cape Koesiester in the ethnographic now. This does not take away from the entanglements of the culinary histories as depicted by Classen (2003) and Louw (2013). Instead, I aim to fill the void of silence through the voicing and documenting of oral family histories and lived experiences from within Cape Kitchens.

As a first step, I return to the comparison of the naming of the Koeksister and Koesiester and the confusion surrounding the missing “k”. For participants, the spelling of Koesiester does not relate to the way it is pronounced at the Cape. To this, I made the conscious decision to make use of the local pronunciation for its spelling as Koesiester when referring to the sweetened fried dough of the Cape. In doing so, I aim to create space for its documentation and as a visual reminder that this narrative is derived from oral and personal narratives as presented by people living at the Cape. There is no attempt to find a single-origin recipe for the Koesiester as I allow for the reception of the Koesiester recipe. Using a contrapuntal read I allowing for the narrative to accept multiple versions of innovative recipes as the Koesiester serves as a reminder of the enslaved kitchen labour, to the emancipation of slaves and settling under Table Mountain within District Six and around the Cape, to the violent forced removals of District Six families and tearing apart of a multicultural community by relocation of people of colour to the Cape Flats and the continued legacies of these historical accounts for contemporary Cape kitchens. In order to do this exploration, I

drew on the oral history and family recipes as shared with me by my participants and traced the movements of the Koesiester as they travelled through multiple generations and locations across Cape Town.



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Chapter 3: The Koesiester, a retelling from Cape Kitchens.

Auwal Tyd Koesiester

Every Sunday morning a queue of children would appear before the front door of the Adams house on Queen Street in District Six. Eagerly waiting for their families' order of freshly syrup Koesiesters to be piled onto their plates and avoiding the temptation of its inviting aromas, sprint to deliver the sweet treats to be enjoyed as family breakfast. Multiple generations spent their early Sunday mornings outside this family house on Queen Street which originally belonged to a couple; Rajalun a creole from Mauritius and Munajeera van Batavia in the late 1800s. They were the great-grandparents of my participant Aunty Faiza. Aunty Faiza was born in 1952 in this very house just like her mother Aunty Raifeeyah who was born in the early 1920s. Aunty Raifeeyah's mother was Oemie Zainap, who was the elder daughter of Rajalun and Munajeera van Batavia. As with many of her generation, Oemie Zainap's birth year was never confirmed and the family tells the oral tale of her having a hip operation in the early 1980s where doctors disputed her birth certificate date as her bones and joints indicated her age well exceed her then documented 90 years. What is known is that Oemie Zainap had eleven children and only two survived the Spanish flu that riddled the Cape in 1918. Aunty Raifeeyah was the miracle that happened soon after the period of great loss.

Aunty Faiza lived with her grandmother Oemie Zainap, her parents and a large extended family in the family home on Queen Street. A spacious house with multiple rooms and a large kitchen space became more than a family home, it doubled as the family tailoring business which made specialized uniforms for Government employees. The family rule for children, especially the daughters at the time, was to attend school until they become mukallaf (reached puberty) or they have completed primary education, then they would work in the home. However, this did not mean that their education was stopped, in fact, their family tailoring business was a site for apprenticeship for many families in District Six as the business had various tailoring skills which included sewing, beading, pattern making and cutting skills.

Aunty Faiza completed her schooling at standard six and began to learn the art of beadwork but also took over the family kitchen as her mother and grandmother would spend their

weekdays at their sewing machine trying to fulfil the never-ending orders. In the kitchen, Aunty Faiza learnt the family Koesiester by watching her grandmother, mother and aunts every Saturday performing their Koesiester recipe. This family Koesiester recipe has never been written down as there was no need to, it was regularly performed every Saturday in the family kitchen in Queens Street for over 60 years, being taught and passed on from one generation to the next. The recipe is said to live in the family's minds and held in their senses of touch, smell, taste and sight as it was made every Saturday from 11 am till just before sunset waiting for the final dressings the Sunday morning. Aunty Faiza could not give an exact amount of Koesiesters sold each week and would often use her stretched-out arms to indicate the diameter of the mixing bowls used during their Saturday preparations. She noted that the line of children outside their house would stretch in long snaking queues. In an attempt to show the scale of their Koesiesters production, Aunty Faiza indicated that they would use a five-pound which roughly equates to 2.26kg of sugar each week, to make the syrup needed to coat the Koesiesters. In this way, the recipe begins to indicate its age as the ingredient's quantities are memorized in imperial pounds before being converted to metric measurements for ease of note-taking.

Aunty Faiza, her parents and her grandmother then moved from the Queen Street family home to Bo-Kaap for a few years before settling once again in District Six in Ashley Street opposite the Moravian Church in the early 1960s. Through all these relocations they continued to make their family Koesiester recipes and sell on Sundays. During their relocations, they continue to buy their Koesiester ingredients and household groceries from Hanover Street in District Six. Boeta Braima's spice store in Hanover Street is remembered as having large brown hessian sacks of spice on display and a weighted measuring scale on the wooden countertop. Boeta Braima knew his customers by their family name and on hearing the family name of Aunty Faiza, would begin to package their spice orders. Using a large metal ladle to scoop up spice stored in hessian sacks for their family masala mixes and the single spices such as Kaneel, fine ginger, whole anise and whole karamonk which was used in the Koesiester spice mix as well as in varying combinations for daily meals. The naartjie peel is a key ingredient for the family's Koesiester recipe as Aunty Faiza recalls her grandmother Oemie Zanaip stressed that her mother Munajeera van Batavia, would insist on its inclusion. However, the naartjie peels were never bought as spice. Instead, children

and adults alike were informed to keep their thin naartjie peels during the winter season. These highly fragranced peels would line kitchen window sills and slowly be dried by the winter sun. It takes weeks of careful monitoring and turning until they can be lifted to sunlight to be transformed into a translucent orange filter. The dried peels are then pounded in a mortar and pestle until a fine powder and stored in an air-tight jar in stock for the coming months' usage. This process continues today for families at the Cape where naartjie peels are used to flavour various recipes and are often added to hot cereals such as oats or Taystee Wheat (wheat semolina cereal) in the mornings as a local food source of vitamin C and bioflavonoids.

District Six is a contentious issue for many Capetonian families as the Group Areas Act of 1958 which declared certain areas as white-only was the start of forced removals across Cape Town for people of colour. District Six families were forced to relocate to the newly formed coloured areas in the Cape Flats. If families were able to finance a property, they would be able to choose the area but those that did not have the financial means were simply forcibly relocated into three to four-storey council flats or semi-detached council houses in areas such as Hanover Park, Manenberg, Lavender Hill and Retreat amongst others. Aunty Faiza's family being of working middle-class status was able to purchase a property on Hawk Road in an area previously known as Montague Gift Estate, in the Cape Flats in 1969. The forced removals and relocations were devastating for many families from District Six as they were stripped of their communities and their social and economic networks. It is a memory that still lives in Aunty Faiza's mind as she vividly describes the mixed feelings of loss, sadness and anger for losing her family home, a community where her family had lived for multiple generations and having to rebuild their lives through social, economic and religious networks in a new and unfamiliar neighbourhood and environment. Aunty Faiza claims that her kitchen was not drastically affected by the moves as the family continued to cook "*Cape Malay Huiskos*", family-style meals, despite having to deal with being far removed from their familiar foodways in District Six. Aunty Faiza recalls having to travel from their new neighbourhood back to Hanover Street in District Six to get their spice from Boeta Braima's spice shop, fresh meat from halal butchers and salted fish in barrels from Rooikop Jood when the seasonal fish were unavailable. These weekly commutes lasted until the vendors eventually closed in the late 1970's. After the closure of Hanover Street

vendors, Aunty Faiza's family began to purchase from Atlas spice store in Bo-kaap and as the convenience of more specialty spice stores expanded across Cape Town, she found numerous suppliers closer to their home.

At the age of 19 years, Aunty Faiza got married into a Bo-Kaap family. She moved to a house in Long Market Street Bo-Kaap, in 1971 and stayed there for 6 years. During her Bo-Kaap stay she learnt that her District Six cooking style was different to her in-laws' Bo-Kaap cooking style, including their Koesiester recipes. She recalls her mother-in-law adding large portions of butter into the Koesiester mixture and less spice whereas Aunty Faiza family's recipe would use fish oil as a neutral base in order to allow the aromatic notes of the spices to be the key component in the Koesiester. However, before the availability of cooking oil colloquially known as "fish oil", *stertvet* (sheep tail fat) would have been used in the Koesiester mixture and used to fry the spicy dough. Older participants recall the softness and delicate buttery sensation that the *stertvet* would give the Koesiester, a taste that continues to evade their current taste buds but lingers within their minds. Aunty Faiza has the opposite reaction to the *stertvet* and upholds her use of fish oil. She remembers in her younger days having to endure the time-consuming and odorous cleaning process of heating and skimming off the impurities of the fat as it rendered to a usable creamy state.

It was also during her Bo-Kaap stay that she encountered the potato Koesiester which she considers to be a completely different version from her description of a Koesiester. This is echoed by Aunty Faiza's eldest daughter, who joins our discussion to express that she can immediately taste if the Koesiester contains potatoes. Insisting that the texture changes from an airy light texture to a dense starchy texture that tends to hold onto more oil as it fries in comparison to the all-flour-based Koesiester. Louw (2016:10) provides two rationales for the inclusion of potatoes within Koesiester's recipes. One is attributed to World War II from 1939 to 1945 when foodways were severely strained and food items were rationed or simply not available globally such as flour and butter. The potato was used as a substitute to bulk up the Koesiester mixture. Culinary historian Cass Abrahams offers an older rationale noting that active yeast was not always available in the early Cape kitchens and the use of potato could be in reference to the use of potato spores as a raising agent for the dough mixture in the 17th Century. Yet for Aunty Faiza and her family, there was a refusal to add potatoes to their Koesiester mixtures which continues with present

generations. This form of refusal can be seen in the light of the Koesiester being a nostalgic narrative of their family history and the remembrance of the quality of ingredients rather than the remembrance of what was once used in times of hardships. Aunty Faiza calls her Koesiester the Auwal Tyds Koesiester. The term Auwal tyd is often used by Cape Muslims colloquially to refer to the historical period in which their ancestors arrived as enforced slaves and political exiles. In this way, the Auwal koesiester may be regarded as an heirloom and for Aunty Faiza and other Cape families familiar with its aesthetics and flavouring.

The Auwal Tyds Koesiester is intensely aromatic with the combination of sweet cardamom, cinnamon and whole aniseed while having the background of heated ginger and balanced with fresh citrus of the naartjie peel (tangerine zest). This spice blend is housed within a soft yeast and flour-based airy textured oval dough which is deep fried to a dark brown. After being allowed to cool, it is coated in a glossy thick syrup that holds a neatly spooned coconut konfyt in the centre of the Koesiester. The coconut konfyt is a sweetened and spiced coconut filling with a hint of floral rose notes and perfecting this coconut konfyt in itself becomes a skill. Here the koesiester's aesthetics become an integral play of key moments within the making of the Auwal Tyd Koesiester. The skill of using a third of a teaspoon to gather the coconut konfyt and place it perfectly centre is complex as it depends on the correct oval shape, the consistency of the syrup coating and the correct ratio of fine to coarse grounds of coconut and its slow cooking in spice-infused sugar syrup that's concluded with a few drops of rose water. Aunty Faiza reiterates through our interview in her Grassy Park lounge, that she cannot describe the steps of the Auwal Tyd Koesiester.

“My kind jy moet kom hoer hoe gesels die spices, die yeast, die oile in die pot....dan is dit nog die suiker en klapper konfyt”. I need to accompany her in the kitchen to be shown how each step is executed like she was taught by her grandmother and mother. I asked candidly if she ever uses cookbooks or recipes in her kitchen. Aunty Faiza proudly states that she doesn't use cookbooks and shows me recipes shared by neighbours, family members and friends that she has written down. A collection of handwritten recipes in various notebooks is stored in a large plastic bag with most containing a detailed list of ingredients and no method section, some resembling a shopping list more than a formal recipe. Amongst the handwritten notes, I spotted one published cookbook, an early edition of the Boeka Treats, a Cape Muslim cookbook that was annually published before the start of Ramadan starting

with its first edition in 1999 and ending in 2013. Aunty Faiza does note that she uses the Boeka treat series as a quick reference to find inspiration for meals while the handwritten recipes are shared family recipes. These handwritten collections are written quickly during telephone conversations with a few written-on envelopes and receipt slips. Commenting on the lack of details on the handwritten recipes, she waves a hand dismissively to state she has no need to document detailed methods. *“Kyk die ingredients praat met jou... ek ken hulle goed oor die jare”*. Explaining that she can decipher the way that each ingredient needs to be handled and emphasises that they (ingredients) speak to each other and the secret is to learn how to listen and work with them.



Figure 3: Aunty Faiza explains how she deciphers her encoded handwritten recipes which only contain an ingredient list and no method sections.

Photographer: Researcher, 2023

Aunty Faiza's final move was a return to Grassy Park in 1979 by purchasing the house next door to her parents where she still stays today and where I conducted her interview. From these houses, the family continued to make and sell their family's Koesiester recipe on Sundays as families moving into the neighbourhood would recall their aesthetics of the

Auwal Koesiester with the topping of coconut konyt and associate it with the memories of sweetness and comfort of their lost community and homes of District Six.

Today, suffering from osteoarthritis at the age of 71 years, Aunty Faiza only makes Koesiesters on special requests as the weekly performance of koeksister-making has taken a toll on her body. Aunty Faiza's two daughters are well versed in the performance of the Auwal Tyd Koesiester as they, like their mother, grew up with it every Saturday and Sunday. Both daughters chose not to uphold the family business in the making and selling of the Sunday Koesiester. Instead, the performance of the Auwal Koesiester recipe has changed over the years to become a ritual made in smaller quantities for close relatives and friends as a means to remember mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers. To remember the Auwal, the founders of knowledge, whose multigenerational hands have choreographed its performances across Cape kitchens. Before leaving Aunty Faiza's house she invites me into her kitchen. *"Jy moet kom praat met die Auwal Tyd koesiester in my kombuis"*. An invite I accepted a few weeks later as I began to gain more insights into the significance of the Koesiester, Koesiester recipes and its overlooked unwritten merits.

Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester

The tale of Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe begins in Grassy Park a few roads away from Aunty Faiza and her Auwal Tyd Koesiester. However, Grassy Park was just one of the multiple relocations that Oemie Fadielah ventured into since her family was forced to move from their family home in Parkin Street in District Six. Oemie Fadielah was born in 1950 in District Six where she lived with her mother and a strict grandmother Memi. Little is known about grandmother Memi as her great-granddaughter, Aunty Naz, can only recall that Oemie Memi was born in the late 1920s. Oemie Memi was a *wasvrou* for a group of policemen and would spend her days scrubbing white shirt collars and ensuring to iron the pleats into uniform trousers. As with most families in District Six, children went to school for primary education and as such Oemie Fadielah left school at the age of 13 years. While her brothers were sent to further their education, she was tutored in her home learning Islamic education from her father. Due to financial circumstances, she in her teen years was sent to work at a shoe factory in Salt River and after a few years became a skilled leather shoe sewer. Having a keen business mind, she eventually took her sewing skills and started

making clothes at home to earn extra income and specialized in evening and occasion dresses.

In 1969, the family was forcefully relocated from their home in District Six to Hanover Park in the Cape Flats and found themselves living in a tiny two-bedroom council house in one of Hanover Park's circles which were considered a more affluent section than the multistorey council flats. These famous circles are renowned for their single-storey buildings with backyards being in close proximity and forcing neighbours to live shared lives due to the small plots and little privacy allocated to the houses. The move from District Six to Hanover Park changed many aspects of the family's lives including access to foodways, no longer could they get to the food markets and food stalls in Hanover Street in District Six as the family never had their own car and relied on public transport. Strangely the place named Hanover Park after the busy markets of Hanover Street offered limited foodways for the growing community during the early 1970s.

The closest store was Foodworld in Athlone which eventually changed to Shoprite and with time and demand, the Bus Terminus became the new food market space in Hanover Park. Entrepreneurs opened various stalls on the sidewalks including food and vegetables, fresh fish and of course a spice stall. The spice stall was a simple table no more than a meter long covered with prepackaged clear packets of the commonly used single and masalas (mixed) ground and whole spices. Many vendors would get their stock from Hanover Street in District Six and surrounding areas and resell to the Hanover Park community as travel costs become too expensive to commute for weekly groceries. This also changed the way that the families shopped as they would budget their food bill with the travel fees needed to get to their work destinations most being in Woodstock or central Cape Town. Home cooks had to negotiate their meals to suit the budget and availability of food supplies, this resulted in adaptations to recipes and making do with their pantry. However, Aunty Naz recalls that spice was never seen as a luxury or something exotic, it was an essential in the pantry like flour, milk and bread. Spice was and continues to be used in all their meals including breakfast.

Oemie Fadeilah married her first husband in 1972 however before the birth of her first daughter she divorced. Having a steady skilled job and a side business of clothing making while living with her mother and grandmother as a support network, Oemie Fadielah was

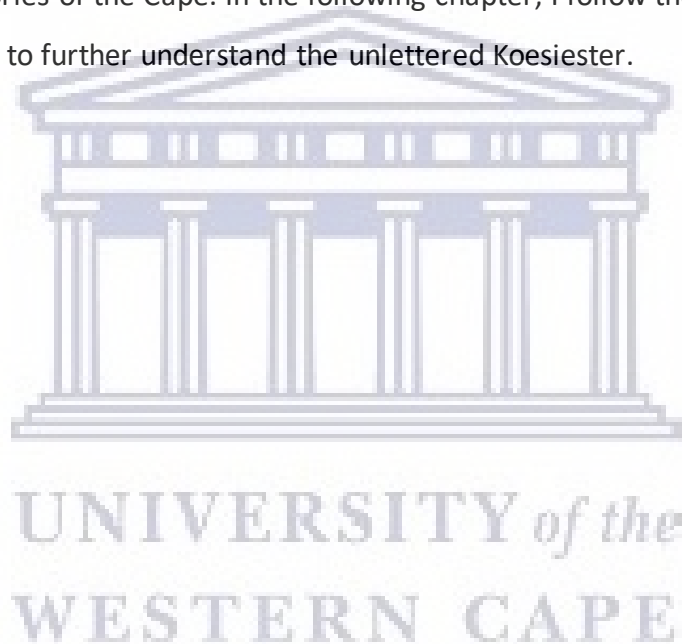
able to care for the daughter and only remarried in the early 1980s. Oemie Fadielah's second marriage brought her to Edna Street in Grassy Park. She no longer worked at the shoe factory and instead began to offer Madrassah classes (Islamic religious classes) for children and adults as she was tutored by her own father who was a religious leader. It was in this kitchen that she began to document her performances of her family's Koesiester recipe. The documentation was an attempt to perfect a Koesiester recipe to sell for extra income to support her growing family. Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester is oval-shaped, coated in a light sugar syrup and dusted with fine coconut and resembles the more popular aesthetic of the Cape Koesiester in comparison to Aunty faiza's Auwal Tyd Koesiester. Another key difference is the use of the potato in its mixture. The potato, according to Oemie Faldeilah's granddaughter who is my participant, was always used in her family's Koesiester recipe and to her knowledge it was the key to making the Koesiester softer with a sponge-like texture. Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe with the potato mixture can handle being frozen after frying without compromising the texture when defrosted. The defrosted Koesiesters would then be bathed with syrup and finished with a dusting of fine coconut. An added benefit is that it can be reheated in the microwave, a new technology that found its way into the Cape kitchens in the 1980s, and still retains its soft spongy texture. This was ideal as Oemie Fadielah being business-minded, perfected her Koesiester recipe so that she could produce quantities of well over 200 Koesiesters which were packaged in butcher bags, a thin clear plastic bag, containing ten Koesiester and stored in her freezer to be sold to customers who would then defrost and syrup their own Koesiesters. In this way, the Koesiester could still be enjoyed by families without the need to collect early on Sunday mornings and opened up avenues for the sale of Koesiester for events such as weddings, religious gatherings and community bake sales. This business model gave Oemie Fadielah the flexibility of making her Koesiesters stock when she had free time during the week.

In 1990, Oemie Fadielah made her final move to Belhar in a neighbourhood called Self-Help. This area was a new housing scheme offered by the City of Cape Town from mid to late 1980. Residents would apply for plots and if accepted, they would be given the material to build their own home when purchasing the plot. This worked well for Oemie Fadielah as her husband was in the building trade and they self-built their new home as one of the first in the area. A year later her daughter and her husband bought a plot on the same road in Self-

Help and the family continues to stay there today. Oemie Fadielah's daughter, Aunty Naz, and her granddaughter recall the struggles of living in Belhar in the early 1990s, as once again the Family had to reorganize their lives in terms of accessing work, schools and foodways. The family changed their ways of shopping and relied on freezers to bulk buy for the month. However, the deep freezer space was prioritized for Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester stocks.

In Belhar through the sales of Koesiesters to the diverse community of Self-Help and the growing area of Belhar, Oemie Fadielah managed to earn a decent income and used it to supplement the household. According to her granddaughter, she kept a watchful eye on the electricity meter ensuring that it also had enough prepaid electricity units to keep the freezer going with her Koesiester stocks. Her main aim was to secure her children's and grandchildren's access to education without the pressures to leave school to assist the household as she had to do. Oemie Fadielah turned to the Koesiester as a means to fulfil her Islamic religious pilgrimage of Hajj to Makkah and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Years of labour-intensive Koesiester making for weekly Sunday sales, selling frozen Koesiester packets and catering for larger community functions allowed her to secure the finances from within her immediate community of Belhar. There are many tales of the Cape Muslims funding their Hajj (journey) by the sale of Koesiesters and the story is told within the Muslim communities as a sense of pride and notion of devotion. When one goes on Hajj, it is not a simple act of having the financial means but is seen as an invitation directly from Allah to come and visit the spiritual home of Islam. Here the Koesiester features as a means to make an additional income to fund Cape Muslims' spiritual travels and therefore individuals that use their koesiester-making skills, are upheld for their ability to patiently work towards their ultimate commitment to the Islamic faith, in spite of all their hardships and socioeconomic strife. In this way, the weekly performance of the Koesiester and its sales becomes a committed kitchen ritual beyond acts of remembering family history. The ritual is brought to the present day, one that is taxing on the physical body but done with the *niyah* (intention) to assist in improving one's life not for capital gain as its endpoint but rather seen as assistance in spiritual growth by creating opportunities to self-fund trips such as Hajj and Umrah which would otherwise be out of reach for many of the underprivileged Cape Muslim families and allow them to journey to their spiritual homes of Islam in Mecca and Medina.

The re-telling of the Koesiester entangles the lived experiences and life histories of Aunty Faiza and Oemie Faldielah allowing for multiple narratives to arise from within the same community. Aunty Faiza provides an insight into the older versions of the Koesiester recipe and highlights the intimate sensory knowledge of the kitchen that was passed down through her family. Whereas Oemie Faldielah's potato Koesiester recipe travels the breadth of Cape Town and shows the lived realities of forced relocations to Cape Flats while displaying the culinary skills of Cape home-cooks to adapt recipes. In this light, the Koesiester reveals the complexities not only of its recipes but of those that engage in its making every Sunday. In this way, the Koesiester moves beyond the textual written recipes and speaks about the unwritten personal histories of the Cape. In the following chapter, I follow the Koesiester into the kitchen in order to further understand the unlettered Koesiester.



Chapter 4: Performing of the Koesiester recipe

“Jy moet kom praat met die Auwal Tyd Koesiester in my kombuis”.

Aunty Faiza

The invite by Aunty Faiza to her kitchen was echoed by many participants, their invitation was to learn the unwritten performances of their family Koesiester recipes. I attended multiple kitchen invites during my fieldwork and was cautious to not divulge family secrets. I chose not to document the Auwal Tyd Koesiester by Aunty Faiza as it has never been scripted and having been granted the honour of being one of the custodians of this family Koesiester recipe, I will not attempt to confine it to the written word. I was provided permission to document the late Oemie Fadielah’s Koesiester recipe by her granddaughter. Oemie Faldielah Koesiester recipes were one of the few handwritten Koesiester recipes that I had encountered that has been transcribed by family members in their handwritten recipe books that can be found across the breadth of Cape Town as it has been passed down through the generations.

In an attempt to not disclose Oemie Faldielah’s granddaughter’s identity and as a means to not only protect their family history but also to allow for the freedom of discourse that moves beyond the oriental exoticism of the Cape Koesiester narratives, I have decided to make use of the name Ayah as her pseudonym. I use the name Ayah in reference to its Arabic meaning of evidence. In this way, I produce a counternarrative for the referencing of Ayahs as mute enslaved kitchen labourers as noted in older culinary publications as noted by Baderoon (2014:57). Within this work, Ayah becomes a voice to fill the voids from the position of her kitchen to bring revelations of her Oemie fadielah’s Koesiester recipe as it moves beyond a text or sweetened fried dough and highlights the recipe as performance within multispecies sensory worlds and acts as a ritual for remembering and mean-making within Cape Kitchens.

I was first introduced to Oemie fadielah’s Koesiester recipe on a Wednesday morning in her granddaughter, Ayah’s kitchen in Parow North situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. Rewritten in Ayah’s handwriting in a black hardcover notebook, under a special section which begins with the documentation of Oemie Fadielah’s birth date in 1950 and her date of passing in 2018. Ayah was adamant in showing me the processes involved in

making her Oemie's Koesiester recipe. In the weeks prior to our meeting, our daily exchanges would often return to the memories of watching her grandmother make Koesiesters and the different sensory elements involved. Unable to describe the process to her satisfaction much like Aunty Faiza who was at a loss for words to describe the details would instead start using their hands to show me visually the movements as they performed the actions of mixing or shaping as steps within their Koesiester recipes. The concept of the Koesiester recipe seemed to evade words and Ayah invited me to her kitchen to not only show me the recipe but to highlight the many untold elements that cannot be held within the written recipe. Ayah offered to show me the culinary pieces of knowledge that had been passed down to her through her family lineage. I obliged as a courtesy and through curiosity as other participants had noted the similar notions of unexplainable sensory elements that are often left out of the written recipes. I accepted the invitation even though I had been solely focused on the use of spice in Cape kitchens and had not considered the Koesiester as a significant contributor within Cape kitchens. Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe had various steps including two different proofing sessions for the dough and it would take us a full day to execute. After arranging our working calendars to align with an off day for Ayah's husband to look after their three children, we eventually scheduled a full day to meet early on a wintery Wednesday morning in March 2023.

On arrival, I was greeted at the front door by Ayah and her 18-month-old daughter, passing by her young sons and husband who were gathered on the sofa in the lounge. I was ushered down the entrance hall towards the family kitchen. It was a large rectangular kitchen unchanged in its original design and in Ayah's view not conducive to her style of cooking. *"It's a ou Boere Kitchen... I have no space for my spices and pots and that tiny sink?"* A glance and the kitchen is divided into two worlds; a row of top and bottom white cabinets covers the length of the right wall with a faded white peeling laminated top while the left wall houses new upgrades with a digital double-door fridge and freezer and a upmarket six-plate gas hob and oven. However, the three-meter-wide window draws you towards the garden views at the exterior end of the kitchen as the early morning wintery sunlight dances along the white-tilted floors and draws the eyes up to the peeling laminate kitchen chipboard countertops. The sink just below the window provides evidence of a working family kitchen with the drying rack loaded with dripping breakfast bowls, mugs and eating

utensils. The tiny double sinks were overwhelming; one barely contained a large green bowl with chicken pieces defrosting for supper while the other sink held soaking kitchen towels. Ayah brings my attention to the new addition to the kitchen, a 1.5-meter camping table she set up for today, squeezed between the stove and the wall of white cabinets barely leaving enough space for us to shimmy around the centre of the kitchen. A much-needed kitchen island is on her current kitchen renovation plans as she gestures to the overcrowded countertops with a food processor, bread bin and large Air fryer. The camping table will do for today's purpose.

Ayah retrieves an A5 hardcover notebook from her tiny kitchen library, a narrow self-built wooden shelf, filled with various cuttings and copies of recipes with a few cookbooks including the famous Cape Malay Cooking by Faldeilah Williams. Carefully she extracts her treasured notebook jammed between the books, a roll of lunch wrap and a few lost packages of spice from her overflowing spice racks above. Carrying the black handbook to the table and using the cardboard box of her new electronic mixer as a makeshift book stand, she searches through the strained and barely bound pages, scanning her faded handwritten recipes to locate Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe. Ayah rewrote her Oemie's recipes into this black notebook a few years before her late Oemie's passing in 2018. The rewrite includes more details than the original recipes that her late Oemie had handwritten in a tattered old invoice book which is now kept by Oemie Fadielah's second eldest daughter. The old invoice book contained the first collection of Ayah's family recipes to be recorded as previous generations held on to the tradition of oral and in-person instruction for sharing of family recipes. Oemie Fadielah's handwritten recipe book was a combination of her family's oral recipes as well as recipes shared by family, friends and neighbours that came into the family's lives as the family relocated across Cape Town. The recipes tell the journey of the forced removals of District Six to Hanover Park and Oemie Fadielah's first recording of her Koesiester recipe in a kitchen in Grassy Park and finally to settling in Belhar. However, the treasured family recipes continued to transverse across Cape Town as Ayah bought her own house in 2016, and Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe found a new home within a kitchen in Parow North that we stand in today.

Reading the recipe aloud, Ayah instinctively glides around her kitchen gathering ingredients on the camping table. From her pantry closet, she calls for assistance as she points to two

ten-litre clear plastic containers one labelled cake flour and the other unlabelled container containing brown sugar. I carry the heavy brown sugar and follow as Ayah places her container on the red plastic stools next to the table. However, the fully stocked pantry returns empty-handed for yeast. A key ingredient is missing, moving on we soon realize that unsalted butter and whole aniseed would need to be acquired as well. Leaving her two sons with her husband, we head off to her nearest convenience store. By car, it took us less than a five-minute drive to reach the store. As I hold her daughter, we watch as Ayah dashes through the aisles familiar with the store layout and finding each missing ingredient just like in her kitchen. Before joining the checkout queue, she takes me to the wall of spices in the store to retrieve the crucial whole aniseed. An impressive display of seven shelves stocked with 50g or 100g plastic sealed packages of single and mixed ground spices and herbs, each brand having its own colourful packaging. Ayah tells me how easy it is to find the common kitchen herbs and spices these days even in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town although they never stock the masalas (mixed spices) and whole spices that she requires. Luckily, she found a 50g package of whole aniseed needed for the Koesiester recipe. For this reason, she prefers to bulk buy from larger spice stores and usually orders online from Atlas Trading Spice in Bo-Kaap as they stock the larger quantities of up to one kilogram that she prefers as she regularly makes large family meals that can cater for her extended family. The distance from Parow North to Bo-kaap does not matter as she emphasises that Atlas spices have a better quality than those at the convenience stores near her home. She notes that Atlas spice has pure spice containing fewer fillers such as cornstarch which helps to keep the ground spices from clumping and has its advantages for longer storage. However, the downside of the fillers is the tendency to dilute the spice's potency and colour which changes the flavour of the meal being prepared.

Returning to Ayah's kitchen with our missing ingredients, we adorn aprons over our clothes, adjust our headscarves to keep our hair off our faces and wash our hands, dressed appropriately we are ready to be instructed by Oemie Fadielah's recipe. Re-reading and checking the ingredient list on Oemie Fadielah's recipe one last time before we begin. Cake flour and sugar containers are each on a red stool next to the table, and newly bought yeast packs are retrieved from the shopping bag and placed on the table. Next is the spices, whole aniseed in its colourful purple and yellow packaging, pale tan ground ginger fills a two-litre

storage glass jar with a front chalk label smudged which barely resembles ginger in block letters. The whole cardamom with its outer green hue colour pods is kept in a small plastic container with a blue lid and no label. Ayah removes a few cardamom pods to place into a coffee grinder and pulses until it turns into a fine powder. The ground cardamon releases a calming sweet aroma as it is decanted onto a side plate and left waiting next to the whole aniseed. Ground cinnamon is stored in a large fancy ribbed glass container with an airtight glass lid that suggests it is cinnamon based on the sweet smell on opening and the brown colour as the white label with black scribbles gives little indication of its actual contents. Ayah states that she knows these spices just by looking at the different shades of brown and that she barely looks at labels so she doesn't bother with labelling the common ones. Satisfied that we have all our dry ingredients arranged on the table as guided by Oemie's recipe. Ayah starts arranging the utensils we need for the nine steps that are contained in the recipe. She pivots backwards and reaches into the depth of the cabinet beneath the kitchen spice shelves, taking out one stainless bowl with a diameter of at least 60cm and one medium-sized stainless pot with a loosely fitting glass lid. She returns to the table to place the stainless bowl in the centre encircled by the jars filled with aromatic spices. Ayah then walks over to the sink and half fills the pot with tap water before placing it on the stove on the far-left gas plate. To the water pot, she adds a pinch of salt and begins to peel two potatoes with a knife over the kitchen bin, allowing the peels to fall directly into the bin while holding the potatoes in her right hand. She returns to the sink and gives it a quick rinse under the tap. Using the same knife, she begins to cut the potatoes over the pot filled with water, with each tiny cube creating a splash as they drop into the pot. I note that the recipe calls for three potatoes and Ayah informs me that she forgot to calculate the number of potatoes needed for her evening meal and now only has two to spare for this recipe. Confidently she says she will adjust the recipe as we go along.

Turning on the stove, Ayah presses on the gas knob and turns clockwise but the ignitor fails. With a heavy sigh from Ayah, she steps to her left and edges towards the fridge while still holding the gas knob with her right hand, stretching with her left arm to the top of the fridge to retrieve a blue flint ignitor. In a swift motion, she brings her left hand to the stove and positions the flint directly under the pot and with one click, she ignites a steady small blue flame under the potato pot and covers it with the loose-fitting glass lid. She decides to

put on the whistling stovetop kettle to make us some tea which would also act as a timer, when the kettle whistles, she will check the potatoes' progress. The ignitor failure indicates that the suburb is undergoing their scheduled load-shedding where the electricity is temporarily shut out from the national grid, this is an attempt to distribute and maintain the limited electricity resources that South Africa has been facing for several years. Ayah checks her phone and confirms that the load-shedding app has sent a notification, it's loading shedding for the Parow North area. Smirking she shares that nothing will interfere with our Koesiester making as we will revert to using a pot on the gas stove to fry the sweet dough as her Oemie Fadielah had always done rather than relying on the more modern electronic deep fryer that is taking space on her overcrowded kitchen countertop.

As we wait for the kettle to whistle, Ayah moves towards the wall of kitchen cabinets and opens a drawer to remove two whisks; a large stainless balloon whisk, a smaller green silicone whisk and a small plastic bowl from the adjacent cabinet. On cue, her 18-month-old daughter drags a red plastic stool towards the table and demands attention with a sudden scream, her aim to be lifted so that she can take her position at the table. Standing on the red stool, the green silicone whisk and the small plastic bowl are placed before Ayah's daughter, she is ready to assist. Following Oemie Fadielah's written instructions Ayah measures the dry ingredients with a white plastic measuring cup, dipping the cup into the large cake flour container and using the back of her index finger to level off the heaped flour before tipping it into the metal sieve that hangs over the large metal mixing bowl. She entertains her daughter by adding a smaller portion of cake flour to her bowl and encouraging her to mix with her green whisk and remarks that her favourite childhood memories are from moments like these where she would be helping her Oemie in the kitchen. A high pitch shrill distracts us from reminiscing of our childhood kitchen experiences, the whistling of the kettle brings us back to our present. Ayah abandons the memories as the measuring cup flops into the white cake flour as she dashes to the sink to take a sharp knife from the drying rack.

Her attention shifts to the stovetop as she turns off the gas for the kettle with her left hand while using the knife in her right hand to insert it into the small potato cubes. She can tell if the potatoes are ready if the knife slides smoothly through the cubes, this time the knife hesitates as it is inserted, not the smooth glides desired. Lowering the flame, Ayah notes

that it should take another five minutes before the potatoes would be fully cooked.

Returning to the table and the dry ingredients, Ayah's attention returns to the large metal mixing bowl on the table. She queries how many cups of flour she measured and notes the position of the measuring cup while eyeing the flour gathered in the sieve above the bowl. By her visual inspection and confirmed by my note taking another cup of cake flour is required. Satisfied with the addition of cake flour, she lifts and shakes the sieve creating a fine dusting of flour to accumulate into a white peaked mountain in the mixing bowl. Tearing open the newly bought yeast packet, Ayah sprinkles the tiny hibernating yeast directly into the bowl and their pale tan spherical shapes sink and eventually disappear into the mountain of fluffy white flour.

The next step is to introduce the spice to the mixing bowl and with the opening of each spice container pungent aromas escape and occupy the kitchen. Spicy notes seem to possess the kitchen as the aromatics become airborne, intensified by the steam gathering above the stove with the boiling potatoes. One tablespoon at a time, the spices create a stark contrast as brown hues compile against a background of snow-white flour. As Ayah mixes with the balloon whisk, it cuts through the mountain of white flour encouraging the shades of brown of cinnamon, cardamom, aniseed and brown sugar to begin to dilute in its starch contrast. However, the spice's aromatic notes refuse to disappear into slumber like the hibernating spherical yeast. Ayah's whisking of dry ingredients conjures a new medium in the mixing bowl, as the contents are no longer recognized by its individual powders, with each whisk the aromatics heighten as the spice's phytochemicals combine and become airborne to transgress our sensory pathways. The combination of the spicy notes encircles the kitchen and floods our nasal passages, triggering our old factory bulbs and setting off a cascade of memories contained within our limbic system. Entranced by the spicy notes Ayah draws her face closer to the bowl and abandons the balloon whisk for the use of her right fingertips to carefully hollow the centre of the new aromatic medium. The rattling of the loose lid on the boiling potato pot breaks the spell of the spicy notes and draws our attention away from the mixing bowl and its captive medium. Attention returns to the present once more and towards the steam-engulfed stovetop.

Ayah refocuses on the recipe by wiping her floury fingers on her apron and glances at her notebook seeking Oemies's guidance for the wet ingredients. Selecting the floury sieve from

the table, she rescues the violently boiling potatoes by taking the pot off the stove and carrying it to the kitchen sink. With both sinks occupied, she holds the sieve in her left hand precariously positioning it over the slight gap between the green bowl of defrosting chicken pieces and the sink outlet. Without hesitation Ayah tosses the potatoes into the handheld sieve, the boiling water barely misses her left hand and safely drains down the sink outlet. Through a cloud of steam, she manages to return the potatoes back to the hot pot. Her pace is notably quickened. No longer lingering and dreamlike as with the dry ingredients. Her demeanour changes as the wet ingredients demand a quick response. She pivots on her heel to bring a cloud of steam and the potatoes to the table, setting the hot pot next to the aromatic mixing bowl. Reaching for the utensil drawer Ayah skilfully negotiates the potato masher from its entangled nest within the crowded drawer. Three tablespoons of butter are scooped and layered over the steaming potato cubes. With the potato masher, Ayah works hastily, pushing the masher firmly downwards and flicking the base along the side of the pot as she draws it upwards to strike once more. Slowly merge the yellow melted butter into the individual white potato cubes to create a luscious pale cream mixture. Once incorporated Ayah exchanges the masher for a red silicone spatula and uses both thumbs to crack open an egg over the now cooling pot. The bright yellow yolk and opaque albumin float over the buttery mixture and with encouragement from the red spatula the mixture changes once more into a creamy stiff texture. The fast pace was to ensure that enough heat was retained to assist in the amalgamation of the butter and egg into the potato. Ayah remarks that this was Oemie Fadielah's secret, the use of potatoes within the Koesiester is crucial to creating the correct spongy texture that became the renowned feature of her Koesiesters, even after being frozen or reheated in the microwave. Although Ayah is not entirely satisfied with her current wet mixture. Remaking that she remembers the texture to be less stiff and more fluid than its current state. Returning to the notebook, Ayah traces her right index fingertip along the faded blue ink holding Oemie's guidance. All ingredients are accounted for, Ayah taps the recipe page. "*Oemie, Oemie, iets is miss?*" Speaking beyond the handwritten recipe, speaking directly to her Oemie for guidance, a means to recall for correction.

The moment passes, and Ayah, still searching for a solution, asks me to assist. I have little to offer as this is my first time observing a potato koesiester's performance. My only offerings

come from prior family recipe experiences limited to the flour Koesiester as described by Aunty Fiaz and her performance of the Aual Koesiester recipe. However, in preparation for my fieldwork, I consulted multiple published cookbooks that focused on Cape Town food including those focusing on "Cape Malay" cooking. I recall Ayah's copy of Faldielah Williams' Cape Malay Cooking which contains a recipe for the potato Koesiester and offers it as a possible solution to the stiff potato mixture. Ayah mentions that she received the copy as a wedding present but rarely uses this cookbook as it sits unused next to her handwritten recipe notebooks in her kitchen library. Retrieving the cookbook, she scans the perfectly bound and glossy pages for the Potato Koesiester recipe for guidance. A consensus is gathered from Faldielah Williams's recipe and our combined kitchen experiences, milk seems to be the logical solution for the thirsty and stiff wet mixture. Ayah pours 200 ml of cold milk into the now cold pot containing the stiff butter, egg and potato mixture. Additionally, she decides to use 150 ml of water remaining in the whistling stovetop kettle to bring some heat back into the pot. Unwaveringly she uses the red spatula to will the stubbornly stiff creamy mixture to accept the milky water solution. Ayah eventually succeeds in creating a luscious pale cream mixture that holds true to the memory of Oemie Fadielah's secret wet mixture.

A sense of ease returns to the kitchen as Ayah settles back into a slower pace, tracing the fingers of her right hand through aromatic dry ingredients in the metal bowl. She leans closer to the bowl and inhales to gather the full aroma of the spices. With each inhale, she checks the combination of spices and notes if the mixture holds enough phytochemical weight to allow for the full-bodied aromatics that are required for Cape Koesiesters. She passes the mixing bowl to me to decipher the spicy notes and we note that something is amiss. The warm and sweet spicy notes are fully present but something is once again missing. Heading back to the notebook, Ayah's floury fingertips leave a trail as she reads aloud the spices and I confirm their presence on the table. A repurposed plastic jar with a yellow lid containing bright yellow powder remains unaccounted for on the table. Unlabelled and hidden between the larger fancy jars containing ginger and cinnamon, the missing powdered naartjie peel is discovered. Interestingly, it is missing from the listed spice noted in Oemie Fadielah's recipe even so Ayah recalls how her Oemie would offer stern warnings to everyone during winter to keep their thin naartjie peels for her Koesiesters.

According to Ayah, each kitchen windowsill in Oemie's Belhar home would be decorated with layers of thin orange peels as they slowly dry out in the late afternoon winter sun until leathery dry and be stored in a glass jar waiting to be ground into powder as needed. It is a memory that Ayah and I share and the drying of naartjie peel is still a process that I participate in each year, often gifting jars to friends and neighbours. In fact, Ayah had requested me to bring the unlabelled naartjie peel powder for the recipe as it remains an ingredient that is home-produced and is rarely found sold even at Cape Town speciality spice stores. With a heaped tablespoon of the vibrant yellow naartjie peel added to the mixing bowl and a few additional spoons of fine ground aniseed to balance the spicy notes, Ayah's fingertips disperse the yellow and brown speckles and recreate a hollow base which she refers to as a well, within the dry aromatic mixture.

Ayah transfers the luscious pale creamy mixture held in the cold pot to the large mixing bowl. Ayah's well becomes a temporary reservoir to hold the wet ingredients before her red spatula breaks the barriers between the dry and wet mixtures. The meeting of dry and wet ingredients is a messy affair and Ayah works skilfully with her spatula to collapse the walls of the dry mixture and tries to encourage the absorption of the creamy wet mixture. Gently she folds the two mixtures until the spatula can no longer cut through the semi-formed sticky dough. Reverting to forceful manipulation through the use of her hands, she pulls up her sleeves to above her elbows, lightly dusts both hands in flour and begins to bind the dough. First using her fingers loosely, she gathers the leftover flour pockets around the edges of the mixing bowl combining the dry mixture into the forming dough. To provide more resistance she clenches her fingers to form a fist and uses her knuckles to exert a firm pressure on the dough allowing it to spread and gather the remaining dry mixture. After a few minutes of this firm and persistent pressure, Ayah checks the dough with her right index finger and declares the dough formed when her finger leaves behind an indentation on the dough. Through strenuous manipulation, the sticky dough gives into the pressures and subdues into a smooth controlled and homogeneous dough that is ready for its first proofing.

The proofing session is a time of rest for both the dough and us, the Koesiester makers. The dough is left in the mixing bowl and wrapped in three layers of clingfilm pulled to ensure an airtight seal. Oemie Fadielah's recipe calls for added layering with a thick blanket suggesting

that the bundle be placed in a warm and quiet place to raise. In contrast to its harsh handling during the mixing of dry and wet mixtures, the formed dough is now treated with loving care. Even Ayah's children are told to refrain from making loud noises around the resting dough, with Ayah referring to it as a sleeping baby. Selecting a resting spot became tricky as the kitchen countertops could not accommodate the large mixing bowl with its additional coverings and the table would soon be used to prepare the evening's meal. Cradling the dough in both arms Ayah searches for an ideal spot and finds herself heading to the dining room that leads off the kitchen. The formal dining room had been unintentionally converted into a playroom for her three young children with the replacement of the expected dining table and chairs with a variety of toys scattered over the parquet flooring. Ayah stops at the entertainment cabinet and peeks behind the smart television and PlayStation console. She instructs me to move the television slightly forward suggesting that this is the ideal resting place as the PlayStation console usually gets quite warm when her eldest son plays and it would not be in anyone's way. The bundled dough gets stuffed behind the television and left to enjoy the generated heat as the boys settle in for their afternoon gaming session.

After one and a half hours, we return to the slumbering dough and gently remove it from its resting spot, returning it to the busyness of the kitchen. Unveiling the dough by peeling off the thick blanket reveals a doming clingfilm layer, hyperinflated with the gaseous exchanges created by the beige microscopic yeast that had been added to the dry mixture. Magically, the slumbering dough had doubled in size due to the feasting yeast as they converted the enriched dough's sugar molecules into microscopic pockets of carbon dioxide, transforming the smooth dough into an airy, spongy living dough. Stripping the clingfilm layers from the mixing bowl results in the dough expelling its constrained yeasty breath. As the airy dough settles into its new aerobic-rich environment and the kitchen fills with yeasty and spicy notes, a shift is created in Ayah's demeanour. With her pace quickened she leverages the commercial-sized clingfilm in both arms and instructs me to move to the opposite side of the preparation table and reach over with both hands to firmly pull the free edge of the clingfilm in an attempt to cover the entire table surface. Half of the table is enrobed in a layer of plastic acting as a smooth non-stick surface for the dough's final proofing.

A thorough washing of hands and retying of aprons allows us to enter the stage of shaping the airy dough into Koesiesters. Ready myself to assist in the shaping I ask about the shaping process as the usual method of rolling the dough into a long log and slicing it into discs before rolling it on the table is absent from Oemie Fadielah's recipe. Instead, it clearly states using a teaspoon to scrap portions of dough and roll in oiled hands into small balls. I watch silently as Ayah portions the dough with a teaspoon in her left hand and gently places it into the palm of her right hand. Her right thumb pushes the unformed dough into the cradle of her right fingers before making the dough dance along its ridges to form a smooth round ball. The ball is placed onto the prepared table and with gentle tapping with the index finger at the centre of the tiny round ball transforms into an oval shape. Entranced by the fluidity of muscle memory as Ayah effortlessly creates ovals Koesiesters in multiples of ten per row providing each ball with enough space to proof without overcrowding. She offers her daughter a portion of dough to experiment with and slows down her rolling to instruct, teaching her the technique of using her thumb to position the dough onto her fingers. The technique is unusual for me and I return to the handwritten recipe to check its detailed directions. The technique for covering the table in clingfilm is clearly documented but the intricate technique for shaping is absent. A total of fifty-three oval Koesiester doughs are shaped and left once more to rest. This time the proofing is uncovered with no additional layers or blanket coverings and left to rest in the centre of a busy kitchen.

The final proofing is complete after thirty minutes when the individual raw Koesiesters once again double in size although this time restrained to their perfected oval shaping as they reach out to their neighbouring Koesiesters. Clearing the back row of her gas stove, Ayah shifts the large pot containing chicken curry for dinner to the front of the gas plate and replaces it with a medium-depth and thick-based stainless-steel pot. Glugs of golden yellow fish oil are poured until the pot is three-quarter filled and a steady blue flame is ignited to engulf the thick-based pot. Waiting as the oil immersion begins to slowly swirl as the oil heats. Ayah extends an outstretched palm floating above the pot allowing the heating emitting from the oil to interact with the thermoreceptors embedded within the dermal layers of her hand. No temperature is given in the recipe but Ayah instinct knows by way of thermal and visual sense when the oil has reached the optimal temperature. To ensure that the temperature is correct, she drops a tiny ball of dough into the oil to test if it floats.

Assured that the heat is correct she proceeds to gently peel Koesiesters off its clingfilm beds. Lightly using her index finger and thumb to release the oval doughs into the hot oil. Ayah proposes that the oval shape is to ensure that the Koesiesters have a gentle dive into the oil with no back slashing. As the oval breaks into the oily environment, it plunges to the bottom of the pot before gently rising surrounded by tiny air bubbles like a life jacket that escort the Koesiesters to the surface. After a few minutes, the Koesiesters show their colour changes as a distinct line appears between the pale raw dough and the darkening brown section submerged in the bubbling oil. The Koesiesters tilt to their side and with the encouragement of a fork, they flip revealing their golden-brown sides. Adjusting the gas knobs to reduce the flame as Ayah notices the intensive bubbling of the oil.

Removing the first batch of fried Koesiesters, Ayah's husband walks by and remarks on the darker brown shade of the first batch. *"Ja but a Koesieter must be so lekker bruin like us"* is Ayah's half-witty response as she lifts the overly brown Koesiester to her tan cheek in comparison and then to her husband's darker brown forearm. As the bowl next to the frying pot fills with fried Koesiesters, they reveal a range of brown shades. Ayah works from moment to moment completely immersed in the environment of the oil and responds to its bubbles and violent spattering as if in a heated debate with the golden liquid, tempering its fury by lowering the steady blue flame and raising the flame as the oil reduces in ferocity. The aim is to create just enough heat to allow the surface of the Koesiester to float and slowly brown as the centre cooks through to a fluffy and soft texture. Reaching the last row on the table with the three Koesiesters, Ayah starts her final step of the recipe by bringing a large pan to the stove, her only cooking vessel left in her arsenal. Remarking that it's not perfect for making the sugar syrup but shall do for the few Koesiester she wants us to taste test.

Using a coffee mug as a measuring cup, Ayah scoops one heaped mug of brown sugar and one mug of cold tap water into the pan and places it on the gas stove with a large flame that engulfs the base of the pan. One large dark brown cinnamon bark is retrieved from the spice rack with quickly snapped into three unequal pieces to join the simmering pan. Ayah forgets about the sugar solution as she refocuses on the evening meal. Her children wander into the kitchen brought by hungry tummies and the enticing spicy Koesiester aromatics that have filled the home. By the time Ayah recalls the sugar solution it has already reached

a thick brown syrup and not what Ayah had intended. To satisfy her children's excitement, she decides to use the thick syrup and places two batches of five Koesiester in the pan, allowing the cooled Koesiester to soak in the sweet aromatics. Removing the Koesiester from the pan and placing it into a blue plastic bowl, Ayah with an ad of dramatics lowers the bowl within eyesight of her children and releases a shower of fine coconut flakes with her right hand while shaking her hips and the bowl to evenly coat the surfaces. The Koesiester barely have time to bask in their final dressings as little hands venture into the bowl, searching for the sticky warm spicy oval Koesiesters that had been enticing them all day. The syrup has become like candy around the Koesiester, it cracks as I bite into it. Yet Ayah's children return to the bowl asking for more, using their fingers to scrape up the candied syrup and leftover coconut flakes from the empty bowl.

The inside of the Koesiester is warm and spongy and the aromatics fill my palate as I indulge in the spicy notes that I recognize from early childhood. Ayah remarks that the syrup is not perfect due to her own miss timings but the koesiester's aromatics and texture are of Oemie Fadielah's golden standard. She grabs my blue pen which I have been using to document her performance for my fieldnotes and immediately starts making amendments to her handwritten recipe. "Formula two" she jokes as she adds the number two in brackets before potatoes in the ingredient list, adding 200ml of milk and 150ml warm water and finally squeezes in the addition of one tablespoon of naartjie peel. Her academic background in biochemical sciences plays its role as she tries to document each performance of the recipe like she would an experiment in the lab, yet she cannot express all the elements and movements contained in the ever-changing kitchen.

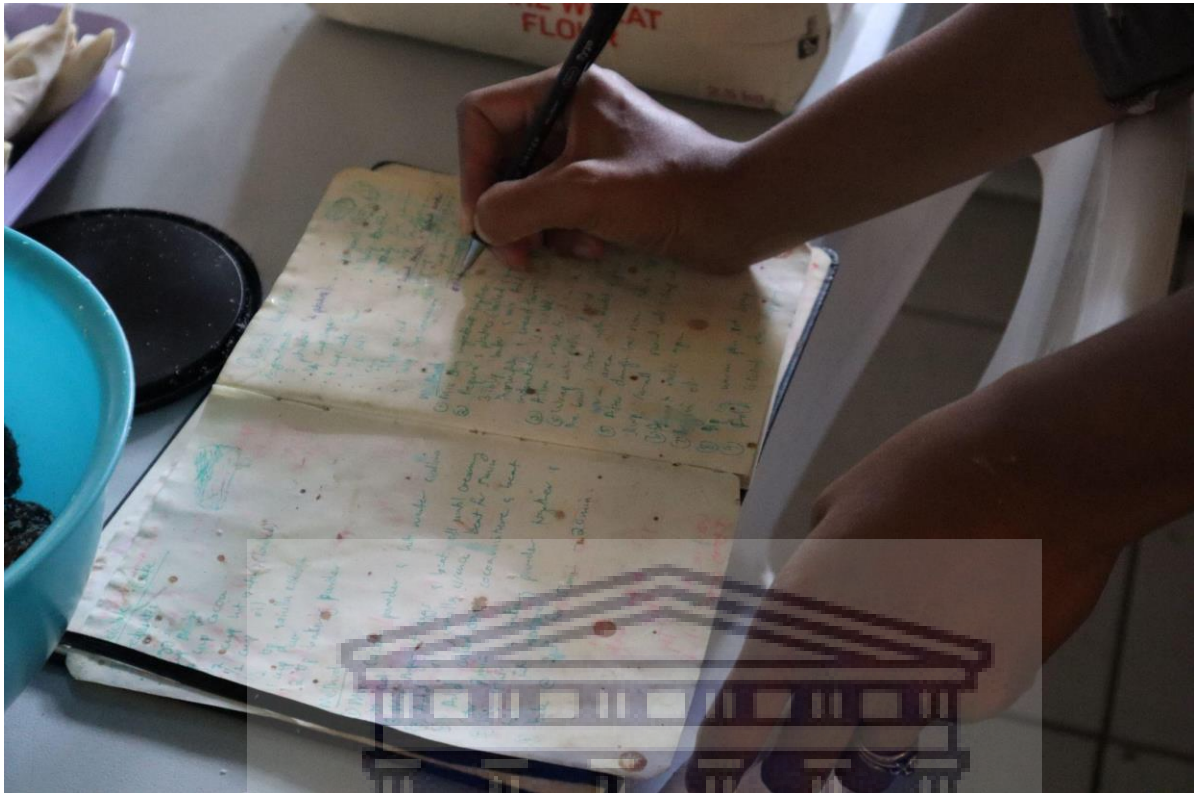


Figure 4: Ayah's reformulating her handwritten version of Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe.

Photographer: Researcher, 2023

The fresh bright blue ink stands out against the faded light blue ink writing as Ayah's contributions of retelling of her family's heirloom Koesiester recipe. New marks of fresh blue ink from her kitchen in Parow North added to her Oemie's tales of District Six, Hanover Park, Grassy Park and Belhar. Her children beg for more Koesiesters and she reluctantly sugars another batch while turning to her eight-year-old and Four-year-old sons and announces that they should be like their younger sister in the kitchen to take note and help with the next re-enactment of the Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe.

The performance of Oemie Fadielah's Koesiester recipe reveals the multiple omissions of written recipes, like Aunty Faiza's Auwal Tyd Koesiester, this Koesiester recipe refuses to be captured in ink as noted in Ayah's recipe book above. Ayah's re-enactment of the recipe shows the tension of following Oemie's recipe and the realities of the kitchen where quick decisions are made based on multisensory intuitions. It is these multiple movements within the making of the Koesiester that are not translatable in its written form. In the following

chapter, I will elaborate on this unwritten sensory knowledge that guides the performance of Koesiester recipes in Cape kitchen.



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Chapter 5: Performative Acts of the Cape Koesiester

The detailed retelling of the Koesiester in the previous two chapters depicts the tales of two distinctive yet overlapping Cape family Koesiester's recipes, each refusing in their own right to be bound within a fixed singular textual form. It is within these ethnographic descriptive tales of the Cape Koesiesters that allow for exploration beyond written recipes and delve into their aromatic spicy trails. Here I propose that the Koesiester begin to enrobe another unique ability of spice. I draw on Timothy Morton's (2006) notion of the slipperiness of spice, where the Koesiester embodies this element of slipperiness refusing to be contained into fixed aesthetics, time periods or singular origin stories. Thereby creating a spicy archive-of-sorts that illuminates key movements which flow effortlessly across multiple temporospatial lines drawn at the Cape.

It is through these vast flowing movements that create multimodal narratives which demand a contrapuntal reading. Through multifocal lenses, I propose that these movements unveiled through the retelling of the Koesiester be seen as aspects of the overshadowed and unscripted creative performances of the Cape Koesiester. In this way, I highlight the creative innovations of the Koesiesters and reiterate Peter Kulbelka's (Graigg, 1999) concept of edible metaphors held within recipes which escape language and require a focused reading mode. This reading mode is required to appreciate the artist's expressions of the doings and movements of the recipe as an artistic performance. To this, I suggest that the retelling of the Koesiester be considered through its creative innovations and as an artistic kitchen performance that encompasses multiple movements flowing across space and time. With this thinking, each movement becomes a performative act of the Koesiester. In the following section, I will reflect on the re-enactment of three key performative acts revealed through the retelling of the Koesiester. First, I will address the Act of naming to provide a contextual framing. Subsequently, I will attend to the Act of relocations and relations by following the Koesiester across the Cape and lastly, the Act of senses to illuminate the unwritten encodings of the Koesiester.

Acts of Naming

The naming of the Koesiester recipes becomes an important strand throughout the retelling of the Koesiester. Naming challenges the notion of the simply missing "k" in its spelling in

comparison to koeksister and positions the Koesiester to be narrated through an alternative voice. I draw on the works of Iliescu (2022) which clarifies that the naming of a handwritten recipe does not indicate the inventor as such but rather provides the recipe's source from whom the recipe has been learnt. The dish becomes accepted as communal as each retelling or version gets its own source author thereby creating a repository for culinary and social networks that appreciate the ability to allow multiple performances of the recipe to occur across space and time. Hence, there is no search for an inventor or the original source; instead, handwritten recipes found within family kitchens should be viewed as multilayered documentation that reveals the dynamic relationships between orality and literacy aspects of domestic practices of history (Iliescu,2022:107).

I focus on the use of the name Auwal Tyd Koesiesters, this name weaves together three different linguistic modes. Auwal is an Arabic term for the founder, Tyd is Afrikaans for time or in this context a time period and koesiesters is considered "kombuis taal" or the more contemporary term of "kombuis" Afrikaans which is a type of colloquial Afrikaans used in the Cape Flats. However, these three language types have an entangled history. Where "kombuis taal" a creole language spoken within Cape kitchens by enslaved women was standardized in 1925 to become the official language of South Africa as refined Afrikaans. Subsequently, Afrikaans was upgraded to ensure its social class status be reclassified to high culture as an ethnic-racial classifier during the apartheid regime (Linnegar, 2013: 5). Whereas, the use of Arabic at the Cape has been documented to have influenced the written form of Afrikaans through the works of early Islamic scholars who created an orthographic text of Arabic-Afrikaans to communicate religious scripts called koplesboeke (Davids,1987). According to Willemse (2018:3), these Arabic-Afrikaans were not exclusively used for religious education and were used broadly within the early Cape Muslim community's daily communication such as creating a shopping list, journals and personal letters. This notion of "kombuis taal" having a written form and its use beyond religious studies allows one to reshape our perspectives of the assumed illiteracy of the enslaved women of the Cape Kitchens called Ayahs.

Drawing on Chutel (2023) it motions us to use our imaginations to answer questions of their innovativeness such as how Ayahs were able to secure spices for their Koesiesters recipes. Could this shift in enquiry lead to narratives of a spicy resistance within the kitchen? Here

the kitchen becomes a site of innovative resistance where the assumed muted Ayahs would allow their foods to be a voice (Arabaca, 2006). Re-imaginings of Ayahs secretly stashing expensive spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, aniseed and cloves from their masters and madams' gaze to conjure up their innovations in delectable edible products such as the Koesiesters which encapsulated their rebellious agency. Furthermore, the unlettered recipes for these culinary innovations could be interpreted as a means of custodianship that continues today as with the case of the Auwal Tyd koesiesters which has not been scripted. This embodied sensorial knowledge and oral life held within the Koesiester recipe allows for the fluidity of retelling a personal family history as a deeper history where perhaps a spicy resistance is layered within the unwritten performances being re-enacted across contemporary Cape kitchens every Sunday morning.

The Auwal Tyd koesiesters naming does move beyond its linguistic intertwining when one considers the significance of the meaning within the context of Cape Town. *Auwal Tyd* is a phrase used commonly in Cape Muslim households, referring to the time of Early Cape Muslims who founded Islam in Cape Town. Auwal is an Arabic name with its roots as one of the ninety-nine names attributed to Allah. This compilation of ninety-nine names is called the *Asma-ul-Husna* and is a foundational Islamic scripture that is taught to Muslim children at a young age as part of *koples* as noted in the section above, it allows for the understanding of the nature of Allah and His endless bounties. The use of the *Asma-ul-husna* is integrated into various forms of litanies including group prayers, dhikr (meditation), Islamic healing therapies, Islamic poetry, and Islamic art that has been passed on through multiple generations across the Middle East, Africa and Asia (Al-Rawi,2015). These beloved names are commonly chosen in Muslim communities when naming a child or an institution with the intention that the name holder upholds the meanings and brings a constant remembrance and spiritual upliftment to the community.

Al -Auwal (Awwal) is number seventy-three of the *Asma-ul-husna* and refers to Allah as a Creator with no beginning nor end, the First, the Pre-Existing and Everlasting (Khawaldeh, 2007:165). However, when *Auwal* is used as a name other than in supplication to Allah, as in the naming of institutions such as Mosques its meaning changes to prevent aspects of adorning Allah's creations with His attributes, and therefore should be interpreted as founders of society or founders of knowledge. The *Auwal* mosque in Dorp Street in Bo-kaap

is an example as it is the first mosque built in South Africa in 1794. Furthermore, the land on which the *Auwal* mosque stands was donated by a Free Black female named Saartjie van die Kaap. Saartjie, having the financial means, purchased the property from her family estate when her late father Coridon of Ceylon passed away (Mahinda,1993:12). Coridon was a free Black Muslim and was one of the few Blacks to own land in Cape Town during the late 1790s. In this way, the process of naming the *Auwal Tyd Koesiester* gives the recipe historical weighting as a counternarrative to acknowledge the achievements of ancestors who were forcefully removed from their nations of origin and managed to settle at the Cape by establishing an Islamic society during the era of slavery, a Cape Muslim community which continues to thrive today.

These Early Cape Muslims were called Malays due to a large number of its members using the lingua franca known as Bahasa Melayu, a common dialect spoken across Indian Ocean regions (Baderoon: 2019:6). Here the Indian Ocean became a connector for enslaved people as immigrant slaves were brought to the Cape from Asian regions such as Ceylon, India, East Indies, and Malaya but also Africa. During the period of 1652 to 1818 majority of the enslaved originated from African regions of East Africa and Madagascar and to a lesser extent West Africa (da Costa & Davids, 1994:1-10). This was due to these regions having a thriving slave trade that was established by generations of Arab slave traders which was later taken over by European nations such as the Dutch-owned trading companies. These African and Asian maritime slave routes operated in communities that had been practising the religion of Islam and as such are a representation of the diverse *Auwal Tyd* Cape Muslims. According to Mahida (1993:18), more than half the slaves at Cape were Muslim between 1810 to 1830 and after the emancipation of slaves in 1840 one-third of the total population of the Cape colony was Muslim. For this reason, it is important to note that “Malay” for Early Cape Muslims was not in reference to their Asian origin but rather to the larger Indian Ocean vernacular used amongst the majority of Muslims coming from an enslaved ancestry. It has been noted by various scholars such as Achmat Davids, that in the latter twentieth century, those following the Islamic faith at the Cape came from diverse backgrounds of socio-economic classes, nationalities, ethnicities and cultures nevertheless they managed to assimilate into an identifiable socio-religious community (da Costa & Davids,1994:105).

This socio-religious identity of Cape Muslims was distorted through an Orientalist viewing of the use of “Malay”. ID du Plessis’s ethnographic work *The Cape Malays* (1947) provided the framing for a fictionist attempt to categorise Cape Muslims into a fixed singular ethnic grouping that retained their Asian exoticism through traditional and authentic cultural practices such as “Cape Malay” foods. In this way, denouncing the diversity of *Auwal Tyd* Muslims as well as overshadowing the Afro-Asian influences that shaped the community’s overlapping identities and merging which included a multicultural cuisine. This notion of an exotic ethno-racial categorization of “Cape Malay” was used during apartheid to cause division amongst the Black population as a means to create a permanent wedge between the “underclass” communities of Cape Town. Jeppie (1987) elaborates on the extent of influence du Plessis had on the crafting of an authentic “Cape Malay” identity and the eventual merging of the “Cape Malay” identity as a subcategory within the broader mixed race “coloured” identity.

The complexities that arose from du Plessis’s fabrications and the apartheid racial segregation regime have rippling effects on the Cape Muslim community as the ideal of a purist “Cape Malay” lingers within the retelling of family histories. It is to be noted that my eldest participants were born around the early 1950s and many hold onto their identities as “Cape Malay” as shaped by the apartheid regime. During casual interviews, I was often shown their apartheid-issued identification documents issued during the 1960s to early 1970s indicating their racial classification as *Maleier-Malay* and the sudden reclassification to “Coloured” in later official documents. Throughout oral histories, participants reminded me of their linkages to Asian ancestry by emphasising certain great-grandparents such as Munajeera van Batavia while referring less to other great-grandparents who were known as Creole van Mauritius or Creole van Madagascar. Little to none was discussed in terms of slavery within their oral retelling, even while making explicit use of terms such as van Batativa which has a direct reference to the recording of enslaved people. Most participants sought to instil a hierarchical approach to their family history by distancing their Jut (family tree) from slavery by emphasizing that their ancestors arrived at the Cape as political exiles rather than part of the enslaved population. At most slavery and the realities of its integrated influence at the Cape remains silenced within my participants’ oral family histories. To this extent, I re-emphasise that understanding the context of apartheid, the

systematic oppression of complex histories of overlapping identities and the inability to trace origins allows the ideals of upholding myth-making for origin stories such as those created by du Plessis to remain in place. As noted by Field (2008), these attempts to form a complete identity become a means to deal with the vast trauma that remains repressed from viewing even through the oral histories of Cape families. While the elements of colonial slavery and enslaved kitchen labour remain largely untold, the naming of Auwal Tyd Koesiester certainly allows revisiting and questioning of the hidden past and continued silences from within the popular memory of Cape Muslim communities.

Act of Relocations (and Relations)

“The network of koesiesters worked its way through District Six no matter what religion you were, you had to have your koesiesters”

Aboubarker Brown (Smith, 2016:203)

The Koesiester recipes while having faded whisperings of its colonial tales provide vivid recollections of the memories of District Six. For participants and many Capetonians living in the Cape Flats, District Six is a lost home, a place filled with fond memories of diverse communities living together in cohesion. District Six was established in 1867 and over the decades had accepted waves of people as they entered the Cape to settle beneath Table Mountain, from immigrants to emancipated slaves, Europeans, Africans, South East Asians, and van de Kaap Creoles. All were accepted and all became influenced by the entanglements of lived experiences. Foods and cultures were a shared lived experience amongst multi-ethnicities and religious upbringings as noted by the quote above. The Sunday morning koesiesters become one of these deeply rooted traditions practised in District Six. It has been suggested that the name Koe’siesters becomes a *“kombuis taal”* word play describing gossiping sisters as the close-knit aunties of the neighbours would deliberate the local news on their front stoeps. It is through this network of word of mouth within Kanaladorp⁴, another name for District Six, which promoted ideologies of helping

⁴ District Six was known unofficially as kanaladorp due to the numerous canals known as Kanal in Afrikaans, which sacred the area (Smith, 2016). However, Kanaladorp became its popular name amongst residents in reference to the Cape Muslim vernacular of *kanala* meaning; Please for the sake of Allah. The name reflects the community spirit of District Six which promoted close community ties and a system of helping one’s neighbors in times of need without the need for compensation.

one's neighbours that allowed for the prospering of koesiesters sales as every neighbourhood would have at least one home kitchen that turned into a Koesiester production line over weekends.

As Koesiesters move through District Six the Koesiesters' recipes provide an entry point into the close-knit relations between people, Koesiesters and spice. Recipes change over time; these redactions and overwriting of ingredients and measurements show the multiple hands that held the recipe within Cape Kitchen archives. Here I note the constant re-quantifying attempts of my older participants as they retell their oral recipes often relying on showing me with their physical body as measurement units through cupped hands, cradled palms or the use of interphalangeal joints for sizing. South Africa's adaptation from imperial measurements of pounds and ounces to metric standardisation of kilogram and millilitres in 1969 was preceded by the period of decimalisation of the currency from British units of Pound Sterling to Rand from 1956 till its officiation in 1971 (Rossouw, 2020). These changes all be it separate movements were in part due to changes in governance as the Union of South Africa left the Commonwealth because of its emboldened apartheid ideologies becoming in due course an independent Republic state (Ball, 2016).

While ingredients such as *stertvet* used in the Koesiester dough as well as for deep frying recalls to periods of the early Cape Settler Kitchens and even further highlighting the merging of culinary knowledge with Indigenous Cape cuisines. *Stertvet's* buttery sensuous taste lingers within the mouths of older participants even though the fat had been replaced in recipes by less labour-intensive fish oil⁵. Similarly raising agents developed over the years from potato spores as fermenters to dry yeast and then to the more modern convenience of activated yeast which reduces the proofing time of the Koesiester dough. These seemingly slight changes in the ingredients hold significant shifts to the community and structure a form of framing the passages of time which is engraved into family Koesiester recipes as they move between and within Cape kitchens over generations. These aspects become explicit in Aunty Faiza's oral narrative of the Auwal Tyd Koesiester recipe as her recall includes vivid descriptions of District Six foodways.

⁵ Fish oil is a colloquial term for a blended sunflower and seed oil in South Africa.

Hanover Street was the central food network running through the breadth of District Six. Saturday morning was the busiest time for the shopping hub as it catered for all grocery needs with numerous stores, cafes, bakeries, butcheries, fishmongers, and herbalists as well as informal trades such as fresh produce stalls and hawkers selling from horse-drawn carts (Smith, 2016:180-185). Boeta Braima's spice store on Hanover Street was a key memory and constant for Aunty Faiza during her childhood as she moved from her great grandparents' home in Queens Street to a brief stay in Bo-kaap and her eventual return to District Six in Ashley Street opposite the Moravian Church. Throughout these moves the family continued to make and sell their heirloom Auwal Tyd Koesiester. As noted above, it was common for Koesiester recipes to give towards the ebbs and flows of foodway supplies as adaptations catered for years of lean with the reintroduction of potatoes not as fermentation agents but rather as a bulking agent during periods of flour shortages such as the World Wars, droughts and plagues. The adaptability of both the Koesiester recipe and the cook's skill and intimate knowledge of ingredients allowed for the creativity and innovations to accept newer ingredients such as fish oil and dry yeast. However, the spice mixture of kaneel (cinnamon), ginger, whole aniseed, karamonk (cardamon) and dried naartjie peels remains unwavering throughout these time periods. Likewise, Aunty Faiza's constant returns to acquire their family's spice supply from Boeta Braima in Hanover Street, without fail each week, tell of a deep relation towards spice, the koesiester and the people of District Six. In this way, the Koesiester sits at the heart of a series of networks within the close-knit community which includes aspects of loyalty to grocery stall holders for access to quality ingredients, loyalty to the skilled Koesiester makers for purchases every Sunday morning and the integrated multigenerational family traditions that underwrote these transactions across District Six.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 as adopted by the South African apartheid regime sought to implement racially segregated areas based on the previously mentioned pseudo-racial categories as discussed earlier. However, District Six was earmarked as a potential prominent inner-city hub since the early 1940s with one major drawback it represented the ability of a flourishing and colourful merging of overlapping identities and ways of being at Cape Town which was in contrast to the foundational purists' ideologies of the Nationalist government of Apartheid (Soudien,2021:370-374). For this reason, the area needed to be 'purified', and a decision was made to neglect the area of maintenance and upgrading of

infrastructure to accommodate the growing community's needs. In this way, District Six was left to fester into an inhospitable slum town riddled with poverty and illness. This deliberate neglect was done with the intention to demolish the area due to its scripted unhygienic precedence. Inevitably in 1966 District Six was declared a white-only area resulting in the active purging of the slum town as its only recourse thus ensuring the removal of a people, their homes and the attempts to dissolve the community spirit of Kanaladorp. By 1982 more than 60,000 people were forcibly relocated to various areas along the Cape Flats, uprooting generations of colourful cultural diversity (Layne, 2008: 54-55).

It is with this mass movement of people of colour, that we begin to see the stark socioeconomic class distinctions amongst Cape Town's demography as those that could afford homes such as Aunty Faiza and her family moved to more established areas such as Grassy Park, Retreat, Lansdowne and Athlone. On the other hand, Oemie Faldielah and her family, not having the financial means to secure loans, were relocated to far-flung areas such as Hanover Park which had little infrastructure which affected many aspects of their lives including access to *huiskos* supplies. During this time Aunty Faiza retained her ability to return to Boeta Braima's spice store in Hanover Street District Six until their closure in the late 1970s allowing her to continue to include the quality and quantity of spice in her cooking and her family's koesiester recipe. Whereas, Oemie Faldielah had to consider the impact of travel costs to return to District Six for weekly shopping.

This created shifts in the family approach to cooking which continued as they moved across the Cape flats over the year until their final settling in Belhar. Adjustments to *huiskos* recipes such as reducing red meat or replacing it with chicken and making *langsous*; a process of using cheaper cuts of meat and increasing the "sauce" of a dish by adding additional water and flavouring it with spice. In this way, the meal stretches as spicy *langsous* can be added over a starch such as rice or bread to satisfy hungry tummies. Here again, the adaptability of the Koesiester recipe becomes apparent as the potato gets included in Oemie Faldielah's family recipe at first as a bulking agent. However, over time the potato addition became a creative innovation allowing for freezing and reheating, and the potato became one of the distinguishing factors of the family's unique Koesiester texture. However, both heirloom Koesiester recipes discussed in this thesis remain constant in retaining their spice mixture.

I refer to the works of Marte's (2007: 284) framing of the foodmap as a search for 'home' and propose that the search for spice across the Cape allowed for the tracing of multiple layers of spice trails thereby creating personalised and alternative histories of Cape foodways. I emphasize that the procurement of spice is not seen as a luxury but an essential food item as spice stalls begin to appear in Hanover Park Bus Terminal, local spice stores open up in Grassy Park and eventually, pre-packaged spices are stocked at local convenience stores. While the oldest specialized spice store, Atlas in Bo-kaap who have been trading since 1946 (Moloto, 2022), and became the preferred replacement for Boeta Braima's spice store for Aunty Faiza while Oemie Faldielah's granddaughter 'Ayah' continues to support the store due its convenient expansion into an online store with delivery options to her home in Parow North.

The forced removals of District Six allow for the observation of spicy trails across the Cape. As people move, the spice trails are not far behind. In fact, spice is never left behind. Spice is given a prominent space within the Cape Kitchen as noted in the description of Ayah's Parow North kitchen. Spice receives special care much like the family's handwritten recipe collections and local cookbooks are housed in a kitchen 'library'. Likewise, the exclusive spice shelf can be seen as a type of Spice 'library'. Offering storage away from direct sunlight and moisture from steaming pots while allowing for a personalized curated colourful display of numerous spicy treasures in repurposed glass jars and containers. However, a distinct difference is noted as these Spice 'libraries' are categorized according to sensory knowledge providing a glimpse into the unlettered knowledge and skills that move beyond textual references of spice labels or written recipes. There is no need for labelling of spice containers as intimate sensory knowledge gained through the 'thoughtful practice' of doing within the kitchen allows for their decoding. The Cape kitchen spice cabinet together with family recipes acts as an embodied multisensory living archive.

Retaining the spicy prestige from the enslaved Ayah's ability to stealthy gain access to spices for her culinary innovations to the local spice stalls at Hanover Street stalls, to the Bus terminals bringing flavouring comforts to uprooted communities and continued demand for supply resulting in the convenience of online spice stores. Spice is an essential kitchen item; it is accommodated within family budgets. Spice is not an exotic luxury; it is an intimate relation weaved into the recipes, taste buds and intergenerational memories. In turn, spice

becomes the constant lingering conveyance for Cape kitchen rituals such as the Sunday Koesiester.

Acts of Senses

“It is bad faith to burn your grandmother’s archive because she wasn’t as free as you”

Rebecca Johnson (2023:33)

The act of bringing the Koesiester recipe back to the kitchen is an attempt to place importance on the doings within the kitchen. In keeping with a contrapuntal read, I draw on the works of Diego Astroga de Ita (2023) noting that the kitchen is an in-between space; a space that is private yet communal while holding nostalgic memories and materials of the past and embracing modernity through technology. However, the kitchen can be viewed with the critique of the unseen subjugated female domestic labour without compensation (Federici, 1975), eventually, the female morphs into extensions of kitchen tool mechanics as displayed in *Semiotics of the Kitchen* by Martha Rosler (2000). On the other hand, the kitchen could be seen through the nostalgic lens to allure the romanticized kitchen labour as an act of feminine attributes of duty, love and care.

Here I wish to emphasize this popular memory held within the framing of South African cuisine as discussed in earlier chapters through published cookbooks which include authors that are insiders of the communities as described by de Beers (2012). These authors have been instrumental to the documentation of unrepresented South African cuisines however they do set the standard by centring kitchen duties of females on upholding authentic and traditional dishes as seen in *Indian Delights* (Mayat, 1982: 20-22), Fatima Williams in *The Cape Malay Cookbook* (1988) and *Everyday Cape Malay Cooking* by Zainab Lagardien (1995). However, it is through the broader explorations of the complex histories of the kitchen by culinary historians such as Cass Abrahams (1995) which illuminated the realities of Cape kitchens and the links to a fusion of Cape Cuisine. More recent publications representing Cape Flats cooks such as Fatima Sydow in her contemporary “Cape Malay” cookbooks (Sydow & Noordien, 2019) (Sydow, 2019 & 2023) provide insights into the realities of the Cape Flats kitchens thereby moving beyond the romanticized traditional Cape kitchens of

the old Malay quarters. Whereas attempts at gathering *komvandaan*⁶ stories of huiskos using social media during the COVID- lockdown of 2020 became an important celebration of the diversity of voices. Here the “untrained” home cooks were able to tell their food stories and personal heritage stories. These unrefined stories from the family kitchens culminated in the publication of *The Lockdown Recipe Storytelling Book* (Jones & Fraser, 2020).

Interestingly, due to the overwhelming response of *komvandaan* food stories, an online archive has been created to curate the diverse voices on the website called *koesister.com*, where Koe’sister is the play on the Koesiesters by reference to gossiping (koe’) sisters telling their own stories across kitchen tables. These newer insider publications on South African cuisine allow for the diversity of overlapping identities and multiple versions of food histories and recipes to exist simultaneously. It is with these works in mind, that I draw on Burnsdon’s (2005) and Rebecca Johnson’s (2023) warning to not be restricted to working within these false binaries of either emancipating the female from the kitchen or erasing the tension and violence of the kitchen through dream-like nostalgic storytelling. For this reason, I take the Koesiester out of the silent library archives as used by scholars such as Classen (2004) and return it to the noisy worldliness of the Cape kitchen. From this vantage, I see the kitchen as a space to theorize from as suggested by Johnson (2023), thereby allowing for a blurring of these above-mentioned boundaries as the kitchen is viewed rather as a site capable of holding multiple and overlapping narratives.

In returning to the kitchen, I lean into the work of Flores Jurado (2018) to reframe women’s recipes as more than cooks-as-authors. Instead, it suggests viewing female cooks as gastronomic creative writers and as storytellers from the kitchen, who hold a unique position to narrate their lived experiences. In this way, the kitchen space becomes a reflection and reflective process of the artistic expressions, care, intimacies, resistance and multiple agencies, which is echoed in the works of Avakivan (2005), Lorde (2019) and in the Cape context by Baderoon (2002 & 2019), de Beer (2012) and Chuntel (2023). It is this dynamic shift in perspective of the kitchen that allows for the movement beyond simplistic victimization narratives and moves towards embracing the full complexities of the lived

⁶ Komvandaan is an Afrikaans colloquial term translated to “where we come from” and used to tell of the place where you were born.

experiences through an “antiromantic” lens that does not dismiss aspects of intimacy, memories, care and love that are embedded within the family kitchen (de Ita, 2023).

Upon entering the kitchen, I emphasise Meridith Abaraca’s (2006) notions of reframing the kitchen from a woman's place of subjugation to a woman's space. With this conceptual movement, importance is placed on the multiple doings of creativity, knowledge production, knowledge transfer and innovation within the kitchen. It allows the women as well as the foods that they prepare to be a voice, to be able to tell stories and histories as they create a world of shared meanings with community from within this in-between space of the kitchen. The kitchen within this conceptualization is a powerful means to acknowledge the discourse of epistemologies.

Here I return to the spicy Koesiesters and Aunty Faiza’s oral retelling of her Auwal Tyd Koesiester noting the refusal to have a written version as the recipe is said to live in their minds and held in their sense of touch, smell, taste and sight. This is echoed by her handwritten recipes which are written in a personalized short-hand and encoded format. With these encodings, Aunty Faiza displays her intimate knowledge of the ingredients, noting that ingredients speak to her therefore she has no need for detailed recipes. It is these notions towards the multisensory world of doings within kitchens which illuminate the pluralliteracy of family recipes which requires a particular sensory literacy to decode. This “Other” form of literacy is learned through the doings within the kitchen such as the re-enactment of the Koesiester recipes every Sunday.

This literacy of the kitchen is a language that escapes attempts to be textualized or verbalized. According to Abaraca (2006), this unwritten embodied language is called *Sazon*, a sensory logic while Usmani (2023) describes it as alchemy, an art of sensory cooking naming it *Andaza* in Urdu meaning to simply guess, referring to an intuitive way of knowing. Cariema Issacs a prominent author of “Cape Malay” cookbooks (2016 & 2019 & 2021 & 2023) has tried to quantify this Sensory Logic of “Cape Malay” cooking wanting to dispel notions that it is an embodied free-form style of cooking. As a culinary chef, she tries to capture the recipes in written form to preserve their authentic forms through precise measurements, and detailed methods to ensure the ability of replication. However, in her latest cookbook (Issacs, 2023) an acceptance of not being able to transcribe the Cape

kitchen language becomes apparent as she explores a form of Sensory-logic calling it a secret code of "Cape Malay" that extends itself to deeper philosophy to the art of cooking where each hand brings its own energy and creativity to the dish being prepared in the kitchen.

In this way, the language of the kitchen is universal yet unique in that it is a sensual response that is founded on cognitive and embodied experiences. In fact, it reflects the worldliness in which people are embedded thus allowing for unique re-enactment of recipes and never precise replications of dishes (Abaraca, 2006). For this reason, to be able to read the sensorial worlds that refuse to be contained within recipe textual forms, I was invited by my participants to "*... kom praat met die Koesiesters in my Kombuis*", to come and talk to the Koesiesters in my (her) kitchen. Here I was offered an invite to learn the Cape kitchen language and the unlettered encoding of the Cape Koesiester.

To explore this sensory logic of the Cape kitchen, I return to my initial interest in following spice. I refocus on the worldliness of spice in order to attune my senses to the materiality of spice and the material agency that spice has over humans (Bennett, 2010: 43-44). I revisit Berni Seale's *Colour Me series* (2023) used in the introduction of this thesis and reanalyse the visual performance framed with thinking of and within Cape Kitchens. The exhibition presented the spices individually in copious amounts to show their vibrant colours thereby emphasizing their visual aesthetics as a series of changing shades. Illustrating a play on the overlapping origins of the people of Colour in South Africa. However, I became aware of the limitations of the visual imagery in which I experienced the series as four sterile and static photographs mounted to an exhibition wall, I am limited to the use of one sensory organ. With this in mind, I refer to Gqola (2010:183-184), who gives a brief glimpse into the missing sensory elements I seek, by highlighting the invisible marking of spice making mention of the potent and lingering fragrances that would have filled the exhibition space during the performance of this spicy exhibition. In contrast, I note that when I follow the spice to the kitchen and observe the performance of the Koesiesters, I become immersed in the multisensory aspects of spice.

In the kitchen, I note that spice is not used individually. Instead, spice becomes merged into a blending of shades of browns turning into a unique spice mixture or a spice blend or a

masala or a mengelsmoes. Although through seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting and touching this mengelsmoes of spices, I acknowledge that it is more than a simple mish-mash of flavouring. I began to appreciate the multimodal reading that is required to engage with the intimate unwritten sensory logic of the Cape kitchen. Noting that in order to appreciate the complexity of this spice mixture I was required to bring my academic training in pharmacognosy and biochemistry to the kitchen in order to decipher the Koesiester spice code. Here I suggest that the Koesiesters spice mixture should be taken seriously as a curated spice formula containing; *Cinnamomum cassia* (kaneel), *Zingiber officinale* (Ginger), *Electarrria cardamomum* (Karamonk), *Syzgium aromaticum* (Naeltjies), *Pimpinella anisum* (Anaise) and the pericarp of *Citrus unshiu* (Naartjieskil)⁷.

I began to study the materiality of the Koesiester's spice formula and became intrigued by its aromatic phytochemicals as they seem to merge into a rhythmical dance creating remarkable displays of synergistic effects (Etkin, 2006). The cinnamaldehyde from kaneel interacts with temperature receptors on the tongue to elicit a warming effect that enhances the overall sense of warming from other spices such as naeltjies and ginger (Farrimond, 2018). Whereas, anethole from anaise excites the sweet receptors on the tongue (Marinov & Valcheva-Kuzmanova, 2015) and interacts with cinnamaldehyde to enhance the taste of sweetness. Next, Karamonk brings out the floral and citrusy notes (Zachariah, 2002) that are echoed by ginger and the Naartjieskil. Lastly, Naeltjies provides a penetrating aromatic to the flavour profile ensuring a lasting effect on the taste receptors and the stimulation of the olfactory bulb (Parle & Khanna, 2011). In this way, the spice mixture can be reviewed as a coded message formulated by Ayahs in their Cape Master's kitchens and passed down through the generations to induce sensations of a comforting warmth and bright uplifting joy through the floral and citrus notes allowing one to embrace the sweet and often spiciness of life at the Cape.

However, before these aromatic phytochemicals can be tasted, they become airborne and transgress the boundaries of the body as they flood the nasal passages. In this way, the sense of smell is unique as it does not need an invitation to enter the internal body yet smell

⁷ As a custodian of the family Koesiester recipes shared by my participants, I have not revealed all the spices. Instead, I have provided the most common spices used in each recipe as a basic spice formula.

is often relegated to a lower class of the senses for this very reason (Sutton,2010) (Pink, 2015). This relegation is primarily due to the way in which smell is processed by the body. Unlike taste, sight, hearing and touch, smell bypasses the thalamus and the sense-specific cortex of the brain (Cagan, 2012). It is this act of bypassing which causes the unconscious mind to process smell in an involuntary mode. Smell gets processed by the olfactory bulb in the limbic system, known as our primitive brain centre (Hoover, 2009). This limbic system houses the hippocampus which is responsible for long-term memory and the amygdala which is responsible for processing and regulation of emotions. Hence, a smell can evoke a more elicited memory than sight or taste. The individual will immediately experience the emotions and remember the long-term memory associated with the smell before the cerebral cortex with its specific sensory regions can begin to process the details and describe the flavour profile in terms of taste or language (Hoover, 2019). In essence, aromatics that trigger the sense of smells become an integral part of our autobiographical memory, becoming a part of our being as they are recorded throughout our formative childhood years and stored within neural pathways that hold vivid recall of multisensory aspects of the memory which includes emotional attachments (Verbreek & Crampen, 2016). Here the phytochemicals of the Koesiester transgress the conscious mind and evoke encoded memories sweetened by strong emotional associations. In this way, the performance of the Koesiester is not a conscious performative action (Seremetakis,2019), it is a ritual to attain social sensory memory by bringing the unwritten pasts into the present. These social sensory memories are embodied codes that are encapsulated in a material form of oval-shaped sweetened fried dough called the Koesiester.

Chapter 6: Poetics of the Koesiester

“This is poetry as illumination for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are until the poem, nameless and formless – about to be birthed, but already felt”

Audre Lorde, Poetry is not a luxury (1985:125)

I began this ethnography with the intention of following spice as it flows across the Cape kitchen. In doing so, I find spice encapsulated in tales of an oval-shaped sweetened fried dough called the Koesiester. Through journeying with the Koesiester across multiple time periods and multiple sites, listening to oral histories and lived experiences across kitchen tables. I discovered that spice is not an exotic luxury. Instead, spice is an intimate relation weaved into the family recipes, taste buds and intergenerational memories of the Cape. In turn, spice becomes the constant lingering conveyance for the Cape kitchen ritual of the Sunday Koesiester. In this way, the Koesiester is more than a spicy fried dough, it becomes an edible archive, a palimpsest, that through its performance in the kitchen tells the unwritten and faded histories of the people of the Cape. To end my journey with the spicy Koesiester, I feel inclined to offer a last contrapuntal poetic reading of the unwritten Cape Koesiester recipe.

Koesiester Poetics

Ingredients:

Refined white flour as a gatherer for binding,
invite the invisible stabilizers' yeast,
offer them a drink of eggs, milk and sugar to nourish.
Entice them with an aromatic display of spices.

Method:

Combine, using brute force and bare knuckles.
Manipulate the amalgamation of identities
as complex sticky doughs of silences.

Through years of enforcement,
a now pliable dough may be allowed
to settle at the Cape Table.

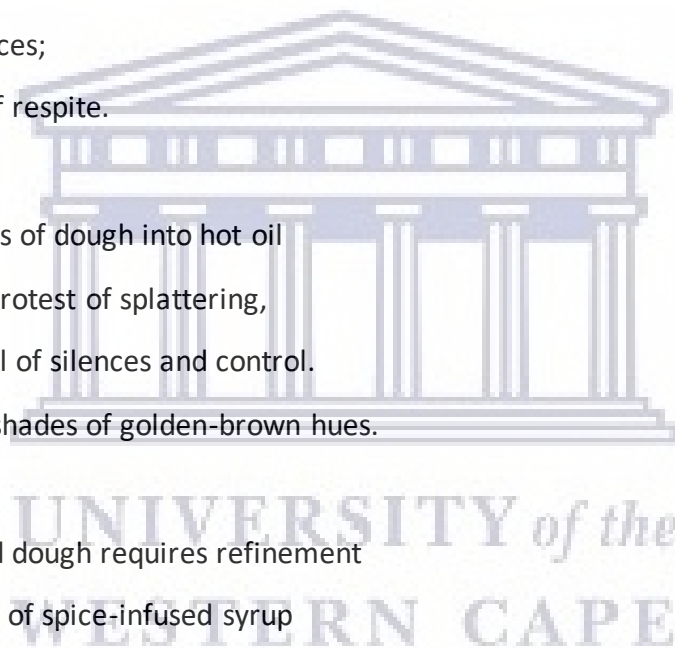
Before knocking it back once again:

using hands to divide and shape
those settled at the Table
into categories of aesthetics,
separate shades and places;
and leave for a period of respite.

Dropping these oval balls of dough into hot oil
they sink into a violent protest of splattering,
an uncontrollable refusal of silences and control.
An uprising in different shades of golden-brown hues.

However, this spicy fried dough requires refinement
—a further bubbling bath of spice-infused syrup
and a final dusting of fine coconut,
to still appease aesthetics and soothe the heat.

Serve warm,
as a re-remembering of our multiple ancestors' enforced journeys
across and along Indian Oceans,
as a retelling for those who wish for us to forget
our unlettered stories.



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