INTRODUCTION

Food and Families in the Making

This is a book about domestic food preparation. It asks how we know cooking. Yet, this seemingly simple question raises many more questions, such as who is cooking, where and for whom, or, indeed, why one should cook at all in view of continuous technological change and women's emancipation. In the low-income Marrakchi homes where the experiences recounted here took shape, women made tremendous efforts to prepare good food for their families and were proud of doing so, despite their limited temporal and financial resources. In the absence of savings in a bank account and of health insurance, coupled with a cultural emphasis on social connectivity via food, domestic cooking assured the reproduction of everyday family life in the context of widespread poverty and food insecurity. In exploring these questions and driven by the desire to understand why many low-income women continue to make so many meals from scratch even when they worked for a wage, this book turned out to be not only a foray into the making of food and of everyday family life but also a political economy of cooking that departs from previous studies of food and cooking and from ethnographies of everyday life in Morocco and the Middle East and North Africa in three different ways.

Domestic cooking is a bodily practice that is often difficult to verbalize and to describe. At the same time, it is mundane and familiar to many. As a result, cooking knowledge is often labelled as nonverbal or embodied knowledge. Yet, while there exist some studies of *what* cooks do or know, *how* they do or know still remains nebulous. Rather than describe what it is or is not and take for granted that readers understand what is meant by embodied knowledge, I first propose to consider the engagement of the cook with food as a form of multisensory knowledge that might not surprise those who have been to Marrakech, or to places with a similarly dynamic food culture, and who perceived food and everyday life through all their senses. In this context, understanding how a person learns and knows cooking requires immersing oneself with all senses in everyday life. Thus, based on my own experience of learning to cook, this book endeavours to understand and make accessible the bodily knowledge of the domestic cook

and how it is reproduced in the context of material and social change. It does so through the thick description of my own engagement with food in the interludes and that of my research participants in the main chapters. Learning to cook and understanding it – method and theory – are thus one and the same. Ideally, in reading this book, my words will resonate with the experiences of everyone who cooks, yet struggles to express precisely what it is they know.

Although my focus is on everyday practices and bodily knowledge, this book does not stop there. Just like a bite of homemade flatbread can expose the whole cosmology of Moroccan foodways, this book also attends to the multiple nested layers and scalar relationships of people's interactions with the material substances of food. These interactions are manifested not only in idiosyncratic bodily experiences but also in family and social relations, in transactions in the streets, shops and markets of a rapidly urbanizing society, which are, in turn, situated in a much broader national and global context. In other words, the study of cooking knowledge connects and condenses the social, cultural, spiritual, ecological, economic and political dimensions of everyday life in a way that can be experienced phenomenologically. For instance, bodily practices of food preparation also always relate to changing norms and values about womanhood and family life, which depend on income, class and identity more broadly. In the monotheistic context of Muslim Morocco, food is also sacred and cooking establishes a connection to God, which more abstractly helps cooks to account for the unpredictability that is inherent in any activity. Equally, Marrakchi cooking practices shape and are shaped by the wider Moroccan food system, which in the context of a drought-prone climate is based on a historically grown 'participatory paternalism' (Holden 2009), whereby the state heeds the preferences and practices of the urban poor on the one hand, while, on the other hand, marginalizing them economically and politically. Through its engaged attention to the lived experience of a handful of low-income Marrakchi cooks – at the confluence of the materiality of food and the sociality of the family – this book contributes a political economy of cooking that considers women's food knowledge as not only *shaped by* but also *shaping* broader debates about health, poverty and political stability in Morocco and the region.

This approach is based on the more general theoretical argument that the ethnographic attention to bodily knowledge as multisensory resonance with one's material and social environment necessarily involves dissonance too, which leads me to the third major contribution. Although it champions women and the knowledge of the cook, this book is not simply a romantic depiction of everyday food and family life; domestic food work is hard work.[1] Rather, it argues that in the absence of reliable food standards and affordable health insurance, making good food, as my research participants strove to do, is the single strongest lever low-income women have to ensure the health and wellbeing of themselves and their families. In other words, if these women do not care, nobody does. In

showcasing the mostly hidden but hard work that especially low-income women across the globe do in order to reproduce their families and everyday culture, this book seeks to give these people – and all women who cook – dignity for what they do and in which many take pride doing, not despite but *because of* material and social change.

Overall, the making of Moroccan foods and families teaches us something important, namely, that reproducing bodily knowledge and the family is worth it. This message is especially salient in the context of the so-called enlightened West, where bodily work especially in domestic contexts – and thus predominantly women's knowledge – has been systematically devalued for centuries (cf. Smith 2004; Spiekermann 2018), amounting to a double devaluation of what women continue to (know how to) do the world over: making good food and making the family. This double devaluation has never been more evident than now, in crisis. Writing this book in the middle of a global pandemic caused by COVID-19 – while also cooking for my own children more often than I am used to due to repeated nursery and school closures – revealed a common faultline that marks not only Moroccan but also my own society: willingly or not, women are called on to cook and care for their families, while governmental institutions fail us.

Three Marrakchi Families

During more than ten years of research, I have encountered and worked with many low-income families in both rural and urban Morocco. But the three families I have learned cooking with and from during my fieldwork between the summers of 2012 and 2013 are the protagonists of this book. At the time, they all lived in the medina, the historic centre of Marrakech. I revisited all three families repeatedly between 2016 and 2018, during my research project on bread in Marrakech and Beni Mellal, and remain in touch with them today. To gain a deeper insight into everyday food preparations and family life, I adopt Miller's portrait approach (2008, cited in Sutton 2014: 152), which contends that individual people can display a pattern in their approach to everyday life that is representative of the society in which they live. Each individual or family portrait synthesizes larger, recognizable themes that resonate with different aspects of daily life. In other words, I follow Geertz's motto that 'We hope to find in the little what eludes us in the large, to stumble upon general truths while sorting through special cases' (1971: 4).

I first lived and worked with the family of Fatimzahra between September and December 2012. I met her in 2007 when she was my neighbour and – thanks to having attended secondary school – taught me *darija* (Moroccan Arabic dialect) while I attended a French-taught course at the University of Marrakech.[2] When

I began fieldwork with them, Fatimzahra lived with her mother Hajja and her older brother Mohamed in the same old *riad* (a house with an open courtyard) in the south of the medina. Her younger brother Hassan had recently bought a small, newly built flat in Socoma, one of many purpose-built quarters on the city's periphery, where he spent most of his spare time. During the period of my fieldwork, Fatimzahra was in her mid-forties and unmarried. Hajja was in her late sixties and had been widowed for more than ten years. Fatimzahra's brothers, fifty-year-old Mohamed and thirty-five-year-old Hassan, were also unmarried. Although Fatimzahra earned some money mending clothes for neighbours or teaching *darija* to foreigners, the family relied on the income of Hassan from his low-paying but stable and respectable government job. Mohamed held only occasional and low-paid jobs, mainly to finance his fondness for alcohol. His alcohol addiction caused occasional domestic disturbances during my stay, such as loud nightly singing and arguments when Hajja tried to prevent him from doing so. To soothe these tensions, Hassan occasionally invited Fatimzahra, Hajja and myself to stay at his new apartment for a period of days or weeks, as was the case when I joined Fatimzahra and Hajja upon my arrival in Marrakech in early September 2012. Most of the time, however, I occupied my own room in their medina *riad* for which I contributed a monthly rent.

As the senior woman in the household, Hajja was the lead cook. She managed food supplies and provisioning, and planned and prepared lunch, the main meal of the day. Despite her illiteracy, she remembered hundreds of detailed recipes and food prices, and seamlessly switched between the three currencies still in use at the time.[3] Because of her rheumatic legs, Hajja did not usually go shopping herself, as lead cooks tend to do in urban Morocco. Instead, she discussed a shopping list with Fatimzahra, who went shopping nearly every day despite her own disability.[4] Fatimzahra was also in charge of breakfast, snack and dinner preparations as well as most other domestic chores. This task allocation changed when Hajja went on the *haj*, a month-long pilgrimage to Mecca – one of the five obligations or 'pillars' of Islam – and Fatimzahra replaced her in the role of lead cook throughout October 2012.[5] I advanced to the position of second cook and became much more involved in cooking and domestic work than I would have otherwise been in this constellation. Indeed, my extra pair of hands was needed when entire days were devoted to the preparation of food to celebrate Hajja's safe return with her extended family throughout November and December 2012.

Their family speaks to broader processes in Morocco in several ways. Fatimzahra's maternal family originated and was still based in Taroudant, in the Souss Valley south of Marrakech. Although the Souss and the surrounding Atlas Mountains are predominantly Amazigh (indigenous peoples) territory, Hajja's origin is urban and Arab just like her husband's.[6] The moving of Hajja to Marrakech as a bride in the early 1960s is exemplary of the first major wave of urbanization after independence from the French Protectorate in 1956.[7] Her children claimed

sharifi descent through their father, materialized in the fading beauty of her family's old *riad* and manifest in a sense of social superiority.[8] Hajja sometimes reminisced of the past when she still cooked elaborate meals for her husband's many visitors. Since his death, the family struggled financially and lost much of their social status in the neighbourhood. Like many formerly noble Marrakchi families before them, they contributed to the medina's gentrification and Marrakech's urban sprawl when they eventually sold their family *riad* to a foreign neighbour and relocated to a much smaller but newly built flat in close proximity to Hassan and his own young family in 2016 (cf. Coslado, McGuinness and Miller 2013; Ernst 2013). Although they missed life in the medina, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fatimzahra and Hajja rejoiced in having moved out of their crumbling *riad* and the dense medina. Thanks to Hassan's government job, the family have weathered the pandemic and food price inflation thus far.

Between January and May 2013, I worked with Rachida. She had moved from the surrounding Haouz plains to Marrakech in the 1990s to marry Mohamed, a distant relative of her family. During the period of my fieldwork, they still lived in the same tiny house in Bab Ailen in the western medina. Rachida is Amazigh, whereas Mohamed is Arab. I met her at the beginning of my fieldwork through her work as a cleaner in the house of friends in the former colonial French neighbourhood Gueliz, derived from the French term *église* for church. At the time, Rachida was forty years old and had two daughters, twenty-year-old Zakia and fifteen-year-old Ibtissam. Mohamed was twenty years older than Rachida and had been unemployed for roughly fifteen years. Rachida was partially literate; she had also learned to speak French during her full-time work as a self-employed cleaner mostly in houses owned by European foreigners. As for many low-income rural migrants, her children's education had been a main reason for marrying into the city. Indeed, Zakia went to Marrakech's public university during my stay, while Ibtissam attended a nearby public high school. As is often the case in low-income households, Rachida was the sole income earner in her household. She earned less than the monthly national minimum wage of 2,500 Dh at the time.[9] Her only insurance was her extended family spread across Morocco.

Their busy routines outside of the home were one reason why I did not live with Rachida's family. Moreover, their house had only one bedroom and was very small overall. In order to work with them, I rented a small studio in Gueliz. However, as a consequence of not living with them, neither Rachida nor Zakia allowed me to participate properly in food preparation or contribute financially besides small gifts such as fruits. I was considered their guest throughout my fieldwork. I observed rather than joined Rachida's or Zakia's food preparation whenever they invited me and I shopped, ate and occasionally cleaned up with them. This happened once or twice on a weekly basis, typically during weekends when Rachida did not work or whenever Zakia had a day off from university. Although Rachida was the lead cook and managed all food work, Zakia often prepared lunch on

the days when Rachida returned late from her wage work. Ibtissam regularly cleaned up and tidied the kitchen. Occasionally she also helped to process ingredients, mainly cutting and peeling vegetables, but she did not cook. Mohamed was sometimes asked to bring homemade bread to the public oven or to make last-minute purchases of milk or eggs at the local corner shop, but generally he did not help with the household chores. Meriem, a younger unmarried sister of Rachida, also temporarily lived with them and took over lunch preparations whenever she stayed there. I sometimes observed her cook. She had helped raise Zakia and Ibtissam years ago when Rachida took over the role of breadwinner after her husband became unemployed.

In the spring of 2013 Meriem suddenly fell ill and stayed with Rachida to go to a hospital for diagnostic tests. She died one month before my fieldwork ended of an undiagnosed illness, causing immense grief and sadness. In 2017, thanks also to Zakia's income from her new job as a teacher in a private primary school, Rachida finally managed to secure a government grant to rebuild the old adobe house in cement, gaining valuable space and a refurbished kitchen. It is thanks to Zakia's, and later also Ibtissam's, steady incomes that Rachida and her family weathered the uncertainty of the pandemic. In fact, compared to the time of my fieldwork with them and to the other two families at the time of writing, the family thrives and was able to afford the weddings of both Zakia and Ibtissam in 2021.

The third family I lived and worked with was that of thirty-year-old Aicha and her husband Hassan, ten years her senior, with their four- and one-year-old daughters Zahra and Rita. I met Aicha in 2007 in the *riad* I was staying at during my university studies, where she was working as a cleaner and where she also met her future husband. She migrated to Marrakech from the Tadla plains below the Middle Atlas Mountains at the age of seventeen to support her natal family financially, waitressing in restaurants and bars until she found the more socially acceptable work as a cleaner. Aicha also befriended Fatimzahra during my second stay in Marrakech in 2007. By September 2012, Aicha had married Hassan, had just given birth to their second daughter Rita and was about to move out of her mother-in-law's house with her small family. Aicha and Hassan are Imazighen (plural of Amazigh), yet they belong to two different dialect groups and thus spoke mostly *darija* with each other and with their daughters. While her husband worked in a nearby tourist boutique and earned their main income, Aicha's income paid for items such as fresh fruits, children's clothes or household appliances. Like Rachida, Aicha had no contract or social security, but she participated in a local women's saving group (*jama'a daret*). Aicha had not completed her primary school education because at the age of seven, when her father was incapacitated to work due to a work accident, she had to run the household while her mother started to work as a picker in the surrounding agricultural fields. After moving to Marrakech, Aicha learned to read and write in Arabic script at an

evening school and learned to speak French at her workplace through interacting with foreign guests.

Although I had not intended it, Aicha invited me to live and work with her in her rented flat in the south of the medina when no other suitable family was willing to accommodate me in their household.[10] I lived with her family from June until late August 2013 and paid Aicha a monthly rent. During the first two months, we lived in their two-bedroom flat, but for the period of Ramadan, the month when Muslims fast during daylight hours, we moved to her employer's *riad*, who had gone on holiday. Because she worked afternoons only, Aicha had more time for daily food preparation than Rachida, and I had more occasions to join her. Even though Aicha's family was small at the time of my fieldwork and she was the only cook in her household, her extended family was a constant presence in her daily life. Aicha's parents – whom she still supported financially – and her two younger brothers visited regularly. Most memorable was their visit during that year's Ramadan, the first Aicha hosted, for it temporarily resembled multigenerational food preparation. Since both Aicha's mother and Halima, her twenty-year-old sister-in-law, only spoke *tamazight*, Aicha had to translate when I was present. After my fieldwork, Aicha and Hassan moved into a larger rented flat in the same neighbourhood and had three more children. Fully dependent on employment in tourism, both her and her husband's sources of income collapsed in the spring of 2020. As the quasi-family member that I had become over the years, I stepped in to partially compensate for their losses.

My own familial situation was also relevant during my fieldwork. Although I undertook my fieldwork alone, many of my research participants knew or got to know my visiting partner as well as my parents, my two sisters and various friends. Later on, I also brought my own children. This allowed them to conceptualize me as a social and cultural being, a hugely important dimension in relationship building in Morocco, as this book will illustrate. The different stages of my life – from being an unmarried woman to being a wife and mother – mattered on both practical and ideological levels. For instance, although my research participants acknowledged that I was 'like' married at the time of my fieldwork, my partner, with whom I shared a household back home, was not able to stay with me at any of the families. We travelled instead. When meeting with other men in the neighbourhood – whether for fieldwork or not – I risked losing not only my own reputation but also that of my host family, which was a regular source of tension.[11] At the same time, not yet having any children of my own, I was considered an inexperienced woman, even a girl (cf. Zvan Elliott 2015). This status facilitated my research in the intimate context of family life, where I was conceptualized as a learning daughter and sister, but it made movement outside of the immediate neighbourhood unpleasant. I was often verbally harassed by male strangers. To prevent this, Aicha sometimes sent her daughters with me on errands, substituting for the children I did not yet have.[12] The importance

Moroccans attach to children and their mark of mature womanhood became even more pronounced during my later fieldwork on bread. Being a mother gave me trustworthiness when interviewing numerous unknown women in their homes, places that are often guarded from foreigners. It also enabled me to speak to male millers and bakers as well as wheat traders and farmers without incurring a loss of anyone's reputation.

Although my portrayal is necessarily partial and remains temporally and spatially situated in the unique life trajectories of my research participants and their families, these three families represent an important subset of Moroccan society for two reasons. First, in relation to similarly sized cities, especially Rabat and Casablanca, the hubs of major government institutions and of industries and services respectively, Marrakech itself is special. A commercial hub on trade routes between western Africa, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, the former royal city has a thousand-year-long history as a cosmopolitan marketplace. Because of its rich architectural heritage, its oasis-like urban ecology and climate, and its location below the High Atlas Mountains, the city has more recently developed into a national and international tourist hotspot and became a favoured residence of European and American expats (Ernst 2013).[13] The city's daily life and infrastructure reflect this. Low-income Marrakchis in the medina are routinely exposed to foreigners, often working in the related informal tourist economy. Compared to precolonial neighbourhoods elsewhere in Morocco, Marrakech's medina is well preserved and its tourist hotspots benefited from electricity and running water relatively early, following its declaration as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) cultural world heritage site in 1984 (Schmidt 2005). The downsides are, according to my research participants, higher rents, reduced amenities and reduced security in daily life in the main tourist thoroughfares. Those who do not earn in this sector, and who can afford to, move from the medina into the fast-growing urban peripheries, as Hajja and Fatimzahra eventually did.

Second, low-income Marrakchis differ from other urban or rural Moroccans described in the literature. For instance, contrary to the low-income Casaouis described by Strava (2021) and the middle-income Casaouis, Rbatis and Fassis described by Cohen (2004), Montgomery (2019) and Newcomb (2009, 2017) respectively, who are either long-term urban inhabitants or lived for more than one generation in the city, many of Marrakech's low- and middle-income families are more recent migrants, whose rural origins still shape their contemporary urban life. At the same time, by moving to the city, their material and social lives differ markedly from the lives and the relatives they have left behind (cf. Crawford 2008; Zvan Elliott 2015); between a material life marked by scarcity and by abundance for those who can afford it; between a generation of unschooled mothers born in the countryside and a generation of schooled daughters born in the city. Despite their actively maintained migrant origins, the three families

were socially and economically embedded in their respective neighbourhoods. They earned their livelihoods largely in the informal economy and their children had access to public education, but hardly any other state services, reflecting the broader context of poverty and general uncertainty that mark their lives. Yet, none of the three families self-identified as poor or – for a lack of identification with their wage work – as working class, hence why I refrain from calling them either. For them, poverty is considered as more than just financial dearth: in the absence of social welfare institutions, really poor is someone who has no one to rely on if things go wrong.[14]

Like low-income Casaouis (Strava 2021) and Rbatis (Bogaert 2018), most Marrakchi inhabitants have neither benefited from the many urban redevelopment projects over the last decades nor from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-induced economic liberalization since the 1980s.[15] Not surprisingly, Marrakchis fundamentally distrust governmental institutions and political actors (Citron 2004). More so than other Moroccan cities, which boast a small but important middle class and a largely functioning urban infrastructure, Marrakech is marked by a strong divide between its wealthy minority and its poor majority. This divide is perceptible across the city: oasis villas, ostentatious malls and luxurious cars coexist with slums, street markets and carts pulled by donkeys. These two worlds meet within the walls of the medina (see Preface). While perhaps contributing to its (inter)national charm and appeal of 'authenticity', Marrakech's political economy is determined by informality and a lack of urban policies around urban infrastructures ranging from markets and housing to industries (Citron 2004; Sebti et al. 2009). In everyday life this translates into poorly paid and insecure jobs in the informal (tourist) economy such as Rachida's, unaffordable medical treatment, causing Meriem's premature death, or inadequate housing for lower-income families and a push into the urban peripheries, as eventually happened to Fatimzahra's family. Needless to say, the financial situations of low-income Moroccans like them remain highly insecure, as the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022 made eminently clear, when Marrakech's booming tourist economy collapsed and many Marrakchis like Aicha and her husband lost their incomes. The current global inflation of food prices further exacerbates this enduring sense of a state of crisis. And yet, the Moroccan monarchy remains a paradox paragon of political stability amid perpetual regional and global instability. Paying attention to the domestic work and life of low-income Marrakchi cooks and their families will provide an original and urgently needed understanding of why this may be so.

Material and Social Continuity and Change

Domestic cooking is not only central to the reproduction of family life, but also contributes to reproducing society and culture at large. This becomes evident when considering all networks, discourses and practices enabling contemporary provisioning, processing, preparing, serving, eating and disposing of food, which together constitute a domestic cook's knowledge. All are relevant to the making of a meal, as this book will illustrate. At the same time, what the preparation of food entails is radically changing the world over. My research participants are no exception. Thus, in order to understand contemporary food preparation and how it is continuous and changing at the same time, it is important to consider the past.

Of the three families, Hajja's and Fatimzahra's foodways can be described as more urban and thus royal, with more distinctly pan-Arab influences marked by saffron or sweet and savoury combinations (cf. Aylwin 1999; Rosenberger 1999). Not only is Hajja's hometown in the Souss Valley well known for its regional cuisine, it is also reputed to produce excellent cooks who in the past used to be employed as cooks in the royal kitchens (Hal 1996). This found expression in Hajja's access to and knowledgeable use of regional ingredients such as saffron or argan oil, the combination of sugar and meat in dishes such as *bastila* (almond and chicken pie) or prune and almond stew, and her command of complex recipes for *haluwat* (sweets, especially patisserie-style pastries) such as *shebbakiya* or *mhancha*.[16] The family's foodways changed after the death of Hajja's husband. Although Hajja owns fruit trees near her hometown and receives a share of the annual harvest through her maternal family, during the period of my fieldwork she could not afford to buy and prepare many of the speciality foods that she and her children grew up with. As a result, her daughter did not fully acquire a Soussi taste. Rather, Fatimzahra introduced new recipes from television shows, cookbooks and her neighbours and friends to complement her mother's Soussi cuisine.

Rachida's foodways can be described as more rural than those of Hajja and Fatimzahra. They were marked by a smaller repertoire of specialty ingredients due to her growing up in the Haouz plains surrounding Marrakech and her role as sole breadwinner with less time and money for cooking. Her Amazigh heritage and family connections influenced her wide-ranging use of cereals and herbs for cooking, such as barley or wild thyme, which she received from her natal family in the Haouz plains and the Ourika Valley close to Marrakech. At the same time, Rachida did not know how to prepare typical urban Moroccan dishes such as *bastila* or *shebbakiya*. Nevertheless, despite her full-time work as a cleaner, she spent much of her spare time processing and preparing food, including homemade bread. Not surprisingly, her daughters both hoped they would not have to cook as much when they would marry. Although Rachida insisted that they learn to prepare everything 'the way it should be', in exchange for help, Rachida's daugh-

ters employed their digital literacy to introduce new recipes such as homemade pizza or pound cakes.

Aicha's foodways were also marked by her rural Amazigh origins. However, since her husband was an Amazigh from the Souss with a distinct taste, as Hajja's case also shows, Aicha learned to incorporate his childhood tastes into her cooking, such as *amlou* (a spread containing almonds, argan oil and honey). Perhaps due to her relative youth and the fact that she had just established her own household when I began my fieldwork, Aicha reached out more actively to widen her cooking knowledge to include Soussi regional cuisine and royal urban dishes like *bastila* or the Marrakchi specialty *terda* (a lentil dish based on leftover bread). It was only when her first child was born, nearly ten years after she moved to Marrakech, that Aicha began to regularly prepare homemade foods again and was proud of doing so. She worked to have her own money for buying relatively valued and artisanal foods such as fruits or honey, so that her daughters would grow into healthy and clever women.

Although marked by different life trajectories, these families' daily food routines and diets also point to shared routines and patterns. Most daily meals were remarkably similar among my research participants. For most breakfasts, leftover flatbread from the day before was briefly warmed up in the pan, dipped into butter or olive oil and served with either tea or coffee. When no bread was left, fresh bread was usually bought and quickly spread with butter or cream cheese in a nearby *hanut* (corner shop), often on the way to school and/or work. Lunch was considered the main meal of the day, even if it was not always consumed every day, as was the case in Rachida's household up to three times a week depending on their busy schedules of work, school and university. Most days, my research participants prepared a *tajine* (stew) in the name-giving earthenware pan or in a pressure cooker to speed up cooking time, using seasonal vegetables and a little bit of meat 'for the taste', except on Fridays or Sundays, when couscous was prepared for lunch. *Tajine* was always accompanied by and eaten with bread, ideally homemade during the morning. Whenever available, a small salad, a self-squeezed juice or fresh fruit were served too.

In the afternoon, a shared snack (*kaskrut*, from the French term *casse-croûte*) was common in all three families consisting of heavily sugared tea or coffee as well as more bread or *msemen* (a layered pancake) with butter and honey or, increasingly, a pound cake or even pizza. If other commitments such as wage work prevented a lunch, this snack could be replaced by a more substantial meal based on *tajine*. Generally, *kaskrut* was a commensal moment that often involved visiting neighbours, friends or extended family members and reflects the strong cultural emphasis on hospitality common to Muslim societies. Dinners were considered the least important of daily meals and often consisted of leftovers from lunch, sometimes a quick pasta or rice dish and, more rarely still, convenience foods such as yoghurts or street food bought spontaneously. For all three

families – as well as for all other low-income Moroccans I worked with – bread was the main staple of their everyday diet and was revered as such. At the same time, my research participants often blamed bread – along with sugar, another daily staple of the urban poor (Mintz 1986) – for the rising rates of noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes and heart diseases among urban Moroccans (cf. Food and Agriculture Organization et al. 2020; Mokhtar et al. 2001).

As in most low-income Marrakchi households where my research took me over the years, Hajja, Rachida and Aicha had had access to reliable electricity only for roughly one decade. Still, refrigerator-freezers and smaller electric household appliances such as handheld blenders were a common sight in 2012 and 2013. Although potable running water was also common by then, with one single tap in the kitchen and one in the bathroom, central heating systems and hot running water were largely absent across low-income medina homes. While Rachida and Aicha had recently bought semi-automatic washing machines and rejoiced at the reduced workload, dishwashers were not common (cf. Dike 2021). Bigger kitchens like Hajja's often contained a low plastic table with a few stools around it. Smaller ones often resembled fitted kitchens with a countertop, hanging cabinets and a 'modern', i.e. high table with a few chairs as in Aicha's home. For cooking, most households relied on subsidized liquid petroleum gas (LPG) sold in cylinders of two sizes.[17] The larger cylinders were used for a two- or four-stove combined hob and oven, while the smaller ones were used as a single, mobile LPG burner. Most cooks also owned a small adobe frame to grill over charcoal, mostly for special occasions such as Ramadan or 'Id al-kebir, the feast of the great sacrifice. With widespread 3G internet access, smartphones became common among younger Moroccans towards the end of my fieldwork. These often served as kitchen tools to communicate, entertain or research recipes online.

Material continuity and change is also manifest in the broader urban infrastructure. Although Marrakech boasts a number of smaller and larger supermarkets, traditional markets were very popular among low-income Marrakchis. These latter supplied all the daily, weekly and monthly necessities of food and drink, making food provisioning a local practice. Like all transport hubs and marketplaces, Marrakech also offered a vast range of affordable street foods, which provided occasional alternatives to homemade food for low-income families, albeit in the form of snacks rather than complete meals. Although a huge range of restaurants and cafés exist throughout the city, these were generally not frequented by my research participants, and certainly not by the women among them. Rather, most low-income cooks strove to bake their own bread and cook at least one meal every day, shaping the city's infrastructure in subtle ways. For instance, each neighbourhood boasts an electric mill and at least one public oven to grind wheat grains into flour and bake the characteristic large homemade bread loaves. Fresh food is sold at nearly every corner, meeting the general preference for raw, unprocessed ingredients. In addition, mobile peddlers

travel through every little alley to sell seasonal foods such as fish or barbary figs door to door.

Social change is less obvious to the eye, but it can still be perceived in the city. For instance, school attendance is compulsory for all children until the age of thirteen and it was common for girls of low-income backgrounds to attend secondary school and increasingly also university. Since many low-income women work for a wage, women of all ages are present in the streets and markets at all times, which marks a decisive break with urban life in the past (Mernissi 1987). This is also due to structural adjustment programmes and agricultural reforms in the 1980s, pushing large numbers of impoverished rural Moroccans to try their luck in the cities. The prospect of an independent income lured predominantly younger generations (Crawford 2008), women were particularly attracted by education and the promises of a capitalist labour market in fast-growing cities such as Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakech (Kapchan 1996; Montgomery 2019; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006). Women like Rachida and Aicha, and even Hajja one generation earlier, gained some freedom when they left behind their natal families – and the tight social control – yet without losing their rural kin and sense of identity, as was evident in the constant flow of regional knowledge, of foods and of people in and out of Marrakech (cf. Graf 2018).

Education in general and literacy in particular divide generations of women most notably.[18] Despite the Arabization programmes that have been running since Moroccan independence, everyday communication and literacy in Morocco is largely based on the oral Arabic dialect *darija* and the Latin script, which includes absorbed French terms dating from the Protectorate. Until today, French and the Latin script remain important tools in the professional and business world, and increasingly also English. At the same time, many rural migrants to Moroccan cities speak Tamazight as a first language, which only became an official national language in 2011.[19] They grew up speaking one of the three distinct Tamazight dialects depending on their regional origins, which bear no linguistic resemblance to *darija* or to *fusha*, the Modern Standard Arabic that many Moroccans still scarcely use in their daily lives (cf. Boutieri 2016; Sadiqi 2014). In an increasingly visually and digitally mediated world, generational differences in literacy acquire yet more nuanced meanings. What exactly being literate means in Morocco is thus highly varied and context-specific, as the protagonists of this book also demonstrate.

Furthermore, for poor, unmarried 'girls', it is nothing new to work for a wage both in rural and in urban Morocco (Cairoli 2011; Montgomery 2019; Zvan Elliott 2015).[20] However, in the last couple of decades it has become much more common for married urban women to also continue to work for a wage after marriage and childbirth (Conway-Long 2006; Kapchan 1996; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006). These latter women, including those I conducted research with, work for financial reasons and not because they seek to realize a professional career or

identify with their jobs like the 'global middle class' described by Cohen (2004). Rather, earning an income allows them to buy 'treats' such as fruits or clothes for their children, and, in the longer term, to establish their own conjugal household and manage all food work independent of their mothers-in-law, who have often exclusive control over younger women's domestic work and life. Although policy reforms since the early 2000s, like that of the family law (*mudawana*) advocating women's right to divorce among others, are fostering awareness and discussions about women's emancipation, they have not (yet) contributed to changing the everyday lives of young low-income women or unmarried 'girls' (Zvan Elliott 2015). Patriarchal values based on the dominance of men and seniors still rule, despite palpable social change in the city, and play an important role in contemporary domestic cooking.

Living and Thinking Domestic Cooking

The above descriptions point to the tremendous cultural importance of food work in everyday family life in Morocco. However, no food-centred monographs exist; even in the Middle East and North Africa, very few anthropologists have studied everyday domestic food practices.[21] Although food figures in some ethnographies of everyday life in Morocco, it is often studied rather casually and within different contexts. For example, in rural Morocco the familial production and processing of food are central to low-income families' economic livelihoods, especially in the absence of alternative incomes (Crawford 2008). By contrast, in middle- and upper-income families in urban Morocco, food preparation plays an increasingly minor role in everyday domestic work due to a professionalization of women, access to supermarkets and kitchen technologies or the ability to employ other women to do the work (Kapchan 1996; Montgomery 2019; Newcomb 2017). My ethnographic research with low-income Marrakchi families fills this gap by bringing together the study of food and of the family. It shows how and why cooking continues to be important.

To understand the reproduction of food and of the family in this context, I draw on anthropological food studies from across the world, an ever-growing research field since the 1990s (Mintz and du Bois 2002; Sutton 2010; Wilk 2006). Yet, even within anthropological food scholarship, ethnographic studies of cooking are relatively scarce and focus mostly on the United States, Europe or other highly industrialized countries like Israel. In various ways, these studies attempt to understand *what* cooking knowledge is, describing it as embodied and largely nonverbal. The knowledge to cook is either reported to be transmitted from older to younger women or men, or acquired from cookbooks and other written sources. However, these authors do not agree about the effects of material and social change on cooking knowledge and its reproduction. Some

conclude that bodily practices are gradually being lost (Abarca 2006; Counihan 2004, 2009; Giard 1998; Gvion 2012) – and to some extent echo the public perception of cooking skills declining with the advent of affordable technology and the individualization of societies. Others focus on cooking practices and their reproduction as being in constant flux and reflective of changing technologies and societies (Adapon 2008; Short 2006; Sutton 2014; Trubek 2017).[22] I follow in the footsteps of the latter perspective, with emphasis on *how* cooking knowledge is constituted and reproduced in the context of change.

Studying domestic cooking knowledge lends itself to a phenomenological approach to sharing the lived experience of domestic cooks. As Ingold put it: 'We do not have to think the world in order to live in it, but we do have to live in the world in order to think it' (2011: 418). Although critiquing the emphasis on societal continuity rather than change, phenomenologically inspired anthropologists like him draw on Mauss' concept of techniques of the body as 'the ways in which from society to society men [*sic*] know how to use their bodies' (1973: 70), coupled with Bourdieu's (1977) analysis of how people learn and share a practical sense of the world. According to practice theory, routine practices such as the use of space or the daily preparation of food are internalized structures, a habitus, which disposes people to do something in a certain way without the need to reflect upon it. Since the late 1980s, anthropologists combined practice theory with Merleau-Ponty's (2001) phenomenology by focusing on embodiment and the subjective experience of the world as lived (Csordas 1994; Jackson 1996; Stoller 1997; Weiss 1996).

Ethnographies of craft learning prove particularly helpful, since they argue that understanding a nonverbal practice requires doing, and advocate for apprenticeship as an ethnographic method (e.g. Coy 1989; Grasseni 2008; Marchand 2009; Portisch 2010; Wacquant 2004). Not surprisingly, methodology is key to these ethnographies. The ethnographer joins in the transmission of craft skills and a broader conditioning of the artisan body through the 'integration of morals, muscles and mind' (Marchand 2009: 6). Wacquant describes such an approach as anthropology 'from the body' (2004: viii); a form of 'surrender' through immersing oneself in the practice that is being studied, what he calls 'observant participation' (2004: 4 fn. 3, 11 fn. 16). And so I surrendered to Moroccan cooking.

Yet, in doing so, I realized that learning to cook also differs from more formal or semi-formal craft apprenticeships. Learning to cook – as well as understanding learning – is often done without deliberation by the cook-to-be as it is in more formal apprenticeships such as carpet weaving (Portisch 2010), masonry (Marchand 2009) or boxing (Wacquant 2004). Equally, because it is such a mundane practice, embedded in everyday family life, learning to cook has no beginning or end point; it always takes place as we hear, smell, touch, taste and see food in the making around us, even in the womb. Thus, some form of learning takes place whether we seek it out or not.

My own experience is indicative of this. After fieldwork, when I began analysing my ethnographic materials, I was puzzled and seemingly unable to fully heed my learning body (see the interludes). It took a while before I understood that my methodological attention had been biased by vision and sight as my main perceptive tools. In fact, most ethnographic craft apprenticeships rely primarily on participant *observation*, in particular through focusing on imitation. Yet, my fieldnotes hardly contain any material based on direct observation and even less on imitation. It was only after fieldwork, when noticing this absence and grappling with whether I had learned to cook the Moroccan way at all, that I realized how the study of cooking engages all senses, often beyond what I could observe or verbalize in fieldnotes; my bodily experience had become ethnographic material.[23]

Participant Perception as Theory and Method

A collection of such different practices as provisioning, processing, preparing, serving, eating and disposing of food, domestic cooking involves a cook's multisensory, often synesthetic perception of the entire material and social environment that makes cooking possible (cf. Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011). In this context, where, when and how does the knowledge of the domestic cook and its apprenticeship begin, and does it ever end? To take seriously and account for this open-endedness and the sensory multiplicity of bodily experience and learning, I suggest speaking of 'participant perception', both of the research participant and of the ethnographer. Participant perception captures not only a way of learning to cook, as I describe throughout the main chapters; it also captures my own growing understanding of domestic cooking as I describe in the interludes and in Chapter 2. Participant perception provides the methodological and theoretical basis for my understanding of the reproduction of cooking knowledge.

By incorporating the ethnographer's multisensory experience during and after fieldwork, participant perception joins the methodological attention to practices with the theoretical attention to the senses.[24] In its successful attempt to end the 'hegemony of sight' (Howes 1991: 4) – which is deeply engrained in Western culture and in anthropological scholarship since Enlightenment (Stoller 1989) – the anthropology of the senses places all senses at the centre of bodily modes of knowing.[25] Stoller (1989: 7) was an early proponent of 'epistemological humility', teaching us that the ethnographer should not only observe, but also touch, taste, smell and hear along during fieldwork. Stoller (1997) describes the dialectic between the sensory and the analytical as a form of 'sensuous scholarship'. Yet, participant perception brings the understanding of the cook and the understanding of the ethnographer closer together, without at the same time equalling what are necessarily vastly different experiences. It recognizes much more forcefully that I – just like my research participants – can only know what is opened up to

me by my experience, and that in learning to cook, I also understand cooking. As a result, participant perception manifests itself in many different ways during and after fieldwork.

In practice, the notion of participant perception means that the ethnographer's involvement extends far beyond direct observation and involves participation at various distances. Since many daily practices are gendered in Morocco, as a woman I spent much of my time with other women, participating in the domestic activities that women of various ages do, including but not limited to provisioning, processing, cooking, baking and eating food. While I often joined the engagement of a cook with her material and social environment, especially when shopping food or baking, depending on the tasks I took on in each family, I did not always share practices in a direct manner. Sometimes I was physically unable to join, especially when I went shopping while another member of the family processed ingredients for lunch. In other cases, I was tasked with processing herbs in the salon, while the lead cook was cooking in the kitchen. In such moments, although I was not observing the cook, I was still able to smell and listen to her activities or touch and taste the result of her work, enabling me to share some of her bodily engagement. Lastly, in handling and eating the meal around the communal plate, everyone was drawn back into the shared experience of food in the making. In short, participant perception involves joining in and co-producing a social multisensory routine that goes far beyond food preparation itself.[26] Taken together, these food practices produce a shared multisensory life that involves family members, friends and guests, cooks and noncooks alike.[27]

The spatial and temporal boundaries of my participant perception were equally fluid. Apart from 're-membering' (Connerton 1989: 72) or storing procedures and processes in my body through repeated practice, which I describe primarily in the interludes, I also kept a food diary and jotted down small notes, recipes or techniques in a small notebook throughout the day, followed by writing more detailed fieldnotes at the end of each day. As I joined in the many activities of daily life, I asked a wide range of questions and discussed topics as they arose and mattered to my research participants and their wider social network. These informal and often spontaneous conversations, carried out in *darija*, French or – more often – a mix of the two, were part and parcel of my participant perception. In fact, casual conversations proved to be the most meaningful way of interviewing especially older women due to a widespread suspicion towards formal information gathering and voice recording. With family members, friends or acquaintances who were less familiar with me and my research, already the presence of a pen and paper altered the flow of a conversation to the extent that I learned to remember entire conversations for later note taking.[28]

This verbalization and sharing of multisensory experiences complement my own bodily understanding of cooking and allow me to relate my participant perception to the lived experience of my research participants and to that of their

friends and extended family in Marrakech and beyond. To further a more generalized understanding of food, I also interviewed, accompanied or sat with other experts such as ethnobotanists, chefs and shopkeepers, as well as various friends and acquaintances in Marrakech and beyond. Given that many of these encounters involved sharing food and a bodily engagement with a certain environment, I was able to expand my participant perception beyond the circle of the three families and their social networks. Even as I write these lines, I still remember the smell, sight, sound, taste or touch of many of these interviews or walk-alongs through the meals or the food environment that I shared with others. It is in this context of shared encounters that photographs, video and audio recordings can capture certain domestic gestures and procedures or urban rhythms and routines, and thus complement and enrich the analysis and representation of my research participants' and my own experiences.[29]

Participant perception also allows us to attune to nonhuman materialities and their relations with humans in an activity such as cooking. After all, food is organic and also transforms without human intervention, and so does the non-organic environment, including such different elements as climate, temperature and kitchen appliances. The materiality of food and its inherent transformative capacities – what Sutton calls the 'mutinous unpredictability of matter' (2014: 125) – make it a collaborator in the production of a meal, just as the material environment such as tools, appliances and/or the specific space and microclimate of the kitchen facilitate and contribute to this production.[30] Multisensory immersion through participant perception helps us to understand the co-production between cook, food and the material environment as it unfolds in practice. It can manifest itself in cut fingers, sticky hands, stench and disgust as well as intense physical pleasure, which trigger different and unpredictable reactions and adjustments by the cook. My Marrakchi research participants conceptualized the co-production between a cook, food and the material environment, and the inherent unpredictability of every meal making through *baraka* (God's blessing); a meal that turned out well is considered to have *baraka*. Importantly, *baraka* refers not only to a spiritual force and human intention, as the literal translation suggests, but also relates everyday practices to socially negotiated values, which are embedded in various relations of power, as I will illustrate in Chapters 1 and 3.

It is evident by now that understanding food preparation through participant perception takes time, intimacy and patience. It is thus not surprising that in food studies – ethnographic or not – the main methodological approach to cooking has often been via verbal and visual methods such as interviews, surveys and observation rather than via apprenticeship-style and bodily experience, even though cooking knowledge is often described as a largely nonverbal, embodied form of knowledge. My own experience of learning to cook the Moroccan way without fully understanding that I did, which I relate in the interludes and in Chapter 2, makes a strong case for long-term participation in the everyday lives

of cooks through deeply immersive perception. Participant perception emphasizes and, indeed, requires the building not only of relationships of trust but also of intimacy with one's research participants and the stuff they use and engage with and that matter to them (Miller 2010).

At the same time, participant perception does not stop at the level of domestic intimacy and everyday lived experience. Although cooking knowledge is anchored in the body of the cook, it is also intersubjective and embedded in family life within a given neighbourhood and urban market, which are, in turn, emplaced in the broader context of a globalized food system. Thus, I consider cooking knowledge as much more than embodied knowledge. It is also a spiritual, a cultural, an economic and a political way of knowing, and as such also involves dissonance and conflict, a dimension that is notoriously absent in phenomenological approaches to practice. Participant perception allows one to *feel* the political economy of life with a low income. Without access to cars and supermarkets, without paid help and convenience foods like many of their middle-class counterparts, the hard work of making food can be acutely felt. Carrying groceries in heavy plastic bags from the market while the sun is scorching and the fingers are being cut by the plastic, being assigned the tedious task of sorting and cleaning herbs or of peeling piles of vegetables every day until the fingers, hands, arms and eyes hurt, and being chastised for being too slow or too wasteful of precious ingredients made me and other novice cooks experience through all perceptual channels of the body the broader social, economic and political context of cooking.

Not only was my participant perception alongside other learning cooks an often painful reminder of the hierarchies of domestic labour requiring young and unexperienced women to submit to the power of older women, it was also a physical reminder of the economic vulnerability and political marginalization of low-income families in Morocco. Of course, relative to other novice cooks, as a relatively affluent foreigner interested in understanding – yet also able to distance myself from – the lives of less affluent and less privileged Moroccans, my position is vastly different. I address this by following Crawford's example to feel *with* and *for* others by bringing our 'fleshy selves' to the ethnographic encounter so as not to overlook the 'hard surfaces of life' (2009: 524, referencing Geertz). By bringing my fleshy self to the daily experience of urban life with a low income, I came to understand just how aware and critical my research participants were of the faultlines of the Moroccan food system and of the government at large. Indeed, as I will show in Chapters 4 and 5, many of their routine provisioning decisions and processing practices should be understood as political acts in response to a government that they hold partially accountable for their plight. As a result of this regular but largely hidden form of political economic participation, domestic cooks and their everyday food practices contribute to political stability in Morocco amidst global food prices hikes and regional upheaval.

Participant perception also has implications for thinking about and representing research. During my fieldwork, it was often impossible to extract myself from the immediate bodily and emotional experience of cooking within a given material and social environment; as my body ached at the end of the day, my mind struggled to express in fieldnotes what had happened. After fieldwork, back home, analysing this experience distances me from the lived experience of cooking in Marrakech. At the same time, it still reverberates in my body when thinking and writing about it; I continue to re-create sensory engagements and emotions old and new. Equally, by preparing Moroccan dishes for my own family and friends, I re-enact past experiences in the present. While my postfieldwork endeavour to analyse cooking requires me to step back from immediate experience in the field, participant perception cannot be removed from bodily experience; it becomes a part of the ethnographer just as I become a part of the ethnography.[31]

Finally, while the representation of domestic cooking in this book threatens to objectify not only my own subjective experience but also that of my research participants, through interweaving my experience of cooking in the interludes with that of my Marrakchi research participants in the main chapters, it also stands for and embraces what all ethnographies ultimately must be: a situated encounter between the anthropologist and her field, including not only other people's often incommensurable experiences but also the ethnographer's thoughts and feelings within a broader context of particular scents, sights, sounds and tastes enmeshed within a constant flow of events and emotions, producing necessarily 'partial connections' (Strathern 2004) and 'situated knowledges' (Haraway 1988). Participant perception is thus both theory and method; it is a way of learning and of understanding; and of making sense of it as we do.

Outline of the Book

Although cooking knowledge is anchored in the body of the cook, it is also intersubjective and embedded in family life within a given neighbourhood and city, which is, in turn, emplaced in Morocco and in the world. As I trace these layers in each chapter, from the body to the globe and back, I demonstrate how low-income Marrakchi cooks engage each layer in their daily food work and that each matters to understanding cooking. While I differentiate between these layers for the sake of representing them in writing, each chapter and interlude also emphasizes the many entanglements between individual and social human and nonhuman bodies, between the urban and the rural, between local and global processes, and between the material and the social. This becomes particularly evident in the making of homemade bread, the staple of the Moroccan diet and of food culture at large. Throughout the interludes and the chapters, different aspects of making

bread are used to highlight these entanglements and how seemingly distanced layers are also always connected.

It is thus no accident that the first and the last interlude are about bread. Like all the following interludes, Interlude 1 on kneading describes one of the most routine practices of a low-income domestic cook in Morocco, albeit from my position as a female ethnographer and keen, if not always adept, learner. Interlude 5 points to the very material centrality of bread in preparing and eating a Moroccan meal; without bread, a *tajine* tastes nothing like *tajine*. Furthermore, although these and each intermittent interlude – on cooking couscous, brewing tea and provisioning food – hone in on my participant perception in the reproduction of cooking knowledge in Marrakech at a particular time and place, they also always relate to broader contexts and analytical questions. Thus, each interlude also anticipates the main analytical emphasis and theme of the following chapter. At the same time, the splitting of chapters is sometimes forced. In particular, Chapters 1 and 2 on cooking and on knowledge, and Chapters 3 and 4 on food work and on the family should be thought of as one respectively. Chapter 5 on homemade bread and cereal citizenship will bring all the layers together.

There seems to be no doubt that the knowledge of the cook is grounded in the body, but *how* the domestic cook knows is less clear. To explore the bodiliness of this practice, I propose to consider cooking knowledge as *taste knowledge* in Chapter 1. The notion of taste knowledge allows us to grasp how cooking knowledge is constituted in, through and beyond the sensing body of the cook. Importantly, rather than taste with her tongue, she tastes and knows food also with her fingers, her nose, her eyes and her ears, often jointly. Bodily perception through taste is rarely verbalized in Morocco, though often invoked when the cook vaguely explains she cooks 'according to taste'. At the same time, taste conjures social evaluation and serves as a moral compass in times of change. The expression 'as long as it takes' captures this social dimension and also points towards the temporality of cooking knowledge. A sense of temporality guides all cooking practices in the confluence of cook, food and environment, both as a cook's *sixth sense* or bodily perception, and as an *extrasensory* ability to understand the moral universe around food. In other words, cultural values of good and bad food are deeply implicated in the bodily experience of temporality in cooking. These values pertain to widely shared ideas of health and wellbeing, womanhood and family life, as well as spiritual and ethical behaviour towards God and other creatures.[32] In combination with *baraka*, the notion of taste knowledge highlights that there is much more to a cook's knowledge than the mere act of preparing food and that it requires hard work. As such, taste knowledge is not only marked by bodily resonance with the material environment; in the context of change and persisting socioeconomic uncertainty, it also involves a cook's negotiation of deeply held social values and thus necessarily includes conflict.

In Chapter 2 I then ask how taste knowledge is reproduced and apply the concept of participant perception as both a theory and a method of learning and understanding cooking knowledge. A cook's participant perception is composed of three distinct elements of learning, which taken together illustrate that knowledge is not simply transmitted from one generation of cooks to the next, but rather is regrown in each in a material and social taste environment dominated by older generations of domestic cooks. However, this chapter also shows how new technologies and media such as smartphones and social media initiate a reversal of the flow of knowledge from younger cooks to older ones, and thereby contribute to altering the reproduction of taste knowledge and, ultimately, the making of a cook too. At the same time, since participant perception understands learning from the particular vantage point of situated encounters between humans as well as between humans and nonhumans, how, when and what a cook learns is the result of manifold situated negotiations and defies any form of temporal, technological or cultural determinism. Taken together, the notion of taste knowledge coupled with attention to the multisensory dimensions of learning and understanding learning highlight how a cook's sense of taste is attuned to the unpredictable and constantly changing workings of her material and social environment, and, as such, constitutes a highly accurate and adaptive form of knowledge that is anything but fading with the advent of affordable electric and digital technology.

In Chapter 3 I move on to focus on social change in low-income Marrakech. Low-income women increasingly work for a wage in order to gain independence from patriarchal family relations. I analyse and make sense of women's emancipation and their continuous motivation to cook for the family through the notion of 'culinary connectivity'. This concept illustrates how Moroccans define themselves in relation to others and how mature womanhood is reached through making good food for the family. It allows me to explore the crucial role that food plays in making the low-income urban family. The preparation and consumption of family meals is central to creating, maintaining or challenging the material and symbolic bonds that hold families and friends together. Culinary connectivity thus emphasizes the knowledgeable practices of the cook in connecting the materiality and the sociality of food. Although gender plays an important role in the domestic division of labour, as I will show, culinary connectivity focuses attention on intergenerational gendered negotiations of what it means to be a woman and a family in low-income Morocco. In establishing the link between making food and making the family, culinary connectivity helps in understanding why domestic cooking remains an important cultural practice that is central to notions of womanhood and of the family in urban Morocco.

To widen our understanding of why these women still bother to cook for their families, in Chapter 4 I propose to attend to the whole range of networks, discourses and practices that matter to ensuring that food is not just any food, but

good food. During my fieldwork over the years, my research participants often emphasized the quality of the food they bought, processed, prepared, served and ate. They used the vernacular pair of *beldi* and *rumi* to describe food quality. Depending on the context, *beldi* indexes regional or homemade food, whereas *rumi* indexes imported or industrial food. Yet, even though there is a widely shared idea of the 'Moroccan way of cooking' – even described as part of the 'Mediterranean diet' by UNESCO – 'beldi foodways' stand for a situated and bodily understanding of food quality that connects rural and urban Morocco.[33] By widening what defines Moroccan food practices through attention to more than just the domestic preparation and consumption of food, the notion of *beldi* foodways shifts attention towards the material and social network that makes the preparation of a good family meal possible. Tracing the connections and disconnections between *beldi* and *rumi* foods points to the broader political economy of domestic cooking, showing how low-income urban Moroccans engage with the entire food system and their government as they cook.

Indeed, food and those who provision, process, prepare and eat it every day play a central role in national stability in Morocco, as I will argue in Chapter 5. This chapter draws on my research on bread in Marrakech and Beni Mellal to bring together the bodily and cultural dimensions of food preparation with the broader ecological, economic and political aspects of daily sustenance. Through a historical approach to wheat production and distribution in Morocco, it first reveals the main coordinates of poverty and food insecurity in Morocco and situates mundane practices around homemade bread in the larger political economy of life. I argue that in provisioning domestically produced grains and processing them into wholemeal flour, low-income domestic cooks become 'cereal citizens'. In valuing homemade bread over store-bought alternatives and in carefully reproducing the knowledge it takes to make their own flour, recently urbanized Moroccans contribute to the social contract that has ensured the political legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy for four centuries. I further describe how through baking and eating homemade bread, cereal citizens also shape and maintain the urban food infrastructure and, in doing so, ensure the health and wellbeing of themselves and their families. Overall, Chapter 5 suggests that phenomenological attention to low-income women's bodily knowledge helps us to understand the paradoxes of political stability within a national context of authoritarianism and a global context of ecological, economic and political crises.

Notes

1. Other ethnographies recounting how hard food work is include Bowen, Brenton and Elliott (2019); Carney (2015); Garth (2020); and Holtzman (2009). Overall, however, there is still not enough research, ethnographic or not, that showcases this aspect of everyday food work.

2. I also took a course on Modern Standard Arabic at SOAS prior to my main fieldwork and learned to converse independently in *darija* thanks to five months of paid weekly individual lessons in Marrakech in 2013.
3. During my fieldwork, three currencies circulated in traditional markets: the riyal was officially operative between 1882 and 1921, and continues to be used in Marrakech, mostly by shopkeepers with their older female clients. The franc was introduced during the French Protectorate (1912–56). Though officially in use between 1921 and 1960, during my fieldwork it was still used by all older urban shoppers, women and men alike. The dirham is the current official currency in Morocco and the only one in print. It was used by shopkeepers in interaction with children and high-income shoppers or foreigners. The women I worked with were fluent in all three currencies and easily switched between them, using whichever was more convenient (cf. Wagner 1993).
4. Fatimzahra is burdened with a physical disability she has had since birth. She suffers daily from pain, which affects but does not impair her body movements. In 2007 I accompanied her and paid for various medical check-ups to see whether her pains could be alleviated permanently; they could not. To some extent, after more than forty years of living with it, pain had become a normal part of her life and Fatimzahra had developed the 'expertise' to normalize her disability for others (Hartblay 2020).
5. My presence – coupled with the successful bid for a coveted plane ticket – was a main driver in Hajja's decision to undertake the journey. She would not have left her daughter without female support for such a long period of time. Hajja, which is not her given name, acquired this honourable new name upon her safe return to Morocco, like all returnees from the *haj*. Like everyone else, henceforth I only called her by this name.
6. Among the low-income Moroccans I met over the years, language and ethnicity were rarely a topic of conversation or contestation. Rather, regional origin served as a marker to identify with others. Still, it is important to note that Amazigh language and identity, including that of other ethnic minorities such as the Haratin (El Hamel 2013), have been systematically devalued in the past. Despite more recent political activism that led to recognizing *tamazight* (the generic name for all Amazigh dialects) as a national language in the early 2000s, this is still the case today (Silverstein and Crawford 2004).
7. A total of 29% of the Moroccan population lived in cities in 1960. In 2014 60% of the population was urbanized (Royaume du Maroc 2014). Gaul (2019) reminds us that rural-to-urban migration is not always direct; it often involves multiple stops and movements.
8. *Sharifi* designates descendance from the Prophet Mohamed and bestows a religiously endowed nobility. It is only passed on via the patrilineage. While it used to imply a certain economic and political power, today it tends to carry mostly symbolic weight.
9. This amount equals roughly €250 (€1 = 10 dirham).
10. My search criteria included at least two generations of low-income women and a small room for myself – an almost contradictory pair of conditions. Although several women I met had agreed to participate, their husbands objected to my stay in their homes.
11. Neighbourhoods are closely monitored spaces, as I learned on several occasions. Not only did both families I lived with register my presence with the local authorities, I was also warned by the local imam not to spend too much time with male shopkeepers of the neighbourhood as this could compromise everyone's reputation.
12. Despite women's widespread presence in urban Moroccan public space, many low-income women considered leaving the house as trespassing into male space and thus avoided going

out alone or lingering in streets or public squares (cf. Graouid 2004). Especially when unmarried and unaccompanied, both Moroccan and foreign women are regularly harassed by young men on urban Moroccan streets (Chafai 2021; Monqid 2011).

13. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Marrakech received around two million visitors annually.
14. The United Nations understanding of poverty now also acknowledges that poverty is multidimensional and cannot be limited to a fixed set of financial assets. See also Zvan Elliott's (2015: 10–11) discussion of how poverty interrelates with gender.
15. See Maghraoui (2002) for an overview of how neoliberal economics and authoritarian politics have coevolved since Moroccan independence, while general levels of poverty have actually increased since the 1990s (Benjelloun 2002: 136).
16. Soussi cuisine is marked by several endemic ingredients. Saffron is grown on the mountains surrounding Taroudant and is unaffordable for most Moroccans, unless sourced through family connections. The argan tree only grows in the Moroccan south and the oil produced by cold-pressing its nuts has acquired global fame not only as a culinary ingredient but also as a beauty product. The Souss is also a major producer of tree fruits such as prunes and almonds. See Aylwin (1999) for a historical and symbolic analysis of some of these ingredients and dishes.
17. Gaul (2018) describes how Moroccans adopted gas burners much later than Egyptians, largely due to French colonial policies that sought to preserve Moroccan social and cultural structures.
18. According to the national population census of 2004, of the women born up to 1969, like Hajja, 52% of those born in Moroccan cities and 94% born in rural Morocco are illiterate (Sebti et al. 2009: 69). Of women born between 1969 and 1979, 33% of urban born and 81% of rural women are illiterate, like the generation of Fatimzahra and Rachida. Women born between 1979 and 1989, like Aicha, are only 18.5% illiterate if they were born in the city, compared to a shocking 64% in rural Morocco (ibid.); indeed, Aicha's younger sister-in-law Halima was barely able to read Aicha's cookbooks. For a critical discussion concerning rural women's literacy, see Zvan Elliot (2015).
19. *Tamazight* is mostly an oral language. Rifi *tamazight* is spoken in the northern Rif Mountains, *tamazight* in the Middle Atlas Mountains and *tashelhit* in the High Atlas, the Anti-Atlas Mountains and the Souss valley in the south of Morocco. The *tamazight* script *tifinagh* has been popularized by Amazigh activists since the 1960s and in 2004 became officially part of the school curriculum, but it is hardly used in everyday urban life.
20. Errazzouki (2014: 262) argues that working-class women's share of the labour force actually decreased from 30% in the 1980s to 11% in 2003. However, because low-income women often work in the informal economy, I doubt that these numbers accurately reflect women's participation in wage work.
21. In historically oriented accounts of Morocco, food takes on more central roles, e.g. in rituals and festive occasions (Aylwin 1999; Buitelaar 1993) or in reform policies and agriculture (Holden 2009; Swearingen 1987). Notable ethnographies of domestic food practices in other Muslim contexts are Barnes (2022); Maclagan (1994); and Naguib (2015).
22. Others have studied cooking, also mostly in the United States and Europe – see, for instance, Cairns and Johnston (2015); Caraher et al. (1999); and Kaufmann (2010). Since their approach is largely based on interviews and focused less on cooking as a practice and as knowledge, their research is comparatively less relevant.

23. Desmond (2006: 392) argues similarly: 'My body became a field note.'
24. I am not the only one to highlight the multisensory nature of ethnographic fieldwork. For instance, Pink (2009) proposes a more sensory approach to ethnography, albeit as a theory of place and place making that relies largely on the visual. Writing about Chinese foodies in Beijing, Xu (2019) speaks of 'participant sensation'.
25. Various ethnographies have since overcome the sensory ethnocentrism critiqued by Howes (1991), showing especially how hearing, smell, taste and touch are equally constitutive of our lived experience, in particular with regard to food (Sutton 2010).
26. In his ethnography of Chinese temple festivals, Chau widens 'sensory-interpretative' phenomenological ethnographies of bodily senses through a 'sensory-productive' understanding of a 'social sensorium, [whereby] the body and its actions themselves are key contributors to the production of a sensory event' (2008: 488).
27. Lave and Wenger (1991) were among the first to acknowledge the importance of the social learning environment, especially in everyday situations of learning.
28. Spittler (2001) provides good arguments for how casual conversations in combination with observation over a long period of time can lead to what he calls 'thick participation'.
29. Although keen photographers with their own smartphones, as Muslims my female research participants were wary of being photographed in their domestic attire, without a headscarf and outer garments. Out of respect, there are thus rarely recognizable people in these photographs, except when explicit consent was given.
30. Similar approaches to food can be found in Abbots (2017); Adapon (2008); Janeja (2010); Paxson (2013); van Daele (2013); Weiss (1996); and West (2013b). For ethnographic descriptions regarding the material environment more broadly, see Ingold (2011); Hernandez and Sutton (2003); and Sutton (2006).
31. Retsikas (2008) provides a self-reflexive analysis of the emergence and the effects of knowledge from the body during his fieldwork at a quranic school in Muslim East Java. Stoller (1989) more explicitly includes his own bodily suffering as part of his learning to become a Songhay sorcerer.
32. Like in the Moroccan village studied by Crawford (2008), faith and religion are so ingrained in everyday Marrakchi life that they are rarely verbalized or separated from other spheres of life and neither do I in this book.
33. See https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/mediterranean-diet-00884 (retrieved 7 September 2023).