

Constructing the Halal Kitchen in the American Diaspora

Farha Ternikar, PhD

Associate Professor of Sociology, Le Moyne College, USA

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This paper is part of a larger book project on American Muslim women in the United States, "Beyond Halal and Hijab: Consumption and South Asian Muslim American women" (Routledge). This study is based on 39 interviews with Indian and Pakistan American Muslim second-generation women in Chicago, Illinois (United States). The project seeks to understand the role that cosmopolitan consumption plays in identity construction for new immigrants, post-911 and under the Trump era.

Introduction

This new project seeks to explore how we can begin to theorize how Muslim American immigrant women construct an American Muslim identity through maintaining *halal* foodways.

In particular, I intend to understand how race, class, gender, immigrant status and religion all shape how Muslim American women construct a *halal* kitchen by a closer examination of how South Asian Muslim American (SAMA) immigrants use foodways. Interpretations of *halal* dietary restrictions, cultural norms, gendered domestic work, economic resources and cultural capital are all ways that intersectionality shape the "*halal*" kitchen. Ultimately, women's labor helps maintain these ethno-religious practices and construct a *halal* kitchen in the United States context.

This paper also builds on the work of the intersectional feminist work in food studies (Forson-Williams 2007, Forson and Wilkerson 2011). Though initially popularized by Kimberly Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, an understanding of intersectionality that includes race, class, and gender helps broaden our understanding of how intersectionality can be expanded to include religion, culture and immigration in the contemporary context to understand why food is an important place that we can study these interlocking social factors. Forson-Williams explains that applying intersectionality helps reveal difference but also highlights advantages for the dominant groups (Forson-Williams 2011, p. 11).

My project asserts that collective identity maintenance for SAMA immigrants through food is at least three-fold. Foodways for *Desi* (South Asian) women help maintain their "authentic", middle class, and gendered identities. The preparation of *Desi* food (South Asian food including Indian and Pakistani food in the diaspora) creates a socially constructed "authentic" cultural marker. Class shapes foodways. The consumption of organic food and luxury ingredients signal middle-class socialization. Gender also frames food work, especially within the immigrant family. The choice to "feed the family" over other

domestic tasks is a way of doing “gender”. Although the gendering of culinary consumption often results in additional women’s domestic work, there is also decision-making power and agency in these processes. My research has emphasized how religion is an important factor to add to the intersectional lens, especially in an analysis of Muslim women’s foodways.

Constructing the halal kitchen in the American Diaspora

Religion frames food consumption, especially for Muslim South Asian American immigrants in a post-9/11 society. The term *halal* (what is permissible) in Islamic law can pertain to much more than food and drink (Armanios and Ergene, 2018). However, there is Quranic basis that forbids eating the flesh of “swine” (13, 2018). “In the Quran, the term *halal* refers to objects and practices regarded as lawful and permissible. The opposite of *halal* is *haram* which is often translated as forbidden, illegitimate, unlawful and sinful” (12, 2018). Maintaining *halal* dietary restrictions among American Muslims refers to avoiding pork and alcohol, and this can be different than maintaining *zabiha*. *Halal* refers to only eating what is permissible according to Hadith (the scripture based on the traditions of prophet Muhammad) and the maintenance of *zabiha* refers to eating meat that has been slaughtered according to Islamic law (*shariah*) and blessed by imams or religious clerics.

Armanios and Ergene explain that, “Quranic prescriptions regarding *halal* and haram food items and practices reflected the environmental and historical circumstances of early Muslims. In particular, the parallels and divergences between these prescriptions and pre-Islamic Arabian, Jewish and Christian traditions became important markers in Muslim’s attempts to differentiate themselves from other populations” (36, 2018). “The Islamic dietary regime grew more complicated over time as Islam spread beyond Arabia and as Muslims incorporated different peoples into their fold” (36, 2018).

Maintaining *halal* or *zabiha* dietary restrictions regarding meat consumption can signal religion or religiosity for Muslim immigrants, and is a way of maintaining ethno-religious traditions, especially those that are South Asian, and from a minority background in their countries of origin. According to the Pew Research Center, 77% of Indians are Hindu and 18% are Muslim (2018, Pew Research Center, Majumdar). The majority of South Asian immigrants in the United States came from India then Pakistan and Bangladesh. Indian Muslims in particular maintain *halal* and *zabiha* practices as a way to maintain both ethnic and religious identities. Women who practice *zabiha* are not necessarily more religious but view food as a way to maintain religious as well as ethnic identity.

The social construction of authenticity and cultural nostalgia

Preparing authentic food is one way that immigrants signal their ethnic identity to each other. This functions both amongst insiders, as well as outsiders. In the diaspora, the preparation of the authentic food of your parent’s or grandparent’s home is often equated with an authentic identity.

As Appadurai and other post-colonial scholars have explained, Pakistani food only became understood as Pakistani food because of artificial borders after colonialism and the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 (Appadurai 1986, Narayan 1997).

Food can also be an important way to create nostalgia and signal homelands, although immigrants often hold onto imaginary or romanticized understandings of home. Homi Bhabha (1994) writes about how those occupying imaginary spaces often refer to places that no longer exist because immigrants often long for a mythical place that their families immigrated from (Bhabha 1994).

Foodways and Generational differences

American immigrants have diverse interpretations of their own ethnic foods and this can be contingent on regional, classed, religious and generational differences. The first generation of South Asian American, middle-class, professional immigrants quickly adapted to using convenience and prepared foods such as pre-mixed masalas and frozen Indian dinners, caterers, or take-out to feed the family, in addition to cooking at home. Since ethnic identity was more salient for the first generation of SAMA immigrants, creating semi-homemade dishes or using catering was part of how this group maintained their household and entertained via food. The daughters of the first generation are the focus of my study. These second-generation women spoke about how their mothers used frozen kebobs or samosas, and regularly used Shan Masala to make biryanis and tandoori meats. These women did not worry about proving their “Desi-ness” as they were new arrivals to the United States. The first generation of SAMA women were perceived as South Asian first and American second.

Gender, Class and Feeding the South Asian Muslim American Family

DeVault’s foundational work *Feeding the Family* helped outline the important invisible gendered labor women often take on in feeding the family including making grocery lists, considering food aversions and preferences, shopping (provisioning), and preparing meals. DeVault’s research also suggests that access to economic power often results in decision-making power in the family (DeVault 1994). Gender has continued to be an important theme in understanding food, and also food and the family (Julier 2016, Cairns and Johnston 2016). Julier emphasizes how class continues to intersect with gendered expectations shaping food (Julier 2016).

From her study of Gullah communities in the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina, Beoku-Betts concludes that food preparation can promote resistance to the dominant culture and is significant in strengthening cultural ethnic identities for marginalized groups and can be a way to ensure group survival (Beoku-Betts 1995). Recreating meals from traditional family recipes and from “scratch” resonates with *Desi* second-generation immigrant women in ways that other immigrant and ethnic immigrants have used food for communities’ maintenance. Although the first generation of *Desi* immigrants relied heavily on masala mixes from the grocery stores, the second generation uses food as a way to recreate imagined

homelands by making South Asian dishes from scratch. There is more pressure on second-generation women to prepare traditional dishes from scratch because they are a product of a diaspora generation where there is cultural policing, but are also products of middle-class socialization. Therefore, they are susceptible to being seen as white-washed if they don't know how to create the Indian and Pakistani dishes of their immigrant heritage, but they are also trying to demonstrate their cultural capital in terms of foodie trends.

Food rituals that maintain this idea of authenticity include family meals, festival foods, and feasting and fasting. In the Desi Muslim community, *Eid* dinners, *iftar* meals during *Ramadan* and mosque potlucks are all rituals that help create community in the Pakistani and South Asian Muslim community. Although in their countries of origin, Indian and Pakistani cuisine was often associated with particular regional cuisines such as Punjabi, Gujarati or Hyderabadi, in the new country, they often take on national cuisine. In the diaspora there is less a sense of regional cuisines than a sense of a national cuisine. Home food becomes one of the indicators of an authentic ethno-religious community that South Asian Muslim immigrants share.

Discussion of findings: new themes in food, family and immigrants

Gender, ethnicity, class and religion were all important in understanding the lives and food practices of SAMA women. Culture and religion were often intertwined and could not easily be separated out as important factors that shaped food practices for SAMA women. In the case of Pakistani food and Pakistani American women, culture was often synonymous with religion for the women I spoke with, as they were all South Asian Muslim Americans. They all spoke about observing Ramadan, and some form of *halal* or *zabiha* food practices either at home or outside the home.

Preparation and consumption of South Asian food creates a cultural marker which often includes ethnic and religious markers. Ethnic food helps maintain group cultural identity, and adherence to dietary restrictions helps maintain religious group identity. The consumption of organic food signals middle-class status, cultural capital, and education. A preference for organic food was a recurring theme in the interviews, and this was linked to education, class and income.

Religion, Muslim practices and food

Food consumption and preparation is shaped by religious practices and dietary restrictions for many SAMA women. Through the maintenance of dietary restrictions and cooking of South Asian food, food is also shaped by religion or in this case Muslim identity. Maintaining *halal* practices can shape where you buy your groceries, where you go out to eat, and what you eat (Armanios and Ergene, 2018). In Chicago, there is a growing market for *halal* grocery stores and *halal* restaurants. Until the 1980s, many of the *halal* markets and restaurants were relegated to Devon or "little India" in Chicago; since the 1990s they have

spread to the suburbs, which are highly populated with middle-class South Asian immigrants (Rangaswamy, 2008).

Food also takes on a unique religious significance contingent on dietary restrictions including pork and alcohol and meat preparation for SAMA women. Though some American Muslims do not maintain *zabiha* meat practices, a larger population maintains the restrictions of pork and alcohol (cis.org). In the second generation, we can observe how *zabiha* proscriptions are often discarded, but *halal* dietary restrictions of pork and alcohol are still maintained, at least inside the home. This was evident in the interviews I conducted. I found that even the Muslim Indian and Pakistani women I interviewed who were not observant, indicated that they didn't drink alcohol or eat pork. It became clear that avoiding alcohol and pork were prevalent social norms in the SAMA middle-class community, at least among those who were married or had children and were loosely tied through family or friends to a SAMA community. These social norms are a result of socialization within Muslim families and ethno-religious communities (Khan and Hermansen 2009). As in any religious tradition, there are SAMA women who are not embedded in a religious or ethnic community, and who choose not to adhere to dietary restrictions that are part of Islamic laws. Since I used snowball sampling to find my interviewees, all the women in this research were connected to an ethno-religious Muslim community in Chicago.

I found three important typologies in terms of Islamic dietary restrictions through my conversations with SAMA women and the interviews I conducted. These three typologies included families who maintained *zabiha* practices inside and outside the home (the most observant), families who ate *halal/zabiha* meat inside the home but only practiced *halal* (avoiding pork and eating meat that is permissible) outside the home, and those that practiced only *halal* inside and outside the home (avoiding pork inside and outside the home). Respondents also indicated it was increasingly easy to find *halal* meat at restaurants that served *zabiha* products. It was also interesting that one respondent indicated that maintaining *halal* was more important than maintaining modesty practices. She explained that not all women who wear hijab are maintaining *halal*, and that eating only *halal* food is more significant religiously than wearing hijab. This was not necessarily a view that all SAMA women hold.

Halal was also often also discussed in relation to purchasing organic meat.

31-year-old pharmacist, Junnah, explained her concern about eating *halal* and organic.

...we do buy *halal* meat. Me and my kids are *halal* only. My husband will eat anything. ... But in the house, it's only *halal*. . Um... we do, we go to Devon... ... I try places around here and I feel like the, like the meat's just not as good as like what you get from Devon. .. Um, I wanna say like every like 2 months maybe. ... I have a deep freezer, ... I just stuff it, and since I don't cook that often. ... So, we buy organic dairy. ... So I will buy... eggs and milk, always organic. I've been thinking of switching to organic chicken, um... just ca—like for the kids, especially my daughter, with the hormones, and like, like all that...

Purchasing organic groceries was often connected to feeding the family and maintaining *zabiha* was also closely related to feeding children. A 31-year old teacher emphasizes that everyone in her family only eats *zabiha* and organic. Although neither she nor her husband grew up with *zabiha*, now that they have kids, they only eat *zabiha*. Children were a big factor in eating *zabiha*. *Zabiha* often becomes more of the norm after these SAMA couples have children:

Leena, a 33-year-old, also spoke of only eating *zabiha* because of kids. The research on religiosity has shown that young adults become more religious after they have children, and immigrants tend to be more religious than in their countries of origin (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2012). They tend to often display religiosity through outward indicators such as mosque attendance and rituals.

...So, I grew up eating only *zabiha* at home. Okay. But we would eat outside meat if we were outside. (Right, right) My husband grew up, uh, he grew up in Chicago, so he grew up eating exclusively only *zabiha*, so he, it was a much bigger deal for him. So, when we got married, I transitioned to only eating *zabiha*. (Okay) So I guess we both grew up only having *zabiha* in the house, (Okay) but in terms of eating outside meat, now that we're married with kids, we only eat *zabiha*, even outside.

Another recurring theme that emerged in my data was how wanting *halal* meat was connected to wanting "clean" meat as a reference to safety or hygiene. Cleanliness seemed to be related to how the meat was packaged or cleaned. A Pakistani American teacher, Khadija, explained:

... Mediterranean has it, Tandoor Express has it. There's another one ... it's also nearby; there's another one called Madina Market. And you know you kind of go to each one and you kinda feel it out, and like some of 'em actually have the same supplier, but then depending on how they store the meat, how they cut the meat, how they package it and stuff like that. Then, that's why I prefer Mediterranean cause it feels a little bit cleaner, a little bit more like professional for me.

Roohi expressed her concern over buying *halal* and good quality meat, and she emphasized both freshness and cleanliness as an issue:

... But to be honest, for me it's a pull between that and then how good quality the meat is. So, I tend a little more to the side of organic if I can. So, I don't have a problem with buying organic ground beef from Costco, because I know it's good quality, versus if I go to the Indian store, or the... um, *halal* store, (Right) I don't really know where that meat came from, what is it fed; is it really *halal*? You know, all those questions. Is it sanitary in the, (Right) in the back of that store? So, I will tend for that. Um, for the chicken, I buy, uh, (*zabiha*), and that's from Fresh Farms. I don't have an issue with like oh it has to be like slaughtered 2 minutes ago. To me as far as I can see, if the meat tastes really good, (Right) it's better than the *halal* you're buying for. (Okay) so, who knows, maybe it's fresher. (Right) Um, and, you know, from talking to the butchers there,

they assured me that this is as close to organic as you're gonna get without the organic sticker. (Okay) So, you know, that makes me feel good (Laugh) about, yeah...

Having clean butcher shops as well as fresh meat was an overarching theme in the interviews. Overall, the respondents seemed concerned with maintaining dietary restrictions, but these practices were often shaped by also wanting organic meat, affordable meat and "clean" packaging. Religion, in addition to class, clearly shaped the consumption of meat products.

The consumption of organic food in the context of feeding the family, and especially feeding children is symbolic of *good* middle-class mothering. "Good mothering" is a social construction largely shaped by white middle-class western norm shaped by gendered expectations of mothering in the contemporary United States. Good mothering also shapes the parenting of Desi mothers in the American diaspora largely because of social media and friendship groups. "Good mothering" often becomes the dominant modeling of mothering for Desi middle-class women despite their own mothers' parenting styles which are often viewed as outdated or politically incorrect. The consumption of organic food amongst middle-class mothers is linked with extreme mothering. "Extreme mothering" has further developed out of "good mothering" as middle-class mothers have turned their attention to organic, local and homemade products and consumption practices. Research on extreme mothering emphasizes that feeding the organic child is a way that middle-class mothers utilize ethical consumption to create distinct identities for their families (Cairns, Johnston, & McKendrick, 2013).

Saving time was discussed in relation to purchasing prepared foods or where women bought groceries. Many women, even those who appeared upper class, did buy groceries and other products from popular discount big box chains such as Costco, Walmart and Target instead of grocery stores or Indian ethnic grocers in Devon. Trader Joe's and Whole Foods also came up numerous times as places that sold healthy alternatives with many organic and fresh options. The consumption of organic food often came up in the context of eating healthy and in particular what was good for feeding children or families. The ideal of extreme mothering among middle class mothers often results in ethical consumption for the organic child (Cairns, Johnston & McKendrick, 2013).

Roohi, a Pakistani 43-year-old journalist and mother, emphasized her desire to buy organic food with an emphasis on purchasing organic meat, dairy and eggs. For her, buying organic was more important than buying *halal*:

Um, dairy. All dairy, eggs, vegetables, fruits. Um... yogurt. I mean anything that... pretty much anything (Laughs) that I can get my hands on yeah. (Okay) As much as possible, yeah, I try to get organic

Deeba, a 31-year old Pakistani woman, explained that it was important for her to purchase both organic and *halal* meat for her family.

She explained:

Yeah, so we, the family, um, we all eat *zabiha*, and we also eat organic. So, we'll just buy like the... Crescent chicken (Okay) And then the Creekstone Beef (another *zabiha* brand).

And where do you find crescent chicken in the Chicago suburbs?

So, I just moved to Morton Grove (Okay) like in October. ...There's a, a, a grocery store that the manager's Muslim. (Okay) So he says do all crescent and Creekstone. (Oh...) Fresh Farm on Gulf has also organic. Um, chicken as well.

Nida, a 33-year-old woman, also indicated that eating organic was important, but could also be expensive. Cost and organic shaped her food choices. She explained:

Yeah, we try and buy most of our fruit organic. (Okay) Veggies we stick with regular for the most part. (Okay) We're not too fad or big, uh, picky about that stuff. Other than that, we're not... I mean we try to go organic, but if it's like double the cost, we definitely won't. (Right) But if it's close or it comparable I definitely will try to.

Yasmeen also expressed an interest in eating organic but was concerned about expense. Even though she was financially comfortable, it was clear that purchasing organic seemed like a burdensome expense. She explained:

You know, I think, the families that I know, I think probably they can't afford it, because again it's pricey, right. (Right, right) Organic, I think everybody would like to buy organic if they can. (Okay, right) But you know, \$20 from Whole Foods gets you really nothing, and \$20 at Mariana will get you a lot more. (Right, right) So again it depends on your budget. (Right) For us, I think you know, I... I've always had organic milk in house for the kids from day one.

Afshan, a 35-year-old woman, explained her preference for Trader Joe's because of cost, cleanliness and availability of organic. I asked her why she chose Trader Joe's for her regular weekly groceries, and she answered:

Yeah, yeah. I mean cause it's organic, (Okay) it's *clean*, (Okay) you know, it's inexpensive compared to Whole Foods. Like, I think (Yeah,) goin' to Whole Foods, and you know, I try to be, I wouldn't say I'm like 100% *organic*, but I try to do at least 50% (Right) in terms like meat and dairy. (Okay, good) ...Right, no, yeah, that's true, yeah. So, it's pretty, like it's relatively cheap, (Okay) so that's why I go there. I often refer to Whole Foods as an "upscale" grocery store because its known for selling a large amount of organic and specialty items.

Only one of the women I spoke to prioritized eating local or purchasing local food products, and she really focused on only buying local honey as it related to also buying organic products for her children. Tania explained:

“Um, on a regular basis other than milk and eggs. Um, probably our cheeses (I buy organic). Like the string cheese I give to the kids, yogurt, um, they like to have those little like slurpy squishy yogurt things (Right) the tubes, so those. Um... what else, honey we try to get organic and kind of like a high-quality honey, but ...

So the suppliers that give it to Mediterranean, (Um-hm) I, I believe they are organic. (Oh, okay) And then there are some like national brands that also are like certified organic, and this and that, yeah.... Yeah. Yeah and I believe Mediterranean is organic meat. And several other places may or may not be. (Right) I'm not sure about them. But Mediterranean is, is a little bit more expensive with their meat compared to the other places I do like to buy some things that are local, but I don't think that I'm like very aware of that. **(Right)** Yeah. **(Okay)** I mean I do like to see oh, okay, this was, like the *honey was local*, you know.

Other food related themes absent in my conversations included gluten-free, vegan or fair-trade, but buying organic especially for children was a dominant theme. Organic continued to be a theme related to feeding children. The other theme that was absent in my data was sustainability. The mothers I interviewed did not express any concern about eating food or purchasing food that included sustainable farming practices. But one mother did explain that her children were concerned with the environment and they had encouraged her and her husband to start recycling before it was mandated. Sustainability as a broader theme was increasing in importance amongst the third generation, the children of my respondents. Three of the mothers I interviewed mentioned their children's interest in the environment and recycling.

The most common food practice among this population was the consumption of organic groceries. Organic and upscale groceries are a place that signals class, wealth and conspicuous consumption. The type of groceries one has access to, can afford, and has the knowledge to purchase is clearly coded with class and cultural capital. As SAMA immigrants attain middle and upper-class status, they adhere to middle-class consumption norms which often include buying organic or what is interpreted as “healthy”.

Ethnic Mothering, Invisible Labor and Doing Gender

Gender is displayed through food preparation even amongst SAMA immigrant families where both parents are professionals. Desi women continue to work the second shift, especially when it comes to cooking. This increased among white middle-class women in the United States by the 1980s, though many working class and women of color had been working a second shift historically (DeVault,

Hochschild 1989). The second shift is the extra labor that women work at home including housekeeping, cooking and cleaning after working a full day outside the home.

American middle-class Desi women in the second-generation, often choose cooking over housework when it comes to outsourcing domestic labor. These women often take part in invisible labor such as keeping dietary restrictions in mind, keeping track of groceries that need replacement, and provisioning. Grocery shopping often included weekly groceries, ethnic shopping, and *halal* meat shopping. Shopping practices of the SAMA women in this study were often shaped by class, religious preferences and ethnic foodways. Organic groceries often became part of the discourse on healthy eating.

Debates about healthy eating also included eating low carb, low fat, and low sugar. Samia chose to eat brown rice instead of white rice because she said it was healthier. Noor discussed eating rotis instead of naan because they were “lower carbs”, and she was trying to lose weight.

My interviews with SAMA women revealed that these mothers have two burdens: to ensure their children have an affinity for home-made South Asian cuisine, and to provide children with what they construct as healthy or “good” food. Food work does not end with preparing authentic food but includes socializing children into eating their home cooking and not preferring “American” food over Desi food. This invisible work often materializes as additional grocery shopping and provisioning as well as extra time in the kitchen and dinner table to ensure their children appreciate their ethnic heritage. Desi women often do this through family recipes, preparation of ethnic meals and the consumption of ethnic groceries. Laila, 32-year-old Pakistani, discussed the many places she grocery shopped for *halal* meat and ethnic items. She explained:

So generally, I shop once a week. (Okay) And then there'll be meat shopping I probably do less. (Okay) So like once every 2 weeks, yeah. ...Grocery shopping, I usually do either from Aldi, (Okay) or trader Joe's. Um, and then some of the more ethnic products like *halal* meats and then like *halal* chicken tenders, stuff like that, like I'll get from Mediterranean market. Yeah. ... (Okay) We also have a lot of *halal* options to choose from too, yeah. In Lombard, okay.

Me: Um, and then in addition to *halal* meat are there any, there specific things you have to get, besides like Desi spices when you go to Mediterranean market?

Laila: So definitely Desi spices, my tea, I get usually get from there (Mediterranean market). I usually get like, um... *rotis*, and like *porattas*, *naans*, things like that, bread products that are like more, um, I get those. They actually have like fresh *porattas* that are made by someone locally and they like deliver it. ...

It was clear that Desi women often had to go to multiple grocers and markets to find ethnic in addition to *halal* markets in the city limits of Chicago and in the Chicago-area suburbs. Shopping in addition to cooking often added additional labor and time to their weekly tasks.

Some respondents emphasized their need to prepare Desi food.

The need to purchase “desi” or ethnic groceries from ethnic markets was a prevalent theme in many of my interviews. But with the increase in immigrant populations, many of the women explained that they could find ethnic groceries in their suburbs and no longer had to go to Devon in the city. Chicago suburbs in particular have large populations of South Asian immigrants which has contributed to the increase of Indian and South Asian owned food markets and restaurants in the suburbs.

Farah, a 35-year-old woman, expressed her concern about eating healthy, but also the need to purchase *halal* groceries and ethnic food. She also explained her need for western cuts of meat as well as less familiar meat like goat

So, we live in Lombard, (Okay) which has been amazing cause everything is nearby. (Okay) So there's 2 *halal* grocery stores I go to in Lombard, a Mediterranean Market, Madinah Market. (Okay) Mediterranean is a lot nicer, (Okay) and it's like, westernized, so like if I ask for like chuck roast they know what I'm talkin' about, if I ask for filet mignon, they cut it exactly how I want it. (Okay) Madinah is *Desi* owned, (Okay) so I can go and get, I can get goat there, I can't get goat at Mediterranean. (Oh) ... (Okay) So if I want like goat meat, if I want like, if I'm making *nihari* and we want tongue, (Laughs) we want something ethnic, we definitely find at Madinah. Madinah's cheaper also.

Farah's grocery shopping indicated a need for Desi food and *halal* meat. Her desire to cook *nihari* (a meat-based curry...) and shop for goat were both clear examples of Desi foodways. Her need of for *halal* meat expressed her need for religiously slaughtered meat. But lastly, her mention of “filet mignon” signaled her affinity to what she termed “westernized”. Many of the SAMA women strived to maintain religious, ethnic and American identities through their foodways, indicating how food practices are shaped by culture, religion and class.

In addition to shopping for ethnic grocery products, women discussed children's preferences, aversions and affinity to Desi food. Food was a way to pass on ethnic identity to their third-generation children through cuisine. The invisible labor that SAMA women often perform includes socialization of children.

Several of the women spoke in detail about how they prepared food differently for their children.

One 32-year-old Pakistani American woman explained, after I asked “And do your kids like to eat everything? She responded: They don't love to eat everything, ...I mean I've actually started cooking

more blandly for their sake, 'cause my older son he doesn't like spicy food too much, so I've cooked more bland food than I usually would, so, for them . . .

Another woman talked about her toddler's preference for eating only pizza and she tried to slowly introduce basmati rice at dinner. Another explained that her daughter was going through a chicken nugget phase, eating only chicken nuggets at dinner, so she was trying to have her eat Desi food on weekends at least when they were at community dinners.

An Indian Muslim woman explained that though her children preferred American food, they would eat rice with dahl (spiced lentils):

"So I cook daily. ... And they're usually Indian, like Pakistani food. ... Where the kids... okay—maybe 2 to 3 times a week, something, and it's like American, which would be pasta ... or like a grilled, you know grilled cheese. But that kind of cuisine. But other than that they typically eat like rice and... you know some meat with dahl or something.

A third married woman talked about her children's preferences for only Desi food:

... I used to cook every day, when I went back to work, um, what we'll do is I'll cook on like Thursdays or Fridays for the weekend ... um, we'll go out to eat here and there, but my kids primarily eat like Pakistani food. ... They just won't eat like pizza, or they won't eat. They won't even eat like—yeah. I think it's because I was home when they were born ... and I was cooking every day.

Women discussed how cooking for children often involved balancing the preferences of what they wanted to eat versus what parents wanted them to eat. This was often a negotiation between feeding children South Asian food versus non-South Asian food.

Healthy or “good”

Healthy food was an important theme that recurred in the interviews. Discussions of shopping for good food often included organic food and healthy food. Organic food clearly was understood as “good” food in multiple interviews. Healthy food was sometimes discussed as low-fat or low carb. Shazia, a 35-year-old, expressed concern about eating healthy and how this was linked to milk consumption and carbohydrates:

But if we're really craving rice, I actually got rid of all the white rice; we only have brown rice in the house. if we're really craving like a salan, especially if my parents send something, we'll have it with brown rice.

Several additional themes emerged around mothering including satisfying children versus husband's preferences, or creating a diverse palette, maintaining a *halal* kitchen and creating healthy menus. The *halal* kitchen meant no pork, alcohol or products with gelatin in the kitchen. The *halal* kitchen often included *zabiha* meat products

The creation and consumption of Pakistani or Desi food is not just about wanting to be the cook of the household but also about socializing children into appreciating or often preferring the food of their parents' origins. Mothers saw this as part of teaching their families to love their culture and inadvertently have some ethnic pride. The preparation and consumption of ethnic/Pakistani cuisine functions to help maintain ethnic identity for Pakistani families. The task to maintain and pass on cultural traditions is the task of women.

Many middle-class women cook to meet their husband's preferences (Devault 1991, Cairns and Johnston 2016). Patriarchal norms shape domestic work, and feeding the family was also gendered work in the families I interviewed. This gendered aspect of cooking is a prevalent theme, even beyond the immigrant household.

Naureen, a 34-year Pakistani American woman, also discussed her husband and his preferences:

when they say like the... way to his heart is through your stomach, like that's my husband. (Right, right) But so I mean, he'll eat *Desi* but it's definitely not his favorite. So, but, (Right, right) I'm sure I would be eating more, like even now I'm used to, I'm kinda like that, like if I go to my mom's house for a few days, and it's like *Desi* food, *Desi* food, (Right) but I need something different now.

Naureen explained that since her husband doesn't prefer South Asian cuisine, she would often end up having to prepare a larger variety of meals. She often cooked non-Asian food to please him. Patriarchal norms often continue to shape the immigrant household, even in the diaspora where South Asian immigrants perceive society as less patriarchal. There was variation in the preferences that the husbands had. Some husbands preferred Desi food and the women mentioned their mother-in-law's recipes and others mentioned preferences for all American food.

Food traditions from South Asia (and in my research India and Pakistan) are often recreated or even reimagined by new immigrants in the Western diaspora. This creative aspect of cooking for South Asian immigrant women is linked to reproducing recipes from their mothers and grandmothers and reinterpreting regional Indian or Pakistani dishes often from cookbooks purchased in the diaspora. Heldke (2003) also emphasizes colonized cultures maintain traditional food as a mode of resistance. Feeding the *Desi* family ultimately helps maintain class, gender, ethnic and religious identity. Though hegemonic norms shape the production of ethnic food, immigrants can also resist this assimilation through the maintenance and reproduction of traditional food. In the Diaspora, traditional food prepared with organic

and upscale ingredients can on the one hand reinforce class inequalities but on the other hand challenge culinary assimilation. The cooking and consumption of Indian and Pakistani food by SAMA women is a way to maintain South Asian identity and challenge the assumption that they will change their foodways to adapt to the dominant culture, but part of this adaptation includes the practice of buying middle-class ingredients, often organic or local. New immigrants achieve middle class status, they often adhere to middle-class shopping norms as they participate in the consumption of fair-trade, local, organic or even gluten-free and vegan ingredients and products. But by holding on to their traditional ethnic food ways, they maintain cultural and religious norms and pass them onto the next generation.

Conclusion

This paper explores how class, gender, and culture shape culinary preparation and consumption for SAMA women in the American diaspora. Religion and immigrant status also shape food ways for Pakistani and Indian American Muslim women in the greater Chicago area. An intersectionalist framework attends to these modes of analyses about food production and consumption in ways that underscore the various ways in which the personal is political. *Desi* immigrant women are able to use food to help maintain their ethnic and religious collective identity and to display their conspicuous consumption through classed understandings of food ways. Class, gender and ethnic and religious status often materialize in the preparation of perceived authentic recipes, often incorporating organic groceries and *halal* meat products. Food is an important way that collective identities are created and renegotiated in the diaspora. Interestingly, food can reinforce and reproduce hegemonic understandings of gender within the family.

Since 9/11 and most recently, in the wake of the Trump administration's stance on immigration, the Muslim ban and the racial provocations of the U.S. political climate, American Muslims have also come under attack and *halal* food is often a point of contention in the marketplace (Shirazi, 2016). Food is racialized and gendered, and food is also political. Food is a place where we can examine how both religion and immigration shape and change society. Religion in particular often intersects with culture, especially when we are exploring how culture shapes foodways for new immigrants.

As I write the conclusion to this paper the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has spread across the United States and onto every continent resulting in various forms of "lockdowns" in many countries. I watch the news and see how the consumption of food for middle-class Americans, as well as marginalized families, is now drastically changed. Access to basic food or ethnic groceries has become even more challenging for poor families often including black, immigrant and refugee American families. As we watch this pandemic unfold, it remains to be seen how those that are food insecure will be able to survive through community-based responses and intersectional understandings of social justice and food.

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