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When a Recipe Leaves Home: Migration and Foodways

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How ingredients, equipment and occasions change after migration, and what can link a dish to the memory of the people who cook it.

What travels with a recipe?

A written recipe can travel alongside a gesture for estimating quantities, the feel of dough and the way a dish is offered to a guest. Different markets, ovens and working hours can gradually change parts of the practice.

Change is evidence in its own right

When a family replaces an unavailable ingredient, a careful account names the earlier ingredient, the substitute and the reason the family gives. A dish may still belong to the same occasion.

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Writing about multiple versions

“One family’s version” is more precise than a claim about a whole diaspora. When accounts differ, recording both points of agreement and divergence preserves evidence of everyday adaptation and leaves room for other histories.

Three things that can change at different times

An ingredient can change as soon as a family shops in a new market, while the preparation stays as the first generation remembers it. The occasion may change years later when the family meets on weekends. Recording ingredients, method and occasion separately allows each to have its own timeline. A dish can keep a strong link to family memory even as several details change.

When generations use different names

In an illustrative case, a grandmother uses the name she learned and her grandson uses one familiar to his friends in the country where he lives. Both names may describe the same dish, or one may refer to a version with different seasoning or presentation. Recording who uses each name and on which occasion keeps the distinction visible.

What changes between home and restaurant versions?

A family may reserve a dish for special occasions while a restaurant in the diaspora serves it daily in individual portions. The shift changes production volume, presentation and who encounters the dish. An account can distinguish a change driven by ingredient availability from one chosen to suit restaurant service. Each version has its own context, and comparing the two can explain why a dish appears in different forms in the same city.

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