

# Sensorial Migrations

Fish sauce fermentation connecting with sensory experiments  
to rebuild the realm of the Teochew diaspora.

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## Abstract

Teochew, located in southeast China, shares strong geographical and intricate political ties with Southeast Asia throughout history. There is a significant ethnic Chinese population in the Southeast Asian region. From the 50ies to the 70ies, the political movements both in Mainland China - The Great Leap Forward (Cultural Revolution) and Southeast Asia (The Vietnam War and The Cambodian Genocide) caused a vast number of ethnic-Chinese displacements all over the world. Through the process of immigration, the permanence stereotypes of Asians over time, invisibility, discrimination, as well as the struggles and initiatives that aim to denounce them are part of this history.

The project Sensorial Migration, triggered by my family's diaspora narratives, employs the lens of food anthropology to reveal and explore additional migration stories between the Teochew community and Southeast Asia, specifically focusing on diverse culinary traditions.

Through field research, interviews, and participant observations in the Teochew Guild Hall in Paris, I interpellated with investigations on culinary cultures, making richer elaboration available in comprehending the lives and everyday experiences of the Teochew migrant in Paris. Furthermore, I discovered a common thread that unites the Teochew community beyond temporal-spatial discontinuity—the fish sauce fermentation and Teochew food.

I argue that the connectivity between migrant culture, fermentation practice, and sensory experience (olfactory and gustatory sensorium) could reimagine the realm of diaspora and question how such remembering is reflective of memories and heritage, embodied by and mediated through sensory experiences.

## 2. Acknowledgement

I want to first thank the Teochew Youth Association of France (Jeunes Teochew de France) for their keen interest in my research, which provided me with the stories and background of this community.

I also want to thank my parents, Peiwei Lin and Shaoyan Chen, who supported me at the beginning of the project and constantly helped me collect the narratives and stories of migrant Teochew people for their love, patience, and support. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my partner, Fanzhe Zeng, for his encouragement, collaboration, and valuable feedback throughout this journey. I would like to thank all the tutors from the Master's Institute of Visual Cultures, Aiwen Yin, Juli Laczkó, Ollie Palmer, Marnix de Nijs, and Marton Kabai, throughout every moment of doubt about my project and myself, my tutors always provided me with significant support and care.

Special thanks to Ly-Hear Teyssandier, who was kindly willing to share her family stories with me and guided my tour around the 13th district of Paris; also invited me to the food-making workshop that she held. Thanks to all the people who have helped me along the research, my friends, the artists, and the researchers who have provided feedback and insight into my work.

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### 3. What Sparks My Interest?

#### 3.1 Background

I embarked on this project inspired by my great-grandfather's migration journey, originating from Teochew, a region in China. Faced with dire circumstances in mainland China, he made the difficult decision to leave behind his family, including my great-grandmother and their children, and seek a new life in Southeast Asia, Singapore. When I first heard this narrative, I had already been studying abroad. At the moment, I am distanced from my native cultural roots and the close connections I once had with friends and family in my country.

Residing abroad has led to a profound sense of cultural disconnection, triggering culture shock and feelings of alienation. Also, the old living habits that used to construct my identity are now impossible to replicate in Dutch culture. For the intricate mental and physical situation, I am gradually developing a sense of insecurity. In a way, I want to connect with my culture and family, and I wonder if it is a personal feeling for all immigrants or a common situation.

During this situation, the one source of solace I found was in the act of cooking. I prepared Teochew dishes, incorporating the traditional method of adding a few drops of fish sauce, a technique passed down from my parents. Surprisingly, in preparing and consuming these meals, I discovered profound comfort. The warmth emanating from the kitchen, the tantalizing aroma of the food, the sensation of heat as I held the bowl, and the multi-sensory experience evoked vivid memories of home.

In the book *Practice of Everyday Life (1998)*, Michel de Certeau mentioned in the Chapter on *Memory*, that it is more indicative of believing that we eat our most reassuring memories, seasoned with tenderness and ritual, which marked our childhood (de Certeau, 1998, p. 183). The culinary experience, cooking method and sensory experience that I have back home, sparks my interest, and guide me explore more about the topic related to it.

I asked my parents and family about my great-grandfather's immigrant experience. Due to the unstable political situation at that time, my great-grandpa's letters were lost. The information we have is a family picture of him. He traveled from Teochew to Southeast Asia by boat; when he arrived there, he opened a small restaurant to support himself.

I'm eager to learn from his stories; however, due to the lack of information, I decided to

learn from the history first. I drew on extensive research to discover the historical background of the Teochew immigration wave, focusing on the 20th century.

My great-grandfathers migrated to Southeast Asia in the 1930s, and the Teochew immigration portion arose in the 20th century. This phenomenon encompasses the economic development of Southeast Asia due to European powers colonizing the region. Furthermore, the need for the coolie labor<sup>1</sup> in Southeast Asia boosts migration pace in the Southern part of China, especially in Guangdong and Fujian provinces (Huang, 2017, p. 245; Lee, 1994, p. 5). During the interview with the older generation in Teochew, most Teochew families in mainland China experienced family members immigrating to Southeast Asia to work as laborers or start businesses (Lin, personal communication, February 18, 2024).

The other historical events from the 1950s to the 1970s in Mainland China—the period of The Great Leap Forward<sup>2</sup> and The Cultural Revolution<sup>3</sup>, led to The Great Famine in China. The inefficient distribution of food within the nation's planned economy required the use of poor agricultural techniques, over-reporting of grain production, and ordering millions of farmers to switch to iron and steel production (Great Chinese Famine, 2023), which caused a highly unequal distribution of food and the death of millions of people, leading to another migration wave.

Besides the historical background, during my observation and conversations in Paris's field research, I learned that most of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia have Teochew roots. I met migrants (born between the 1950s and 1960s) in the 13th arrondissement of Paris, most of whom escaped from China and traveled to Southeast Asia in the 20th century, indicating a profound relationship between the Teochew area and the Southeast Asian countries (Teyssandier, personal communication, November 18, 2023).

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<sup>1</sup> An unskilled Asian worker, usually of Chinese or Indian descent; a laborer; a porter. Coolie, in Mandarin 苦力 (kǔlì, "hard labor" the English pronunciation is the same as Mandarin) may have been influenced by cognates of the above Hindi word in other languages and may have further influenced English.

<sup>2</sup> The Great Leap Forward was an economic and social campaign within the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1958 to 1962, led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The Chinese hoped to develop labor-intensive methods of industrialization, which would emphasize manpower rather than machines and capital expenditure.

<sup>3</sup> The Cultural Revolution (CR), formally known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was a sociopolitical movement in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Upheaval launched by Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong during his last decade in power (1966–76) to renew the spirit of the Chinese Revolution. Fearing that China would develop along the lines of the Soviet model and concerned about his own place in history, Mao threw China's cities into turmoil in a monumental effort to reverse the historic processes underway.



Figure 1: Thomas (2016) The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia.

([https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/4y4xiq/the\\_chinese\\_diaspora\\_in\\_southeast\\_asia\\_1179x1100/](https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/4y4xiq/the_chinese_diaspora_in_southeast_asia_1179x1100/))

### 3. What Sparks My Interest?

#### 3.2 Foodway and Multiracialism

After I learned from the historical knowledge of Teochew migrants over the 20th century, the intricate migration culture spanning a hundred years between Southeast China and Southeast Asia. Therefore, the connection between culture and cuisine is evident in cultural contexts and culinary studies.

Looking through the famous cookbooks and recipes from the *Singapore Heritage Cookbook*, we can find evidence of how food integrates into a multiracial social context in Southeast Asia (Tarulevicz, 2013). Take the example of Nyonya cuisine (or Peranakan cuisine) from Baba–Nyonya<sup>4</sup>, which results from blending Chinese ingredients seasoned

<sup>4</sup> Baba-Nyonya (The Peranakans) are an ethnic group defined by their genealogical descent from the first waves of

with various distinct spices and cooking techniques used by the Malay and Indonesian communities (Peranakan cuisine, 2023). Nyonya cuisine has seen the emergence of many spices in Malaysia mixed with Teochew cuisine. Through cultural borrowing and innovation, the Nyongas concocted a distinctive cuisine with predominantly spicy and piquant flavors (Ng & Ab. Karim, 2016).

As well as *Phở sa tế*<sup>5</sup>, which is a popular dish both in Asia and Europe. The dish's origins can be traced to Teochew, where the cooking technique and method were brought and seasoned with fish sauce ("*Phở*," 2023), and the ingredients could be varied in different places. In Paris, I interviewed Ling, the immigrant from Teochew to Vietnam, Cambodia, and France during the 60ies to 70ies, who opened a *Phở* restaurant in the 13th district of Paris<sup>6</sup>. According to her description, in the 80s, *Phở* became increasingly popular in Paris, because stallers aimed to adapt *Phở* to local flavors and learn the cooking methods from French Stew Beef<sup>7</sup>, which created a wildly popular *Phở* in Europe, but still, with fish sauce as a main seasoning (Ling, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

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Southern Chinese settlers to maritime Southeast Asia, known as Nanyang (Chinese: 南洋, 'Southern Ocean'), namely the British Colonial ruled ports in the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago, as well as Singapore. Peranakan culture is characterized by its unique hybridization of ancient Chinese culture with the local cultures of the Nusantara region, the result of a centuries-long history of transculturation and interracial marriage.

<sup>5</sup> *Phở sa tế* is a pho noodle with chili and peanut sauce that came from Teochew immigrants in southern Vietnam.

<sup>6</sup> During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the first wave of Vietnamese refugees from the Vietnam War settled in the arrondissement. Later waves of refugees and Asian immigrants transitioned from being exclusively ethnic Vietnamese to including ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, Laotians and Cambodians. These migrants largely settled in the southern area of the arrondissement, creating an Asian quarter and establishing a commercial district and community institutions. Teochew, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer are spoken by many residents in the community.

<sup>7</sup> French Beef Stew also name Beef Burgundy, which braised in red wine, often red Burgundy, and beef stock, typically flavored with carrots, onions, garlic, and a bouquet garni.





Figure 2: Author (2023) The fusion Phở sa tế in auntie Ling's Phở restaurant in the 13th arrondissement of Paris (Pho Thai).

Correspondingly, fish sauce is one of the most famous and irreplaceable condiments both in Southeast Asia and Teochew cuisine (Hsiao et al., 2015). The handing down of recipes and traditional cooking techniques indicate that dishes are adapted in various locations, incorporating local spices and herbs to create new culinary variations. For instance, in the Thai diet, citronella and lemongrass play a significant role in each dish; similarly, in the Teochew diet, green onions, coriander, and celery are essential herbs to flavor the meals. However, fish sauce remains an indispensable and crucial condiment in every recipe and cookbook, with its role unchanged and never replaced (Brien, 2014).

### 3. What Sparks My Interest?

#### 3.3 Fish Sauce Fermentation and Geographical Relationship

There is an interesting overlap between my great-grandfather's migration footprint and the foodway of fish sauce. I gathered diverse recipes for making dishes seasoned with fish sauce, spanning from Southeast China to Southeast Asia, and mapped them out (Fig 3). The locations I pinpointed on the map closely mirror the Teochew Immigration Trace (Fig 1). This correlation prompted me to speculate on my great-grandfather's migration routes, using fish sauce as a lens to delve into the migration of the Teochew community to Southeast Asia.

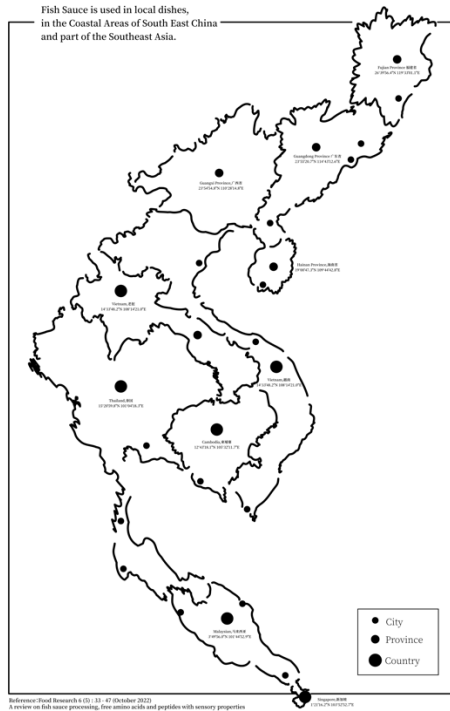


Figure 3: Author (2023) "Fish Sauce is used in local dishes, in the Coastal Areas of Southern China and part of the Southeast Asia."

To comprehend fish sauce fermentation, I initiated the process of fermenting fish sauce myself. I delved into numerous fish sauce recipes and found that different regions, primarily in Southeast Asia, and various fish types have distinct methods for producing the sauce (Mouritsen et al., 2017). I chose three different ways of fermenting the fish sauce. I documented the changes in the fermentation process by taking daily photographs (The detailed project record can be found in Appendix 1).

The traditional family-based method of making fish sauce has strong regional characteristics, and its fermentation methods from different coastal areas in Southeastern China and Southeast Asia are highly similar. However, because of the geographical differences, various fish types and fermentation times can create different flavors (Hakimi et al., 2022).

"Fermented foods are substrates that are invaded or overgrown by edible microorganisms whose enzymes, particularly amylases, protease, and lipases, hydrolyze the polysaccharides, proteins, and lipids to non-toxic products with flavors, aromas, and textures pleasant and attractive to the human consumer." Stdeinkraus (1997, 311).

Fermentation is a practice that has been used for millennia to purify, enhance the flavor,

and extend the life of foods and drinks; fermentation and its outcomes are familiar to human beings from many cultures and geographies (Modi, 2023).

According to the book *The Noma Guide to Fermentation* (2018), fish sauce typically appears in the coastal regions; if we see it worldwide, from the Mediterranean to Southeast Asia, they have several ways of making it (Redzepi et al., D. 2018). Moreover, considering the Teochew fish sauce's origin is rooted in the practices of fishermen, it is noteworthy that when they cast their nets, they inadvertently capture small fish, such as anchovies (Yang Chen, 2019). Although fish sauce carries a distinct aroma that might deter those sensitive to fishy smells, it can elevate the dish's flavor as a condiment and, being a natural umami<sup>8</sup> enhancer, be known as a natural MSG<sup>9</sup>.



Figure 4: Arthur (2023) Photographs of different brands and regions of fish sauce from supermarkets (The Amazing Oriental) in the Netherlands.

In terms of the relationship between fish sauce and the Teochew immigrants, in the 19th century, Teochew people traveled abroad on Red Prow Ships from Zhanglin Harbor to

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<sup>8</sup> Umami (the word initially from Japanese: 旨味), or savoriness, is one of the five basic tastes. It has been described as savory and is characteristic of broths and cooked meats. People taste umami through taste receptors that typically respond to glutamates and nucleotides, which are widely present in meat broths and fermented products. Glutamates are commonly added to some foods as monosodium glutamate (MSG).

<sup>9</sup> Monosodium glutamate (MSG), also known as sodium glutamate, is a sodium salt of glutamic acid. MSG is found naturally in some foods including tomatoes and cheese in this glutamic acid form. MSG is used in cooking as a flavor enhancer with a savory taste that intensifies food's meaty, savory flavor, as naturally occurring glutamate does in foods such as stews and meat soups.

Southeast Asia, a journey lasting 1-2 months by boat (Wang, 2022). According to Teochew Immigration Folk Songs<sup>10</sup>, the essential items that Teochew immigrants must bring are the red peach cake<sup>11</sup>, cloth<sup>12</sup>, wax gourd<sup>13</sup>, and fermented vegetables and foods<sup>14</sup> (Huang, 2017), which indicates fermented food has a deep meaning with migrant communities.

During the interview with Yong (the interview transcripts are presented in Appendix 2), he revealed that he grew up in a Teochew migrant family in Malaysia. His grandmother consistently made fermented sauces, from soybeans to pickles, which, in a way, influenced his career path, leading him to become a fermentation artist. Nevertheless, nowadays, fish sauce fermentation is gradually taking place by industrial manufacturers instead of household production.

As mentioned by my father, who was born and raised in Teochew in the 60ies, there was a newly constructed fish sauce factory near where he lived; from then, no one fermented homemade fish sauce in the village (Lin, personal communication, May 10, 2023). Simultaneously, I delivered my small bottle of fermented fish sauce to my parent. When my dad smelled the fish sauce, he showed a disgusted reaction; he said: "This smell reminded me of the old fish sauce factory near my childhood poor bungalow. It was the moment of the Cultural Revolution; Teochew was poor and lacked food, and this fishy smell helped me to remember that vividly." At that moment, I felt disappointed because the reaction did not meet my expectations.

However, upon reconsidering the remark, I realized it was a case of Sensorial Migration; through the olfactory reaction, he vividly recalls his childhood memories and experiences. Thus, this experience formed the basis of what has become known as the *Proust phenomenon*, the ability of odors spontaneously to cue autobiographical memories that are highly vivid effectively toned, and very old (Chu et al., 2000). In my father's case, the Proust phenomenon indicates the loss of time in his childhood and how the olfactory reaction could link with the past and present.

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<sup>10</sup> The "Teochew Immigration Folk Songs" is directly translated by the author in Chinese called 过番歌. The folk songs introduce the details of how Teochew immigrants traveled abroad, what they did before the trip, and the customs.

<sup>11</sup> Red Peach Cake(粿) is a sweet sticky rice cake that can be preserved for a long time during the boating journey

<sup>12</sup> In the boat, where the atmosphere is humid, travelers use cloth to prevent paper currency from getting wet.

<sup>13</sup> Wax gourd, vital for food and water on boats, doubles as a potential lifebuoy. In case of a crash, travelers can hold onto the wax gourd and float.

<sup>14</sup> Fermented food can be preserved for a long time, and the bacteria inside can benefit the intestinal flora and prevent disease.

Because of the historical and geographical specialty of fish sauce, I aim to investigate whether fish sauce, as a condiment, triggers sensory memories in migrant groups, specifically concerning taste, smell, and potentially other senses. Furthermore, I am exploring the possibility of fermented fish sauce serving as a binding agent and healing exercise for separated communities and groups, as in the situation of my family. I interviewed friends and relatives with Teochew roots from mainland China, Southeast Asia, and Europe. They are both interested in and practice food/fermented food very well.

## 4. Field Research and Collaboration

### 4.1 The History of The Teochew Clan Association

As I mentioned in the last chapter, I'm eager to figure out whether fish sauce, as a condiment, could trigger sensory memories in immigration groups. However, at this moment, as I am based in the Netherlands, how I can reach a Teochew group would be essential; luckily, I found the Teochew Clan Association.

Regarding the Teochew culture and history, as a famous saying goes among Teochew people, "Where there is tide, there are Teochew people."<sup>15</sup> The sentence records their immigration footprints around the world (Wang & Wang, 2022). Besides, when Teochew people migrate to Southeast Asia, they always respectfully invite deities to go together so that the deities can bless them on the uncertain and risky journey and roving life abroad.<sup>16</sup>

Teochew people allied and founded various organizations after migrating to Southeast Asia to cooperate and support each other. The organizations vary in name yet share a common title--The Teochew Clan Association. From time to time, the Clan Association transforms into various community-based organizations. Such organizations as township and clan associations were gradually formed based on geographical relationships, kinship, and industrial connections.

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<sup>15</sup> Teochew (潮州) means "Tide State" in Chinese.

<sup>16</sup> Teochew region has a rich deities worship culture, for example, *Mazu* (Chinese: 妈祖), also known as *Tianhou* (Empress of Heaven), the imperially sanctioned sea deity, was essential to sailors and migrants.

## 4. Field Research and Collaboration

### 4.2 Field Research in the 13th arrondissement of Paris

After the history of the Teochew Clan Association, I want to find a place in Europe where I can conduct my field research and reach out to the community. How can I connect with an authentic Teochew community near the Netherlands? My friend Shuang Xu, who is also researching Teochew migrants, suggested the 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement (district) of Paris (a three-hour train from the city where I lived), where she conducted her field research. After this recommendation, I discovered the Teochew Youth Association of France's website. On October 13, 2023, I wrote a letter to initiate communication with the head of the association regarding my research and asked for a visit.

The Association's website shows that the Teochew Clan Association in the Paris 13 district serves as a multi-functional community, which includes a Buddhist temple (Fig 5), financial groups, cultural and educational groups, women's groups, leisure groups, senior citizens groups, tourism groups, public relations groups, industry and commerce groups, youth groups Commission science and technology innovation group, office and other functional groups to carry out various tasks (Amicale des Teochew en France, 2022).

When I visited the Teochew Clan Association in Paris in person on November 18, 2023, I gained insights into the adeptness of the Teochew community in cultivating and fortifying their social bonds in a contemporary context (Figs. 6-7). Still today, the relationship between Teochew and Paris is connected. The head of the association told me that notifications like Fig 7 appear occasionally (Arnold, personal communication, November 16, 2023).



Figure 5: Arthur (2024) At the front door of the Teochew Clan Association in Paris is the Buddhist Temple. Teochew people have the tradition of praying to the deity, depending on the lunar calendar.



Figure 6: Arthur (2023) The Teochew Association (Guild Hall) in Paris, France.



Figure 7: Arthur (2023) There are two notifications at the front door of the Teochew Association. One of the contents is (upper): A family based in Teochew is trying to find their brother in France. They used to commute by letter; however, since the Cambodian Genocide, they lost contact till now.

After discussing with the head of the Teochew Clan Association, I gained insight into the basic population structure across the 13 districts of Paris. Historically, a significant watershed occurred in 1975 (Guillon, 1998), marked by an influx of overseas Chinese immigrants from Southeast Asia into France following the end of the Vietnam War<sup>17</sup>, as well as conflicts in Laos and the Cambodian Genocide<sup>18</sup> (Yu-Sion, 1998). Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were the previous French Protectorate Countries of Indochina<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, amidst these political shifts, many immigrants naturally gravitated towards France as their preferred destination due to its favorable policies. According to Michelle Guillon (1998, 189), she mentioned: "Immigrants from Cambodia and Vietnam had arrived in Paris since the colonial era but had arrived in the largest numbers post-1975, there was a likelihood of many members of the Chinese minorities (Cantonese and Teochew) among

<sup>17</sup> The Vietnam War was a conflict in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from 1 November 1955 to the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975. At the heart of the conflict was the desire of North Vietnam, which had defeated the French colonial administration of Vietnam in 1954, to unify the entire country under a single communist regime modeled after those of the Soviet Union and China.

<sup>18</sup> The Cambodian Genocide was the systematic persecution and killing of Cambodian citizens (especially ethnic-Chinese) by the Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Communist Party of Kampuchea (Cambodia).

<sup>19</sup> French Indochina. The territories of SE Asia that were colonized by France and held mostly until 1954: included Cochin China, Annam, and Tonkin (now largely Vietnam), Cambodia, Laos, and Kuang-Chou Wan (returned to China in 1945, now Zhanjiang), and these countries used to be the French Protectorate Countries. French Indochina was formed on 17 October 1887, and lasted until 21 July 1954.



these refugees." However, the traumatized experience of exile, war, and the harsh conditions that the refugees faced seem to have revived Chinese cultural traits among these people now living in France.

In the 1970s, migrants from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia fled to France to escape the chaos of wartime. The Paris 13 district has tower block apartments constructed by the government (Fig 8-9). These were ready in the mid-1970s and were used for short-term stays by provincials arriving in Paris or new couples. However, due to the continuous emptying of buildings, the refugees took advantage to move in. In this case, several Chinese families would group, so they could afford to pay the rent.



Figure 8: Arthur (2024) The Tower Block Apartment



Figure 9: Arthur (2024) The Tower Block Apartment

In the field research in Paris, I conducted interviews with people with Teochew roots who live in France, the first-generation immigrants<sup>20</sup> and second-generation immigrants<sup>21</sup>, and more, to deepen my knowledge of the migrant histories and collect their family stories, family cookbooks and recipes, how food connects with their identity and stories, and more. Based on the interview, I can better understand their societal struggles and themselves as an "in-between" world.

I had the pleasure of meeting Ly-hear and Arnold, members of the Teochew Clan Association who share a keen interest in Teochew food and culture. Both are second-generation immigrants who kindly guided me through the areas and shared their family migration stories. As we strolled down the street, they constantly met their relatives and greeted each other, which enhanced my impression that there is a strong community. While I stood on a higher platform in the area and overlooked the tower block apartment, I felt a sense of *déjà vu*, as a time machine that I was traveling back to my childhood, living in the same residential blocks in Teochew and relatives lived nearby; if anything happened, the family unit could gather in a short time.

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<sup>20</sup> According to USCB (The United States Census Bureau), the first generation of immigrants is composed of individuals who are foreign-born, which includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, protracted temporary residents (such as long-staying international students and migrant workers, but not tourists and family visitors), humanitarian migrants (such as refugees and asylees), and even unauthorized migrants. In this research, "first-generation immigrants" refers to those born in China, Teochew; however, because of several reasons, settled in France, Paris and have lawful permanent residents.

<sup>21</sup> Although there are many debates about the word "second-generation immigrants", however, in this research, "second-generation immigrants" are not immigrants; being "second-generation" means that the person is born in the country and the person's parents are the immigrants in question.

As I document the conversation with Arnold and Ly-hear (see Appendix), most of the Cambodian and Vietnam refugees here are the descendent of Teochew; their ancestors moved from Teochew to Southeast Asia in the period 20s-30s to avoid the chaotic conditions in mainland China, as my great grandfather did. Most of the Teochew family here, in the Paris 13 district, although I cannot understand most of their Teochew dialect<sup>22</sup>, still conserve the tradition of making Teochew food and passing it through generations and generations. While interviewing Teochew migrants in Paris, I discovered many had never been to Teochew. Even the places where they grew up have either been destroyed due to war or have been drastically reconstructed to the point where they are unrecognizable. Unfortunately, documentation of these places is scarce, and with time, their memories of their hometowns may fade away completely.

Hence, in my opinion, how we cook and prepare food is a trace of inheriting the sense of home. Deborah Lupton mentioned in her book *Food, the Body and the Self* (1996), "The processes of cooking and eating are highly sensory and embodied activities," and the sociologist David Morgan's argument that food "represents a solid form of anchorage in the past" (Morgan, 1996, p. 166), in which, shows on both Ly-hear and my stories. Despite never having met before and having grown up in entirely different cultural backgrounds and age ranges, the Teochew culture and food brought us together. We discovered many shared aspects, such as our method of enhancing dish flavor with fish sauce.

Therefore, I initially planned to hold a collective fish sauce fermentation practice together in the Teochew Clan Association. Out of the blue, most people do not tolerate the intense fishy smell of fish sauce. During the discussion, I found holding a fish sauce fermentation workshop in the collective space impossible. In this instance, I decided to split my design into two phases: First, I discovered fermenting fish sauce as my trigger to trace my childhood memory and my great-grandfather's migration routes; Secondly, I chose to broaden this 'inner conversation' by organizing a collective Teochew cuisine workshop for a wider audience. I employed fish sauce as the primary condiment to facilitate an immersive food-making experience and to impart cooking knowledge inherited from our family. I will further discuss this in the workshop collaboration and design sections.

We changed the workshop decision to select several traditional Teochew cuisines, which are flavored with fish sauce, and do the collective food-making workshop; finally, we narrowed it down to the Red Peach Cake (Fig 10), the one I mentioned in *Chapter 3.3*, and I have been researching the Red Peach Cake before, in my bachelor graduate design (See Appendix 3).

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<sup>22</sup> For example, the Cambodian-Teochew descendent I met, have a different accent as original Teochew accent, which mix with the Khmer loan-words.



Figure 10: Jen (2011) Family Traditions: Teochew Peach-Shaped Kueh (红桃粿)

(<https://www.ontheslowlane.com/2011/02/family-traditions-teochew-peach-shaped-kueh/>)

## 4. Field Research and Collaboration

### 4.2 Collaborations and Workshop

The process of making the Red Peach Cake was wondrous; since my grandmother passed in 2010, I have never made the cake again, but it remains a cherished memory. For every Teochew family, this ritual binds us. Each moment spent kneading the soft, sticky, glutinous rice flour is a symphony of nostalgia, a shared journey through tales and recollections with every family member. This collective act lets us close again wherever life takes us, weaving the threads of our shared heritage.

The Red Peach Cake is a small teardrop-shaped cake with soft, sticky, glutinous rice flour skin wrapped over a filling of glutinous rice, peanuts, mushrooms, and shallots. The skin is often naturally dyed pink and shaped with a wooden mould before steaming.

Many members of the Teochew Clan Association, spanning different age ranges, have registered for the workshop (including the first, second, and third generations) (Fig 11).



Figure 11: Arthur (2024) Ly-Hear (Left 1) and her aunt and mother (Left 2-3) were preparing the rice flour dough.

Ly-hear, a leading chef, taught us how to fry the cake filling and added fermented fish sauce and soya sauce to enhance the sticky rice flavor (Fig 12). After we fried the filling, we kneaded the rice flour skin. I want to describe the practice through the embodied experience.

We moulded the rice flour dough into a round shape (Fig 13), and it had a soft texture and a warm sensation (tactile sensation); we carefully put the filling into the rice flour skin, and the fried rice came out a tenderizing fragrant (olfactory sensation); we shared knowledge on shaping the dough better in the wooden mould and stories of the migrant experiences of the first generations who settled in Paris (hearing sensation); we observed the participator placed the cake into the steamer (visual sensation) (Fig 14); and finally, we taste it, which etched into our memory of home (gustatory sensations).

We embodied ourselves in the workshop, which includes textures, scents, sounds, vision, flavor, and feelings – gathered in symbolic carriers. It is the act of leaning on the body while hearing a story or the interaction of practicing food (Sarsam, 2023, p.21). I asked my partner Fanzhe to help me document the process during the participation.



Figure 12: Arthur (2024) Fried sticky rice, the filler of the rice flour dough.



Figure 13: Arthur (2024) Shaping the dough into a circular shape.



Figure 14: Authur (2024), Red Peach Cake, took out of the steamer.

## 5. Design Approach

### 5.1 The Weather Chamber, Constructing Sensory Memory

I visited Paris thrice for field research. Every time, I gained different knowledge and insight. The first two times, from October to November, I aimed to interview first- and second-generation migrants, most of whom are in the catering industry and include restaurant owners, chefs, and fermentation artists. The conversation revolved around food, fermentation practices, self-identity, and memory.

After speaking with Ling (see Appendix), the owner of the Phở restaurant, I can understand how precious food is to those who come from a background of famine and how crossing the border in a dire situation was so difficult. During my conversation with Ly-Hear (see Appendix), a second-generation migrant, we discussed cultural conflicts between family and society, the challenges of living between two worlds, how food brought her immense comfort and her journey to becoming a leading chef in France. Furthermore, my conversation with Yong, a fermentation artist based in Europe and Australia who grew up in Malaysia, revealed how his childhood memories of preparing Teochew fermented food with his grandmother influenced his passion for fermentation.

When conducting the interview, I sensed vulnerability, a longing for the so-called 'homeland' in many details, and an urge to preserve the 'hometown flavor' through fermentation. What if we could design a tool to recreate the climate of your homeland? To overcome borders, create your own 'Weather Chamber' to ferment the taste of home.

The weather chamber's structure was designed as a merged structure to prevent the use of glue and allow the user to assemble it quickly (Fig 15), inspired by the design team at Newcastle University and Northumbria University, who guided the growth of fungi through a robotic system and placed the fungi in a plastic box (Ozkan, D et al., 2020).

My design goal is to create the weather chamber as a fermentation space where real-time simulation of temperature and humidity from various regions (selected by users) occurs. These factors are crucial for fish sauce fermentation. Users can choose local fermentation recipes to ferment their bottles. Temperature and humidity sensors monitor the internal conditions and regulate the 'climate' within the space, allowing users to observe the sensor's function from time to time through the monitor (Fig 16).

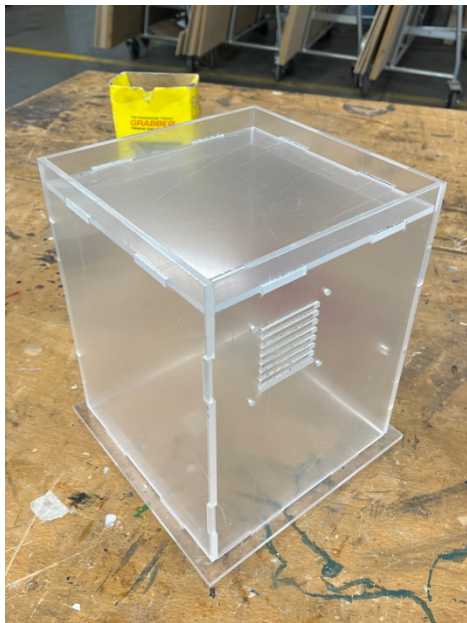


Figure 15: Author (2023), The initial structure of the weather chamber with acrylic material.



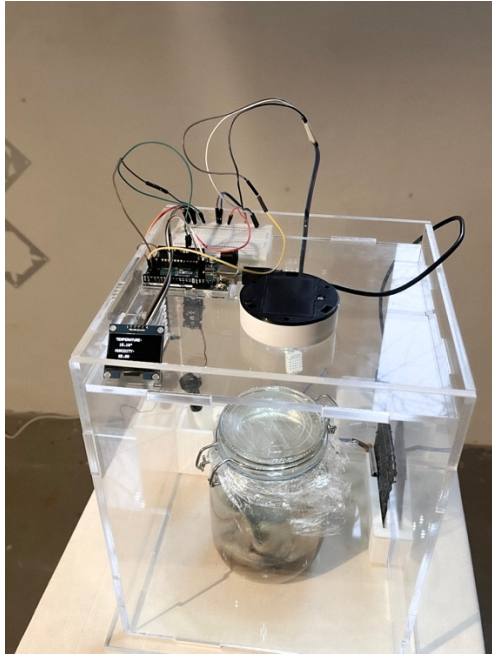


Figure 16: Author (2024), The Weather Chamber.

Each of the fermentation practices, such as alcohol ferments and lactic ferments<sup>23</sup>, is specific to a region, and many have become synonymous with that region's culture. What happens when the fermentation practices are displaced from their regions or origins (Modi, 2023)? The act of fermented fish sauce (or other forms of fermentation) could serve as a binding agent and healing exercise for separated communities and groups, like the situation of my family.

The Weather Chamber is still in the design stage and remains a draft. Nevertheless, when I shared videos detailing its functionality with my interviewees, they both expressed keen interest.

In the design practice and exhibition setup, I aim to guide the viewer in constructing their sensory memories or evoke recollections of food stories through all five senses. Viewers can observe the weather chamber's functionality while listening to the stories I recorded about other people's impressions and memories of fermented food. All the voices and video footage belong to individuals who are friends I met in the Paris 13 district and family members. I asked them to answer the following questions: "What is your relationship with food?" "How did this type of food trigger your memory?"

In Teochew culture, rich decorative patterns and shapes are evident in both local cuisines, reflected in the moulds used for food (Fig 17) and architectural ornaments (Fig

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<sup>23</sup> Lactic ferments are a type of 'good' bacteria which add texture and flavor to the cream, for example, yogurt is a type of lactic ferments.

18). I have observed the intricate patterns from the floral tiles in the cement, each telling a story of the Teochew village etched in my childhood memory; the history of these tiles intertwines with the rich Teochew migrant culture.



Figure 17: Lin (2024) Black Herbal Kueh (鼠壳粿)

(<https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/63f17fa50000000013012bee>)



Figure 18: Hai (2023) Ancient House Wall (古厝墙壁)

(<https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/63f17fa50000000013012bee>)

The origin of floral-shaped tile (cement tile) art is derived from the art of Goa's

Azulejo tiles<sup>24</sup>. Yet, cement tiles became popular in Southeast China in the 19th-20th century when returning overseas Chinese reintroduced the technique from Southeast Asia, shaping modern architectural decoration culture. They're now utilized both indoors and outdoors.

In my experiment, I'll blend my homemade fish sauce with concrete, pour the mixture into the cement tile mold, and let it dry. The self-fermented fish sauce will impart a unique 'seaside' aroma and bring the nostalgic feeling of my hometown memory through the sense of sight, touch, and smell.



Figure 19: Unknown (2024) Remove the soft clay tile from the mould

(<https://ceramicartsnetwork.org/daily/article/Bulb-Glazing-An-Alternative-Glazing-Technique-for-Pottery>)

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<sup>24</sup> The art of azulejo, or hand-painted ceramic tiles, is unique to Goa and arrived with the Portuguese. The art and craft of azulejos, born in Arabia and dubbed azulejo, smooth and blue, or small polished tile, today manufactured using old and modern techniques, was brought back to Goa by Orlando de Noronha

## 6. Conclusion

“Food is intimately bound with social relations, including those of power, inclusion, and exclusion, as well as with cultural ideas about classification (including food and non-food, the edible and the inedible), the human body, and the meaning of health, where migrants become agents in the transnational circulation of food by bringing with them their traditions, cuisine, and consumption patterns (Caplan, 1997, p. 9)”.

This research began by observing my distinct cooking habits, such as using fish sauce, and reflecting on feelings of cultural disconnection during my time studying abroad. These experiences evoked memories of my great-grandfather, who migrated to Southeast Asia in the 1930s, leaving his family behind.

The initial starting point led me to conduct intensive research on fish sauce fermentation. I found that the migration routes match the places where fish sauce recipes appear. To learn more about fish sauce fermentation, I started taking a hands-on approach and documented the fermentation process. However, due to the weather conditions, the fermentation process was unsuccessful. In contrast, the process created a sensory memory, a strong smell from fermented fish sauce and the food flavored, constantly helping me remember the sense of home. I started the journey of researching food with sensory memory.

I carried on my research question and delved into field research in Paris’s 13th district, a Teochew diasporic community in France. I utilized participant observation and in-depth interviews to identify the food habits of different generations of Teochew. In my opinion, the way they maintain their food habits strengthens their identity. Especially for first-generation immigrants, through the war and reconstruction in their homeland, it’s hard for them to physically back to their hometown. Nevertheless, the term Proust Phenomenon indicates that the distinctive senses (particularly smell and taste) could activate autobiographical memories, and the food-making process could help them connect with the past with the present and the future.

In my artistic practice, I used creative coding, the sensor, and acrylic material to create a fermentation box with specific temperatures and humidity to represent the “climate” of Teochew. I’m trying to unfold the dimensional mapping in my exhibit using Geographical,

Historical, and Memorial aspects.

In conclusion, the research I conducted provided me with a new perspective on history. I gained insight throughout the field research, and as an artist and designer, it is vital to me to transfer this research into art language, and access to a broader audience. Teochew cuisine, fermented food, and sensory memory reshape the concept of time; maybe in the parallel universe, I reconnect with my ancestors through the "Sensorial Migration."

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# Appendix

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Bachelor Graduation Project, Related to Red Peach Cake

## Appendix 1: Project-Fish Sauce Archive

The primary purpose of the *Fish Sauce Archive* project was to learn about the process of fish sauce fermentation, foodways, and dietary culture, focusing mainly on coastal China and parts of Southeast Asia. *Fish Sauce Archive* done by learning about fish sauce fermentation through literature reviews, videos, and a hands-on approach. This project combines the knowledge of fish sauce fermentation and geopolitical issues from people migrating, observing how migration groups could affect the local diet, and trying to find the migration trace through the lens of fish sauce and family recipes.

### Process of Homemade Fish Sauce

Through engaging with different kinds of literature, I found the article *A Review on Fish Sauce Processing, Free Amino Acids and Peptides with Sensory Properties*(2021) helpful. It illustrates all the information about fish sauce fermentation.

As I learned from the article, fish sauce is a distinctive brown-to-grey liquid with a unique aroma and flavor resulting from the fermentation of fish. The ingredients used to produce fish sauce include various types of fish, salt concentrations, storage containers, and storage temperatures. For instance, Malaysian fish sauce (Budu) needs 3-12 months to ferment, and the ratio between salt and fish is 5:1. It is usually contained in an airtight container, and the fish type is Devis' Anchovy.



Fig1: Author(2023) Documented the process of fish sauce fermentation from April 2023 to March 2024.

Therefore, I tried to buy anchovies at the local fish market in the Netherlands. I prepared three types of jars containing fish sauce with three different recipes (different from the fermentation period and the ratio differences between fish and salt).

Furthermore, fish sauce is commonly used as a flavoring additive in cooking and often consumed as a condiment in daily meals (Saisithi, 1994; Rosma et al., 2009; Montero et al., 2017); it plays a role in varying degrees in the foodways of Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Le Roux, 1993; Baffie, 1993). Also, fish sauce was incorporated into some cooking in Southern China dating back to the Tang Dynasty of A.D. 618-907 (Schafer 1977, p47-50) and through the ethnic Chinese migration and historical events (history of Chinese immigrants), which in a way influenced the eating habits and flavor in Southeast Asia. While there is no concrete evidence that fish sauce originated in China, the culinary practices of Southeast Asia and Southeastern

China share similarities that pique my curiosity.

Table 1. Summary of fish sauce processing

Country Origin	Fish Sauce	Fish Species	Fermentation Duration	Fish; salt (w/w)	References
Thailand	<i>Nam-pla</i>	<i>Stolephrous</i> spp. <i>Ristrelliger</i> spp. <i>Cirrhinus</i> spp.	5-12 months	1-5:1	Ray and Montet (2015); Garnjanagoonchorn
Vietnam	<i>Nuoc-mam</i>	<i>Stolephorus</i> spp.	9-12 months	3:1-3:2	Nghia <i>et al.</i> (2017)
China	<i>Yu-lu</i>	<i>Engraulis japonicus</i> , <i>Channa asiatica</i>	6-12 months	3:1	Jiang <i>et al.</i> (2007); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2018)
Japan	<i>Ishiru/ Shottsuru</i>	<i>Astroscopus japonicus</i> , <i>Clupea pilchardus</i> <i>Omnastrephis sloani</i> , <i>Omnastrephis pacificus</i>	12 months	5:1	Ohshima and Giri (2014); Ray and Montet (2015)
Indonesia	<i>Bakasang</i>	<i>Stolephorus</i> spp. <i>Clupea</i> spp. <i>Leiagnathus Osteochilus</i> spp. <i>Sardinella</i> spp. <i>Engraulis</i>	2 months	5:1.5-3.5	Ijong and Ohta (1996); Ray and Montet (2015)
Malaysia	<i>Budu</i>	<i>Stolephorus</i> spp. <i>Sardinella</i> spp. <i>Decapterus macrosoma</i>	3-12 months	3-5:1	Beddows (1985); Klamklao <i>et al.</i> (2006) Huda (2015)

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Table 1: Summary of Fish Sauce Processing.

## Design Process

To develop my assumption of the interrelationship between food in Southern China and Southeast Asia, I started mapping out the migration routes and collecting the local recipes flavored with fish sauce, mainly focusing on the period between the 19th and 20th centuries, which turns out the migration routes match with the recipes.

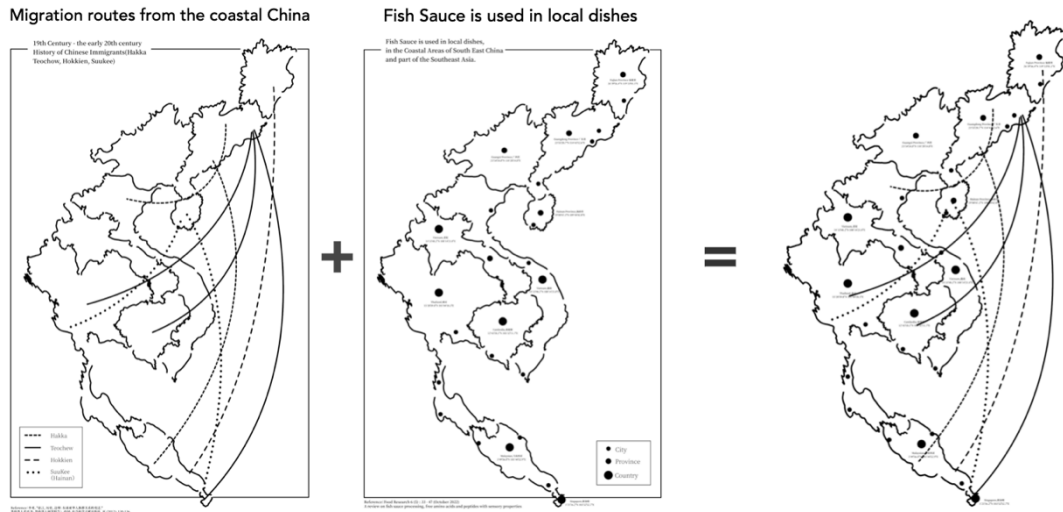


Fig 2: Mapping out the Migration routes from four minority groups (Hakka, Teochew, Hokkien, Hainan) from coastal China to parts of Southeast Asia ( ), and Fish sauce is used in local dishes.

## Appendix 2: List of Interviews

### Auntie Ling

(Conclusion of the interview)

I met an auntie<sup>25</sup> called Ling. As I mentioned above, she opened a Phở restaurant called Pho Thai in the 13th arrondissement of Paris. Her restaurant is next to the Teochew Guild Temple. She was born in Teochew in the 50ies. Because of the extremist political movements - The Great Leap Forward and The Cultural Revolution, people around the South suffered from famine. When Auntie Ling was seven, in response to the famines, her family embarked on a month-long journey on foot to Vietnam for a better life. Subsequently, the Vietnam War happened, and the family moved to Cambodia; she spent her adolescence in that country so that she could speak fluent Khmer. However, the Cambodia Genocide forced her family to move again; luckily, Ling had a chance to go to Paris with her fiancé, but in the chaotic wartime, Ling lost her sibling. Since she came to Paris and settled, she has missed the food that could represent her hometown, and she has a family recipe of Char Kway Teow<sup>26</sup>, so she decided to open a restaurant. (Ling, personal communication, November 17, 2023) I wrote down her story because Ling was uncomfortable recording this story with a recorder or camera.

<sup>25</sup> Auntie is an honorific title for an elderly lady in Chinese culture, which shows my respect for Ling in this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> Char kway teow (sometimes also spelled as char kuey teow, Chinese: 炒粿條; Peh-ōe-jī: chhâ-kôe-tiâu) is a stir-fried rice noodle dish from Maritime Southeast Asia of southern Chinese origin. In Hokkien and Teochew, char means 'stir-fried' and kway teow refers to flat rice noodles

Furthermore, in my opinion, the Phở restaurant and the bowl of Phở documents the narratives of Ling's life. Likewise, the foodways of Phở, which trace the soup from Teochew, herbs and noodles from Southeast Asia, and the stew beef from France, also correlate Auntie Ling's migrated experience from Teochew to Southeast Asia to France. Phở is like a symbolic word, for finding those who have witnessed each other's past, based on the presupposition of shared historical experiences, hoping to relocate to these new surroundings.

Ly-Hear Teyssandier  
(Transcript from Audio)

**1. Would you please introduce your immigration background? (for example, how your parents or grandparents immigrant from Teochew to Cambodia, Vietnam and France)**

The nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. My grandmother was born in Cambodia and so was my grandfather on my father's side and my grandmother was sold because her father smoked opium and was very addicted to drugs.

And he was constantly looking for money to buy drugs, so that's how my grandmother was sold. on my, my grandmother's, my mother's side. My grandparents were born in China. They're originally from Fust and um, they migrated to Cambodia as young adults when they were about eighteen or nineteen.

so my two parents. My father and mother were born in Cambodia into very large families. Ten children in each family. My father was a little prince, a little boy, the first boy after five girls and very spoiled. my mother. She was the eldest girl after three boys. So uh, not quite the same life.

She had more responsibility being the first daughter. Then uh, my family grew up in a certain gentleness. They did business, they had a hairdressing salon, they sold tobacco and through their activities, in fact, they learned to speak several languages. Cantonese, Mandarin, Khmer and Vietnamese.

They have great flexibility in actually learning languages. They therefore lived a fairly happy existence, prosperous thanks to business. Until this day, April 17, one thousand nine hundred and seventy-five, when the Khmer Rouge plunged Cambodia into chaos. my father Uh so following this news wanted to get involved with the Vietnamese to uh well to act as resistance and my grandmother did not agree at all.

She stopped him, she forced him to get married Uh and uh so a marriage was quickly decided with his neighbor with whom he was secretly in love. Uh well who was my mother? They then fled to Vietnam. Uh who luckily repatriated his nationals, my family by the Vietnamese thanks to trade.

So it was quite easy to pass as Vietnamese and then cross the border. So they crossed all of Cambodia because they were in Phnom Penh at that time and so they went north to Cambodia. where it was really a very, very difficult passage. Um, my mother said that they passed through fields where we saw a lot of dead people.

So it was actually really difficult for them during that period. Uh and then they lived in Vietnam uh a few years uh and then uh and then well that's where I was born before before we could leave for uh for France

**2. How significant do you consider the relationship between food and personal identity? Do you believe that engaging in food practice holds a specific connection to shaping your sense of self-identity? What's your relationship with food?**

Since I was little, I felt that food was a non-verbal language. I remember the long hours shaping the **Gu Chai Gue** that we did together with my maternal grandmother, with my mother, my aunt, my uncles. all together. In fact we did yeah and it was really a moment of sharing, we did Uh well we were all around my grandmother and then well we shaped them, we cooked them, we, we ate them together.

Um we also spent a lot of time together as a family rolling Vietnamese rolls. spring rolls as we say in French. Uh the same in fact moments of sharing learning also for us uh making skewers also of Khmer beef for the barbecue that we did as a family on my father's side in particular and those were great memories happy.

we had as much fun as we worked, we passed recipes to each other, we talked to each other about my tatins in fact and my parents uh told me about memories they had in uh when they were young people, how they were uh how they lived there, how they worked, all the family stories etc. So it's really big moments of sharing cooking together.

And then I also actually remember our whole days that we spent at the beach fishing for crabs and then we cooked in the evening. So it was quite funny actually, well playing with the crabs, picking them up, putting them in the bucket then washing them, leaving them in a basin and then in the end actually eating them so it was still something quite curious at the time.

so uh, cooking together, eating together, it's really moments of sharing, happy moments in fact that I cherish. It was truly what we call love. This is nonverbal love and all that really. I felt quite, quite quickly. and therefore my love for cooking. In fact, it comes from these memories that I try to reproduce somewhere at home or with others.

When I give lessons and I would say that I was born to do that, to give happiness to people. Um, it makes me feel good to know that people are happy and there are two phases in cooking. we can distinguish two phases. The preparation then the cooking, and it actually ultimately applies to our daily lives.

We learn to organize ourselves, to anticipate, to do our shopping for example, to cut uh, cook things before others keep them in the fridge and so on uh also be patient when we simmer soups for a long time, soups in particular , in fact, which must simmer for hours and hours.



uh for example. And then we also learn to be flexible, to adjust, add these seasonings uh find solutions when we don't have the right ingredient or when we put too much salt for example on something on a dish. Um, so there you have it, I would say that it's a life lesson.

and uh really in fact Uh well my temperament, I have a fairly generous temperament, I have an eye for detail. Um I like everything that is beautiful and good Um I am super creative too. Um, and all of this is actually expressed completely in the kitchen. I can not say. In fact, today, if it's cooking that makes me who I am today, or if it's my personality that brought me to cooking, the truth certainly lies somewhere between between these two, these two paths.

### **3. What's your favorite Teochew or Teochew Cambodian food? (Food means not only the taste of the food could also the process of making food)**

I have a lot of Proust madeleines. What do we call it? These are dishes that I really like and which actually make me remember very happy moments in my childhood. Um, like for example these little cakes that dad bought us Um, when we went to the beautiful city to visit our paternal grandmother.

So uh, he always bought us little cakes filled with soy paste and I never managed to actually find the recipe or even in fact these little cakes which are no longer made. Um, I also have beautiful memories with Bah, always my dad who cut our oranges, but he cut them in a certain way so that we could drink directly from the orange, he made a hole.

and uh in the top of the orange. Then he removed the peel from half of the orange. And then well, we squeezed gradually to drink the juice through the hole. So that was a great memory. With mom too, we have lots of memories, I remember the red beans we made for dessert.

Um she made them often in fact it was something that she loved to do and that she then put in the freezer and it made us frozen desserts and we made them we took them. Uh uh finally we scraped with the spoon as we went along to uh well to eat and it took a long time but it was so good.

Um there are also lots of dishes, there are so many dishes but in fact the ones that mom used to make for us and that's really the most comforting dish par excellence. always good memories in fact when you eat like me and it's uh not necessarily when you're sick but also uh well yeah when you don't feel well when it's cold uh uh well there you go, we share one and I and it's uh it's it's great!

But I must say that there is one dish that I love above all and which dethrones all the others, it is the crepe. Well, it's a crispy and melting rice pancake at the same time, which is made with coconut milk and turmeric. and it is always generously garnished with

minced pork, shoots, bamboo. (<https://grantourismotravels.com/vietnamese-banh-xeo-recipe/>)

Uh mom, she put bamboo shoots, So I don't know. It's a traditional recipe or not, but mom used bamboo shoots and bean sprouts. And uh, And what I actually like, actually, is this melting crunchy side of this turmeric pancake. the generous use that we make with the when we actually water the pancake the umami of the shrimp, the freshness of the raw vegetables, all that means that it's really flavors that don't worry us.

And this pancake is really my favorite pancake too. Finally the favorite dish of many, many, many people I know. I don't know why there is something inexplicable about this dish. Yet it's a dish that we each eat in turn, because well you have to make it and uh and and it's And the preparation is long and the cooking is long.

And that, but I don't know why in fact these pancakes, I love them and uh, and I love them because we prepared them together with mom, we prepared all the ingredients, we cut them, we had them. Um, she showed me the gesture technique too. How? How to cook this pancake? uh on very hot oil.

And then above all, she told me well you have to be patient to taste the best crepe, it had to be very crispy, very golden and and in fact I always ate it in twos or threes and I always ended up in made by a plain crepe without anything at all and with just a little bit of and it's really fabulous.

It's really in fact the way Uh uh, which I love to finish my meal And it's really a Proust madeleine Uh, this Proust madeleine that I wanted to highlight in the restaurant that I had created Ben ben. uh where we could uh well enjoy this pancake a whole table in fact being able to eat this pancake and it was really great what was it really?

Well, finally, it was a dream that came true and I'm happy to have made it known to many, many, many people.

#### **4. Are you willing to try fish sauce fermentation?**

When I opened my restaurant, I actually wanted a lot of things to be homemade. I even wanted to make my own sauce. All my sauces are made by myself, and I'm going to make homemade soy sauce, etc. But it's true that I never thought about making the sauce. The fish sauce, the homemade one.

Why? Because I thought you needed a climate because you had to have the right ingredients. the right ones, the right tools, the proper technique to do it. And it's true that I never really thought about the possibility of doing it myself and since, well, since I met you I say to myself, why not listen? I really have in fact you fascinated me I found it fascinating what you told me about the history of what you wanted to retrace on why in

fact it was dear to you.

while it's not necessarily an ingredient that is used everywhere else in China, but among them we use it a lot with soy sauce. And it's funny because well when I see dishes, certain dishes like caramel pork in fact uh, we mainly use the Vietnamese in fact, mainly use but I always actually use soy sauce because that I find that it brings something, it brings a plus, it brings a caramelization that the uh that the NKM does not bring and uh and I find it incredible in fact to be able to achieve this to be able to do things yourself, to master the techniques in a certain way and precisely to transmit them.

to actually transmit these things even if it's long, even if it's uh uh finally here today for example the Koreans they make their own kimchi even though it takes a lot of fermentation time and that that it takes months in fact to obtain a good a good kimchi Uh well listen to them the it's a bit the same thing in fact with the diam uh I think that well you just have to sit down, look and see Well, let's try something.

SO? Yes, I want to, I want to, I want to do it. I want to try. Um if, if, if the time is given to me and that and that I have the opportunity and the possibility to do it, I I. One day I will try to make my own sauce. my own that my uh and then well I would like you to help me do it because I found it super enriching and uh, and uh, and very interesting in fact the way you approached the subject Um, so here's to the pleasure of seeing you again to uh to do some together.

Dennis Yong

### **1. What triggered you to start the journey of fermentation?**

My dad's side is Hakka and mom's Teow Chew. Pretty lucky to be able to experience both cultures. But to be honest I did not really grow up with lots of homemade fermented food. One thing my mom or grandma would make though, at least once a year is the Rice Wine to make Rice wine chicken 黄酒鸡. And occasionally, my grandma would make her own pickles (elephant ear shoot that she grows) just with vinegar and salt. It has a nice texture. I think what really spark the beginning of my fermentation journey was encountering kombucha (SCOBY) at my first work place in Malaysia. Ever since I got more curious about preservation techniques and want to explore more. I find the whole process very magical. You could turn something from fresh into fermented, basically into a while different product. I think that's what got me into it.

### **2. How significant do you consider the relationship between food and personal identity? Additionally, do you believe that engaging in fermentation practices holds a specific connection to shaping your sense of self-identity?**

Food definitely plays a big part in personal identity. Heard of the phrase "what you eat is what you are"? In short form, every different cuisine is influence by their cultures and practices and that's what makes every individual unique. Until today although I grew up in a Chinese family in Malaysia which is a multicultural country, I am still being shaped & influenced by the new environment and people. I think that's what makes me excited in tasting new food always. To ferment something usually takes time as it is a slow process to obtain this amazing and delicious product and it really reminds me to slow down especially in my line of work, where everything has to be fast. In a way I think fermentation teaches me to be a patient human being.

### **3. When you engage in the fermentation process of a specific food, like fish sauce, known for its distinct aroma, does it evoke memories (like childhood memories) for you? Similarly, do sensory experiences, such as smell or taste, trigger specific memories for you when you consume certain foods? If yes, could you provide some specific examples?**

I grew up eating a lot of fermented product so yes definitely brings back some very specific moments in my life. Sometimes even the smell could trigger this memory. I can't think of this food but I remember when I was walking on the street somewhere in a small town of Spain. I could smell something from far away and it brought me back to this very specific moment in my life like that moment where the food critic tasted the ratatouille in the movie.

**4. What's your favorite dish in Malaysia or Teochew or other Southeast Asian? (better to be fermented food or accompanied by fermented condiments)**

Fermented shrimp paste or Belacan usually used in making sambal or stir fried vegetables is something I could think of. Another one is like a preserved teow chew olive (Ka na Cai) I grew up eating with congee.

### Appendix 3: Design and Artwork

Bachelor Graduation Project, Related to Red Peach Cake

Guo (Red Peach Cake) is a traditional food from my hometown Chaoshan (a small city in south of China), which is used to be tributes to the god. It usually has beautiful patterns, most of which are animal totems. With the crush from modern and western food, the popularity of Guo is fading away and we can rarely find a Guo vendor nowadays.

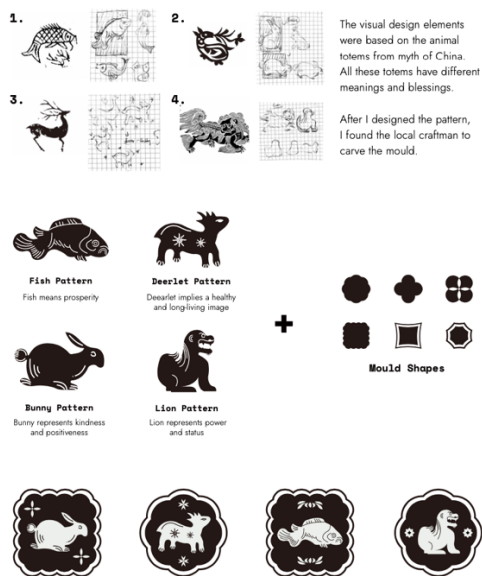


Fig 3: The Patterns design of the Guo-Red Peach Cake, and crafted with wooden mould.