

# Oral Practices for Sharing Recipes

---

PETRONELA SAVIN

## Research Context

**P**EOPLE HAVE always felt the need to share culinary knowledge. Even in the case of written recipes, we can speak of a tradition that goes back thousands of years, as evidenced by the 3,700-year-old clay tablets from ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq).<sup>1</sup> Direct transmission, that is, teaching someone how to cook, is such a natural fact that it seems to have no history, only an existence. Unlike recipes in cookbooks, which have a discursive autonomy conferred by writing itself, a generally standardized structure, oral practices in passing on recipes are the result of a momentary exchange, during cooking or even outside the cooking ritual. They are ephemeral, without a secure discursive body, always situated in an extraverbal context that determines them.<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, they are often ignored in academic literature, both in the field of discursive studies and in that of sociological or anthropological studies.

This paper analyzes the oral practices of recipe transmission documented through field studies in 45 localities<sup>3</sup> in the center of Moldavia, which we conducted in 2016–2021 as part of the projects on food heritage in different areas of Romania.<sup>4</sup> The aim was to record a natural situation of knowledge transmission associated with the preparation of a dish, complemented by communication about other dishes learned in the family. The research team consisted of two people most of the time, the main interviewer and a partner who provided technical support and intervened in the conversation depending on the context. The meeting was organized locally by a facilitator, a person from the village with authority, usually a teacher, a priest's wife, a nun, who more often than not participated in the research situation. 110 people were interviewed, in most cases women, selected for their skills and willingness to cook and talk about cooking. Thus, these are both oral practices of sharing recipes prepared under the eyes of the researcher and sharing recipes from memory.

Therefore, the qualitative research<sup>5</sup> approach was adopted, combining the interview<sup>6</sup> with participant observation in the theoretical context of sensory ethnology, which assumes the multisensory sensibility of the experience of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the interviews conducted in this research were designed from an ethnographic sensory perspective and aimed to create the context of a communication about a recipe shared during its prepara-

This paper will be published as part of the project titled PN-III-P2-2.1-PED-2019-5092: *A Romanian Digital Repository on Food: Turning Heritage Knowledge Towards Society (FOODIE)*.



ration. The act of preparing, touching, smelling and tasting the food magnified the act of communication. We sought to strategically preserve the evocative, sensory nature of the communication experience such as the cooking lesson. We wanted to observe not only the process, but also the way in which food experiences evoke memories,<sup>8</sup> the way in which the preparation of a meal which is considered traditional brings together the entire repertoire of culinary heritage, recalls past times, honors family members, and connects present moments with experienced events.

The kitchen, as the space for the filmed interview, was not only the natural place where culinary practice was carried out, but also the space that allowed relaxation and the adoption of a natural behavior specific to a shared activity.<sup>9</sup> Since one of the aims (and difficulties) of qualitative research is to study things in their natural setting and to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people give them,<sup>10</sup> the kitchen space provided an opportunity to study culinary practice in natural conditions.

## Oral Practices for Sharing Recipes

**T**HE STUDY of the cooking act in terms of knowledge sharing allowed us to analyze the types of practices of oral sharing of recipes, depending on the performance of the act or its evocation. By oral practices of sharing recipes, we mean any approach to teaching someone how to cook, whether by preparing a meal and explaining the steps or by passing on recipes from memory.

In the surveys we conducted in the villages from the central region of Moldavia, we audio-video recorded both situations, the preparation of a dish of the host's choosing in their own kitchen and the presentation of recipes from memory that they had learned in their family.

The first category we considered was the oral sharing of recipes in conjunction with a performance. By recording the interlocutors cooking in their own kitchens, the interactions took place under the guise of cooking lessons. The hostess, equipped with everything necessary, began preparing her chosen dish under our eyes and in front of the camera. Women who were not familiar with the presentation of recipes through the media presented us with the ordinary act of preparing a meal in daily life. Most of the time, after greeting us, they started cooking without introducing themselves. It was the natural gesture to perform an act that is usually performed and not presented. Very rarely did the host say the name of the dish without being asked or verbalizing the steps she was taking. She gave cooking tips rather than present the process as it was seen. In most cases, the specification of the actions performed in real time, stating the ingredients, measurements or tools used, was in response to the researcher's insistent questions. This is because cooking is something you do rather than something you say, it means putting an action into practice until the body itself learns the technique and rules, so gesture predominates. Success in cooking means skill, attention and self-control, and the word cannot fully express this action. A preparation with the same name, sometimes even with the same ingredient, can involve very different methods because the knowledge

conveyed by the act is difficult to standardize. Unlike written recipes, the oral transmission of recipes preserves the knowledge shared through gestures, which are only partially verbalized (whisking, kneading, charring, etc.).

When someone teaches cooking, they describe not only the actions, i.e. what to do, but also how to make that food successful. As Adam<sup>11</sup> notes, we can speak not only of a procedural discourse, but also of a discourse that encourages action, a discourse that gives advice and counseling. To advise is to tell someone what to do and what not to do, and the advisor is to guide, warn, recommend, convince, persuade. All these components of learning, relating to modality, technique and attitude, are fulfilled in the oral practices of passing on culinary knowledge through gestures and words. The whole approach is governed by a truth contract that guarantees success if the advice of both dimensions, gesture and word, is followed.<sup>12</sup> The cooking expert guarantees that the preparation will be successful if the procedures and recommendations presented are followed. This contract also explains the impersonal nature of the expression of the procedure (chopping, adding, cooking), which guarantees the objective nature of the approach, as well as by subjective interventions (“but I also add...”), which are assumed to be elements of innovation resulting from personal experience.

Another principle in the oral transmission of culinary knowledge is that the learner is not a complete stranger to cooking. The most important issue in culinary communication is the negotiation of the relationship between the shared body of knowledge of the teacher and the learner, which often underlies that which is implicit, implied, or unsayable in recipes. The category of negotiation includes invitations to make approximations (as needed, according to taste) and the enunciation of processes that are taken for granted (sautéed onions). In the oral sharing of recipes, there is always a component of *savoir-faire* that cannot be expressed. There is a communication contract between the speaker and the listener, negotiating what needs to be explained and what is obvious, what is implicit and what is explicit. The researcher plays the role of the innocent learner, suggesting to the cook from the outset that she explains what she is doing as if she were addressing a stranger, but this convention is often violated.

If the general scenario of a research activity follows the stages of preparing a meal in real time, each action with its location data in time and space, with the degree of involvement it claims, definitely affects the communication situation. Oral practices of sharing recipes through the act of preparation involve sequences consisting of gestures and ordered sequences leading to the final result, the preparation. Such a procedure is led by an expert who is knowledgeable, but the success of their action depends on the means at their disposal, the quality of the ingredients, the utensils and equipment used, the time and the help available. It is well known that ingredients have a great influence not only on the final quality of the product, but also on the cooking process. Cooking implements and equipment (blender, mincer, oven) operated or supervised by humans also shape the activity in the kitchen. From this point of view, time is essential not only in terms of the chronology of actions, but also in terms of the modulation of actions (what you do in the meantime, what is repeated, what is the pace of the action, whether the action unfolds slowly or quickly, whether it speeds up or slows down). Also, the fact that the preparations have autonomous sequences enables the performer to do several

things at once and enables the performer to be assisted by several people. The act of preparation is thus a collective performance, in which the cook benefits from a number of resources that condition their success. All these resources characterize the practice of the oral transmission of culinary knowledge.

In the case of the research we conducted, the researcher had a conversation with the cook who asked for the verbalization of her actions, knowing that she was being filmed in the process. The fact that nowadays everyone who wants to learn a new recipe uses the internet and watches cooking shows means that the oral transmission of culinary knowledge is influenced by the transmission through the media. The greatest innovation in transmission through the media is the image that captures the process, the recipe that unfolds step by step before the viewer's eyes. From this point of view, the young interlocutors I interviewed, in particular, tended to adopt strategies for communicating and presenting the culinary act along the lines of those seen on television or the internet. Thus, they set up the kitchen in which they were going to cook, making sure they had all the tools and equipment they needed, prepared and presented the ingredients, performed the steps, verbalized the process, stressing the tips in the communication that was, more often than not, impersonal. Inevitably, this method of transmission ended with the wish "Enjoy your meal!"

Creating a research-oriented communication related to the actual preparation of a particular dish, with openings to a broader repertoire of recipes known to the interlocutor, was the initial aim of the research approach. The all-encompassing discourse of the conversation allowed the recipes to develop different dimensions. Unlike the strictly procedural discourse of written recipes, which tends to be time-neutral, the oral recipe can move between past, present and future as it is a construct shaped by the variable of time.<sup>13</sup> The recipe belongs to everyone, in the sense that recipes are only copyrighted in rare and very specific cases,<sup>14</sup> but in conversation recipes will belong to someone. They display all the signs of implementation: they are said in a specific kitchen, in a specific way, they follow the reference to someone's specific techniques, objects, utensils, facilities. The said recipes, especially when they are simultaneous to the act of preparation, are defined by a permanent implicitness that refers to the context, to the plurisensory reception (at a rough estimate, to taste, as appropriate), to the gestures (it feels in the hand), but also to the prior knowledge regarding the cooking of those who participate in the communication (like a cake, with a consistency like pancakes). The word does not say everything, it is completed by the action, which is always negotiated, appropriated and adapted. Thus, a recipe prepared before the eyes of another person or presented in the context of a conversation inevitably acquires an identity through all these data of implementation by a particular person. But it is not only a personal identity; it is also a group identity. Recipes testify to belonging to a community (recipes specific to Csango communities), but at the same time they belong to a family (the mother's recipes, the aunt's recipes), they can reveal who is included in a group or not (women chosen to cook for the patron saint of the church), who is the "other" who cooks differently (neighbors of a different religion). However, the recipes turn out to be in a permanent dynamic, since they imitate the old ways (Christmas Eve cakes were made with hemp seed cakes,

Rom. *julfă*), but they are also adapted to the modern times (nowadays, Christmas Eve cakes are mainly made with walnut cakes).

As I mentioned earlier, as part of the general discourse on how to make food, avenues of communication were opened up about the entire repertoire of recipes known to the interlocutor. In essence, recipes presented from memory in the context of communication are difficult to classify into a single category. As Norrick<sup>15</sup> writes, conversational recipes are turns of phrase with multiple units, with distinctive openings and closings. Recipes can be continued in narratives or emerge from narratives, however they are a facilitation as a discourse of procedure that is linguistically marked by characteristic elements, including changes in the syntax of communication, time and person, specific terminology. An essential difference between recipes recited from memory and the discourse of preparing a dish is that, in the first case, we are dealing with a synthetic discourse that does not benefit from references, while, in the case of prepared recipes, the discourse is destructured by the act of preparation. In the case of food sharing, it is often difficult to determine where the recipe really begins and ends. The combined, intertwined, embedded nature of recipes in an interview-like communication practice, as described above, gives recipes the status of a sign in language. The retrieval of recipes from memory in a conversational practice based on the act of preparing a dish gives procedural discourse the status of a technical argument in the economy of a communication about food knowledge.

Understanding recipes in the process of communication therefore means, as Wharton<sup>16</sup> describes, going beyond words and examining the ways in which recipes succeed in conveying the world.

## Case Study: The Preparation of Mash for *Sarmale* by Maria Budău, Galbeni, Bacău County, Romania

**I**N WHAT follows, we want to provide evidence for the complexity of the communication situation created by the oral transmission of recipes. To do so, we analyze an interview sequence that captures one phase of the preparation, namely the preparation of mash (Rom. *păsat*) for minced meat in cabbage leaves (Rom. *sarmale*).<sup>17</sup>

Maria Budău, our interlocutor, was born in 1950 and lives in the village of Galbeni in the commune of Nicolae Bălcescu, about 15 km from Bacău, on the right bank of the Siret River, at the confluence with the Bistrița River. The inhabitants of the village are mostly Roman Catholic Csangos. The oldest of them are bilingual and speak a mother tongue of Hungarian origin in addition to Romanian. This is also the case of Maria Budău, whom we were able to interview on 21 January 2017, on 26 November 2018, and on 7 December 2020, with the help of Petronela Condreț, a primary school teacher, who had chosen her as an interlocutor because of her communication skills and knowledge in the field of cuisine. The interview we present here took place at the first meeting in Maria Budău's kitchen, an annex to the main house that consists of two rooms, one

for sleeping and one where food is prepared, with a common stove that serves both rooms. The future daughter-in-law and niece also helped with the cooking. In all the meetings I filmed and conducted the interview alone, with the teacher Petronela Condreț intervening in the communication from time to time.



MARIA BUDĂU, sifting mash for *sarmale*

In the following, we will analyze the beginning of the first interview, which was conducted in Maria Budău's house. We had come to ask her how to make *sarmale* with mash, and stopped at the first stage of *sarmale* preparation, the preparation of the mash.<sup>18</sup>

When we entered Maria Budău's home, after greeting and thanking her for her kindness in letting us film how the *sarmale* are prepared with mash, our hostess began sifting the mash, a larger ground cornmeal. Informants, already informed of the purpose of our arrival, rarely linger with the introductions and begin work just before our arrival. The first filmed line<sup>19</sup> records our request to the host to talk about what she is doing:

*R. Numai spuneți de fiecare dată când faceți ceva... [Just tell us about what you are doing...]*

*M. B. Da, da, da, deci noi... fac cernutu' la păsat. Astăzi facim niște sarmăluțe din păsat. [Yes, yes, yes, so we... are sifting through the mash. Today we are going to make some sarmale with mash.]<sup>20</sup>*

The first intervention is revealing of the host's interest in communication, but it also registers the uncertainty specific to the beginning of the dialogue. However, some linguistic structures unnatural to the Romanian language are the consequence of the bilingualism of the interlocutor.

Normally, informants do not speak when it comes to cooking, only verbalizing what they are doing when the researcher asks them to, but when they are involved in a repetitive action that does not require much concentration, this is the best time to initiate more complex communication. Absorbed by the work, the speaker becomes freer in expression and sometimes even forgets the camera. Under the pretext of curiosity of the teacher who had organized the meeting, we asked the interlocutor, who continued to sift, to explain what mash is, a basic ingredient of *sarmale* in the past, which is now often replaced by rice. This ingredient is rarely used in today's Romanian cuisine, so the details of sourcing it are important:

*R. Ne povestii? Doamna vrea să știe ce e acela păsat... [Could you please tell us? The lady would like to know what mash is...]*

*M. B. Acum, păsatul e făcută din porumb... la moară... [Now mash is made of corn... at the mill...]*

The host states that it is an ingredient consisting of ground corn, but does not give more specific details. The burden of beginning the communication still dominates, and the question demanding a definitional answer has been asked too soon. Given the more difficult start to the discussion about the first stage of the preparation being made, it seemed a better option to open the conversation about other dishes based on that ingredient, mash:

*R. Mai puneți păsat și-n altceva? [Do you add mash to other dishes?]*

*M. B. Numai în sarmale... Mai facem lapte... pentru copii. Da' ce-i de bun! Cu asta am crescut zece copii. [Only to sarmale... We also add it to milk... for children. Yes, that's good! I raised ten children on that.]*

In this answer we notice a very interesting reformulation of the answer in accordance with the expectations of the interviewer. The question referred to the present, and the first answer confirms that mash is currently an endangered ingredient, used *only in sarmale*... But the informant knows we are interested in old dishes, so she just brings up a recipe she used to make long ago. The memory becomes more fluid, Maria Budău's voice changes when she tells us that she also added mash to milk and she raised ten children on it. The recipe for mash with milk recorded on the *ECULTFOOD* platform is proof of this moment of reliving a memory that is difficult to put into words:<sup>21</sup>

*R. Zece copii ați avut? Să vă trăiască! Și puneți așa păsat în laptele fiert? [You have ten children? Congratulations! And you would add mash to boiled milk just like that?]*

*M. B. Când fierbe laptele... am pus la fierț laptele... pun și păsatul, sare, zahăr. Și atâta îl învârt până când se moaie exact ca mămăliga... Și, pe urmă, li scot cu lingura. Ție, ție, ție, la toați gașca... [When the milk boils... I boiled the milk... I also add the mash, salt and sugar. And I mix it until it becomes soft, like polenta... And then I take it out with a spoon. This is for you, this is for you, this is for the whole gang...]*

*R. Și cum se cheamă mâncarea asta? [And what do you call this food?]*

*M. B. Mâncare făcută... din..., lapte făcut din păsat. [Food made from... made from milk and mash.]*

The recipe for milk with mash that Maria Budău prepared for her children not only awakens from oblivion a simple recipe that has now been replaced by milk and rice, but also conveys the sense that feeding is an essential instance of motherhood. It should be noted that the interlocutor links the success of the preparation to the continuous way of stirring until a known consistency is reached, the usual term of comparison being polenta. The difficulty of naming the recipe is a fact I encountered very often with interlocutors, with the description of the preparation taking the place of the name.

We used the context to verify the existence of another dish that is currently very rare, pig tripe stuffed with mash:<sup>22</sup>

*R. Și la chișcă puneți cumva păsat? [Do you also add mash to the stuffed pig tripe?]*

*M. B. Da... tot la fel, și la chișcă punem tot la fel... Din plămânuț porcului, din ceafă, o bucățică de carne, date prin mașină... Și, pe urmă, punim la muiet, în oleacă de ulei, jumătate din ceapă și jumătate din morcov, și-l amestecăm. Piper, boia, condimente în toate, și sare. Și chișca o ieșit. [Yes... the same thing, and we put the same thing in the stuffed tripe... From the lungs of the pig, from the neck, a piece of meat, minced... And then we soak in a little oil, half an onion and half a carrot and mix them. Pepper, paprika, all the spices and salt. And then there you have the stuffed tripe.]*

*C. Și, de fapt, puneți păsatul în loc de orez sau cum? [And you add mash instead of rice, or how do you do it?]*

*M. B. Orez separat facem la chișcă. Aici băgăm o mână de orez. Ca să deie un gust mai bun. [We do the rice separately. Here we put in a handful of rice. To give it a better taste.]*

*R. Deci și cu orez și cu păsat. Înainte, pe vremuri, se făcea numai cu păsat? [So, with rice and mash. In the past, long ago, was it only made with mash?]*

*M. B. Da, atunci, bătrânii, acum vreo optzeci de ani, bunică-mea așa am găsit-o, nu mai știa de orez, ei făceau cârnați din carne cu păsat. [Yes, in those days, the old people, about eighty years ago, like my grandmother, would not know how to make it with rice, they would make meat sausages with mash.]*

It is very interesting that Maria Budău continues to give answers in the spirit of our expectations. First, she offers us a recipe for stuffed pig tripe that her grandmother used to make; besides minced pork, fried onions and carrots she would also add mash. When asked if she used mash instead of rice, she answers that she currently prepares stuffed pig tripe with both mash and rice to give it a better taste. It is necessary to analyze this juxtaposition of two ingredients that play the same role, namely mash and rice. The



noblest ingredient, rice, replaces mash in most dishes today. However, in the Csango villages we studied, mash continues to be used as an ingredient, albeit together with rice. The reason for this, we believe, is the conservative nature of these communities, which retain culinary habits as a sign of their own identity. The awareness of the importance of maintaining these habits is confirmed by the fact that there is a mill in the village that grinds corn for mash and its owner is the son of our host.

The conversation about the preparation of mash is abruptly interrupted by the end of a first phase of the preparation of *sarmale*, the sifting of the mash, and the beginning of another, the washing of the mash. At the same time, Maria Budău signals to her niece and daughter-in-law to start chopping the vegetables:

*M. B. Gata, așa... Acuma spălăm păsatul... [There now, just like this... Now we wash the mash...]*

*R. De ce îl spălăm? [Why do we wash it?]*

*M. B. Fiindcă din ea iese coaja ceea a porumbului... [To remove the corn husks...] Și pe urmă începem... Puteți [fetelor] să vă apucați la ceapă, la morcov, la toate cele. [And then we start... You [girls] can start with the onions, carrots and everything else.]*

As you can see, the preparation of the mash, the defining ingredient of this preparation, consists of two steps: sifting, so that only the large grindstone remains, and washing several times with warm water to remove the corn husk that remains after grinding. Only our hostess took care of the preparation of the mash, which proves that she considers this a very important step, while the chopping of the vegetables is delegated to the helpers, the niece and the daughter-in-law. The fact that the technique of preparation is crucial to the success of the mash is confirmed by the clarification: *Api caldă pun eu la spălat păsatul să mi se umfle un pic, când începe să fiarbă, atuncea, sarmalele nu se sfarmă* [I wash the mash with hot water so that it swells a little, and when it begins to cook, the *sarmale* won't fall apart]. In the case of prepared recipes, then, the instructional component tends to be verbalized, with advice seen as more important than stating the steps, which can be seen anyway.

Even when analyzing this relatively short fragment of the interview, the performance of a preparation phase, the preparation of the mash for the *sarmale*, can be identified through the general characteristics of the practices of oral exchange of the culinary recipes discussed in the first part. In the case of this activity of knowledge exchange, there is a constant negotiation of the relationship between the expectations of the interviewer and the answers received. The fact that the mash is the ingredient that defines the recipe for the *sarmale* is highlighted by the host who insists on its preparation. On the sidelines of the communication about the preparation of the mash, Maria Budău, who noticed the team's interest in the dishes considered old, also offers other recipes with mash that she made in her youth for her children, milk with mash, or which she still makes, stuffed pig tripe with rice and mash. The recipes are placed in a significant life context, as facts from the present merge with those from the past. The dynamics of adapting culinary practices to the resources of the present become apparent. Evidence of this is the rice put into the *sarmale*, but the imprint of the past is still there, as the mash remains a basic ingredi-

ent. In the preparation of the recipe, gestures often replaces words. The steps are often verbalized at the request of the researcher or as a signal to channel attention to another cooking mode. Knowledge is conveyed through an action, and the word modulates, advises, entices. Both at the level of the discourse that presents the recipe prepared under the researcher's eyes and at the level of the discourse through which recipes are presented from memory, one notices the use of a whole strategy of guidance, of stimulating interest, of enticing and goading the helper. The point is to perform the specificities of any discourse on the transmission of knowledge, which is by definition a didactic discourse, a discourse of guidance.

Research aimed at the discourse on the practices of sharing recipes allows the expression of the whole and constitutes a discourse of life. The oral transmission of knowledge remains the most vivid way to preserve a cultural heritage that defines our present and invisibly connects us to the future. The act of showing or explaining to someone how to prepare a dish is a commonplace interaction that is nevertheless valuable in exploring the relationship between food and communication, a relationship that can be a key to understanding human beings in general.

□

## Notes

1. J. Bottéro, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia*, translated by T. Lavender Fagan (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
2. A. Claxton, "Cooking Lessons: Oral Recipe Sharing in the Southern Kitchen," M.A. thesis, East Tennessee University, 2019, <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3550>.
3. We present, in the chronological order of the survey, the 43 villages examined—39 localities from the Bacău County: Frumușelu (Glăvănești), Glăvănești (Glăvănești), Muncelu (Glăvănești), Ludași (Balcani), Balcani (Balcani), Rățeni (Balcani), Buda (Blăgești), Apa-Asău (Asău), Valea Mică (Roșiori), Gioseni (Gioseni), Galbeni (Nicolae Bălcescu), Bălăneasa (Livezi), Mănăstirea Cașin (Cașin), Cașin (Cașin), Blidari (Căiuți), Pârjol (Pârjol), Berești (Sascut), Somușca (Cleja), Țardenii Mici (Blăgești), Chetriș (Tamași), Prăjești (Prăjești), Faraoani (Faraoani), Pustiana (Pârjol), Mălosu (Lipova), Dumbrava (Gura Văii), Vâlcele (Târgu-Ocna), Răchitiș (Ghimeș-Păget), Berzunți (Berzunți), Scurta (Orbeni), Pâncești (Pâncești), Răstoaca (Răcăciuni), Pâncești (Sascut), Sascut-Sat (Sascut), Oituz (Oituz), Agăș (Agăș), Turluianu (Berești-Tazlău), Sărata (Sărata), Comănești, Chiricel (Comănești) and 6 localities from neighbouring counties: Grăjdeni (Frunțișeni), Vaslui County, Bălteni (Bălteni), Vaslui County, Bârgăuani (Bârgăuani), Neamț County, Izvoru Mureșului, Harghita County, Focșani, Vrancea County, Dragosloveni (Soveja), Vrancea County.
4. Namely, the projects PN-III-P2-2.1-BG-2016-0390 *Digitalizarea patrimoniului cultural alimentar: Regiunea Bacău—eCULTFOOD/Digitization of the Cultural Food Heritage: The Region of Bacău—eCULTFOOD* (1.10.2016–30.10.2018), coordinated by Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacău, the partners being Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași and the Cultural Association Art–Traditions–Heritage without Borders from Bacău and the project PN-III-P2-2.1- PED-2019-5092 *Colecție digitală a patrimoniului alimentar româ-*

- nesc și transfer spre societate—FOODIE/A Romanian Digital Repository on Food: Turning Heritage Knowledge Towards Society (FOODIE) (1.11.2020-31.10.2022)*, coordinated by the West University of Timișoara, the project partners being Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacău, the Romanian Academy, the Cluj branch, and Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava. The database resulting from the research can be accessed at: [ecultfood.ub.ro](http://ecultfood.ub.ro).
5. For a detailed description of the proposed research approach, see P. Savin, *Bucate din bătrâni: Frazeologie și cultură românească*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edition (Iași: Institutul European, 2018), 109–113.
  6. The interview guide was based on the work of Mihai Lupescu, *Din bucătăria păranului român*, foreword by Radu Anton Roman, introduction, bibliography and afterword by Antoaneta Olteanu (Bucharest: Paideia, 2000), the repertoire of intangible food heritage elements made by N. Știucă, “Alimentație tradițională,” in *Repertoriu național de patrimoniu cultural imaterial. I/Repertoire national du patrimoine culturel immatériel. I*, senior coord. V. Ș. Nițulescu, edited by M. Paraschiv and I. Balotescu (Bucharest: Institutul de Memorie Culturală, 2008), 133–140, the categories delimited in *Atlasul etnografic român*, vol. 3, *Tehnica populară. Alimentația*, edited by I. Ghinoiu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), to which contextual elements were added, documented by O. Hedeșan and D. Ișfănoni, and the information obtained by us in field surveys.
  7. S. Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Los Angeles etc.: SAGE Publications, 2015).
  8. J. D. Holtzman, “Food and Memory,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006): 365. See also D. E. Sutton, “Synesthesia, Memory, and the Taste of Home,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, edited by C. Korsmeyer (Oxford–New York: Berg, 2005), 304–316.
  9. E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1959), 112.
  10. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Thousand Oaks, CA–London: SAGE Publications, 2018), 10.
  11. J.-M. Adam, “Entre conseil et consigne: les genres de l’incitation à l’action,” *Pratiques: linguistique, littérature, didactique* 111–112 (2001): 12.
  12. *Ibid.*, 23.
  13. S. Supski, “Auntie Sylvie’s Sponge: Foodmaking, Cookbooks, and Nostalgia,” *Cultural Studies Review* 19, 1 (2013): 28–49. See also K. Tompkins, “Consider the Recipe,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1, 2 (2013): 439–445.
  14. S. Rousseau, *Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet* (Lanham etc.: AltaMira Press, 2012).
  15. N. R. Norrick, “Conversational Recipe Telling,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 43, 11 (2011): 2740–2761.
  16. T. Wharton, “Recipes: Beyond the Words,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 10, 4 (2010): 71.
  17. The whole process of making *sarmale* with mash can be viewed on the [ecultfood](http://ecultfood.ub.ro/items/show/1826) platform at <http://ecultfood.ub.ro/items/show/1826>.
  18. In addition to the recipe she showed us, Maria Budău gave us information on about 35 other recipes, as answers to questions associated with the general discourse related to the preparation of *sarmale*. The 35 videorecorded recipes, which enable us to see the entire

communication context, can be accessed online on the ECULTFOOD platform at <http://ecultfood.ub.ro/collections/show/16>.

19. The recording can be watched by accessing the ECULTFOOD platform at <http://ecultfood.ub.ro/items/show/1826>.
20. We present each intervention in Romanian as we recorded it, translating each reply in square brackets. In transcribing the oral speech in Romanian, we have been guided by the principle of rendering dialectal peculiarities only by means of the letters of the Romanian alphabet, while respecting the general norms of current orthography.
21. The recording can be watched by accessing the ECULTFOOD platform at <http://ecultfood.ub.ro/items/show/1813>.
22. The recording can be watched by accessing the ECULTFOOD platform at <http://ecultfood.ub.ro/items/show/1803>.

### **Abstract**

#### **Oral Practices for Sharing Recipes**

This paper analyzes the oral practices of recipe transmission that were the subject of field studies we carried out in the period 2016–2021, as part of food heritage recording projects in different areas of Romania. The researchers and participants were involved in the preparation of a recipe, which formed the basis for a semi-structured interview about the food inherited from the family. Thus, these are both oral practices of passing on recipes prepared under the researcher's eyes and passing on recipes from memory. A qualitative research approach was adopted, combining the interview with participant observation in the theoretical context of sensory ethnology. This approach allowed us to characterize the practices of oral transmission of the recipes we documented.

### **Keywords**

food, recipe, oral transmission, fieldwork, sensory ethnology, heritage