



AUSTERITY BITES

Food stories from Lewisham





Editorial

Austerity Bites: Food Stories from Lewisham is part of a larger project run by the Department of Anthropology at Goldsmiths and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's community engagement initiative.

Food is a fundamental signifier of culture, an important part of social identities, and features in our everyday lives not only as mere sustenance, but structures memories, symbolises who we are, and who we would like to become. As an event that is produced, displayed, and shared, everyday meals and special feasts bring people together, but may also draw boundaries between communities defined in terms of preferences and prohibitions.

The London borough of Lewisham is one of the most culturally diverse but also one of the most deprived areas of London and has been particularly affected by the politics of austerity that have compounded the effects of a deep economic recession on residents. Food is naturally a very imminent concern, whether we are just budgeting more carefully, or whether we are experiencing hardship that leads to food deprivation. As part of the project we have collected evidence of long-term changes and recent challenges, traced throughout the interviews, life histories, casual conversations, and in the course of workshops. This is an exciting journey, which highlights ideas about abundance and scarcity, experiences of deprivation and enrichment, of connections and exclusions that together form a local foodscape.

The exhibition presents some of the most interesting questions the ethnographic project has brought up. It invites us to reflect on the multiple meanings the generously shared stories contain. These draw on other places and times, signify current struggles, and document the routines of shopping, cooking, sharing that form local foodscapes.

We are greatly indebted to those who collaborated with us: traders and restaurateurs, staff and mothers from two local schools, senior citizens who shared in a memory session, activists from community projects, and allotment holders, as well as our students.

All of them shared their stories and pointed us towards a more nuanced approach to researching social change through exploring the meaning of food practices.

Henrike Donner, Gabriela Nicolescu, Dominique Santos







This is Patricia's story...

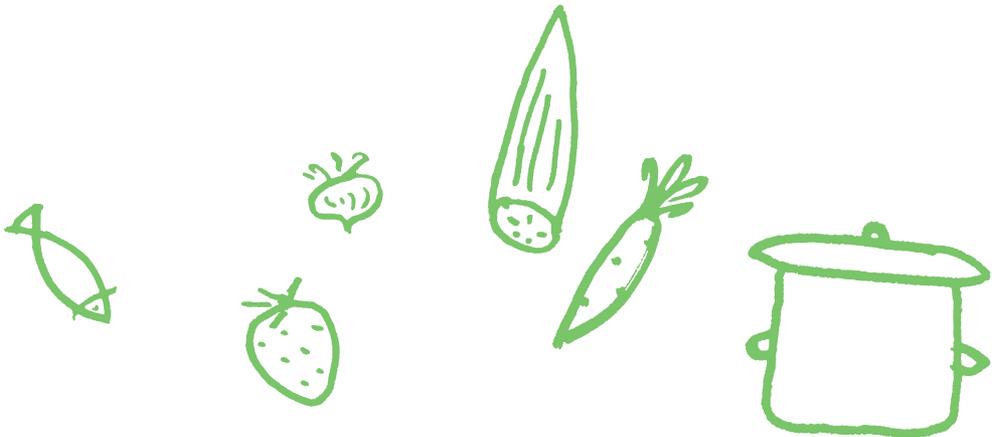
She was born and grew up on the Old Kent Road and now lives in Catford. What is exotic and rare can become very ordinary. Born on an estate in South East London, Patricia has had a life peppered with being on the frontline of novel experiences.



I remember how evacuation to the countryside as a child in World War 2 gave me a first sight of vegetables growing out of the ground. I grew up in a flat so I didn't see nothing growing till I was evacuated to Norwich. That was the first time I saw veg growing in the ground. There Colman's Mustard [a factory located there], threw dinner parties for evacuees. Once back in London, I remember a banana being passed around our school. No one had seen one before!

A Jewish friend introduced me to Spaghetti Bolognaise. I had to ask how to eat it! I wanted to chop it all up. It was delicious though.

But I my favourite is suet pudding, which has to be done with real suet, not from a packet. It is only right when you use real suet. You can only get the real thing if you know your butcher.



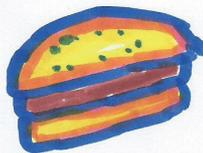








McDonalds



The last time i ate My
food was on Sunday 8th May 2016.
I ate with my mum and dad.
I felt sad after the food finished
because I want feel more.





This is Danielle's story

Some of the mothers were telling us about new problems they experience when their situation changes, which does not only affect newcomers, but applies to many at some point.

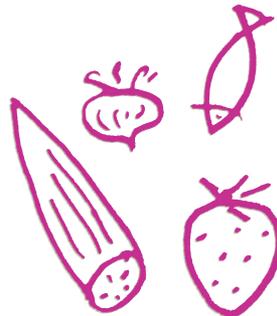
Danielle did not know that when your child is unwell, you need to apply for extra help. Danielle says it took nine months for her to really receive confirmation that she is entitled to special funds to help her get by.



I had to look after my daughter full time as she was unwell, which meant that I could not work so I was living on very small amount of money... I was cooking a big pot of something that was supposed to last for two days [...] Very often I had to go without, every other day. The children were eating their dinner but I was not.

What was really feeding me was mainly a portion of chicken and chips for one pound. It is hot food so it is very satisfying when you eat it.

It feels like a meal!





BLUE OCEAN SALT FISH

BY ANA

ANA LOVES COOKING. SHE COMES FROM JAMAICA, AND SHE MARRIED A PAKISTANI MAN. IN THEIR SHOP ON DEPTFORD HIGH STREET ONE CAN FIND INGREDIENTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. WHEN SHE COOKS SALT FISH, HER HUSBAND EATS IT, BUT DOES NOT STAY AROUND WHEN THE FISH IS BOILING. HE DOES NOT LIKE THAT SMELL.

ONE PACK OF SALT FISH (300 G) – IT CAN BE MIXED FISH OR COD, BONELESS AND SKINLESS.

SCOTCH BONNET – A LARGE, HOT CHILI PEPPER

BLACK GROUND PEPPER

OTHER SPICES (OPTIONAL) LIKE CUMIN

SPRING ONION, CUT INTO SMALL SLICES

SOME PLAIN FLOUR

VEGETABLE OIL

FIRST YOU NEED TO SOAK THE FISH OVERNIGHT IN COLD WATER.

NEXT DAY, BOIL THE FISH AND THROW THE WATER OUT.

THEN, WITH FLAKE THE FISH WITH YOUR HANDS.

MIX IT WITH SPRING ONION, CHOPPED SCOTCH BONNET PEPPER, FLOUR, SALT, PEPPER AND A BIT OF OIL. THE DOUGH NEEDS TO BECOME LIKE THAT FOR DUMPLINGS.

IN A PAN PUT SOME OIL – NOT TOO MUCH.

HEAT OIL IN A PAN, TAKE SOME DOUGH AND SPOON IT INTO THE PAN TO FRY – FIRST ON ONE SIDE AND THEN TURN IT ON TO THE OTHER.

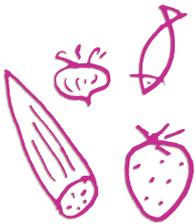
WHEN THIS IS BROWN, IT IS READY – JUST EAT IT!







This is Serena's story



Serena is a single mother of two, whom we met at one of the schools we are working with. She originally comes from Trinidad. At the moment, she has no job and spends her days taking care of her kids, bringing them to school, doing housework and picking them up.

She knows Deptford very well, it is her area, isn't it? Not any more, Serena says. We've moved...



They [the council] moved us in a different location. Now I need to take a train and travel one hour and a half to come here and one hour and a half to get back, every day.

But still, I do not want to change the school. It is a very good school and the children [are] integrated so well...

At the same time, I spend so much more money on food.

All this time spent on trains and tubes... Children are always hungry by the time we get to school, or we get home in the afternoon.

I always need to add to their menu a pack of fried chicken and chips.

At the end of the month I end up paying so much more...

Then, when we arrive in that hostel, it is horrible.

We have a common kitchen and you cannot really cook and keep cooked food for you and your family.

There is not enough space in the fridge, or you cannot trust the other ones there. People take each others food, it is so different from how it was in the place we had in Deptford.

Unfortunately this is the last fashion now with councils. They [the council] move us around, and we cannot really make roots, build friendships.

That is why I do not want to change the school, and even if extremely difficult, I travel every day for 3 hours.

At least the school is something stable in my life and in the life of my children...



**CHICKEN BURGER
& REG. FRIES**



**6 SPICY WINGS
& REG. FRIES**



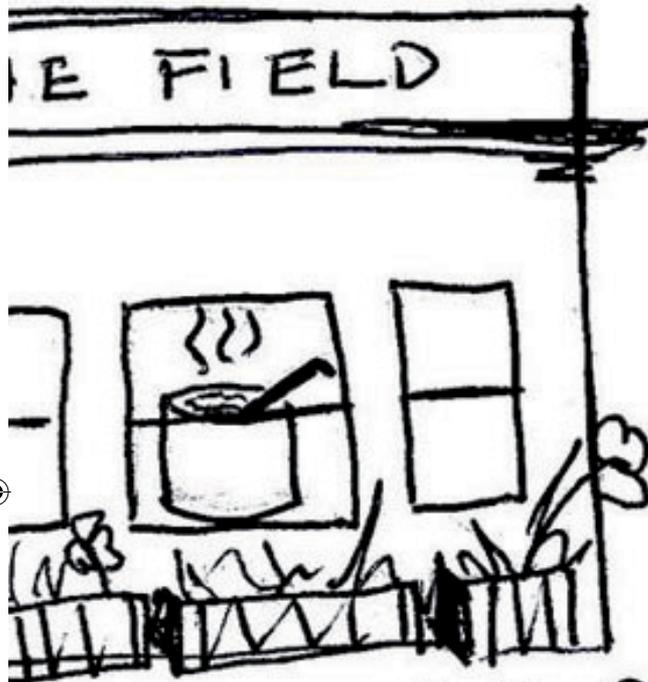
**1 PC CHICKEN, 3 SPICY
WINGS & REG. FRIES**



FIELD K



KITCHEN



385
QUEENS
ROAD
SE14.5HD

Y-WHAT-YOU-CAN MEAL
6PM TO HELP, 7-30PM TO EAT
VEGETARIAN FOOD-WHEELCHAIR
ACCESSIBLE - FAMILY FRIENDLY







TRY OUR
Traditional



Home
Made

PIES

HOT
& COLD!

- * STEAK & KIDNEY
- * STEAK & MUSHROOM
- * CHICKEN & MUSHROOM

Home
Made

SAUSAGES

Special * COOK IN *
SAUCES

PORK & LAMB

* CHOPS *



BREAD PUDDING

made by by Sheila, her mother and her grandmother



LIVING IN DEPTFORD FOR THREE GENERATIONS. SHEILA SAID THAT IN THE PAST THERE WERE NOT MANY SWEETS TO BUY AROUND HERE. SHE LEARNED THESE RECIPES FROM HER MOTHER.

16 OZ. BREAD (450 G)

1 PINT MILK, OR HALF MILK – HALF WATER.

(SHEILA SAID THAT HER MOTHER NEVER USED MILK BUT JUST PLAIN WATER. AND THE BREAD PUDDING TASTED DELICIOUS)



4 OZ. (220 G) MELTED BUTTER OR SUET (LARD)

(SHEILA RECOMMENDS THE ORIGINAL ATORA – SHREDDED BEEF SUET)

6 OZ. (160 G) DARK BROWN SUGAR

4 TBS MIXED SPICE (FOR SWEETS!) AVAILABLE IN SAINSBURY'S – IT MAINLY CONTAINS CINNAMON, FENNEL SEEDS, NUTMEG

2 MEDIUM OR LARGE EGGS

12 OZ. (340 G) MIXED FRUIT (SULTANA RAISINS AND DATES – CUT INTO SMALL PIECES)

GASMARK 4 (180 C) 1 ¼ - 1 ½ HOURS

REMOVE CRUSTS FROM BREAD.

BREAK INTO SMALL PIECES (OR CUT IT WITH A KNIFE)

PLACE IT IN A LARGE BOWL, ADD LIQUID, AND SOAK FOR AT LEAST 1 HR. TURNING OVER A FEW TIMES.



MIX TOGETHER FRUIT AND SPICE IN A BOWL.

MELT BUTTER AND SUGAR TOGETHER.

BEAT EGGS, ADD TO BREAD.

ADD BUTTER/SUET AND SUGAR MIXTURE.

THEN ADD FRUIT AND SPICE MIXTURE.

MIX WELL WITH A SPOON.

LINE AN 8" SQUARE TIN WITH NON-STICK BAKING PAPER.

PLACE INTO A PREHEATED OVEN.

BAKE FOR 1 ¼ - 1 ½ HOURS.

CHECK WHETHER IT IS READY BY POKING A THING WOODEN STICK IN, WHICH SHOULD RETURN CLEAN.

REMOVE FROM THE TIN.

COOL IT ON A WIRE RACK.



Curry
Chicken
Stew Chicken

Peppered
Steak

Stew
Pork

Curry
Goat



A story about eggs...

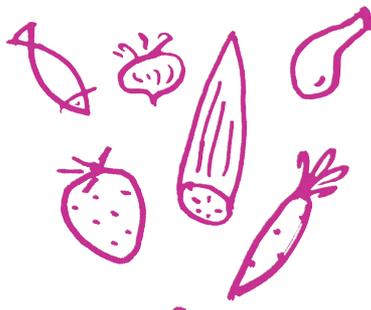
Food provokes powerful memories – of good times and bad times, of lack and abundance, of reward and punishment. Today at a coffee morning for parents in a Lewisham primary school we heard a story about eggs, and how they can be something to be treasured.



Sharon grew up in Imo state in Nigeria. Remembering her childhood there, she recalled how eggs were a precious and sought after treat, enjoyed once a week at most. Her father would use the promise of an egg as a lure to get children to complete household chores and all their homework. Sharon would do so with complete commitment. The thrill of an egg was a powerful incentive, the most delicious treat. It was a jewel, occasionally added to the vegetables and grains of their regular fried breakfast. She would search for the fragments on those days when an egg would make an appearance, savouring each mouthful.

The abundance of eggs was one of the things that struck her about England when the family moved here in 1985. It was there, alongside the unfamiliarity of cheese and the richness of chocolate. Yet eggs remained a treasure for her, a reminder of the joy and reward of food when it is precious and rare.

She laughs and shakes her head as she tells us how she struggles to get her daughter to not only to eat traditional Nigerian food, but also eggs! For her daughter, treasures lie elsewhere.





THE FOOD PARCEL CHALLENGE

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LIVE IN FOOD POVERTY? WE INVITE YOU TO TAKE THE FOOD PARCEL CHALLENGE TO EXPERIENCE THE REALITY OF FOOD POVERTY. THIS IS HOW IT WORKS...

CHOOSE A WEEK (OR 5-DAY PERIOD) TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE. SHOP FOR A TYPICAL FOOD PARCEL THE WEEK BEFORE YOUR CHALLENGE WEEK. DURING THE CHALLENGE, YOU NEED TO SURVIVE ON WHATEVER YOU FIND IN YOUR FOOD PARCEL. YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO ADD ANYTHING ELSE (INCLUDING HERBS, SPICES AND FLAVOURINGS), EXCEPT TAP WATER. THE FOOD PARCEL WILL CONTAIN A MIXTURE OF FOODS, WITH NO PARTICULAR BRAND/QUALITY. SOME ITEMS MAY BE MISSING, AND SOME MAY BE OUT OF DATE. WHO KNOWS WHAT FOOD SUPPLIES ARE RUNNING SHORT AT THE FOOD BANK ON THAT WEEK!

A TYPICAL FOOD PARCEL FOR 1 PERSON CONTAINS:

1 LITRE LONG-LIFE MILK

1 LARGE PACK OF PORRIDGE OR CEREAL

25 TEA BAGS

500G SUGAR

1 JAR OF JAM

1 BOX OF INSTANT SOUP

1 TIN OF BAKED BEANS

500G RICE OR 500 G PASTA

1 JAR OF READY-MADE PASTA SAUCE

1 TIN OF CHICK PEAS

1 LITRE OF COOKING OIL

2 TINS OF VEGETABLES LIKE PEAS

1 PACK OF SALT

1 PACK OF STOCK CUBES

2 TINS OF FRUIT

*COURTESY OF SUFRA NW LONDON





