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***Exploring the Food Identity among Adult Ghanaians Living in Norway***

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates how Ghanaians in Norway use food practices to preserve their ethnic identity and navigate integration into Norwegian society. Food serves as a key aspect of cultural identity, community cohesion, and health. Through semi-structured interviews with six Ghanaian adults, the research highlights how traditional food practices are maintained, particularly in raising children and marking significant life events, while also adapting to the local Norwegian environment by incorporating available ingredients. The findings reveal that food plays a dual role in preserving Ghanaian identity and fostering intercultural exchange during shared meals with Norwegians, thus supporting both cultural preservation and selective integration. The study concludes that food practices are essential for maintaining cultural identity, promoting health, and strengthening community ties within the Ghanaian diaspora. The ability to adapt to food practices demonstrates cultural resilience while engaging in the broader society. It is recommended that future research should aim to build on this study's findings by examining the integration experiences of Ghanaians in Norway in greater depth. Researchers could also explore generational differences within the Ghanaian community, investigating how food practices evolve among second- and third-generation Ghanaians compared to those who migrated as adults. Again, it is recommended that community leaders and policymakers prioritize cultural events such as food festivals to promote Ghanaian cuisine and encourage intercultural exchange. Additionally, culturally sensitive health education programs are advised to address the dietary needs of Ghanaians while incorporating beneficial aspects of the Norwegian diet. These initiatives are seen as vital for enhancing the well-being and integration of Ghanaian migrants in Norway.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an exploration of food choices Ghanaians in Norway make. They make food choices that are beyond nutritional value. I am going to look at how Ghanaians in Norway use food to negotiate minority identity in the majority context. I am going to do this by looking at four aspects of it and once I have done that, I am going to have a discussion that deals with the concept of integration. I am going to discuss this by looking at literature that has dealt with similar issues in other places or analogy to that to understand identity processes of Ghanaians in Norway.

The study involved six adult Ghanaian people living in Oslo, Norway. There were three males and three females. The participants' age ranged from 36 to 65 years. All the participants were married with children and have lived in Norway for five or more years with the highest being thirty-five years. The participant's pseudonym (fictitious) names were used.

Much like human beings everywhere, the participants eat and drink as part of their cultural identity, as part of being a community, as part of an act of bringing up their children, and as part of being a healthy individual. As a minority in Norway, these Ghanaians have varied ideas about what it means to be of Ghanaian in Norway. My idea is to explore what it means to a Ghanaian as a minority in Norway through what they eat and what they describe as food connection for them.

Among the six participants in this study that I have spoken to, the following four components or themes emerged: Identity, Community, Culture, and Health. I am interested in exploring these four components among Ghanaians living in Norway as minority citizens. I will talk about these in my findings section. Ghanaians in Norway do not obtain all the Ghanaian food ingredients in Norway, so they do make some compromises or accommodations. I am also interested in how these four components deal with integration, which I take up in the discussion section of this paper. Hence the research questions.

For me to throw light on these four analytical/narrative themes (Identity, Culture, Community, and Health) – which summarize the meaning they imbue to food, I lean on sociological or ethnographic literature on food and identity in minority contexts, for instance (Tuomainen, 2009) which is relevant to this study. (Tuomainen, 2009) highlights that food has become a medium for expressing and maintaining Ghanaian identity in a multicultural urban environment. Ghanaians use Ghanaian food to connect with their roots, especially when they experience cultural dislocation or marginalization. Ghanaians in the UK during event such as cooking and eating together cook and share Ghanaian food to affirm their ethnic identity and pass their cultural heritage to their younger generations.

## **1.2 Objective**

This study aims to explore food choices adult Ghanaians in Norway make to maintain their identity. Focusing on food and ethnic identity versus integration is vital in understanding the dynamics of cultural assimilation and identity preservation. Food acts as a powerful symbol of ethnic identity, helping migrant communities preserve cultural heritage while adapting to new environments. Studies show that food traditions offer a sense of belonging and resistance to full assimilation, especially in diasporic communities (Duruz, 2010). However, food also plays a role in integration, where sharing ethnic cuisines fosters multiculturalism, though sometimes at the cost of cultural commodification (Heldke, 2015).

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following questions will underpin the study.

- i. How does food function as an identity marker among this group of Ghanaians living in Norway?
- ii. How do food practices reflect how these Ghanaians attempt to or resist integration into Norwegian society?



#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in exploring how food identity plays a central role in the lives of Ghanaians living in Norway, helping them maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to a new environment. Food serves as a bridge between the past and present, allowing immigrants to stay connected to their cultural roots. The communal eating practices observed in the Ghanaian community, such as sharing meals from a large bowl, reflect how food fosters belonging and unity, offering both cultural continuity and a sense of comfort in a foreign land.

Current research supports the notion that food is a crucial part of identity negotiation for ethnic minorities. Studies show that food enables individuals to assert their cultural identity while also navigating the pressures of assimilation (Khan, 2024; Duruz & Khoo, 2014). For immigrants, food is not only about nourishment but also about social bonding and preserving cultural values (Phillipov & Kirkwood, 2019). This study aligns with recent findings that demonstrate how ethnic minorities, including immigrant populations, use food practices to resist cultural erasure while integrating aspects of their host society's food culture (Abbots et al., 2016).

The findings of this research, through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, reveal how Ghanaians in Norway use traditional meals to foster social connections and affirm their identity. These practices contribute to a sense of community, where food choices not only reflect cultural preservation but also adapt to their new context. Thus, understanding the cultural and social significance of food among this population adds to the broader discussion of how food shapes immigrant experiences and identity in contemporary migration contexts.

#### **1.5 Delimitation of the Study**

The delimitation of this study was focused specifically on six Ghanaians living in Norway. These six participants reflected their personal experiences and perspectives, and the study did not seek to generalize their experiences to the wider Ghanaian migrant population or other migrant communities. The scope was intentionally narrow, concentrating on how food was linked to identity, culture, community, health, and integration within this small group. While the

participants also spoke about their children and how food practices were passed on to the next generation, the core of the study remained centered on the perspectives of the six individuals themselves. The study was limited to their viewpoints and did not extend its exploration to the children or other relatives of these participants, although their roles emerged in the discussions.

## **1.6 Outline of Thesis**

Chapter two of the study provides a literature review on the key concepts in the study. In chapter three, the methodology and the methods of data collection are presented. This chapter also presents the limitations of the study.

Chapter four presents the findings of data collected from the fieldwork and the discussions. Chapter five concludes the thesis with recommendations to policy makers and other researchers who have an interest in ongoing debate on Food Identity of ethnic minorities.

## **1.7 Definition of Terminologies**

**Identity marker:** This refers to the ways in which food represents and affirms a person's cultural background, values, and sense of belonging within the Ghanaian community.

**Integration:** In this context refers to the process through which Ghanaians adapt to and engage with the dominant Norwegian culture, while also considering how they preserve their distinct cultural identity. The study will look at whether these practices foster a sense of belonging in Norwegian society or act as a means of maintaining cultural boundaries.

**CHAPTER TWO:**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature on the connection between food, identity, culture, community, and health, with a focus on how these elements shape the experiences of minority groups in Western societies. It starts by discussing food identity in general for migrant communities and then narrows down to specific cases, which offers a comparative perspective for analyzing the Ghanaian experience in Norway. The literature highlights how meals help maintain cultural identity, foster a sense of community, and impact health within diaspora settings. This review will guide the analytical approach of the study by contextualizing the role of food in identity formation and integration for Ghanaians living in Norway.

**2.1 Food and Culture**

Food has always been central to shaping cultural identity, weaving together beliefs, practices, and rituals that hold communities close and keep traditions alive through generations. Reddy and van Dam (2020) describe food as much more than a means of survival; it's a cultural vessel that carries the values and heritage of a community. Almerico (2014) echoes this, pointing out that food is a powerful symbol of our shared history, a way to reinforce social connections and bring people together. Both studies remind us of that food's true meaning goes far beyond nourishment. It provides comfort, creates belonging, and serves as a reminder of who we are and where we come from.

Parasecoli (2019) adds an interesting layer to this discussion, focusing on the complex ways food practices manifest in migrant communities. He breaks it down into personal, communal, collective, and institutional aspects. On a personal level, food habits reflect where someone comes from, a concept that ties back to Reddy and van Dam's (2020) and Almerico's (2014) points about cultural continuity. At a communal level, food becomes a unifier, bringing people of similar heritage together and giving them a sense of community. It is through cultural events and

gatherings, where traditional dishes are shared and celebrated, that these bonds become even stronger. Parasecoli's ideas resonate with Almerico's notion of food as a tool for building and maintaining social cohesion.

Continuity and adaptation are especially relevant themes when considering diaspora communities. Nairi (2023) explores how traditional dishes are carefully preserved, while Jezewska-Zychowicz et al. (2021) and Marty et al. (2021) highlight how migrants adapt by using local ingredients or blending culinary traditions from home with those of their new surroundings. This blending reflects the dynamic nature of cultural identity, which is constantly being reshaped by experiences and environments. The act of balancing tradition and innovation shows that cultural identity is not static but rather fluid and responsive.

External factors play a huge role in shaping how food practices evolve in new cultural settings. Osaili et al. (2023) and Daly et al. (2022) delve into the impact of issues like food neophobia (a fear of unfamiliar foods) and the motives behind food choices. These influences complicate how minority groups maintain their food identity in foreign environments, revealing the social and economic challenges they often face. The research provides an essential perspective, showing that food practices are not merely about cultural nostalgia but are also a way to adapt to and negotiate with the social pressures of the host country.

Together, these studies paint a vivid picture of food's role in cultural identity. Personal habits connect to broader communal and institutional practices, illustrating that food is a living, evolving part of culture. The conversation moves beyond simple continuity to consider how food adapts to new realities, shaped by migration and globalization. This discussion reveals that food is a vibrant, ever-changing expression of cultural identity that brings people together, fosters a sense of belonging, and keeps heritage alive, even when miles away from home.

## **2.2 Food and Identity**

This section explores how food plays a crucial role in both personal and collective identity, particularly for migrant communities. The aim is to show that food acts as a cultural marker,

helping individuals keep connections to their heritage while adapting to new surroundings. Food practices often serve as a form of resistance to cultural assimilation, preserving ethnic identity and offering a sense of continuity. This analysis will highlight how food shapes identity by allowing individuals to navigate their sense of self within both their community and the wider society. The discussion provides a theoretical framework to understand how food contributes to cultural preservation and identity in migration contexts.

Food is one of the key elements in identity formation, especially for minority groups living in diaspora settings (Frez-Muñoz et al., 2021). In multicultural environments, food practices help minority groups maintain a sense of belonging in the face of the dominant culture of the host country. Scholars have extensively examined how these groups use food to stay connected to their heritage and resist complete cultural assimilation.

Wright et al. (2021) provide a compelling example through their research on cultural food security among second-generation minority college students in the United States. They emphasize that having access to traditional foods is vital for preserving cultural identity and overall well-being. Their findings demonstrate that food is not just about nutrition but is deeply tied to both personal and collective identity. Participants shared that eating traditional foods made them feel more connected to their roots, offering comfort and a sense of belonging.

Tuomainen (2009) adds depth to this conversation through her study on the expression of ethnic identity in a post-colonial context. She argues that food becomes a significant medium for negotiating and expressing ethnic identity. The act of preparing and consuming traditional dishes helps diaspora members stay rooted in their cultural heritage. Communal food events, such as shared meals, further reinforce these cultural connections and sustain a shared identity within diaspora communities. Her research complements Wright et al.'s (2021) findings by illustrating how food rituals provide stability in an ever-changing environment.

The work of Williams-Forsson and Cognard-Black (2014) also emphasizes food's symbolic importance, focusing specifically on African American women and food traditions. Their study illustrates how food practices serve as tangible expressions of identity, preserving cultural

heritage while navigating the socio-cultural landscape of a new environment. These traditions are more than just a way to fill the stomach; they are deeply symbolic acts that reinforce cultural values, rituals, and memories. This research highlights that traditional foods offer migrants comfort and familiarity, even in unfamiliar surroundings.

In addition, sharing meals with family and community members plays a crucial role in passing down cultural practices to younger generations, ensuring that heritage is preserved despite the pressures of cultural assimilation. The continuity of these practices across generations emphasizes the importance of food as a cultural touchstone. As a form of resistance to assimilation, these traditions allow communities to assert their identity and maintain cultural boundaries.

Food choices and identity are influenced by various factors, including cultural beliefs, family dynamics, peer influence, and broader social contexts (Davison et al., 2021; Ragelienė & Grønhoj, 2020). Chen and Antonelli (2020) extend this discussion, noting that food choices are shaped by individual, social, and environmental influences, which can be particularly complex in multicultural settings. Their work aligns with other studies in showing that food acts as a bridge between personal heritage and external social realities, helping people to navigate their sense of identity.

Collectively, these studies from Frez-Muñoz et al. (2021), Wright et al. (2021), Tuomainen (2009), Williams-Forson and Cognard-Black (2014), Davison et al. (2021), Ragelienė & Grønhoj (2020), and Chen and Antonelli (2020) emphasize food's critical role in constructing and preserving identity, particularly among migrants and minority groups. They highlight food as a key marker of ethnic and cultural identity, one that helps individuals navigate their sense of self in multicultural environments. Beyond its nutritional value, food functions as a symbol of heritage, a form of cultural resistance, and a means of maintaining continuity across generations.

This body of research falls under the broader umbrella of food and identity studies within migration and diaspora research. It captures how food becomes central to understanding cultural preservation, adaptation, and identity negotiation in new socio-cultural contexts. These

interdisciplinary insights draw from cultural anthropology, sociology, and migration studies to demonstrate how food reinforces cultural belonging and strengthens community bonds. The findings illustrate that food remains a powerful expression of cultural identity, helping individuals and communities remain resilient against pressures to assimilate into dominant cultural systems.

### **2.3 Food & Community**

Food plays a crucial role in building and maintaining community cohesion, especially among migrant communities. Dinmohamed (2023) emphasizes that food creates spaces where people come together, share cultural traditions, and strengthen social bonds. While the communal aspects of food are clear, there is a deeper connection between food practices and health outcomes. Cultural food traditions are central not only to identity but also to both physical and mental well-being, making this an important area of exploration. Migrants often find that maintaining traditional diets contributes to better physical health. This is partly because familiar foods are linked to cultural knowledge about nutrition, passed down through generations. Additionally, eating these traditional foods provides emotional comfort, helping to reduce stress and promote mental well-being during the challenging process of adapting to a new country.

The argument presented by Reddy and van Dam (2022) supports this link between food and well-being. They assert that food practices promote social connections, aid in cultural preservation, and improve overall well-being for community members. The simple acts of sourcing familiar ingredients, cooking together, and sharing meals play a vital role in many diaspora communities, as Choithani (2017) notes. These practices create a sense of belonging, helping individuals maintain their connection to cultural roots despite living in a foreign environment. Marovelli (2019) further illustrates this, describing how traditional food events serve as powerful reminders of home and reinforce social cohesion among migrant groups.

However, maintaining traditional food practices is not without its challenges, particularly when it comes to health. Adapting to a new food environment often results in dietary changes that can have negative health impacts. Nardocci et al. (2021) and Calcaterra et al. (2023) discuss how some migrants experience an increased risk of obesity and hypertension, highlighting the complexity of

balancing cultural preservation with nutritional well-being. Addressing these challenges requires culturally sensitive nutrition counselling, as suggested by Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020) and Adan et al. (2019). Such interventions could improve health outcomes by acknowledging and working with the unique dietary habits of migrant communities.

The literature also emphasizes the impact of food choices on both mental and physical health. Ocean et al. (2019) and Ross et al. (2023) provide evidence that dietary patterns among minority groups influence health in diverse ways. For many, navigating between cultural food traditions and the local food environment in Western societies involves a careful balancing act. Miocevic and Zdravkovic (2020) examine this balance, pointing out that while cultural preservation can have positive effects, the necessary adaptations may introduce health risks. The insights from these studies make it clear that food practices serve as both a source of comfort and a potential area of concern when it comes to health, adding layers of complexity to the relationship between food, identity, and well-being.

The interconnectedness of food, cultural identity, and health outcomes is well-documented across these scholarly works. Dinmohamed (2023), Reddy and van Dam (2022), and Marovelli (2019) focus on the social and cultural dimensions of food, while Nardocci et al. (2021), Calcaterra et al. (2023), and Miocevic and Zdravkovic (2020) draw attention to the health implications of traditional and adapted food practices. Together, these studies form a comprehensive picture of how food serves as a bridge between cultural preservation and adaptation, reinforcing community ties while influencing well-being. This body of research aligns with the thesis's exploration of food identity in diaspora contexts, illustrating that food is far more than sustenance. It is a cultural marker, a symbol of resilience, and a significant factor in health and well-being, revealing the intricate ways in which migrants navigate their identities in a new environment.

## **2.4 Food & Cultural understandings of 'Health'**

Food practices are crucial in shaping how people perceive health and what it means to live a healthy life, particularly within migrant communities (Daly et al., 2022; Khemthong & Charnkit,



2022; Nestel & Mori, 2022). When people migrate, they often find themselves navigating the complexities between their traditional diets and the new food environments they encounter. This intersection highlights how health and nutrition are culturally constructed concepts, deeply rooted in generations of cultural knowledge. Kwon (2023) explains that traditional food practices are tailored to meet the nutritional needs of specific populations, shaped by cultural, geographical, and environmental factors.

In many cultures, communal cooking, sharing meals, and using culturally significant ingredients go hand in hand with both physical health and social well-being. These practices reinforce a holistic understanding of health that extends beyond just physical nourishment. Migrant communities, for instance, often view maintaining traditional food practices as vital not only for physical health but also for staying connected to their cultural roots. Food, in this context, becomes a symbol of belonging, blending health with identity and a sense of social connection.

Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020), Akbar et al. (2022), and Nairi (2023) have observed that many migrant communities make considerable efforts to maintain their traditional diets. They do so by importing ingredients from their home countries or using local alternatives that offer similar nutritional benefits. This commitment to cultural diets often involves the use of whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables, forming a dietary pattern informed by deep-rooted cultural knowledge and adapted to local resources. Nestel and Mori (2022) suggest that these efforts serve more than a nutritional purpose; they also provide a sense of continuity and cultural affirmation, crucial for maintaining a balanced diet and emotional well-being. Substituting ingredients creatively becomes a strategy that allows for the preservation of cultural identity while adapting to a new geographical reality.

Nevertheless, adaptation is not a one-way street. Migrants often find value in integrating certain elements of their new environment's food practices, especially when these are perceived to offer health advantages. Parackal (2023) and Manning & Trimmer (2020) discuss how food and eating are seen as cultural practices that can evolve, enabling migrants to blend traditional and local dietary elements. The result is often a hybrid approach to eating that reflects a flexible, nuanced

understanding of health and well-being. Nairi (2023) highlights how many migrants adopt healthy aspects of local cuisines, such as fresh produce and whole grains, and incorporate them into their traditional dishes. This integration of diverse nutritional sources allows for creative and health-conscious eating but also introduces new challenges.

Despite the opportunities for healthier eating, adapting to new food environments often exposes migrants to a higher prevalence of processed foods. Nardocci et al. (2021) point out the increased availability of sugary drinks, fast foods, and high-fat products in Western settings, which complicates efforts to maintain traditional dietary patterns. While migrants may be blending nutritious elements from local cuisines, easy access to processed foods can lead to negative health outcomes, such as obesity and diabetes. The challenge lies in balancing cultural preservation with the realities of the food landscape in their new environment, making the conversation about health and food practices even more complex.

Cultural beliefs about food further shape dietary habits and perceptions of health. Traditional foods, for many, represent more than just nutrition. They symbolize physical strength, vitality, and a connection to cultural heritage. Tezcan (2021) adds that the psychological comfort derived from traditional foods can significantly enhance mental well-being. This sense of familiarity and continuity provides emotional support, which, in turn, contributes to overall health. The literature illustrates how cultural food practices intertwine with identity, not just keeping people physically nourished but also psychologically grounded and socially connected.

The connections between these studies are clear as Daly et al. (2022), Khemthong and Charnkit (2022), Nestel and Mori (2022), and Kwon (2023) emphasize the deep cultural roots of traditional food practices, while Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020), Akbar et al. (2022), and Nairi (2023) explore the practical ways migrant communities strive to preserve their diets. Parackal (2023), Manning and Trimmer (2020), and Nardocci et al. (2021) focus on the adaptive strategies migrants employ and the health implications of these adaptations. Finally, Tezcan (2021) brings attention to the emotional and psychological dimensions of food practices. Together, these works provide a comprehensive view of how food practices shape health and well-being among migrant

communities. They collectively highlight that food is not merely a matter of sustenance but a significant part of cultural identity and holistic health, shaping how migrants find their place in new environments while staying connected to their heritage.

## **2.5 Ghanaians in the UK**

The case of Ghanaians living in the UK provides a focused example of how food practices are intertwined with identity, culture, community, and health, which is relevant to the present study. In her works, Tuomainen (2006, 2009) analyses how the Ghanaian diaspora in London utilizes food as a significant cultural symbol to maintain and negotiate their ethnic identity within a post-colonial context.

### **2.5.1 Food and Identity**

For the Ghanaian community in London, traditional food serves as a powerful link to their homeland. It is much more than just something to eat; it is a way to keep cultural identity alive, even in a foreign environment. Preparing and enjoying familiar dishes helps Ghanaians stay connected to their roots. Meals often carry deep symbolic meanings, whether from family gatherings, religious celebrations, or social customs. These food traditions bring comfort, a sense of continuity, and a strong feeling of belonging, making them crucial for holding the community together. Tuomainen (2009) explains how food has become a way for Ghanaians in a multicultural city like London to express their identity and preserve their cultural heritage, especially when they experience feelings of disconnection or marginalization. Traditional meals like fufu, jollof rice, banku, and kenkey take on even more significance during cultural events, where sharing food becomes an act of unity and cultural affirmation.

These communal meals go beyond simply satisfying hunger. They help strengthen social bonds and ensure that cultural heritage is passed down to younger generations. Soltani (2021) discusses how Ghanaians in the UK adapt their traditional dishes, sometimes using British ingredients or local cooking techniques. This adaptation reflects a living and evolving identity. It is a way of holding on to cultural roots while also incorporating new influences from their surroundings. This

approach allows Ghanaians to balance the traditions of their past with the realities of their present, blending old customs with new ways of life.

The experience of Ghanaians in the UK, as discussed by Tuomainen (2009) and Soltani (2021), provides valuable insights for understanding how Ghanaians in other countries, such as Norway, might approach food and identity. It shows that food is not only about preserving cultural traditions but also about adapting to new environments. Traditional food practices remain crucial, but there is always room for evolution and change. This balance between holding on to cultural practices and embracing the influences of a new place is a central theme when exploring how Ghanaians in Norway maintain their cultural identity.

Food events in Norway, like those in London, may serve as a vital support system. They can provide a sense of home and comfort in an unfamiliar cultural landscape, while also helping to pass on values and traditions to the next generation. Studying how these food practices are maintained or adapted in Norway could give important insights into the ways food shapes identity and fosters a sense of community.

However, adapting traditional food practices in a new country is not always simple and comes with health implications. As Ghanaians blend their traditional diets with local Norwegian food options, both positive and negative health outcomes can occur. Using fresh, local ingredients could improve health and make traditional meals more accessible. On the other hand, exposure to Western processed and fast foods can pose risks such as higher rates of obesity and diabetes. The UK example shows how the availability of unhealthy food options can make it challenging to maintain a nutritious traditional diet. This health aspect is significant because it highlights how food practices are tied to both cultural identity and overall well-being.

The case of Ghanaians in the UK gives us a detailed understanding of how food helps maintain cultural connections while also adapting to new environments. It illustrates that food is much more than just nourishment; it is a way of preserving heritage, finding emotional comfort, and fostering community. The study of Ghanaians in Norway can build on these insights, exploring how food traditions are sustained or adapted in a new cultural and social landscape. This will help

to reveal how food plays a role in health, identity, and the resilience of a community. Food, in this context, becomes a symbol of both continuity and adaptation, reflecting the complex process of maintaining cultural roots while also navigating life in a new country.

### **2.5.2 Food and Culture**

The cultural significance of food among Ghanaians in the UK is clearly reflected in the way traditional food practices are both preserved and adapted. Tuomainen (2006) highlights how these practices embody a mix of continuity and change, showing the ways in which Ghanaians navigate their cultural identity in a new environment. Even when certain traditional ingredients are hard to find in the UK, the community finds ways to adapt, using locally available substitutes while still honoring the essence of their cuisine. This process of adaptation does not take away from the cultural importance of these dishes. Instead, it reveals the fluid and evolving nature of cultural expression, as Reddy and van Dam (2020) explain.

The cultural role of food extends beyond simple nourishment. Williams-Forson and Cognard-Black (2014) add depth to this understanding, describing how food practices within the Ghanaian diaspora are about keeping a strong connection to the homeland. At the same time, these practices allow for the creation of a new cultural identity that incorporates elements from the host society. For example, Ghanaians in the UK often blend British influences into their cuisine, resulting in hybrid dishes that capture both their heritage and their present-day reality. This merging of cultural elements symbolizes a balancing act between holding onto one's roots and adapting to a different social landscape.

The experiences of Ghanaians in the UK offer valuable insights that can be extended to the Ghanaian community in Norway. Here, the dynamics of adaptation and resistance also come into play. On one side, Ghanaians in Norway may engage with the local food culture, adopting certain Norwegian food habits or participating in multicultural events that promote interaction and cultural exchange. These acts of adaptation can foster a sense of belonging and encourage mutual understanding with the broader Norwegian society. However, the strong emotional and cultural ties to traditional Ghanaian food can also serve as a form of resistance against full cultural

assimilation. Mabhaudhi et al. (2016) and Parackal (2023) suggest that this resistance can preserve cultural distinctiveness but might also limit deeper social integration, creating a delicate balance between cultural pride and societal engagement.

Food practices, therefore, hold dual significance in the lives of Ghanaians living abroad. On one hand, they offer a way to maintain cultural identity and provide a sense of home and community. On the other hand, these practices represent an arena where cultural negotiation takes place, influenced by the realities of living in a multicultural society. The literature paints a picture of food as a cultural bridge that connects past and present, heritage and adaptation. This exploration of food identity among diaspora communities shows that food is not just about survival but about storytelling, belonging, and the ongoing conversation between tradition and modernity.

This understanding is crucial for the thesis, which focuses on food identity among Ghanaians in migration contexts. The work of Tuomainen (2006), Reddy and van Dam (2020), Williams-Forson and Cognard-Black (2014), Mabhaudhi et al. (2016), and Parackal (2023) collectively informs this research. These studies reveal that while food practices are anchored in cultural roots, they are also adaptable and responsive to new environments. This balance of maintaining heritage while embracing change is a testament to the resilience and creativity of migrant communities. The discussion emphasises the idea that food is both a cultural anchor and a means of navigating new social landscapes, a key theme in understanding the food identity of diaspora groups.

## **2.6 Integration**

This section reviews the literature related to how food practices influence the integration of ethnic minorities into host societies. The discussion emphasizes the dynamics of integration among minority groups within the broader context of Western societies and narrows down to specific examples relevant to the case of Norway.

### **2.6.1 Integration through Food Practices**

Food practices among immigrant communities act as a means of navigating integration into host societies. The literature reveals that these practices often create a space for negotiating between

preserving cultural heritage and adapting to the host culture's norms. This study focuses on how Ghanaians in Norway balance the preservation of their cultural identity through traditional food practices while simultaneously adapting to the Norwegian food environment. This negotiation illustrates how food can both anchor cultural heritage and serve as a tool for integration, highlighting its critical role in the process of settling into a new society.

Wright et al. (2021) explore cultural food security and its impact on identity and integration among second-generation minority students in the United States. Their findings reveal that access to traditional foods is not only essential for maintaining cultural identity but also provides a platform for engaging in the majority culture. These interactions can foster integration when the majority group becomes exposed to minority cultures through shared food experiences. However, the study also notes that cultural food practices may inadvertently create boundaries that prevent full integration, depending on how these practices are embraced or perceived by the host society. This dual role of food practices underscores the delicate balance between integration and cultural preservation.

Tuomainen's research (2006; 2009) on Ghanaians in London offers a similar perspective, demonstrating that food practices are crucial for cultural continuity while also facilitating engagement with the broader society. Tuomainen argues that Ghanaians manage to maintain their sense of cultural identity through traditional dishes while showing a willingness to integrate by participating in multicultural food events and incorporating local ingredients. This adaptability signals a desire to bridge cultural divides while holding on to essential cultural practices. However, the research also shows that reliance on traditional foods can sometimes reinforce ethnic boundaries, particularly when there is a reluctance to adopt aspects of the host culture's foodways. These findings suggest that food practices have the potential to either facilitate or hinder social integration, depending on how they are managed within a community and perceived by the wider society.

D'Andrea and D'Ulizia (2023) provide a compelling example of food's role in cultural integration through their study in Arsoli, Italy. Their research highlights how local food traditions can bridge

generational divides, fostering social cohesion. The authors describe how the preservation and preparation of the traditional “fagiolina arsolana” bean brought together older and younger generations in a shared experience of cultural learning. This intergenerational exchange not only preserved cultural heritage but also strengthened social bonds within the community. The case of Arsoli illustrates the broader idea that food practices can be powerful tools for fostering unity, suggesting that a similar approach might help immigrant communities maintain cultural ties while integrating into a new environment.

Ishak et al. (2019) expand this understanding through their work on biculturalism and food identity in Malaysia’s multicultural society. Their study shows that Malays, Chinese, and Indian communities maintain distinct cultural food traditions while also participating in a shared national food culture. Social events, ethnic food knowledge, and media play key roles in shaping a bicultural food identity that both preserves individual traditions and promotes social cohesion. This integration through shared food experiences helps bridge ethnic divides, reinforcing the idea that food practices can facilitate cultural exchange and contribute to a sense of collective identity.

Taken together, these studies highlight food as a complex medium for integration. While Wright et al. (2021) and Tuomainen (2009) show the dual nature of food practices, which can both connect and separate communities, D’Andrea and D’Ulizia (2023) and Ishak et al. (2019) emphasize the unifying potential of shared food traditions. The implications for the current research on Ghanaians in Norway are significant. The balance between preserving cultural food practices and embracing aspects of the host culture could either aid or complicate integration efforts. Understanding this balance will be key to exploring how food shapes the identity and social cohesion of Ghanaian immigrants in Norway.

Food, therefore, stands out as more than a simple necessity. It is a cultural marker, a means of resistance and adaptation, and a bridge that connects communities across cultural divides. The way food practices are managed and perceived can influence the integration journey, making them an essential area of study for understanding how diaspora communities maintain their identity while finding their place in new societies.



## 2.6.2 Social and Cultural Integration

Social and cultural integration through food practices acts as a powerful connector between migrants and the host society. These practices offer opportunities for meaningful interactions that foster a sense of belonging and strengthen community cohesion. Chen and Antonelli (2020) explain how activities like shopping for familiar ingredients, preparing traditional meals, and sharing food within one's community not only help preserve cultural heritage but also build social networks and provide comfort in a foreign environment. Kalkman (2021) expands on this idea, suggesting that these food-related practices create supportive spaces where migrants can bond with one another, creating familiarity amidst an unfamiliar setting.

Beyond fostering internal community ties, food practices often pave the way for intercultural exchange. When migrants share traditional meals or participate in local food-related events, they can introduce their culture to the broader society. This sharing generates curiosity, encourages dialogue, and promotes mutual appreciation between migrants and the host population (Tezcan, 2021; Plessz & Wahlen, 2022). Food serves as a universal language, breaking down barriers and helping to bridge cultural divides. It allows people from different backgrounds to connect on a deep human level, providing a common ground for understanding and respect.

These shared food experiences often ease the integration process. Migrants and locals learn from each other through these exchanges, transforming integration into a collaborative effort rather than a one-sided adaptation where only the migrant community must change. This two-way process enriches both cultures, turning integration into a mutually beneficial experience that fosters respect and understanding. The significance of this perspective lies in its emphasis on integration as a shared journey. Aligns with the studies' findings that food practices do not merely preserve cultural identity; they also promote mutual learning and create a more cohesive and inclusive community.

Food, then, is more than a tool for cultural preservation. It also acts as a gateway to positive intercultural interactions that contribute to a connected and inclusive society. Ferrero (2002) provides a striking example with Mexican restaurants in Los Angeles. These spaces simultaneously

preserve cultural identity and encourage intercultural dialogue, illustrating how ethnic cuisines can foster connection and understanding. Ishak et al. (2019) similarly highlight shared food festivals in Malaysia, where people from different ethnic backgrounds come together, share their traditional cuisines, and engage in meaningful cultural exchanges. These events promote national unity while allowing each group to retain its unique cultural identity. Pilcher (2023) also discusses the historical role of food in global connections, showing that cultural differences often become opportunities for relationship building. In this way, food practices act as a medium for integration that is welcoming and beneficial for all involved.

The negotiation between cultural preservation and adaptation is another theme woven through the food practices of immigrant communities. Participation in events like food festivals often reflects an openness to engage with the broader culture, while adhering to traditional foodways reveals a desire to stay connected to one's cultural roots. Moreno and Malone (2021) explain that this leads to partial or selective integration, where migrants blend elements of their heritage with those of their new environment. This approach underscores that integration is not simply about assimilation or complete retention of one's original culture. It exists on a spectrum, involving a dynamic mix of adaptation and cultural preservation.

Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020) argue that successful integration requires a careful balance. Preserving cultural heritage is essential, but so is active engagement in the norms and practices of the host society. Achieving this balance allows migrants to experience integration in a way that feels authentic and individualized, acknowledging the diverse and complex pathways migrants take. The literature, therefore, shows that food practices are not just about maintaining identity but are also a fluid and adaptive process, contributing to how migrant communities integrate and build new lives while staying rooted in their cultural traditions.

## **2.7 Food and integration among ethnic minorities in Norway**

Exploring food and integration among ethnic minorities in Norway offers important insights into how cultural identity is maintained and negotiated in a new social landscape. Although there is limited research specifically focused on the experiences of Ghanaians in Norway, studies on other

non-Western immigrant groups reveal valuable patterns and dynamics. The integration process often involves continuous negotiation, as Ozer et al. (2017) describes, where ethnic minorities adapt to the host culture while making efforts to preserve their own cultural practices. This balance is especially evident in food practices, where traditional cuisine serves as both a cultural anchor and a bridge to wider society.

Research on Pakistani and Somali communities in Norway sheds light on how food practices reflect this negotiation. Pakistani immigrants, for instance, keep traditional food practices as a way of preserving cultural identity. However, they have also adapted by using Norwegian ingredients when necessary. Lien and Law (2011) explain how these adaptations allow for cultural continuity while also facilitating integration into the broader Norwegian food culture. Food practices in this context become a way of honoring heritage, even as practical adjustments are made to fit into a new environment. This demonstrates how cultural identity, and adaptation can coexist in meaningful ways.

Similarly, studies on Somali immigrants show how traditional food practices help build community bonds and provide a sense of belonging. Grønningsæter and Brekke (2017) point out that Somali immigrants engage in communal meals and traditional food preparation to preserve their culture. At the same time, they participate in interactions with Norwegian society through food. These experiences highlight the balance between maintaining cultural roots and engaging in the host society, which plays a crucial role in easing the integration process. The Somali case reinforces the idea that food can act as both a form of cultural preservation and a medium for new social connections.

Multicultural food festivals and community events in Norway have also emerged as significant platforms for fostering intercultural dialogue. These gatherings create opportunities for immigrant groups to share their traditional cuisines with the wider Norwegian public. Lien and Law (2011) argue that such events help break down stereotypes, encourage mutual respect, and promote social cohesion. Sharing food in these settings becomes an accessible and enjoyable way for different cultural groups to engage with each other. It provides a common ground where

appreciation and understanding can flourish, making it easier for migrants and locals to build connections.

Although specific studies on Ghanaians in Norway are limited, comparisons with other immigrant communities reveal that similar patterns are likely. Like Pakistani and Somali immigrants, Ghanaians use traditional food practices to stay connected to their cultural roots while also adapting to the Norwegian food landscape. Participation in multicultural events allows Ghanaians to share the rich flavors and traditions of their cuisine, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual learning. Through these experiences, Ghanaian cuisine becomes not just a marker of cultural identity but also a way to contribute to Norway's diverse and multicultural society.

These observations highlight the role of food as a multifaceted tool for integration. Traditional food practices help migrant communities preserve their cultural identity, offering familiarity and comfort in an unfamiliar environment. At the same time, engaging in shared food experiences with the host society promotes mutual understanding and strengthens social cohesion. The literature makes it clear that integration is not about simple assimilation but rather involves a complex and fluid negotiation that respects both cultural heritage and the need for social connection.

This research provides a foundation for examining the experiences of Ghanaians in Norway. The patterns seen among other ethnic groups, such as Pakistanis and Somalis, suggest that food is a crucial element in how Ghanaians balance cultural preservation and integration. While keeping traditional foodways is essential for maintaining a sense of community and self, engaging with the host society through food-related activities can make the integration process more meaningful and collaborative.

## **2.8 Integration of Ghanaians in Norway**

The integration of Ghanaians in Norway is a multi-layered process that encompasses socio-economic adaptation, cultural assimilation, and the strategic use of social networks to navigate a

new society's complexities. Socio-economic participation stands out as a crucial component of integration, requiring Ghanaians to enter the labor market, access educational opportunities, and secure stable housing. Yet, various obstacles complicate this path. Diku (2020) discusses how language barriers, difficulties in recognizing foreign qualifications, and experiences of discrimination often limit Ghanaians to low-skilled jobs. This restriction hampers socio-economic mobility, even in the face of supportive integration policies. Hansen and Kinn (2019) argue that language proficiency and social capital are vital for overcoming these challenges. For those who manage to achieve higher education, the likelihood of navigating these structural hurdles improves, offering a more promising route to integration.

Cultural integration also plays a fundamental role in how Ghanaians adapt to life in Norway. Language proficiency, especially in Norwegian, is closely tied to successful integration, yet many Ghanaians continue to use their native languages, such as Akan or Ewe, within their households (Strøm, 2017). This linguistic retention serves as a cultural anchor, even as many in the community strive to learn and use Norwegian in public settings. Nkrumah (2022) highlights how cultural traditions, like celebrating Ghana's Independence Day and participating in traditional festivals, reinforce a collective sense of identity and belonging. However, these efforts to maintain cultural ties sometimes lead to intergenerational tensions. Younger Ghanaians, especially those born and raised in Norway, are more likely to assimilate into Norwegian culture, causing friction with older generations who prioritize cultural preservation.

Dietary practices represent an often overlooked but essential aspect of cultural integration. Food provides a tangible connection to Ghanaian roots while simultaneously adapting to the Norwegian food landscape. Oppong and Amoah (2020) explain that Ghanaians continue to prepare traditional dishes like jollof rice, banku, and fufu, often relying on imported ingredients or creatively using local substitutes to maintain the flavors of home. At the same time, Ghanaians are gradually incorporating elements of Norwegian cuisine into their daily routines. Adusei (2021) describes how dietary adaptation can include eating bread and dairy products for breakfast or preparing fish in traditional Norwegian styles. This blend of culinary practices reflects a hybrid

cultural identity, highlighting the flexibility of food as both a cultural expression and a practical adaptation.

Social networks further enrich the integration experience by offering support and a sense of community. Boateng (2018) emphasizes the importance of churches and community associations, which provide spiritual and practical assistance, such as help with job searches, housing, and navigating social services. These networks foster solidarity and create a comforting environment in what can often feel like an alien society. Religious organizations serve as hubs where Ghanaians connect, share resources, and uphold cultural values. This community support system not only mitigates the psychological impact of migration but also enhances overall well-being, as noted by Oppong and Amoah (2020). The collective spirit of these networks is a critical element in the Ghanaian integration experience, blending cultural preservation with the demands of adapting to a new environment.

The literature points to a nuanced understanding of integration, where Ghanaians in Norway must continuously negotiate socio-economic and cultural domains. It becomes clear that this process is not linear but involves adapting while preserving essential elements of cultural identity. The emphasis on social networks and food practices illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of integration. Ghanaians in Norway are not only striving to secure economic stability but also finding ways to celebrate and maintain their heritage. The combination of cultural traditions and adaptive strategies demonstrates a community that is resilient, resourceful, and committed to creating a cohesive immigrant experience.

These insights inform the thesis's focus on food identity among diaspora communities. The role of food emerges as more than just a cultural artifact; it becomes a symbol of adaptation and belonging, blending the familiar with the new. Further research could explore how Ghanaian identity continues to evolve in Norway, paying particular attention to intergenerational dynamics and how various elements, such as dietary practices and community support, contribute to a holistic and integrated immigrant experience. This exploration could shed light on the ways

cultural and social integration shape the lived realities of Ghanaian migrants in a changing landscape.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The reviewed literature shows that food practices among immigrants play a dual role in their integration processes into host societies. While these practices preserve cultural identity and foster community ties, they provide a platform for intercultural engagement and understanding. Integration involves a dynamic interplay between maintaining cultural heritage and adapting to the host society's expectations and norms.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology used to collect and analyze data for the study on food identity among Ghanaians in Norway. Methodology is a crucial part of any research, as it impacts the reliability and validity of the findings. This chapter explains the qualitative study design, the sampling techniques employed, the methods used for data collection and analysis, details about the participants, the interview process, coding strategies, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

#### **3.1 Study Design**

The study adopted a qualitative research design, which is particularly suitable for exploring complex cultural topics such as food identity. Qualitative research allows for a rich and detailed understanding of how individuals make sense of their food practices in the context of migration, offering insights into personal experiences, cultural meanings, and social influences. According to Bryman (2016), qualitative methods are ideal for capturing the depth and complexity of cultural phenomena, making them appropriate for this research. This study is non-interventional, meaning that I did not attempt to influence or alter participants' behaviors but instead aimed to understand their experiences and offer insights for policymakers and future researchers interested in the cultural dimensions of food among ethnic minorities.

#### **3.2 Sampling Technique**

The research employed non-probability sampling techniques, specifically purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics that make them relevant to the research topic (Bryman, 2016). In this case, the participants had to be Ghanaian adults residing in Norway as they could provide meaningful insights into how food practices influence cultural identity and integration. This method ensured



that the research captured diverse yet relevant experiences within the Ghanaian community in Norway.

To complement purposive sampling, snowball sampling was used to expand the participant pool. Snowball sampling is a technique where initial participants help the researcher recruit further participants by referring individuals with similar characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2019). This approach was beneficial because it leveraged the strong social networks within the Ghanaian community, making it easier to identify and engage with potential participants. The researcher's residence in an area with a significant Ghanaian population facilitated this recruitment process, enhancing the study's efficiency and reach.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

Primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews, a widely used method in qualitative research. This technique allows for open-ended questions, which provide flexibility and the opportunity for in-depth exploration of participants' views (Adams, 2015). The interview guide included questions designed to cover various aspects of food identity, such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, culinary background, cultural influences on food practices, balancing traditional and local foods, nutritional considerations, access to traditional ingredients, adaptation to Norwegian cuisine, and social interactions around food. These topics were chosen to address the research questions comprehensively and to ensure that all relevant aspects of food practices and cultural adaptation were discussed.

Semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they provide a structured framework while allowing for the conversation to flow naturally. This approach gives participants the freedom to express their experiences in their own words, making the data richer and more nuanced (Bryman, 2016). The flexibility of this method also enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions and delve deeper into issues that emerged during the interviews. Each interview was recorded using a mobile phone app, with participants' consent, ensuring that all details were accurately captured for later analysis.

A guide directs a researcher on topics and areas to ask questions during the interview process. This tool is flexible as relevant issues identified during the interview can be taken on and delved

into, further enriching the research findings (Bryman, 2016). My SIKT reference number is 660145. Some information collected from the participants listed on the interview guide included: Age, gender, marital status, occupation, culinary background, influence of cultural background, food practices and customs, balancing traditional and local foods, nutritional considerations, and access to traditional ingredients, adaptation to Norwegian cuisine, and social interactions and food. The main interview guide questions were based on research questions.

### **3.4 Participants**

Ghanaian men and women above 18 years of age living in Norway with legal residency were eligible for inclusion in the study. Six (6) adult Ghanaians were invited to participate and participated in the study.

### **3.5 Interviews**

The interviews were a crucial component of the data collection process. Conducted in English, as all participants were fluent, the interviews took place at locations chosen by the participants for their convenience and comfort. I ensured that the interview setting was suitable and private, facilitating an open and honest conversation. On average, each interview lasted about an hour. The semi-structured format enabled me (researcher) to follow the interview guide while also allowing for flexibility, exploring any topics that emerged naturally during the discussion. The recorded interviews were later transcribed to ensure that every detail was captured for analysis.

### **3.6 Coding**

Coding is the process by which researchers break down data into manageable parts and label them accordingly (Bryman, 2016; Elliot, 2018). In this study, I generated initial codes based on a review of interview transcripts. Codes such as *Ghanaian food as identity* and *connection to heritage* were applied to segments where participants expressed how food plays a role in maintaining their cultural identity. For example, one participant stated, "Ghana food is my identity." Other codes, such as *passing food traditions to children*, captured the role of food in

transmitting cultural values across generations, as seen in statements like, "I started giving them fufu from one year old."

As I coded additional transcripts, themes related to adaptation emerged, leading to codes like *substituting ingredients* and *mixing Ghanaian and Norwegian foods*. For instance, one participant shared, "We use spinach instead of cocoyam leaves," highlighting their adaptation to local ingredients. Economic considerations also surfaced, with codes like *cost of Ghanaian food*, reflecting challenges in accessing traditional ingredients. Irrelevant codes were dropped during this process, and interconnected ones were consolidated into broader themes, ensuring the data accurately reflected the complexity of Ghanaians' food practices in Norway.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants. Before starting the research, ethical approval was obtained from the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT), with reference number 660145. Participants received detailed information about the study's purpose and were informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Participants were informed that they could change their minds later and stop participating in the study even though they had agreed early on. Participants were asked to share personal and confidential information with me (the researcher) but were informed that they did not have to answer any questions if they felt they did not want to. They did not have to give any reason for not responding to questions or refusing to participate in the interview. To ensure confidentiality and privacy, I assured the participants that he would not share information about them with anyone. The information that the researcher collected from this research project was kept private. Any personal data of the participants was used for the purpose of this study and in accordance with data protection legislation (the GDPR). Only the researcher and the supervisor had access to the information collected from the participants and all the information was stored on a secure computer. After analyzing the data, I made sure that all identifying information about the participants was deleted. No participant was harmed in any way before, during and after the conduct of the research or study.

### **3.8 Limitations**

Several limitations were identified in this study. The small sample size of six participants limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader Ghanaian population in Norway. As qualitative research often focuses on depth rather than breadth, the insights gained provide a detailed understanding but may not represent the experiences of all Ghanaians in Norway. Additionally, participants' memories of food and cultural practices may be influenced by nostalgia, potentially leading to idealized or incomplete recollections. The study also focused heavily on challenges, such as difficulties in sourcing traditional ingredients, which may overshadow the ways in which participants have positively integrated Norwegian food practices into their daily lives. Despite these limitations, the study offers a valuable exploration of how food practices shape cultural identity and adaptation, providing a foundation for further research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter discusses the study's findings. It is divided into two main sections: Results and Discussions.

#### 4.1. Results

##### 4.1.1 Food and Identity

In a multicultural urban setting, food becomes a powerful way for Ghanaians to express and hold onto their identity as Tuomainen (2009) points out. This theme clearly stands out in my findings, especially among Ghanaian parents in Norway who are committed to ensuring their children feel connected to Ghana and Africa through traditional cuisine. Food is not just about nourishment; it is about heritage, belonging, and cultural pride. Agyei, who has been living in Norway for 15 years, shared a heartfelt account of how he uses food to keep his roots alive:

*We always prepare Ghanaian food like fufu, yam, banku with okro soup, plantain with green, green (cocoyam leaves) stew and eat with our children using our right hand (fingers) to show them where we come from or our identity and how we cherish our traditions. I usually tell my children that you are Norwegian on paper. You are from Ghana or Africa because your skin is different (black). Eating Ghanaian food is one of the only ways we can experience Ghana. When we don't get yam, fermented corn for banku, cocoyam leaves and garden-eggs for stew, we substitute them for potato, semule, spinach, and aubergine respectively. When my children eat it, they feel it is the same as yam, banku, green, green (cocoyam leaves) and garden-eggs stew.*

Agyei's story illustrates the role of food as a living symbol of cultural identity. Preparing and sharing Ghanaian meals, even when substitutions are needed, becomes a meaningful way to bring the essence of Ghana into daily life. The act of eating with their fingers is a tradition deeply tied to cultural respect, and Agyei's words show how these small but significant practices connect

his children to their roots. His message to his children was that they may be Norwegian on paper but are Ghanaian in spirit, emphasizes the importance of food as a bridge to their heritage.

Boatema, who has spent 14 years in Norway, echoed this sentiment:

*We introduce our children to Ghanaian food, such as fufu with palm nut or groundnut soup, and eat it with our natural fork (fingers) to let them know where we come from and be connected to Ghana. Comfort supports it by saying: my children are introduced to Ghanaian food like fufu with green, green soup, banku with groundnut soup, jollof rice, kenkey, and waakye with shito once they start eating solid food after breastfeeding so that they do not grow up eating Norwegian food.*

Her description highlights the importance of cultural rituals, like eating with one's hands, to keep traditions alive. For Boatema, the act of using their "natural fork" is a conscious effort to teach her children that Ghanaian customs are valuable and worth preserving. This practice represents more than a way of eating; it is a lesson in cultural pride and belonging, ensuring that the next generation understands where they come from.

Comfort, another parent, shared her approach to introducing Ghanaian flavors to her children early on:

*My children are introduced to Ghanaian food like fufu with green, green soup, banku with groundnut soup, jollof rice, kenkey, and waakye with shito once they start eating solid food after breastfeeding so that they do not grow up eating Norwegian food."*

Comfort's proactive strategy of introducing Ghanaian cuisine immediately after breastfeeding reflects a strong commitment to preserving cultural identity. There is a sense of urgency in her approach, a desire to shape her children's tastes before Norwegian food becomes their norm. This strategy reveals an underlying tension between preserving Ghanaian traditions and the reality of living in a different cultural environment. Comfort's dedication ensures that her children associate their upbringing with the flavors of Ghana, anchoring their cultural identity through food.

Danso added another layer to this discussion, touching on the economic sacrifices involved:

*I buy Ghanaian food like yam from an Asian shop in Gronland at an exorbitant price and eat it with my children. My choice of eating this Ghanaian food with my children is a matter of necessity but not a choice to affirm our identity as Ghanaians. Even though we are in Norway and far away from Ghana, we are still Ghanaians, and this is what we do as Ghanaians.*

Danso's words highlight the challenges that come with preserving cultural practices in a foreign land. The high cost of traditional ingredients does not deter him because the cultural and emotional significance of these foods outweighs the financial burden. For Danso, eating Ghanaian food with his children is a necessity, a non-negotiable part of their identity. This practice emphasizes how food serves as a constant reminder of who they are, reinforcing their cultural heritage even thousands of miles from home.

Together, these stories show that food is much more than a means of sustenance. It is a vessel of culture, a way to teach values, and a reminder of where one comes from. Eating with fingers is portrayed not just as a method but as a cultural act rich in meaning. The practice of substituting ingredients illustrates the resilience and adaptability of the Ghanaian community, finding creative ways to recreate the flavors of home. These parents make conscious efforts to connect their children to Ghanaian culture, ensuring that food becomes a legacy, a way to hold onto their heritage while living in a multicultural society. The themes of identity, cultural preservation, and adaptation are central, highlighting the deep significance of food in sustaining a sense of belonging and pride in one's roots.

#### **4.1.2 Cultural Significance of Food Practices**

Food serves as a vital cultural marker, especially for migrants who strive to preserve their heritage through culinary practices (Parasecoli, 2014). For Ghanaians living in Norway, food becomes a medium of cultural transmission, anchoring them to their roots while navigating life in a new

country. The stories shared by members of this community highlight the importance of passing down traditions and maintaining a connection to their cultural identity.

Freda provides a compelling example of how food intersects cultural milestones:

*When my first daughter had her first menses (menstruation), I prepared Ghanaian food 'eto' with egg for her to eat, letting her know that according to our culture, she had reached maturity and was now a woman. Eating the egg with the 'eto' means that in the future, it will help her give birth to children when she marries.*

Freda's account shows that food is not only about sustenance but is deeply intertwined with cultural rituals that mark significant life transitions. Preparing 'eto' with an egg for her daughter's first menstruation carries profound cultural meaning. It signifies her daughter's entry into womanhood and reinforces beliefs about fertility and family values. This practice is a way for Freda to connect her daughter to ancestral traditions, even while living in a foreign land, emphasizing the role of food in teaching cultural norms and values.

Comfort echoes this dedication to cultural preservation through food:

*We must carry our culture and tradition along and pass it on from generation to generation because that is what we are born and grew up with. My responsibility is to teach or let my children know where we come from, our food and our culture. So often, I prepare typical Ghanaian food such as yam and plantain with garden eggs, cocoyam leaves, tilapia, and palm oil stew, and we eat with our right hands (fingers) as our culture demands. Because according to our culture, eating this food at home with cutlery is unnatural or not right. When I don't get garden-eggs and cocoyam leaves for stew, I use aubergine as a substitute for garden-eggs and spinach for cocoyam leaves.*

Comfort's reflections highlight the importance of cultural continuity. Her commitment to teaching her children about Ghanaian food and traditions speaks to the broader theme of cultural transmission. The act of eating with their right hands is not just a method of consumption but a practice deeply embedded in cultural values, symbolizing respect for heritage and tradition. Even



when faced with the challenge of finding traditional ingredients, Comfort's creative use of substitutes illustrates a form of cultural adaptation that preserves the essence of Ghanaian cuisine. Her approach reinforces the idea that food practices are a crucial way to maintain cultural identity in a multicultural environment.

Agyei adds another dimension to this discussion, emphasizing personal preference and cultural loyalty:

*I try as much as possible to eat a lot of Ghanaian dishes like red, red, jollof, kenkey with shito and fried fish, and banku with okra soup with my children. Of course, I eat Norwegian food, such as Norwegian bread. Still, if I have a choice, I will instinctively and naturally go for Ghanaian food, such as fufu with palm nut or groundnut soup and eat with my fingers or right hand because that is what I grew up with. It is my culture, and I cannot break away from it. I must ensure that my children practice the same.*

Agyei's words underline the sense of cultural attachment and pride associated with traditional food. While he acknowledges the practicality of eating Norwegian food, his instinctive preference for Ghanaian cuisine reflects a deep emotional and cultural connection. Eating with his fingers is more than a habit; it is a deliberate act of cultural preservation that he feels responsible for passing on to his children. This demonstrates the powerful role of food in sustaining cultural identity and the lengths to which migrants will go to ensure that cultural practices endure across generations.

Together, these narratives reveal that food is more than a dietary choice for Ghanaians in Norway. It is a tangible way to keep cultural traditions alive and an important means of teaching younger generations about their heritage. The tactile experience of eating with fingers connects individuals to their roots, making the act of eating a culturally rich and meaningful ritual. The commitment to preparing and consuming traditional dishes, even with local ingredient substitutions, highlights the adaptability and resilience of the Ghanaian community. These practices serve as a bridge between past and present, helping migrants navigate cultural adaptation while remaining anchored in their identity and sense of community.

#### 4.1.3. Traditional Foods and Perceptions of Health

The blending of traditional foods with healthy elements from local Norwegian cuisine has become a meaningful way for migrants to maintain their cultural dietary practices while also embracing aspects of their new environment. As Nardocci et al. (2021) suggest, incorporating local fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can lead to improved overall health outcomes, a strategy that Ghanaians in Norway have adopted. Yet, traditional foods remain central to their identity and perception of health, as the following testimonies illustrate.

Edward expressed the deep cultural and health-based significance of traditional food:

*If Ghanaians don't eat our favorite Ghanaian food like fufu, we will grow weak. Edward further stated that God has created us Ghanaians in such a way that this is our foodstuff in our geographical location. So, if we come to Norway, we must ensure that we eat the food we ate back home in Ghana to stay strong and healthy. I substitute Norwegian food ingredients when I don't get the exact Ghanaian food ingredients I want. I often use vegetables like spinach instead of Ghanaian cocoyam leaves, which I don't get here in Norway.*

Edward's statement highlights the perceived link between traditional foods and physical well-being. He believes that consuming Ghanaian food is necessary for maintaining strength and health, tying the idea of food to a sense of identity rooted in his homeland. His practice of using local Norwegian vegetables like spinach as substitutes for cocoyam leaves illustrates a practical adaptation while still striving to stay true to his cultural dietary habits. This blending of ingredients reflects a careful negotiation between preserving cultural authenticity and making healthy, sustainable adjustments in a new environment.

Boatema reinforced this belief in the inherent health benefits of traditional foods:

*We are made strong and healthy according to our geographical area and the food God has designed for our system (body). In Norway, we must find Ghanaian food, such as fufu and red, to eat to remain strong and healthy.*

Her viewpoints to a deeply ingrained understanding of how traditional foods are intertwined with physical strength and well-being. Boatemaa attributes these health benefits to the natural design of Ghanaian foods that suit the biological makeup of Ghanaians. Her reliance on culturally familiar foods reflects a sense of connection to her roots and the belief that these foods are essential for her and her family's health. This perspective suggests that the cultural significance of food extends beyond tradition, encompassing an almost spiritual or natural understanding of health that continues to influence dietary choices despite geographical relocation.

She further elaborated:

*They said nature and nurture influence, but in this sense, nature has dominated the nurture and environment we live in. Because we can still get Ghanaian foodstuff here through purchases from Asian shops and sometimes importing from Ghana, I am inclined to go in for Ghanaian food, which is suitable for my health. My children and I love eating Ghanaian garden egg stew and feel comfortable. But if I don't get the garden eggs, I substitute them for Norwegian aubergine.*

This remark adds another layer to the discussion, as Boatemaa explains how “nature” dominates “nurture” in the context of food preferences. The effort she puts into sourcing Ghanaian ingredients, even from Asian shops or through imports, highlights a deliberate act of cultural preservation and a commitment to maintaining health through familiar dietary practices. Her willingness to adapt, such as substituting aubergine for garden eggs, reveals a flexible yet culturally grounded approach. This adaptability demonstrates the balance between cultural identity and the practical realities of living in a different food environment.

Danso shared his perspective, noting a more integrated approach to healthy eating:

*Even though if I don't eat fufu, which is Ghanaian typical food, I will grow weak, so I eat it more often, Norwegian fruits, vegetables and bread have become my added food for a well-balanced or healthy diet, and I love eating it.*

Danso's statement illustrates a hybrid dietary approach, where traditional foods remain a core part of his diet but are complemented by Norwegian fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. His mention of "growing weak" without fufu underscores the emotional and cultural attachment to this traditional dish. Yet, his incorporation of Norwegian dietary elements shows a mindful adaptation aimed at achieving a balanced and healthy lifestyle. This integration highlights how migrants negotiate their cultural food preferences while embracing the nutritional benefits offered by their new surroundings, creating a sense of harmony between the old and the new.

Together, these reflections illustrate that Ghanaians in Norway place immense value on their traditional foods for both cultural and health reasons. The preference for eating fufu, yam, and other staples reflects a deep connection to their heritage, while the selective adoption of Norwegian dietary practices demonstrates a willingness to adapt for better health outcomes. Participants also show a strong resistance to incorporating high-sugar, processed, or high-fat foods that are less common in traditional Ghanaian diets. This selective integration emphasizes the community's commitment to preserving their culinary traditions while also adapting thoughtfully to their new environment to ensure well-being. The tactile act of eating certain foods, like fufu, with fingers further underscores the holistic experience of cultural identity through food.

#### **4.1.4. Food as a Vehicle for Community Bonding**

Food acts as a powerful facilitator of community bonding, especially in-migrant contexts where shared meals offer emotional and cultural support (Dinmohamed, 2023). Among Ghanaians in Norway, food serves not just as nourishment but as a medium through which community ties are strengthened and cultural practices are celebrated.

Freda, who has lived in Norway for 33 years, vividly described the significance of sharing Ghanaian food at communal events:

*I mostly buy from African and Asian shops. During weddings, birthdays and confirmation parties of my children, I prepare typical Ghanaian food such as fufu with a light soup or*

*palm-nut soup, mmotuo (rice balls) with groundnut soup, waakye jollof rice, banku, and among others. I invite other Ghanaians to come, and we all share or eat the food, for example, fufu with palm-nut soup with our fingers together from a large bowl. This reminded me of when I was a kid back home in Ghana in our village; I used to eat fufu, our favorite Ghanaian food, with other kids from a huge bowl. The act of eating together from a massive bowl like that promotes a sense of belonging and unity.*

Freda's account illustrates the way shared meals recreate the collective experience of eating in her childhood village, emphasizing how food can evoke powerful memories and a sense of home. The act of eating together from a single bowl is deeply symbolic, fostering unity and reinforcing the communal values that are central to Ghanaian culture. This practice not only strengthens ties among Ghanaians in Norway but also serves as a cultural anchor, reminding them of their roots and traditions, even in a foreign environment.

She also mentioned that during her children's confirmation parties, Norwegian friends are invited and experience this cultural exchange:

*During the event of my children's confirmation party, my children's Norwegian friends are also invited. So, I prepare Norwegian food like farikal in addition to the Ghanaian food. Interestingly, they all eat some of the Norwegian food while the Norwegians at the party also eat some of the Ghanaian food. Come and see joy and the sense of belonging when my children's Norwegian friends are eating fufu and we too are eating farikal.*

This moment of cultural exchange illustrates the bridging of cultural gaps through food, creating a joyful and inclusive environment. Freda's integration of both Norwegian and Ghanaian cuisines at the party reflects a thoughtful cultural adaptation. The act of everyone trying each other's traditional foods promotes mutual respect and understanding, fostering a shared sense of community. It highlights how food can break down cultural barriers and encourage meaningful connections between different groups.

Danso shared a similar experience during Ghana Union gatherings in Oslo:

*During the Ghana Union gathering or day and food festival, all Ghanaians in Oslo are invited to showcase their food on the food stand, and we all share or eat food together which gives us emotional comfort. Those who don't get the exact Ghanaian food ingredients such as yam, cocoyam leaves, garden-eggs and fermented corn for banku substitute them for potato, spinach, aubergine, and semule respectively.*

Danso's account emphasizes the role of communal events in preserving cultural identity. Even when exact ingredients are hard to come by, the collective experience of preparing and sharing Ghanaian food helps recreate a sense of home. The willingness to substitute ingredients highlights the adaptability of the community, but the act of eating together remains a deeply grounding experience that offers emotional comfort. These gatherings allow Ghanaians in Oslo to strengthen their cultural bonds and celebrate their shared heritage, making it easier to navigate the challenges of living in a different culture.

Comfort elaborated on the significance of food during multicultural days at work:

*During multicultural days at work, which is done twice a year, all the other nationals will bring their food. I and the other Ghanaians will also bring ours, and we all eat together. I prepare Ghanaian food like jollof rice and red-red, and the people really enjoy it.*

Comfort's description highlights how food serves as a medium for cultural exchange in professional settings. Through bringing traditional Ghanaian dishes to multicultural events, she creates opportunities for her colleagues to engage with her culture, promoting cross-cultural understanding. The positive reception of Ghanaian cuisine reinforces a sense of pride and belonging, showing that food can act as a bridge that fosters relationships and celebrates diversity in the workplace.

Agyei also spoke about the role of food in building connections at work:

*At workplace where the employees are from Iceland, Norway and me and other guys from Ghana, we occasionally have International Day where we do summer activity and social gathering such as 'bring and share'. Each one brings food, and we eat together as*

*'bonding at work'. I and other Ghanaians will always prepare Ghanaian food to try to show where we come from because that is the only way they can experience Ghana.*

Agyei's account captures the importance of food as a way to share and celebrate culture. Preparing Ghanaian dishes for his colleagues allows him to introduce them to his heritage in a real and memorable way. The experience of "bringing and sharing" food creates a warm sense of togetherness and appreciation among coworkers, transforming a simple workplace event into a meaningful cultural exchange. This practice fosters a spirit of friendship and mutual respect, showing how food can build social connections and bring people from different backgrounds closer.

These shared meals are more than just an opportunity to eat; they play a significant role in creating unity and a sense of belonging for Ghanaians in Norway. Meals become a space where cultural exchange flourishes, emotional support is shared, and cultural identity is reaffirmed. Whether it is at community gatherings, work events, or family celebrations, food serves as a powerful link to Ghanaian heritage. It ensures that traditions are kept alive and passed on in ways that are both joyful and inclusive, making everyone feel a part of the community.

#### **4.1.5. Summary of Findings**

These four points (Identity, Culture, Health, and Community) collectively illustrate how Ghanaians living in Norway navigate the challenges of being a minority in a majority context. The findings indicate a continuous balancing act between non-participation in Norwegian society and full integration. Rather than strictly aligning with one extreme or the other, participants' experiences highlight a careful negotiation that involves retaining their cultural practices while adapting to the Norwegian environment. This reflects the earlier discussion in the literature on the dual role of food in resisting assimilation and fostering selective integration (e.g., Tuomainen, 2009). The participants preserve essential elements of their cultural identity through food and simultaneously embrace aspects of the local culture, demonstrating a flexible and dynamic approach to managing their integration process.

## 4.2 Discussions

### 4.2.1 Food and Identity

Food plays a pivotal role in preserving and reinforcing identity among the Ghanaian diaspora in Norway, as demonstrated by, among other things, the participants' intentional efforts to introduce their children to Ghanaian cuisine. This aligns with findings in previous research, which emphasizes the significance of food in maintaining cultural ties, particularly in diaspora contexts where individuals experience cultural dislocation (Tuomainen, 2009). Wright et al. (2021) and Tuomainen (2009) highlight how food serves as a tangible link to one's cultural roots, playing a vital role in preserving identity. In the face of cultural assimilation pressures, preparing and consuming traditional dishes such as fufu, banku, and jollof rice becomes a critical method through which Ghanaians in Norway reaffirm their identity and pass on their cultural heritage to their children. This resonates with Tuomainen's (2009) study on Ghanaians in the UK, where food is a powerful symbol of ethnic identity, particularly within multicultural urban settings.

The findings illustrate the adaptive nature of food practices in the Ghanaian community in Norway. Participants reported substituting traditional ingredients like yam, cocoyam leaves, and fermented corn with locally available alternatives such as potatoes, spinach, and semule. Despite these substitutions, they continued to perceive the meals as authentically Ghanaian, reflecting the adaptive nature of food practices in diaspora communities. This adaptive strategy, discussed by Marty et al. (2021), highlights the dynamic nature of cultural identity, which evolves while maintaining core elements of significance. Such flexibility enables the Ghanaian community in Norway to sustain a strong sense of identity even amidst geographical and cultural displacement.

Maintaining these food traditions in a foreign environment emphasizes cultural practices' resilience and capacity to act as a form of resistance against cultural assimilation (Williams-Forson, 2014). Through consistently preparing and eating Ghanaian food with their children, participants are preserving their own sense of identity and ensuring that future generations maintain a connection to their heritage. This commitment to food as a cultural marker resonates with the broader discussion in the literature about how food practices function as a means of



ethnic boundary maintenance in diaspora settings (Tuomainen, 2009; Jezewska-Zychowicz et al., 2021). As Osaili et al. (2023) discuss, food practices among minority groups often involve a delicate balance between continuity and adaptation, with the retention of traditional dishes serving as a symbolic gesture of cultural endurance amidst external pressures to conform to the dominant culture.

In addition to preserving cultural identity, food practices among the Ghanaian diaspora in Norway also serve to construct new identities that blend elements from the homeland and the host country. This blending of food traditions and using local substitutes while maintaining the cultural essence of the dishes reflects the evolving nature of food practices in multicultural settings (Jezewska-Zychowicz et al., 2021). It also mirrors the dynamic process of identity formation in diaspora communities, where individuals continuously negotiate between maintaining their cultural roots and adapting to the new social environment (Williams-Forson, 2014).

Therefore, food practices act as a site of identity negotiation and cultural expression for Ghanaians in Norway, allowing them to retain their connection to their homeland while engaging with their host culture. This dual role of food in preserving and adapting identity highlights the complex interplay between cultural continuity and change in diaspora settings, as articulated by Parasecoli (2014). The findings from this study reinforce the idea that food is not merely a source of sustenance but a profound cultural tool that allows the Ghanaian community in Norway to assert their identity, navigate their experiences as a minority group, and transmit their heritage to future generations.

#### **4.2.2 Food and Culture**

The findings highlight that food is a marker of identity and an essential medium for cultural transmission within the Ghanaian diaspora in Norway. Participants expressed the importance of preserving traditional food practices as part of their cultural responsibility, especially ensuring they are passed down to the next generation. This reflects the broader discussion in literature, where food is seen as a powerful conduit for expressing and transmitting cultural values across generations (Parasecoli, 2014). Preparing traditional dishes, such as 'eto' for significant life

events, as Freda did for her daughter's first menstruation, demonstrates the cultural importance of food in marking life's milestones and rites of passage. In this context, food serves as sustenance and a cultural ritual that imparts significant meaning, highlighting the deep interconnection between food and cultural heritage (Williams-Forson, 2014).

Furthermore, the method of food consumption, particularly the practice of eating with fingers, emphasizes how food practices are imbued with cultural meaning. Several participants emphasized that eating Ghanaian dishes such as fufu and banku with their fingers was a matter of preference and a cultural imperative. This aligns with Tuomainen's (2006) research, which emphasizes how Ghanaians in diaspora settings maintain specific cultural practices, such as eating with hands, to reinforce their ethnic identity. In a foreign environment, where the dominant culture might encourage cutlery, eating with fingers can be seen as a form of cultural resistance, allowing individuals to retain their cultural heritage and identity despite external pressures to assimilate (Marty et al., 2021).

The literature further supports this idea of food as a cultural transmission tool, where the continuity of food practices plays a central role in preserving cultural identity, particularly for diaspora communities. According to Jezewska-Zychowicz et al. (2021), food practices are often a blend of continuity and adaptation, where traditional methods and ingredients are preserved as much as possible but adapted when necessary due to the availability of resources in the host country. In the findings, participants spoke about substituting local Norwegian ingredients for Ghanaian ones when required, such as using spinach instead of cocoyam leaves. This adaptation does not diminish the meal's cultural significance but demonstrates the flexible and evolving nature of artistic expression in diaspora contexts (Calcaterra et al., 2023).

Moreover, communal food practices, such as cooking and eating together during significant cultural events, further reinforce the role of food in maintaining cultural ties. Parasecoli (2014) outlines that food serves a personal and communal function, where sharing meals within the family and the broader community solidifies cultural bonds. In this context, food practices become a form of cultural transmission that transcends generations, ensuring that younger

community members learn and adopt these traditions, thereby preserving their cultural heritage even in foreign environments (Tuomainen, 2009). For example, gathering to prepare and share traditional Ghanaian dishes during celebrations or social events, as mentioned by multiple participants, fosters a sense of cultural continuity and community cohesion.

The findings also show that food practices, especially those passed down through generations, serve as cultural education. Participants expressed their responsibility to teach their children how to cook and eat traditional Ghanaian dishes, ensuring the younger generation remains connected to their cultural roots. This sense of responsibility is echoed in the literature, where food is described as a critical medium through which cultural knowledge is imparted and sustained (Reddy & van Dam, 2020). In diaspora settings, where cultural dislocation is joint, food represents one of the most accessible and enduring ways to transmit cultural values and practices, providing a daily, tangible connection to one's heritage (Jezewska-Zychowicz et al., 2021).

#### **4.2.3 Food and Health**

Health emerged as a significant theme in the findings, with participants expressing a strong belief in the health benefits of maintaining a traditional Ghanaian diet. Participants like Edward and Boatemaa emphasized that consuming traditional foods such as fufu and 'red, red' was vital for preserving strength, well-being, and overall health. This perception aligns with literature, highlighting the intrinsic connection between food, health, and geographical origin. According to Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020), individuals often associate their traditional diets with the environments in which they grew up, believing that they naturally align with their bodies and health needs. This perspective was echoed by several participants, who felt that their bodies required the nutrients and sustenance provided by Ghanaian foods to remain healthy, even while living in Norway.

The belief that traditional foods are suited to one's geographical and cultural origins is a recurring theme in studies of food and health in diaspora settings. Calcaterra et al. (2023) point out that food practices within migrant communities often reflect a deep-rooted understanding of health, where specific dishes are consumed for sustenance and their perceived medicinal or health-giving properties. For example, participants like Edward emphasized that eating traditional Ghanaian

food like fufu helped them stay strong, suggesting that food choices are closely linked to a cultural understanding of physical well-being. This reflects broader cultural beliefs, where traditional foods are often seen as superior in maintaining health compared to the foreign diets of the host country (Osei-Kwasi et al., 2020).

However, the findings also illustrate the complexities of food adaptation in diaspora settings, particularly in the context of health. Danso's comment about incorporating Norwegian fruits, vegetables, and bread into his diet highlights diaspora communities' challenges in balancing cultural preservation with the demands of a new environment. This theme is well-supported by the literature, which suggests that while individuals may attempt to maintain traditional dietary practices, the food environment in the host country often necessitates adaptation (Nardocci et al., 2021). Marty et al. (2021) explains that the availability of local ingredients and the need to adhere to the dietary norms of the host culture can lead to a blending of traditional and regional food practices. In Danso's case, while he acknowledged the importance of traditional Ghanaian foods for his health, he also adapted by incorporating Norwegian food items to create a more balanced and healthy diet.

This blending of traditional and local foods reflects a broader trend within diaspora communities, where cultural preservation and adaptation coexist in complex ways. Jezewska-Zychowicz et al. (2021) notes that health considerations in a new environment, such as the need to manage dietary-related conditions or to access healthy ingredients, often influence food choices in ways that can lead to the hybridization of food practices. Participants in the study exhibited this dynamic, with some expressing a preference for traditional Ghanaian foods due to their perceived health benefits. In contrast, others, like Danso, acknowledged the nutritional value of local Norwegian food items. Incorporating local foods suggests a pragmatic approach to health, where maintaining traditional dietary practices is balanced against the need to adapt to new health realities in a foreign country.

Moreover, the adaptation of food practices in response to health concerns is further highlighted by Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020), who suggest that dietary patterns among migrant communities often

shift due to changes in lifestyle, accessibility, and the nutritional environment of the host country. In the case of the Ghanaian diaspora in Norway, participants like Danso reflected this shift by blending traditional Ghanaian foods with Norwegian fruits and vegetables to achieve what they viewed as a well-balanced diet. This balancing act emphasizes the complex relationship between food, health, and cultural identity in diaspora settings, where individuals often navigate multiple influences on their food choices, including cultural preservation, health, and practicality (Reddy & van Dam, 2020).

The findings also shed light on the potential health challenges faced by the Ghanaian diaspora in Norway. While participants strongly believed in the health benefits of traditional Ghanaian foods, there was also an underlying recognition of the need to adapt to the Norwegian food environment to maintain good health. This duality reflects the broader theme in the literature that while traditional food practices are closely linked to cultural identity and health, the realities of living in a foreign environment often necessitate dietary adjustments (Nardocci et al., 2021). For example, as Osei-Kwasi et al. (2020) suggest, the risk of diet-related health issues can arise when individuals face challenges in maintaining their traditional diets due to the availability and cost of conventional ingredients.

#### **4.2.4 Food and Community**

Food plays a central role in fostering a sense of community and belonging among the Ghanaian diaspora in Norway. The findings highlight the communal aspect of food practices, particularly in social settings like birthday parties, Ghana Union gatherings, and confirmation celebrations. Participants like Freda emphasized the importance of communal eating during these events, where Ghanaians gather to share traditional dishes such as fufu, jollof rice, and waakye. This collective experience of eating traditional food reinforces community ties and offers emotional comfort, allowing individuals to reconnect with their cultural roots even in a foreign environment. As noted by Kalkman (2021), food practices within diaspora communities often function as a powerful mechanism for building social networks, offering a space for individuals to come together, share experiences, and maintain their cultural identity in the face of potential alienation.

The communal nature of these food practices counterbalances the isolation and disconnection that many diaspora communities may experience in their host countries. Sharing traditional food helps strengthen social bonds within the Ghanaian community, offering a sense of belonging and solidarity. This aligns with the findings of Parasecoli (2014), who emphasizes that communal food practices in migrant communities' help preserve a shared cultural identity while providing emotional support and social cohesion. Participants in the study frequently mentioned how preparing and sharing traditional Ghanaian dishes during social gatherings fostered a sense of unity, reminding them of their cultural heritage and alleviating the alienation they may feel in Norway.

Furthermore, including Norwegian guests at these social events and their willingness to try Ghanaian food suggests that communal food practices facilitate cultural exchange. Freda's account of her Norwegian children's friends eating fufu during birthday celebrations illustrates how food bridges cultures, creating interaction and mutual understanding opportunities. This selective engagement with the host culture, while still maintaining a solid sense of Ghanaian identity, reflects the broader theme in the literature that food practices in diaspora communities often serve as a space for negotiating cultural boundaries (Moreno & Malone, 2021). While Ghanaians in Norway may invite Norwegian friends to participate in their food traditions, these interactions do not necessarily dilute their cultural identity but offer a controlled form of cultural exchange that allows for integration on their own terms (Tuomainen, 2009).

#### **4.2.5 Negotiating Identity and Integration**

The findings indicate that food practices among Ghanaians in Norway are crucial for negotiating identity and integration. Participants consistently expressed the desire to maintain their Ghanaian identity through food, particularly by-passing traditional food practices to their children. At the same time, there were instances where participants engaged with Norwegian food culture, especially during social events involving both Ghanaians and Norwegians. This reflects the complex nature of identity formation in diaspora settings, where individuals balance preserving their cultural heritage with adapting to the host society.

This negotiation process is well-documented in literature, particularly in studies on food and integration. Tuomainen (2006) highlights how food practices within diaspora communities serve as a means of maintaining ethnic identity and a space for interaction with the host society. For Ghanaians in Norway, food practices allow them to retain their Ghanaian identity while offering opportunities for selective engagement with Norwegian culture. Wright et al. (2021) similarly discuss how food practices among second-generation minority students in the U.S. act as a platform for negotiating identity and cultural belonging, where access to traditional foods helps individuals preserve their cultural roots while facilitating interactions with the broader society.

The selective integration through food, as evidenced by the participation of Norwegian guests in Ghanaian food traditions, suggests that Ghanaians in Norway are navigating the complex integration process on their terms (Osei-Kwasi et al., 2020). While participants made concerted efforts to preserve their cultural identity through food, they also demonstrated a willingness to adapt, incorporating certain aspects of Norwegian food culture into their diets and social interactions. This balance between preservation and adaptation reflects the broader theme in diaspora studies, where individuals maintain cultural continuity while simultaneously engaging with new cultural environments (Marty et al., 2021).

The findings suggest that Ghanaians use food practices as a strategy to navigate the challenges of living in a foreign society. Maintaining traditional food practices while adapting others allows participants to preserve their cultural heritage and foster a sense of continuity and stability amidst integration difficulties. Osaili et al. (2023) argue that food practices provide a sense of familiarity and comfort for migrant communities, which helps them manage the complexities of life in a new environment. For Ghanaians in Norway, retaining traditional food practices represents cultural resilience, enabling them to uphold their cultural identity while adjusting to the practical demands of living in a foreign country. This balance between preservation and adaptation is key to managing the integration process while maintaining a strong sense of self.

Lastly, the interview data in this study is categorized into key themes related to food, identity, and integration among Ghanaians in Norway. These themes illuminate how participants maintain

cultural connections, emphasizing areas such as cultural preservation, adaptation, and social engagement. Cultural preservation through food emerged as a core theme, with participants expressing a strong attachment to traditional Ghanaian dishes as vital markers of their identity. They highlighted the transmission of cultural values to children, stressing the role of early exposure to traditional foods like fufu in reinforcing heritage. Adaptation also played a significant role, reflecting participants' ability to balance traditional dishes with local Norwegian ingredients without compromising their cultural identity. This adaptability demonstrates their resilience in preserving Ghanaian culinary practices while navigating challenges in a new environment. The significance of food in social and religious events was evident, with traditional dishes like jollof rice and fufu serving as cultural anchors during special occasions, reinforcing collective identity and connection to home. Although not the main focus of the study, economic considerations were noted, with participants acknowledging the cost and availability of ingredients affecting their food choices. Additionally, challenges in maintaining traditional practices were addressed, highlighting the need for community networks to facilitate access to essential ingredients. These themes align closely with the research objectives and provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences, with additional aspects like economic factors and challenges briefly included for context.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations based on the results from Chapter Four. The study explored how Ghanaians living in Norway use food as a means of preserving their identity, culture, community ties, and health, while also negotiating their integration into Norwegian society.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The study revealed that food plays a crucial role in shaping and preserving the identity of Ghanaians living in Norway. Traditional Ghanaian dishes such as fufu, banku, and jollof rice serve as significant cultural markers, helping participants maintain a strong connection to their heritage. Food is not just for nourishment, but a vital medium through which cultural values are passed down to future generations, ensuring that children remain aware of their Ghanaian roots. The participants demonstrated how food practices preserve cultural continuity, even when they had to adapt to local Norwegian ingredients.

Culturally, food is intertwined with social and ritual practices among Ghanaians in Norway. Participants highlighted the importance of preparing and consuming traditional meals, especially during significant life events such as birthdays, confirmations, and rites of passage. The practice of eating with fingers remains a fundamental cultural expression, symbolizing an enduring connection to Ghanaian customs. Substituting local ingredients for traditional ones has not diminished the cultural significance of these meals but has demonstrated the resilience of food practices in diaspora settings.

Health was another significant theme in the study. Participants discussed the health benefits of maintaining a traditional Ghanaian diet, which they believe provides strength and vitality. While they have incorporated Norwegian fruits, vegetables, and grains into their diets, traditional meals such as fufu and red, red are still seen as essential to their well-being. This blend of traditional

and local food practices highlights how Ghanaians have adapted to maintain good health in their new environment.

In addition to personal and family identity, food plays a central role in fostering a sense of community among Ghanaians in Norway. Social gatherings centered around traditional meals, such as weddings, Ghana Union gatherings, and birthdays, help strengthen community ties and reinforce cultural belonging. These events also provide opportunities for cultural exchange, where Norwegian friends and colleagues participate in Ghanaian food traditions, fostering mutual understanding and social integration.

The study also found that food practices play an important part in how Ghanaians negotiate their identity and navigate their integration into Norwegian society. Participants actively preserve their Ghanaian identity through food but also engage selectively with Norwegian food culture in social contexts. This dynamic balance between cultural preservation and adaptation is a key strategy in managing their integration process.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study concludes that food is central to how Ghanaians in Norway maintain their identity, culture, and health, while also facilitating community engagement and integration into Norwegian society. The findings demonstrate that traditional Ghanaian dishes act as powerful tools for preserving ethnic identity and ensuring that future generations remain connected to their cultural heritage. The ability to adapt their food practices using local ingredients reflects the flexibility and resilience of cultural traditions in diaspora communities.

Food practices serve not only as a means of reinforcing cultural identity but also as an important aspect of health and well-being. The participants' strong belief in the health benefits of their traditional diets highlights the deep cultural connection between food and physical strength. Furthermore, the blending of Norwegian ingredients with traditional Ghanaian foods illustrates the ongoing negotiation between cultural preservation and adaptation to the practical realities of a new environment.

In addition to individual and family roles, food plays a significant part in community cohesion. Shared meals during social gatherings create spaces for cultural continuity, allowing Ghanaians in Norway to maintain their sense of belonging and unity. These events also promote cultural exchange, providing opportunities for Ghanaians to introduce their food culture to Norwegians, fostering deeper mutual understanding.

The dual role of food practices in preserving cultural identity and facilitating selective integration highlights the complex nature of identity negotiation among diaspora communities. Ghanaians in Norway manage to engage with their host society while maintaining a strong connection to their Ghanaian heritage through their food practices.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

There is a need for policymakers, cultural organizations, and community leaders to prioritize cultural preservation initiatives that celebrate and promote Ghanaian food practices. Organizing cultural events such as food festivals and cooking workshops could provide platforms for Ghanaians to showcase their traditional cuisine. These events would not only enhance the sense of belonging within the Ghanaian community but also offer opportunities for intercultural exchange with the broader Norwegian society. Such initiatives would create spaces for sharing and appreciating Ghanaian culture, contributing to both cultural preservation and mutual understanding.

Culturally sensitive health education should also be a key area of focus. Health professionals and community organizations should develop nutrition programs that are tailored to the specific dietary preferences and needs of Ghanaians living in Norway. These programs could highlight the health benefits of traditional Ghanaian foods while encouraging the incorporation of local Norwegian ingredients for a balanced and healthy diet. Culturally appropriate nutrition education would help address potential health challenges related to diet and provide guidance on maintaining well-being in a new environment.

Another important recommendation is to encourage community gatherings centered around food, as these events play a vital role in fostering social cohesion and reinforcing cultural identity. Community leaders, religious organizations, and local cultural centers should facilitate regular social gatherings where traditional meals are shared. These gatherings provide Ghanaians with opportunities to reconnect with their cultural roots and strengthen community ties. Moreover, they offer a space for cultural exchange, where Norwegians can participate in Ghanaian food traditions, promoting intercultural understanding and social integration.

Further research is recommended to explore the food practices of other migrant communities in Norway, offering broader insights into how food functions as a tool for cultural preservation and integration. Comparative studies across different ethnic groups could reveal deeper connections between food practices, identity formation, and social integration in various diaspora contexts. Longitudinal studies could also be valuable in assessing the long-term effects of food practices on health and integration experiences among migrant communities. These additional insights would be useful for policymakers and health professionals working in multicultural societies.

### **Practical Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should aim to build on this study's findings by examining the integration experiences of Ghanaians in Norway in greater depth. Studies with larger and more diverse samples could capture a broader spectrum of experiences, adding nuance to the understanding of how food practices influence cultural identity and social adaptation. Researchers could also explore generational differences within the Ghanaian community, investigating how food practices evolve among second- and third-generation Ghanaians compared to those who migrated as adults. Another practical area for research could involve the impact of food-related community events on social integration, measuring how these gatherings influence participants' sense of belonging and cross-cultural interactions.

Additionally, studies focusing on the psychological and emotional significance of food for Ghanaians in Norway could provide insights into how traditional meals contribute to well-being and mental health. Examining how specific food practices help alleviate the stress of migration or

homesickness would be beneficial for developing more holistic support strategies. Finally, research could explore the economic aspects of accessing traditional ingredients in Norway, assessing how affordability and availability impact the ability of migrants to maintain their cultural diets. This line of inquiry could inform future efforts to make culturally significant foods more accessible to diverse communities. These practical recommendations for future research would help extend the implications of this study and provide a more comprehensive understanding of food practices as a vital element of cultural preservation and integration in migrant communities.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **AN INTERVIEW GUIDE**

Exploring Food Identity Among Adult Ghanaians Living in Norway.

#### **Introduction**

(a) Interviewer/researcher introduces himself and where he comes from

(b) Informed consent form-Signature

**HOLD TO <NO>, THEN <RECORD>**

#### **Demographic Information:**

Age:

Gender:

Marital status:

Duration of stay in Norway:

Occupation:

Purpose of coming to Norway:

#### **Ice breaker (warm-up) question**

What surprised you most when you first got to Norway?

### **SECTION 1: FOOD IDENTITY AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

#### **(A) Culinary Background**

- i. Can you share some of the traditional Ghanaian dishes you frequently prepare or consume?
- ii. How has your food choices evolved since moving to Norway?
- iii. Are there specific occasions or events where you prefer traditional Ghanaian dishes?

#### **(B) Influence of Cultural Background**

- i. How does your Ghanaian cultural background influence your food choices in Norway?
- ii. Do you find it challenging to maintain a connection with your cultural food identity in Norway?

### **(C) Food Practices and Customs**

- i. Are there specific food-related customs or practices from Ghana that you continue to observe in Norway?
- ii. How do you celebrate cultural or religious events through food?

## **SECTION 2: HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF FOOD CHOICES**

### **(A) Balancing Traditional and Local Foods**

- i. How do you balance traditional Ghanaian foods with the local Norwegian diet?
- ii. Have your food choices impacted your overall health since moving to Norway?

### **(B) Nutritional Considerations**

- i. Are there specific nutritional considerations or challenges you face in maintaining a healthy diet in Norway?
- ii. How do you ensure that your diet meets your nutritional needs?

### **(C) Access to Traditional Ingredients**

- i. Are there challenges in finding traditional Ghanaian ingredients in Norway? How do you address this?
- ii. Do you incorporate local Norwegian ingredients into your traditional dishes?

## **SECTION 3: INTEGRATION AND ADAPTATION**

### **(A) Adaptation to Norwegian Cuisine**

- i. Have you incorporated any Norwegian foods into your regular diet? If so, which ones?
- ii. How has the exposure to Norwegian cuisine influenced your food preferences?

### **(B) Social Interactions and Food**

- i. How do social interactions and gatherings influence your food choices?
- ii. Have you shared your traditional dishes with non-Ghanaians, and if so, how was the reception?

**ENDING SECTION**

Please is there anything else you would like to add on?

Thanks a lot for your time and having me!

**<STOP> RECORDING**

