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Farah Al Chammas March 20, 2019

Reviving Recipes of Resilience from the Refugee Crisis: An Anthropreneurship Proposal

by

Farah Al Chammas

Dr. Arri Eisen

Adviser

Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture

Dr. Arri Eisen

Adviser

Dr. Peter Wakefield

Committee Member

Dr. Wesley Longhofer

Committee Member

Dr. Christine Ristaino

Committee Member

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Farah Al Chammas

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Abstract

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Drawing from historical and anthropological perspectives on the use of food and communal dining to establish social systems and relationships across human history, this study begins by explaining the critical role of food in community building. From there, the study proceeds to explore the phenomenon of immigrants' use of food as a tool for integration in the Atlanta metro area by means of interviews with founders of immigrant food businesses as well as an anonymous survey to the residents of the greater Atlanta metro community that gages consumer demand and residents' perspective of immigrant food businesses. According to the thematic analysis of the interviews, affording a kitchen space and an adequate marketing strategy are the two most common obstacles facing entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the survey results show a high demand for and frequent utilization of food businesses selling culturally-relevant foods. Building upon the insights from the data analysis of the interviews and survey, as well as drawing from a case study of immigrant food businesses in Singapore's Hawker centers, this study concludes with an intervention and business proposal aimed at eliminating some of the obstacles found to face immigrants while launching their businesses.

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Chapter I:

Introduction

Twelve-year-old me was fascinated by baking. I would watch baking shows for hours and always ask my mom to let me in the kitchen. Although she rarely baked herself, she would at least allow me to go into the kitchen and bake my own as long as I cleaned up afterwards. Consequently, most of my creativity was translated into recipes that did or did not exist. The kitchen was my stage and my thoughts about my recipes were kept in a diary, which I began to write after I was denied the parental permission to start a blog on *WordPress*, as I had seen Julie do in the movie *Julie and Julia*. The necessity I felt to keep my recipes alive also gave a platform for my thinking to develop and my intellectual abilities to grow.

Shortly after, the Syria I had known from birth began to change as the war began, interrupting my baking flow and replacing the smell of my ever-so-favorite rosewater, which occupied our apartment kitchen in Damascus, with the smell of gunfire and smoke. As a result, what began as my recipe diary became the only escape, where I could write away my feelings and thoughts when fearful of adding to my parents' concerns and anxieties of an unpredictable future. I do remember at that time beginning to develop an awareness of my own thinking about the world and my place in it due to the surrounding consequences that almost forced me to stay in my head and my dreams, to hide from the reality of war.

Two years later, the smell of gunfire became more dangerous than simply uncomfortable when three major terrorist attacks exploded within walking distance from my apartment building, specifically four blocks away, killing tens of people and keeping my parents from sending us to school. Two months after the biggest and deadliest of these attacks, I said goodbye to my favorite baking equipment and moved to the United States with everyone in my family, except

my father, who was only able to join us in December of 2017, after five years of separation. The move to the United States was accompanied by major culture shock, especially considering our transition from the oldest capital in the world to a small town in North East Texas. I was not only welcomed by a new climate, but a wave of new tools that I had to immediately learn to use in order to survive school and social life.

When I first moved to Texas as a junior in high school, I remember that the first thing my sister and I noticed and discussed at home was how much people talked about food at school. I wondered why food was such an important aspect of American culture. When I discussed this with Americans, they were surprised at my seemingly strange observation. But after living in the United States for almost six years myself, I no longer notice this topic of conversation as much as I used to. I actually have become a part of the conversation.

While growing up in Syria, the cuisine was definitely a major part of the culture, but it was never discussed in the way it is here in the United States, at least not to the same extent. Over time, I realized this phenomenon might be because food is the only tool bringing together Americans from different ethnic and racial subgroups of the greater American society.
After all, most living and functioning humans, not taking into account those living in food insecure areas, regardless of external appearance, experience the need to eat for fuel, and eat "three meals plus snacks every day." (Mattson, et al) Unlike the American population, however, the Syrian population is significantly homogeneous and far from the United States in terms of ethnic and racial diversity. Therefore, I began to think that it could possibly be the variation of experiences and identities within the American population calling for a medium to create a shared experience in order to foster community, belonging, and national pride. That medium is food.

I distinctly remember the first time I ever made baklava, which was about a month after moving to the United States. I was living in a small town in North East Texas because my uncle, who had lived in the United States for longer than I have breathed, had been living there with his family. Moving close to them was my parents' most sound decision. On a Thursday evening, their Vietnamese neighbors were invited for dinner, so I offered to make dessert. As suggested by my mother, I made baklava. I had always eaten it on special occasions in Syria but had never made it before that day. None of my relatives or grandmothers had either. Baklava had always been a store-bought dessert for us, so making it meant that I was taking extra measures to share with our neighbors a specialty of Syria that I only had tasted on special occasions. Since then, everyone has begun to make baklava in the family. I had started a movement! But really, the already-prepared filo dough found in any grocery store made our preparation process significantly easier than that of Damascus's most authentic dessert shops.

From my uncle's dinner table to my history class in high school, baklava spoke for me. It spoke for my longing for home and my hunger to share that longing with this new community. Baklava helped me make home of my new home. My history professor was so fascinated with this dessert. We would sometimes spend lunch time chatting about the art of baklava and why every country on the Mediterranean claims its origin yet prepares it differently. I never realized I could hold a conversation longer than ten minutes with a man older than my father and with a background so different from my own, but baklava apparently makes miracles happen.

It was not only baklava, however, that expressed what was often too difficult for my words to capture. As I began making friends and bringing them home, my mother would use her fabulous falafel recipe to keep them at our dinner table, holding conversations with them and attempting to get a sense of their ethical codes to ensure my safety among what she thought was

a dangerous zone of American teenagers: my public high school. As soon as she felt safe, she began to invite their families and create connections herself, over our dinner table.

Growing up in Syria, where Israel is referred to as the imperialist enemy, I never imagined my mother cooking a feast and hosting a dinner for my Jewish friend's family. I myself had never imagined I could be best friends with a Jewish girl, due to the biased narrative I had consumed from the Middle Eastern media and our textbooks. But food made for the best diplomat, which brought our families together. My friend's mother recognized many of our dishes due to our shared heritage and offered to bring my mother halva, which is a sesame candy that Syrians know as halawe. I began to recognize that no matter how numerous our differences are, we still share our need to eat.

My observation continued to bloom in college. During my first year at Emory, my understanding of food anthropology in America began to gain context. Moving from the homogenous capital of Syria to a homogenous small town in rural Texas to now the cosmopolitan city of Atlanta, I developed an appreciation for food and its ability to ease tension by creating a shared value between groups and individuals, who wouldn't admit to sharing anything. As part of a student organization that I founded called Refugee Revive, I met and worked with many refugee women, who, just like my mother in Texas, used food to cultivate connections with their neighbors and to empower their families financially.

Since its founding, Refugee Revive has held different versions of an event called the *Dinner Syries*, where 12 Emory students attend a paid dinner that a partner Syrian refugee family hosts in their very home. Having so far only received positive feedback regarding the dynamics and conversations blooming at these dinners, Refugee Revive has continued to plan these dinners as a form of financial support for the families and as a way to continue humanizing the political

debate around immigration. Near the organization's first birthday, I was approached with the opportunity to develop the organization into a startup. Blindly walking into a pitch competition and later more hackathons and business courses, I fell in love with the creative ideation process and the power of social entrepreneurship in sustainably tackling aspects of social issues through business models.

While travelling to sixteen new countries within seven months while studying abroad, I witnessed a pattern of immigrant-owned ethnic food restaurants in every city I walked through, suggesting how immigrants prioritize food as a powerful tool for integration. For example, in Singapore, which is a small city country that is formed of immigrants and hawker centers, cafeterias where immigrants serve authentic and ethnic recipes from a diverse array of stalls, which can be found around every block and make for an example of a successful initiative that allows immigrants to integrate, self-express, create income, and help the public feel welcome and fed.

Drawing from both my academic training and personal experiences, I have now come to believe in the vitality of interdisciplinary thinking for conflict resolution. But as an anthropologist, I have also come to believe in the power of food as a medium that fuels interdisciplinary thinking, easing tension where conflict reigns. Therefore, through the lens of anthropological research methods and social entrepreneurship, this essay examines the phenomenon of immigrants' use of food as a tool for integration through literature review and anthropological research methods, building from the findings a proposal for an entrepreneurial intervention to answer this phenomenon and amplify its positive impact on the community.

The United States is a very special place. I did not realize the impact of growing up in a homogenous community until I moved here from Syria. Here, I found that the diversity of the

population fosters compassion and humility around our own existence that nothing else can, only when we perceive others as equal, of course. Often times, the information we negotiate from the media, our surroundings, and our history textbooks, lead us into focusing on our differences. But what if we focused on our similarities, on our shared humanity, our hunger for food, for love? What if we focused on the love that sharing food can ignite to cultivate our communities?

Humans are social animals. We thrive by connecting with one another and by feeling loved and loving others. This is nothing new. Archaeological records tell us about the centrality of feasting to social and political aspects of many ancient civilizations, from the early Dynastic Mesopotamia to the Egyptians, the Mayans, and the Incas. Our nature is nothing different today. The circumstances have changed, however. We now very likely live further from family and closer to our screens. We now very likely eat alone more often than we used to, which could potentially correlate with the increasing rates of depression globally, but significantly in individualistic societies.

Even with incredible progression and evolution of our species, we still value communal dining as an integral aspect of social wellbeing. From birthday dinners to dinner dates, company team lunches, and Thanksgiving potlucks, food is a powerful medium that we especially need in today’s America to remind us of our shared humanity, to cultivate love and wellbeing in our communities. Everyone has a different story, a different background, a different goal, a different passion, and a different morale. Everyone is different. But everyone eats.

Chapter II:

Background and significance

This study explores the phenomenon of immigrants' use of food as a tool for integration. This phenomenon is a timeless externalization of immigrants' reliance on food as a language for both maintaining their culture and integrating in a new one. A study proposes that "the key domains of integration [relate] to four overall themes: achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment." (Ager, et al) The significant demand by refugees to sell their ethnic food for a living as well as the increasing number of new refugee-founded and immigrant-owned food businesses indicate the ongoing manifestation of this phenomenon. This study intends to explain how the use of food as a tool for integration can be utilized to help immigrants and refugees resettle in new communities. Using insights from a literature review as well as the ethnographic research methods applied in the Atlanta metro area, the study will conclude with an intervention and a proposal for a social enterprise in the City of Clarkston, GA, a town that is located about 10 miles from the city of Atlanta and where "over 40,000 refugees have been resettled in the last 25 years" (Long), facilitating the growth of this phenomenon and amplifying its positive impact for immigrants and refugees, as well the economy of the greater community.

While no specific study has built a social enterprise model upon the anthropological investigation of the impact of immigrant food in Atlanta, related works have pointed to the externalization of this phenomenon through the growing number of immigrant-founded restaurants and how immigrant food is a factor for integration and health outcomes. For example,

Vivian Halloran's *The Immigrant Kitchen: Food, Ethnicity, and Diaspora,* highlights through a collection of food memoirs from immigrants, how the use of food in their host countries reflects processes of assimilation, acculturation, and expatriation, bringing to light the importance of responding to immigrants' needs of integrating through programming that places their use of food in the center of their integration process.

Furthermore, Jean-Pierre Poulain's *Sociology of Food: Eating and the Place of Food in Society* sheds light on the evolution of eating practices and how they build networks and impact health and the economy. These two resources are examples of research that highlight how immigrant food service locations create opportunities for social activities, helping immigrant restaurant owners and workers integrate with members of their new community. Building from historical and anthropological perspectives on this topic, but most importantly, upon the research findings of my ethnographic methods, I will follow methodologies and concepts from Joey Reiman's *The Story of Purpose: The Path to Creating a Brighter Brand, a Greater Company, and a Lasting Legacy* as well as Madsbjerg and Rasmussen's *The Moment of Clarity: Using the Human Sciences to Solve Your Toughest Business Problems,* to create a social enterprise proposal for the city of Clarkston, GA that allows for its immigrant community to flourish and contribute to the local economy.

While this study is not intended to produce results that are generalizable beyond the specific context in which it is being conducted, the results are intended to serve as a description of the metro Atlanta immigrants' use of food as a means of integration, and potentially as a guide for other communities on how food can be used as a platform on which to build community. Immigrants arrive in new countries on a daily basis all over the world and food is a language that they can immediately speak with their new neighbors. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this

study is to demonstrate for the inhabitants of Atlanta, from citizens to government officials to investors, the financial and social benefits of immigrant-owned food businesses. Thus, the goals of this study are: first, to provide a comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of the phenomenon of immigrants use of food as a tool for integration; second, to respond to this phenomenon with a social enterprise proposal to increase the benefits of this phenomenon in the city of Atlanta.

Chapter III:

A Historical Perspective

While one can argue that the human experience has changed significantly across history, there still remains certain aspects of human life that necessitate some sort of consistency. Food and drink, for example, "are basic, constant, physical necessities, essential elements of life for all people in every society." (Bray ,18) The daily need for these elements makes them "a powerful means of social control: manipulating access to food and drink or to essential means of production can be translated into control over people. Second, food and drink are almost infinitely variable and subject to elaboration -- not only what is eaten and drunk, but how it is prepared, served, and consumed" (18). Therefore, food serves in the "construction and maintenance of social relations of power and inequality" (4), which allows for consumption to be "intimately involved in the creation, maintenance, and manipulation of identity" (3). This identity is not confined to the individual but to their positionality and socialization within a group.

The statement "you are what you eat" encompasses beyond a physiological fact but extends to the social dimension of food, implying that "how and what to eat is one of the fundamental ways we define ourselves as social beings and members of a given group" (19). The consumption of food as a social event brings about the importance of understanding "commensality--the social context of sharing the consumption of food and drink--[as] a pervasive feature of agrarian societies. [...] The ways that food and drink are prepared, presented, and consumed contribute to the construction and communication of social relations" (19). While some forms of feasting are designed to "[reinforce] social distinctions (Dietler 19990), foodways also serve to bind individuals in larger social groups through shared understandings of cultural

conventions (Wood 1995)," (40) as well as "foster solidarity or to promote competition" (19). Through "material remains of feasting with written and visual information on the symbolic meaning of food, the importance of reciprocity, and the role of gender in determining productive roles," historians can construct the puzzle of "political power, social identity and status, and control of prestige or wealth items, [which] were subject to perpetual renewal and renegotiation" (227). What foodways cultivated then, they continue to cultivate today.

A major aspect of foodways and commensality are feasts, which appear "in rituals of all kinds, from rites of passage to religious rituals," (19) and which serve for "the creation and maintenance of networks of social relations among individuals and groups (Kan 1989). Through the provision of food and drink, hosts repay old social debts and create new ones. New Aztec rulers, as part of their installation, invited rulers of both allied and enemy polities to an elaborate feast (Sahagun 1953-1982, Book 8:65-65)" (205). Thus, feasting is structured through a "repetitive and cyclical nature [that follows] an ordered socio-temporal framework, such as religious calendar or the human life-cycle, [or most often] through the reciprocal nature of the social relations created and reinforced through these events--one cannot be just a guest but must also be a host at some later time. (204)

The history and context of feasting has been constructed through the archaeological record, supplemented by historical texts and analyses. What has been excavated and analyzed from various locations supports the universality of commensality across states and empires of the early civilizations. From the Early Dynastic Mesopotamia to the Egyptians, the Mayans, and the Incas, "feasting was apparently conducted both by the state and private individuals, sometimes in connection with religious festivals and sometimes on their own (Ikram 2000) (47) Examples of archaeological records are the "visual images of people [engaging[in feasting [...] found on

Early Dynastic seals (used as administrative devices), on inlaid items such as musical instruments, and on plaques that could be affixed to walls. (22) Moreover, "food and feasting were important dimensions of Egyptian society and religion with specialized dishes appearing at funerals, state and private rituals, and large-scale festivals sponsored by the temples or pharaohs. (54) Feasts were also hosted by the Inca nobility "in order to fulfill their obligations of reciprocity to laborers as well as other administrative elite and dignitaries for services rendered the state." (183)

Evidence for feasting is not limited to cooking utensils and paintings but extends to the civil engineering and urban design of cities. "Using various lines of evidence to complement the focus on culinary equipment, including epigraphic, architectural, ethnohistoric, and osteological data, they all strongly suggest that feasting and food presentation were indeed important elements in the political strategies of early states." (9) For example, "the organization of Maya social groups into Houses argues for the importance of feasts that cross-cut status lines as well. The House is a corporate group maintaining an estate perpetuated by the recruitment of members whose relationships are expressed in the language of kinship and affinity and affirmed by purposeful actions" (Gillespie 2000:467)" (207).

Feasting is a form of foodways, which are "defined as 'modes of feeding' (Simons 1967:3), [and] may be accessed archaeologically through the functional analysis of cooking, serving and storage vessels, [providing] insights into ethnic identity, hierarchy, and social relations within and between groups (Wood 1995) (40) Furthermore, "the art of ancient societies, as seen in studies of Egyptian tomb paintings (Hames 1984; Romer 1984), Sumerian cylinder seals and plaques (Schmandt-Besserat 2001; Collon 1987), and Moche and Nazca pottery (Yakovleff and Herrera 1934; Towle 1961), offers another source of information on banquets,

feasting, and special foodstuffs." (3) Such historical artifacts suggest the types of foods, methods of eating, and different contexts for feasting adopted or initiated by the communities they belong to. More importantly, these artifacts also shed light onto the socialization within one community as well its relationship with neighboring communities, as seen in the example of Nubians and Egyptians. "In spite of the politically charged ideology of separation and otherness, the patterns of Nubian pottery and other artifacts at Askut indicate that Egyptians and Nubians interacted and probably intermarried. In particular, Nubian women had a profound impact on colonial society through the gradual dominance of Nubian foodways reflected in cooking vessels [that date back to 1325 B.C.]." (60) Therefore, the "distribution of culinary equipment in the form of ceramics for food service and cooking at Askut shows Egyptian frontier communities did more than simply implement central policy." (59-60)

What the historical narrative and archaeological record of foodways demonstrate is the centrality of food as a social tool to cultivate community and manipulate social relations. However, most importantly, the archaeological record demonstrating interaction between different cultures like the Egyptian and Nubian communities through food in the 14th century serves as evidence for food's ability to mediate conflict and orchestrate political and social hierarchies depending on the nature and presentation of food, its preparation, as well as consumption. This is important as it points to the power food plays in connecting or breaking up communities. Although this occurred hundreds of years ago, today, we still see food deserts in certain neighborhoods and organic food stores in others. On the other hand, taking into account feasting as a valued form of celebration by different social groups for different purposes, the importance of food as more than a biological need but eating as a social event is emphasized for the curation of feeding experiences that can foster community and enhance social relations. This

is especially important in today's America with increasing racial divisions that call for a need for more feasts, more celebration around the one shared need among all humans: feeding the body and soul with good recipes and trusted company.

Chapter IV:

An Anthropological Perspective

Anthropology, which “is the study of what makes us human,” (“What Is Anthropology?”) according to the American Anthropological Association, is inter-disciplinary by nature, drawing from different aspects of life that touch our experience on earth as a species, or that we touch and transform while experiencing the world. A vital part of the human condition are the needs we share as a global, multicultural human population. In *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*, E.N. Anderson explains food, as a human need that “[goes] far beyond nutrition, [as inevitably], people use food to satisfy many needs beyond those for simple nutrients” (Anderson, 75). Anderson further states that “humans have a genuine biological need to feel in some control of their situation [...]; [to] feel safe and secure, above all. This is not just a matter of physical safety. It is more important for people to feel accepted, approved, and socially grounded than to feel physically secure. Food is conspicuously important in demonstrating both types of security” (81). Therefore, food makes for a strong tool that can unite humans over our shared experience of hunger and satiety for both food and social connection.

‘Culture’ is a word used by anthropologists to refer to the rules, customs, and other shared plans and behaviors that result from people's interactions. (5) Of the “interactions that are repeated [...], people develop [...] generalizations that we know as ‘foodways’ or, more broadly, as ‘knowledge and culture’” (5). Today, our foodways evolved our knowledge of food as a multi-layered concept. While “food as fuel is a means to the goal of being able to survive and accomplish, [food] as a social facilitator is not an end in itself; the end goal is the social life that the food facilities. [Finally], food as fun might be considered an end in itself.” (83) The second mentioned use of food as a social facilitator makes “humans [as] social feeders, [which has]

some obvious benefits, such as the creation of social alliances, or the possibility of combining to defend the food. However, the immediate reason for most social feeding is that people simply like to eat with others." (173) The charitable organization Meals on Wheels, "which takes food to shut-ins, learned [from its volunteers] that the delivery person often has to sit with the recipient; otherwise the food goes uneaten." (personal communication Meals on Wheels volunteers, 1980s). This further confirms how "people almost always eat as a social act, [that] lonely individuals often lose the desire to eat, [simply not feeling] hungry, [and that] they often starve to death." (154)

Psychologists explains this through data that show "conforming to a group norm is a rewarding experience and eating with someone else amplifies the hedonic aspects of the experience." (Higgs et., al) Therefore, emphasizing communal dining experiences may be beneficial in fostering more cohesive, interconnected, and happier communities. This could start with designing cafeterias in schools and companies that facilitate group seating as well as encouraging communal dining, especially on college campuses, where stress levels are high. Taking that into account, I wonder what America, today, would look like, if we created more opportunities for neighbors, co-workers, mothers, veterans, immigrants, physicians, artists, and politicians, to simply eat together.

A matter of life and death, food has served us universally in ways that we do not always recognize and take advantage of. Shaping our identity through our belonging to certain cultural or religious groups, for example, "foodways are powerfully structured by considerations of personal and group identity, [which] is often constructed and communicated with regard to foods" (Anderson, 176). "In Chinese society, no important deal can be concluded without food and drink, where major contracts signed necessitates a lunch or dinner, [and] the more important

the contract, the larger and more expensive the meal". (173) This extends beyond national borders to religious affinities, [where] the group that prays together stays together -- especially if its members share religious feasts. Holy communion in Christian churches is a form of this sharing. Sikh temples insist that the worshipers share a sweet food, made of substances acceptable to all the Indian religions. The worshipers have to eat together, thus publicly denouncing the widespread Indian restrictions on dining with members of other occupations and groups. Other impressive feasts that bring people together around religious themes include Thanksgiving and Christmas in standard American Christian traditions, Passover and Hanukkah in Judaism, Buddhist temple feasts throughout East and Southeast Asia, and the countless sacrificial or hunting related feasts of indigenous peoples." (190) These "religious foodways, [which] can be explained either on the basis of ecological sense or on the basis of religious and ritual logic, [...] are not blind immemorial traditions but pragmatic adaptations to community life." (198) How religion even has adopted food as a means to cultivate a shared value system proves its power and potential as a tool for effective communication and connectedness.

Communication requires a language, and food is a language that does not need translation. However, "[while] food, is, indeed, rather like language, [...] one can be freer with food. It is not so tightly structured as the elements of language are." (155) Through the ability to "read food as a text and decode what people were saying, or trying to say, when they managed food" (154), "[we] find the encoding and decoding of messages sent by food to be extremely complex and interesting." (84) Of these messages, "many are emotional--matters of mood, feeling, and exact--rather than precise and specific. Language is often about being exact, but food is usually about being warm, homey, religious--anything broad and deep, but little that is narrow and defined."

(158) Food thus makes for a neutral language that can take up multiple shapes, sizes, flavors, and structures, to make its point for recipients with differing palates.

Most important of all, "[the] main message of food, everywhere, is solidarity. Eating together means sharing and participating. Families traditionally unite around the table, and this remains deeply important in most of the world." (172) Because everyone eats every day, "food is available for management as a way of showing the world many things about the eater, [and] may be second only to language as a social communication system." For example, "in Chinese formal hospitality, honor and respect are shown by the host using his own chopsticks to serve the guest, by hosts serving chicken and wine rather than salt fish and boiled water, or by literally thousands of other gestures." (171) Another example of this is how "buying dinner, or otherwise feeding a prospect, is so universal in courtship, business, and politics that it is almost certainly grounded in inborn tendencies we evolved as food sharers and feel a natural link between sharing food and being personally close and involved." (172) We see how different communities thus use the language of food to communicate different messages and how these messages often serve to bridge ties and foster belonging.

In communities with residents of different cultures and backgrounds, food plays an especially powerful role as a mediator to unite. As a global village, our world has now become so interconnected through social media and the increased travel and migration movements. The result of one politically-motivated migration movement was the founding of the United States, which makes for a perfect example of a nation with residents of different affinities, identities, and nationalities. Consequently, "the United States slowly developed a distinctive, sophisticated, complex culinary landscape after it became a world-system power, but this complexity remains almost entirely confined to the great trading centers: New York, Seattle, San Francisco and the

Bay Area (home of "California cuisine"), New Orleans, and so on." (239) However, just as the American identity can be defined in thousands of different ways, reflecting the diversity of the American people, the American food identity also encompasses different scopes. "Food identity" is a truism that ethnic groups are characterized by, and [which defines] their foodways" (242) that result [from] complex interactions of human nutritional needs, ecology, human logic or lack of it, and historical accident." (2) The "ethnic survival of foodways is not simply a matter of ethnic conservatism or tenacity. It is influenced by ongoing interaction with the host societies." (249) If people speak food to communicate belonging and foster connections, immigrants speak food to establish belonging and invite connections. When immigrants move to new countries, they lack social capital, and by using food as a medium that everyone has a taste for, they are able to establish a social capital. However, when immigrants open restaurants or turn their foodways into entrepreneurial ventures, not only do they establish social capital, but financial capital as well.

While Anderson's anthropological perspective indicates the importance of communal dining for human wellbeing, Bray's historical analysis points to our ancestors' recognition of the importance of the feasts and foodways that crafted or manipulated their social systems. These perspectives suggest that the creation and sharing of food are universal and timeless aspects of the human experience, which, despite having been expressed differently across cultures and throughout history, still result in the same outcomes: stronger or weaker communities. Therefore, if we craft dining experiences designed to be welcoming and inclusive, we allow food and feasting to embody their powerful potential of serving as the common denominator that welds communities together. Food is an especially critical mediator for diverse communities with

members of varying backgrounds, who, despite sharing little, still share the need for nutritious and social satiety: their experience of being human.

Chapter V:

Migration and Food: The Past and the Present

Our evolution from “[historic] and [prehistoric] foragers, hunters, and coloniz- ers” (Buss, 182), has resulted in our resistance to and avoidance of uncertainty and unfamiliarity. The purpose of this discomfort seems to be for the conservation of energy. “Neuroscientists have made the fascinating observation that when we do something completely novel, a broad range of brain areas becomes active. As we become more skilled at the task, however, our brain becomes more focused: we require only the essential brain regions and need increasingly less energy to perform that task.” (Manacorda) Therefore, when taking up new tasks, such as navigating a new environment or learning a new language, the brains require more energy. However, because “the conservation of space and energy, appears to be a guiding principle of brain organization and function” (Bach-y-Rita), our evolution suggests our discomfort with unfamiliar and novel experiences, encounters, tasks, and even thoughts or concepts, as these require more energy of the efficient machine that is the human brain.

Our forefathers were hunter gatherers, who survived on what they gathered and hunted, which was subject to climatic changes and other factors that made their food sources scarce or their risks of predation unpredictable. Evolutionary anthropology has found that “early modern human dispersals correlate with climate changes, particularly the tropical African ‘megadroughts’” (Rito, et al). This unpredictability would lead them to move from one environment to an unfamiliar one, where they were unaware of the potential risks from which to self-defend, or the availability of food on which they would survive. Therefore, unpredictability and unfamiliarity, from an evolutionary perspective, were states that we evolved to associate with risk, starvation, or danger. These states were also more energetically-demanding for the

brain that operates based on conserving energy as a guiding principle. However, eventually, our ancestors were no longer subject to all the above, as the need for a more stable source of food brought about the inception of organized agriculture.

Instead of worrying about making enough income, buying a larger house, or planning a better vacation than the last, our ancestors suffered from the uncertainty of survival in unknown lands, where sources of food and predators were yet to be defined as they moved from one place to another. Theoretically, if the earliest Homo sapiens, whose fossils have been found in Africa, were to be examined while migrating from place to place, it would become obvious that only by lack of resources or increase in danger did groups begin to migrate, seeking higher chances of survival. Taking that into account, one might say the lack of resources and increased danger were of great importance, as they "paradoxically may have facilitated expansions in central and eastern Africa, ultimately triggering the dispersal out of Africa of people" (Rito, et al).

Similarly, in today's world, migrations happen for reasons that are not too different from what made our ancestors pick up their stone tools—assuming they had any—and move in search of safer homes with an abundance of resources. While migrations then and now differ in context and time, they are analogous in their causes, which are mainly rooted in lack of resources or danger. Today, immigration and migration are on the rise, as more and more people are moving from one country to another, from a village to a city, from a city to another city, or even from one neighborhood in a city to another neighborhood in the same city, for better resources or a safer environment that is close to opportunities or community, or both. Similarly, in today's world, when humans immigrate from their home country to one that is new and unfamiliar, they are faced with the discomfort of unfamiliarity and unpredictability, which our brains have evolved to associate with danger and risk. Thus, naturally immigrants and refugees, seeking a

safer environment or more appropriate resources, try to recreate a sense of familiarity by recreating aspects of home in their new countries, whether through a set of cultural behaviors and practices or physical materials, such as garments or decorations, or food, of which this study is concerned.

Although migration movements in the past and the present might differ in the political, technological, and sociological aspects surrounding them, the human experience of uncertainty and unfamiliarity remains grounded in the brain's evolvement to conserve energy and avoid discomfort, which includes discomfort with new environments that require more energy of the brain to navigate. The phenomenon we are witnessing today is that of immigrants and refugees working towards mediating this natural discomfort by making familiar their unfamiliar environments through familiar foods, especially. I experienced this first hand when moving from Damascus to northeast Texas and watching my own family recreate our sense of home by trying out recipes we had never made in Damascus, simply because we never needed to. While I made my first Baklava, my mother made her first Falafel and Kunefe, as these were traditional foods that we always bought, but had to make in our new home in Texas. Being unfamiliar with the spread and availability of e-commerce, we did not even check to see if these could have been shipped online, as such services were simply non-existent in Syria when we had lived there. Later, when moving to Atlanta for college, I found in this bigger city, much larger immigrant communities and a growing population of refugees. While interning for a non-profit called the Refugee Women's Network in Atlanta during my fourth summer in the United States, I began to notice a trend among the clients who visited the office looking for help with a job searches and, more specifically, opportunities to sell cultural foods they prepared and longed to share.

Chapter VI:

Methods

In order to understand the phenomenon of immigrants' use of food as a tool for integration in the Atlanta metro area from both the entrepreneur and customer perspectives, I conducted interviews and published a survey supplemented by my participant observation of different events in the community as well as through my internships with the mayor of Clarkston and the *Refugee Women's Network*.

For the interviews, I contacted immigrant and refugee food business owners and others who are in the process of launching their businesses, as well as American founders of non-profits and organizations that offer immigrants and refugees culinary training and employment opportunities. To find participants for my study, I researched immigrant-owned food businesses in the Atlanta metro area and sent e-mails to the ones I learned to be potentially qualified for the study. However, because I received no responses to my phone calls or written requests, I reached out to my contacts at the *Refugee Women's Network* and was referred by them to the *StartMe: Clarkston Neighborhood Networking Night*, which took place on February 13th, 2019, and where I met three of the interviewees. Using the alumni network of *StartMe: Clarkston*, I connected with two more immigrant food business owners. Finally, I was able to reach the last three of my interviewees by e-mailing founders of various businesses invitations to interview and feature their businesses or organizations on an online platform that celebrates immigrant-owned food businesses called *Recipes of Resilience*, which is further explained in chapter IX.

The interviews varied in duration between 15 – 54 minutes and were semi-structured, generally following a set of questions but diverting when needed to preserve a flow for the conversation. Interviews were conducted with between February 14th and 25th of the year 2019.

Two of the interviewees are refugees from war-torn Syria and Afghanistan, respectively; three are immigrants from Estonia, Lebanon, and Brazil; one is a descendant of immigrants; and the final two are American women who empathized with the refugee crisis and dedicated their careers to founding nonprofits that provide refugees a means of generating income through the culinary industry. To analyze and extract qualitative data from these interviews, I examined each closely to then perform a thematic analysis, highlighting a list of emerging themes, that elucidate truths about the use of food as a platform to create familiarity and a sense of home, to bring people together, and to provide healthy food for the immigrant cooks and their new neighbors. The next chapter explains the insights found within the emerging themes throughout the interviews (for full transcripts of the interviews, see appendix I).

Chapter VII:

Insights from Founders of Immigrant Food Businesses

a. Home Food:

The first of the emerging themes within the interviews is home-cooked food. During my summer internship with the Refugee Women's Network, the clients who demonstrated interest in selling food they prepared at home were women who fed their families the same food they would sell. As I interviewed immigrant restaurant owners and local food entrepreneurs for my study, it was clear that for many of them, they prepared a product or recipe at home due to their inability to access it elsewhere because of its high price or unavailability. By preparing these items in their own home kitchens then sharing them with neighbors and friends, they discovered a spark of interest that their novel recipes inspired among community members, who would ask for the recipe or where to buy it. From there were born the ideas behind many of the food businesses founded and operated by Atlanta's immigrant residents.

When asked during the interview what home food meant to them, each of the participants had a different answer but all aligned with the idea of food that provided comfort and familiarity, as well as food that was clean, healthy, and culturally-relevant. For example, Tina D'Souza, the Estonian baker behind *Estoetno* Bakery, shared with me her frustration with the excessive salt and large proportions found in most restaurants serving standard American diet food, compared to Estonia, where "[she] could get a lot of pre-made healthy meals that are all cooked on the spot."

She continued that "when [she] came [to the United States] and began to read the labels, [she] was just shocked. Some of the stuff that [people] buy here are illegal in Europe because they are considered unhealthy or harmful." However, besides the excessive salt, large

proportions, and what she considers to be unhealthy additives in processed foods, the lack of rye bread was Tina's greatest problem, "because Estonians have lived off this bread for hundreds of years and that has been the main source of nutrition over the years when [they] didn't have refrigeration." Today, Tina mostly eats at home because it is healthier. Through her business, she "[offers] value from the healthier choices [she] provides with no preservatives, which naturally have a long shelf life for those who don't like to go to the grocery store several times a week." She explained: "In Estonia, [she] never made [her] own rye bread. There were 10-15 selections of all types and [she] never felt the need to make [her] own. For the first 10 years, [she] used to bring half a suitcase full of bread from Estonia every time [she] went to visit. [She] would freeze it and portion it out. It was beginning to become tiring and [she] wanted to be able to bring other stuff from Estonia as well, not just bread, so [she] decided to learn how to bake it." From her need for a product was born the idea behind her business that today sells at three different farmers' markets and online to Eastern European expats and Americans who appreciate her healthy desserts and nutritious additive-free bread.

Similarly to Tina's story, Nicola, owner of Nicola's Restaurant, a Lebanese restaurant that has been successfully operating in Atlanta for 36 years, shared with me that "hummus, tabbouleh, and lamb were the first items on the menu, because they are very healthy and made of a combination of many different and healthy ingredients." Nicola first started preparing these foods when he was in college because he couldn't afford to buy them from outside, and because at the time, hummus was not available in every grocery store as it is today. He further stated that during the '70s and '80s, people were beginning to become more conscious about what they were putting into their bodies, which further encouraged him to respond to this consumer demand by promoting and offering his healthy home recipes, that are "made of fresh

ingredients." He believes "cleanliness, of course, matters, and so does maintaining a balance between the authentic flavor of a recipe while playing with it according to his personal preference. Lebanese food has little meat with a lot of vegetables. So, you consume little meat that adds flavor to your variety of vegetables." When I asked Nicola what he eats at home, he told me that he and his wife eat the exact same food served at the restaurant, just like Tina eats the same bread she sells and even takes while travelling, as she struggles to find bread "without any high fructose corn syrup or other additives that I never put in my rye bread."

Sharing home food with the community is also what prompted Shaista to found *Amani Catering company*, an Afghani catering company in development at the time of this study. Shaista, an Afghani refugee who arrived in Atlanta with her family two years prior to our interview, grew up in what she called a joint family, a community of approximately thirty people—parents, siblings, children and grandchildren, all living in the same large household. She explained that cooking for thirty people was the norm of everyday life, but that "[they] had everything disciplined, taking turns for cooking lunch and dinner. Once or twice a week, [they] had guests, like 60 or 80 guests at once." When I asked about her favorite item on the menu of *Amani Catering Company*, she told me she loved "Kabuli Palaw, which is Afghani rice with raisins and carrots. [She] loves it especially with lamb but you can prepare it with anything!" She further explained: "In the village side, the government is not so established so when people have problems, they come to the leader to solve them. [Her family] would serve this kind of rice for those kinds of gatherings but also for birthday parties or engagement parties. There were no wedding halls in the places [they] were living in so [they] were so dependent on [themselves]. Everybody was working. [She] was used to cooking for a large number of people." When she moved to America she felt overwhelmed with the hospitality of the Oakhurst Baptist Church

community that had welcomed her family from the airport and had prepared their home with all they would need. She returned their hospitality by cooking for them every weekend. She shared that Afghanis are very welcoming of guests, which "are considered friends of God, so everyone tries to make their guests very happy by preparing a feast of five or six dishes. This tradition makes women in Afghanistan used to cooking for large numbers of people." Shaista, who only founded the business after sharing her home recipes with her community members in gratitude for their hospitality, also believes that "Afghani food is very healthy. And because Americans mostly don't cook at home, the food [she prepares] is a hundred times healthier than any fast food. It is very tasty, healthy, and similar to Indian and Mediterranean food with options for the elders, the kids, the gluten free or the vegetarians. Afghani food can be accommodating for many preferences."

Another refugee family, with a story similar to Shaista's, is that of Malik Alarmash and his mother, who founded Suryana Cuisine months after their arrival from Syria to the United States in 2016. In Malik's words, after moving to Atlanta, he "started working hard to achieve [his] dreams since [he] buried them in Syria after being forced to leave the country." I met Majida, Malik's mother, and Malik only four months after they had arrived in the United States at the Atlanta Underground Market, where they had set up a table selling Syrian food. I could tell they were Syrian by how they looked so I immediately approached them and greeted them in Arabic. As would any Syrian mother, Majida took me in with a hug and would not let me or my friends go without trying her delicious falafel, hummus, mixed vegetables, and baklava of course, for free. Majida reminded me of my mother and I felt an instant connection to her, even though we would have never met had we stayed in Syria, as Majida lived in a predominately Muslim community while I lived in a predominantly Christian community. After exchanging

hugs and reminiscing about the city we had once called home, I left, but kept the family in mind and made sure to involve them with students on my Emory University's campus through the programming of a student organization in which I was involved. Today, it brings my heart such joy to see their family business having evolved into a popular Syrian catering business that will soon be expanding to a food truck. Majida's strength and wit brought people together over her delicious food. It also provided her son the opportunity to start a business and become a CEO while learning a new system in a new country. She became a strong provider for her family through her persistence and flavorful recipes.

When asking Malek what home food meant to him, he told me that "home food means everything about Syria. It means gathering with the family and friends for a picnic on a Friday. Sharing food means generosity, as when you share more food, you are considered more generous. [He] started a food catering business because for [him], smelling the spices from the food [his family] makes in the U.S reminds [him] of the smells from the street vendors in Damascus streets and give [them] the feeling of Home." This family and that of Shaista are only two examples of how refugees contribute to the economy and uplift their people, providing employment opportunities and paying back the welcoming of their new community members with delicious feasts of gratitude and new recipes.

While Tina, Nicola, and Shaista founded their businesses upon the idea of feeding their family recipes to more than their just nuclear families but further sharing their traditional family recipes with the community, Nicole and Musa, founders of Bread and Butter Farms, transitioned from full time jobs to full-time organic farming in order to provide healthy and fresh produce to community members beyond their own family. Musa, who grew up on a farm when he was young, longed for the ability to access fresh and organic produce. He and Nicole were first

growing herbs in the closet of their apartment, which they later expanded to what is now Bread and Butter Farms: an urban farm that provides locally-grown, pesticide-free, and organic produce, as well as bread and butter to members of the community. Regarding the health aspect of their value proposition as a business, Musa shared: “People love knowing what is in their food. People are becoming more and more aware of their own health. People are becoming more aware that what you eat directly affects your health. The more we learn, the more our customers learn. We are now getting more word of mouth and shares on Facebook. People now show up and tell us that they've heard about us from someone they know. In the beginning, many people were skeptical about our growing practices since we don't use any chemicals or pesticides. They're always intrigued about how we are able to grow the way we do.”

Finally, Wellyngthon and Jackie, founders of *Bueno Barbecue*, a Brazilian barbecue catering service that is currently being developed, both explained how their experiences of communal dining with their families while growing up inspired their desire to host parties for their friends, which later brought about the idea for taking their Brazilian barbecue to more members of the community through a registered business. Jackie shared that “no matter how busy the day was, dinner time was a sacred time for the family. [They] would have a hot dinner on the table every night. So, for [her], that is what [she knows]. [She believes] in the importance of food in bringing people together and making memories over food, whether it is just a dinner or a holiday. Mealtime was always an important part in [her] family life.” Likewise, Wellyngthon explained that making time to eat together was very important for his family, who would “always [cook] together”, which he believes “made their relationships stronger.” He remembered that “at [his] home in Brazil, [his] dad usually [prepared] the barbecue, but because he worked at night, [he] decided to prepare it for him on his behalf, so by the time he [would be] home, all would be

done." Wellyngthon remembers that time as "when everyone began to tell [him] that [he] could do it" in reference to a flavorful and delicious barbecue. He told me that he was fifteen at the time. As he grew older, so did his love for feeding others, so much so that "on the weekends, [he] would invite friends to come to [his] house for barbecues. As soon as they would eat, they would want to come back for more and would tell [him that he needs] to do this for other people. Everyone who has tried [his] Brazilian-flavored meat loved it, so people began to recommend [his] barbecue to their friends. People started to come to [his] house and try this barbecue. From there, [he] got the idea to turn [his passion] into a business and make money from it." Wellyngthon and Jackie found the joy of feeding family and friends a value they wanted to provide to the community through their catering service. Unlike Shaista, whose company sells the food already made, Jackie and Wellyngthon are at the center of their business as servers, beyond cooks.

As seen with Tina, Nicola, Shaista, Nicole Musa, Jackie and Wellyngthon, their food businesses provide more than family recipes that neutralize the anxieties of arriving in a new environment with a sort of familiarity. Their established or currently-growing businesses are built upon the desire to respond to the community's hospitality and provide a healthy alternative for Americans, countering the fast food culture that they lacked in their respective home countries of origin. To these entrepreneurs, home is where home food is prepared and enjoyed, whether that be in their countries of origin or the United States: their new home country.

b. Responding to Consumer Demand:

Simultaneous to the re-creation of home in a new environment, the interviewed entrepreneurs discussed the inception of their businesses upon their identification of vacuums in the market for certain products or cuisines that they identified with, and for which they later found consumer demand. Tina, the Estonian baker, first founded her business based on her personal struggle to find the wheat-free rye sourdough that she used to bring in suitcases from Estonia before starting to make it herself. When she found "few bakers who are producing this type of bread in the Atlanta area, [...] and very few who ship this type of bread, [she] saw from a business perspective an opportunity for this product that also interests [her]." While the rye sourdough is her specialty product, Tina expanded her selection of offerings, as "[she] did not want to rely on only one product for [her] business, because if the sourcing of its main ingredient [went] wrong, the business [would not] stand still, and that is why [she] began to add more products such as the baked goods. [Her] goal is not to make wedding cakes but to make desserts from real ingredients that [customers] can taste and that are not too sweet that the sugar masks all the other flavors." Tina shared that she now "[develops] products and [observes] how customers react to it, how they eat it, and with what." By doing so, she ensures she is adding value according to customers' needs, which she describes as "surprising at times." She explained how it caught her by surprise when she was asked if her bread was vegan. She explained: "Bread is always vegan. Because I'm not vegan, I never paid attention to that. But now, I realize the breads sold often have high fructose corn syrup and animal products, which I never grew up with. I only found this out when I was travelling one time and found only one type of bread that did not have high fructose corn syrup. Since then, I travel with my bread. I always bake bread to travel with me because it keeps for a week, so we are covered this way." As the researcher, who can

empathize with the consumer's perspective in this situation, learning that Tina travels with her bread adds to the trustworthiness of her products, which is indicated by her personal dedication to it.

Like Tina, who feeds her family her rye bread, Nicola, the Lebanese owner of *Nicola's Restaurant*, also shared that he prepares at home the same food that is served at the restaurant, when he does not dine at the restaurant with his wife. He, too, shared how he first founded his restaurant based on his inability to find Lebanese food. He "looked around and there were no Lebanese restaurants, and everybody at that time in the 70s and 80s, especially during the 80s, was starting to look for healthy meals." He continued: "I realized that our Lebanese food is very healthy, so of course, I decided to introduce it to Atlanta. I am very close to a Jewish community that appreciates the hummus and baba ghanoush and other healthy Mediterranean recipes. There were also a lot of Lebanese families that were connected to American families, so between all of these small communities, I established a place for 36 years." From Nicola's insights, it is understood that despite serving Lebanese food specifically, it still attracts different communities that return to his restaurant for delicious and healthy food, for food without a nationality or political agenda.

While Tina offers ready-made products, and Nicola, a dining experience, Musa and Nicole are a couple that has defied all odds to found a business that stands as a small social justice movement. Their urban farm *Bread and Butter Farms* offers a delivery system of organically-grown produce with no pest control to people with little to no access to it, including their own family. According to Musa, their business "is filling a void in accessibility and bridging a gap that not a lot of people are willing to bridge." Having served on the executive board of the Georgia Farmers Market Association and the executive board of the USDA's Farm

Service Agency, Musa and Nicole "have access to information, which [they] are able to utilize to [their] benefit", and which they disseminate "to whatever groups [they] are in." During our interview, Musa also shared that "[they] accept EBT and SNAP, which most other farmers are not equipped to do, but that they are trying." When I asked what inspired their business name, as it does not imply organic and fresh produce, Musa explained: "We make our own infused oils, skin products, and things like that. It wasn't anything new when we started farming, but one thing we ran into when we got started is having an early start on the season. When we went to farmers' markets to sell for the first time, we didn't have a lot of produce because the market season had started so early, earlier than our harvesting season. To fill that gap, we started bringing bread and butter. We got approved by the department of agriculture to make the butter, bread, and oils. When we started selling these, people loved them, so we decided to keep it going considering there was such a high consumer demand." When I met the couple in person at the *StartMe: Clarkston Neighborhood Networking night*, they shared with the audience that community members were buying more bread and butter than fresh produce, something they were not expecting when they began to sell, but a potential indication of the general dietary preferences favoring bread and butter over the organically and locally grown produce. Naturally, the couple has continued to produce what ensured customers' return, such as the blueberry maple butter, while continuing to offer their CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) share with the support of other local organizations.

Therefore, as seen with the three different kinds of businesses by Tina, Nicola, and Musa, consumer demand was and remains central for product development to attract and retain customers. While the entrepreneurs that this study focuses on are ones whose businesses serve them financially and personally through the cultural and personal associations that tie them to

their roots, their insights also highlight their desire to respond to the community's needs by filling gaps in the market, providing healthy alternatives, and maintaining flexibility to respond to consumer feedback and behavioral patterns.

c. A Crumbly Path:

If starting a business were easy, more would commit to doing so? While the set of obstacles facing entrepreneurs differs based on their support network, their location, their access to seed funds, and more, the set of obstacles facing immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs especially, can extend the list to include language barriers, unfamiliarity with new legal and economic systems, lack of funds or credit to receive loans, and cultural differences that could hinder communication with customers and marketing messages. However, despite the numerous difficulties facing immigrant entrepreneurs, starting their own businesses is often easier than finding a job that matches their qualifications and skills without mastering the language. That is why food businesses are most commonly pursued by immigrant entrepreneurs, as the aforementioned obstacles are compensated for by the taste of the food they offer, which requires no translation. That is why my mother was tempted to discard her medical license and 25 years of experience as a pediatrician in Syria to start a catering business. That is also why 69% of restaurants in New York City are founded by first or second-generation immigrants according to Kerry, the founder of Emma's Torch in Brooklyn, NY, a non-profit that provides a year-long apprenticeship program for refugees to become equipped and competitive for opportunities in the culinary industry.

Before these businesses reach the peak of success, the entrepreneurs typically spend at least two years preparing to launch, test products, and locate and secure a sales channel. Before Nicole and Musa were able to commit to farming full time, they started growing plants in the

closet of their apartment, where "[they] would grow greens and herbs. Then, [they] moved to [their] new small home and started growing about 10 acres in [their] backyard, which is actually where [they] grow right now. The idea was simply to just grow whatever [they] wanted to grow, however [they] wanted to grow it to eat what [they] needed to eat." Nicole and Musa had the educational background and passion for farming that helped them transition into farming full time. Musa graduated with a bachelor's in Animal and Poultry Science and a graduate degree in Cancer Biology, but growing up on a farm himself, he was familiar with the process and longed to grow his own produce. He shared during our interview that "[they] were beginning to sell at farmers' markets but still had [their] full time jobs. Last year, [they] stopped working [other jobs] to farm full time and that was really nerve-racking, because [they] had four kids and were moving to a place that didn't have a lot of the things that [they needed]. [They] didn't have running water or electricity, so we hooked up solar panels and had a well dug up." In order to avoid mortgages and loan payments, Nicole and Musa went off the grid while transitioning to a new property, where they lived and farmed full-time. "[They] bought an old car to reduce [their] expenses and invest those funds into the farm or whatever else [they] wanted to do at the time. [They] wanted to be able to fund the business [themselves], making sure [they] didn't have any overhead, even when it comes to tractors or anything like that. [They] decided to let the farm pay for these things. For people that are getting started, [they] would advise everyone to avoid loans, [and to start] extremely low if [they] can." While the beginning was difficult, their business continues to grow as they continue to pop-up at farmers' markets, making organic and local produce accessible and available to their family first, their community members, and especially people of disadvantaged backgrounds.

None of the entrepreneurs I interviewed shied away from sharing the challenges and setbacks that have slowed their progress or which they are currently facing while growing their businesses. A couple of them discussed having trouble in the beginning finding a farmers' market, which Tina considers her "testing lab for consumer behavior", as she finds it "risky to jump start something without knowing how people are going to respond to it." Jackie and Wellyngthon found it most difficult navigating the legal aspects of obtaining licenses and certifications to legalize their business. Founding a business requires a number of certifications and licenses that differ depending on the type of business, which often times makes the process of legalizing food businesses difficult for entrepreneurs to navigate, especially with language barriers sometimes further complicating these challenges. However, the two most commonly shared challenges, as suggested by the interviews and my participant observation, are accessing an affordable commercial shared kitchen space and the need for more marketing and promotion of small-scale food businesses to the broader Atlanta community.

When first attempting to find refugee or first and second-generation restaurant owners and food entrepreneurs to interview, I was approaching them by visiting actual restaurants on Buford Highway, for example, and introducing myself as a student conducting my research on immigrant food businesses. Unfortunately, none of the eight restaurants I visited and the other twelve I sent emails and messages to responded or were willing to answer my questions. I realized there was a problem. I thought about creating an incentive in which they could they find value. As a consumer myself, who has not heard of most of the businesses with which I was interacting, I found business promotion through social media as a service I could offer for free and that could incentivize my perspective research participants. I tried this alternative approach by beginning to call restaurants to offer free marketing on a website that will promote immigrant

food entrepreneurs. Suddenly, the set of entrepreneurs I contacted with my new approach were willing and eager to participate, giving me up to an hour of their time, answering questions and sharing old menus and copies of ServSafe certifications. The change in reaction to my different approach indicates the need for more promotion to help small businesses and local entrepreneurs attract consumers, including myself, who frequent grocery stores with no awareness of their neighborhood farms or local home bakers.

Besides reaching a larger customer base, finding a kitchen was the second most commonly expressed concern among the entrepreneurs and one that also came to my attention while interning for the Economic Empowerment program of the *Refugee Women's Network*. Tina, who currently bakes from home through a Food Cottage License, voiced her interest in expanding her production by utilizing a commercial kitchen with commercial ovens. Despite "a couple of negotiations with commercial shared kitchens, [she still found them to be] too expensive to the point [she] would not be profitable, as five hours would cost [her] about $100." Expressing her interest in mass producing her bread, but struggling to fund a shared kitchen rental, she suggested the need for more affordable alternatives that would support her business model and assist her growth. On the other hand, Shaista, the Afghani cook behind *Amani Catering Company*, shared her concern with not only the pricing of the kitchen but the proximity of it to her future employees: Afghani refugee women living in the Clarkston and Stone Mountain areas. Shaista said that "there are some kitchens, which are really out of [her] budget and there are some that are located very far away, that all of the women, who would work with [her], cannot drive that long." She continued that "[she was] just looking for a space to rent and get by, at least, in the beginning." Locating and securing an appropriate space to produce from is a real issue for these entrepreneurs, who are working towards expanding their product lines,

growing their businesses, and providing employment opportunities in the process of doing so. Therefore, it is vital for local institutions and organizations, even corporations and federal programs, with the capacity and resources, to get involved and allow these entrepreneurs to continue to plant seeds of hope and enrich the community, as the following chapter further explains.

d. More than Fuel, Freedom:

Serving the community through food is a vital aspect of immigrant food businesses. Although community enrichment and entertainment is typically not the leading purpose behind the founding of these businesses, many of them turn into central platforms for community engagement, where specific ethnic groups can find belonging through the literal and figurative sense of home at their respective cultural hubs, which encompass religious centers, language schools, beauty shops, and of course, most predominantly, marketplaces and restaurants. However, these spaces are not exclusive to those that identify with their ethnic representation but are often visited by members of the broader Atlanta community, thus providing unique cultural experiences and a window into the world outside Atlanta. Many of these cultural hubs can be found scattered in the Atlanta metro area, from Chinatown on Buford Highway to Patel Brothers in Decatur, the Ethiopian Village on Cheshire Bridge road, and more in Clarkston, GA, where most immigrants and refugees are resettled due to the cluster of resettlement agencies in the area. Throughout my research, most of the entrepreneurs I interviewed first pointed to a value other than the food that their business offered, when asked what the world would lose if their businesses were gone. The three most important themes that emerged in response to this question were a means of cultural enrichment and entertainment, fulfillment of an urgent need, and significant employment opportunities for those who would otherwise struggle to find any.

In terms of entertainment, if you have been to Nicola's Restaurant on a Friday or a Saturday evening, you will experience first-hand an immersive cultural experience followed by an inclusive form of entertainment. These two nights of the week starting at 8 pm, belly dancers showcase their moves to enchanting music while diners enjoy a delicious Lebanese meal, but the owner, Nicola, never leaves his audience of customers unengaged. He invites all of the customers to join him on the dance floor in the middle of the restaurant, offering belly dancing skirts to those who would like, and leading the dance scene with his quirky moves that are simple enough to be replicated by anybody of any age, to his diverse playlist of modern hip hop, Bollywood, Latin, and of course, some Arabic songs. Having experienced Nicola's Restaurant as far more than a dining experience, I personally attest to it serving as an immersive opportunity to engage with other diners and the owner, who would belly dance to the ground, balancing a wine or juice bottle on top of his head as he slowly kneels to the beat of the music, offering the birthday customer a glass to pour from that bottle, as well as a free tray of baklava and Lebanese Maamoul cookies. When asked about the start of this birthday tradition and weekend dance scene, Nicola shared with me that one time, some customers of Lebanese descent asked while dining at his restaurant if he could play them music for Dabkeh, which is a native folk dance practiced by people of Levantine countries. He played the music and began dancing, joined by his niece, in the middle of the restaurant. Because people responded favorably and belly dancers were asking for job opportunities, the dance became a tradition and Nicola continues to lead it until this day.

Similar to Nicola, who is the spirit and name behind his restaurant, Wellyngthon and Jackie shared their desire to contribute to the entertainment aspect of each event they bring their Brazilian catering service to. According to Wellyngthon, "[their] business has helped [them]

make a lot of friends, and for anybody new to town who comes to [their] events, they have a good time laughing and eating delicious food, and leave having made friends." Jackie, too, emphasized the importance of the live entertainment aspect of their business that nourishes them personally and others. She shared how "[they] like to be a part of the party, and how [their] idea was to provide a live cooking element, which is an exciting part of [events]. When [she hosts] dinners at [her] house, [she] always [tries] to make [them] interactive, whether by engaging guests in making fondue, grilling outside, or making personal pizzas. For [their] Brazilian steak business, [they] want to offer a sort of entertainment [through] the experience of live cooking and eating straight from the grill." She continued: "We currently are the entertainment for our friend group and we really cherish the good moments with family and friends. But we also understand that it is not natural for everyone to [create] that, so we want to give them the opportunity to host fun parties without having to stress about the food preparation and entertainment." Besides the warmth of a home-cooked meal, these entrepreneurs are offering the value of live entertainment, which is not typically associated with dining but serves as a point of attraction that adds to the value proposition of their business and their personal wellbeing by means of self-expression.

While entertainment adds to the value proposition of Nicola's and Wellyngthon and Jackie's businesses, education and social equality are what drives Musa and Nicole, informing the success of their urban farm: *Bread and Butter Farms*. Musa is "very content with the fact that [they] are able to grow and feed [themselves] but being able to support the community is like icing on the cake." Besides growing produce, "education is a whole other aspect, as [they] want to ensure kids understand how to grow, what to grow and when to grow it, how to harvest and how to maintain it. [They] also want to incorporate technology, through programing and coding."

Later, when I asked Musa what coding had to do with farming, he told me that he "picked up coding on [his] own, [as] when [they] decided to pursue farming full time, [they] wanted to have something that [they] could fall back on, so [Musa] kept it simple and began learning JavaScript, but to be competitive in the market, [he] started learning Engler and [other coding languages]." Musa and his wife, Nicole, "want to have a diverse array of programs to teach people how to farm, about technology, and how to fill general engineering practices on the farm [...] like electrical and plumbing work." This couple's success did not come easily. However, as when they first quit their jobs and moved on the farm, they were living off the grid, drinking water from their own well, and not paying for electricity or water bills but only cellphones and house taxes. They were willing to sacrifice everything to launch their farm, and "told each other, if anything goes wrong with the business, [they would] just go and work at McDonalds to pay it off." In retrospect, Musa shared that "It was a really good experience because [they] learned how to do things that [they] didn't know how to do."

Nicole and Musa are descendants of immigrants, who had full time jobs and were competitive in the job market, but longed to be self-employed, to add real value to their community, and to solve a problem that few were willing to solve. However, for first generation immigrants, the job market is a much more difficult battle field to enter. Especially for first generation immigrant women, who struggle with language barriers or cultural and religious beliefs that prevents them from working alongside men, finding appropriate job opportunities is far more challenging. That is why Leah, founder of *Just Bakery* in Atlanta, GA, and Kerry, founder of *Emma's Torch* in Brooklyn, NY, created their non-profits with the goal of providing culinary training and employment opportunities for refugees and immigrants, who would otherwise struggle to find any. When asked why food service, in particular, was the idea behind

their ventures, Leah explained that "food is a language everybody speaks, [that] everybody eats, [and eating] is a sustaining act [...] that connects us because it speaks to everyone." She added that "[eating] is a way of touching [one's] identity and sharing it with the world because we eat with our families according to our cultures." Leah's venture, *Just Bakery*, is a non-profit that offers refugees job training, a professional certification, and a living wage. Similarly, Kerry's *Emma's Torch*, is a non-profit restaurant that provides job training, ESL classes, and interview preparation for refugees about to enter the culinary industry. For Kerry, "there's something about food that makes it a way for people to connect that really transcends language barriers and it is the type of thing that can be mentally comforting." As a self-proclaimed history nerd and innovative activist, she thought "[she] could talk to anyone forever about how important it is to welcome refugees and make them a part of our community and how they are such a big asset, but [that it would be] so much easier if [she did] that [by] putting food in front of them." Kerry's "memories of [the] cooking of her grandmother in Washington D.C. are not that different from one of [her] students' memories cooking with their grandmother in Afghanistan, [which] helps begin to see each other as human beings to overcome the dangerous rhetoric that we are hearing these days." Kerry concluded by telling me that "there is just as well documented history of any wave of migration that has come to the United States and was able to integrate through food" as there is now. So just as migrants and refugees were able to survive and integrate in the past, so can we help our new community members today by investing in their culinary potentials, whether through non-profit, corporate, or federal programming.

Kerry and Emma are both American-born women, who empathized with the recent migrant and refugee crisis, thus deciding to launch their ventures as their form of intervening. Shaista, on the other hand, was born in Afghanistan, and is a refugee herself, yet her desire to

launch her business to sustain herself financially and employ other Afghani women, is noble but nothing new to the pattern of immigrant entrepreneurs, employing other immigrants and members of the community, as done by the Eritrean-born brother and sister and founders of Feedel Bistro and other ventures in the Atlanta area. Shaista moved to the United States about two years ago and was shocked by the kindness with which she was received. She shared that community members from Oakhurst Baptist Church received her family at the airport and took them to their new home, which they had prepared with everything her family would need. She did not know how else to pay them back except through cooking, which she had mastered, growing up and living in a big family household. So, "every weekend, [she] would invite a group of people and they would come and eat at [her] house."

One of the church community members who welcomed Shaista and her family was Leah, who later went on to found *Just Bakery*. Shaista shared with me how much "Leah loved the food and [would ask Shaista to cater] dinners for the non-profit *Just Bakery* or for birthday parties." She continued that "one time, there were only few people attending and [Leah] wanted [her] to make about eight types of food, [which Shaista found] difficult to make that much for a small number of people, so [Leah] told me to pack the rest in meals and she would let her neighbors know and ask if they would buy." That is how Shaista began to prepare food every Friday according to friends' orders, which she received through her email. However, when she "realized that [she] had to get licenses and certifications to legally sell [her] food, [she] joined *StartMe*, [which is an accelerator program for local entrepreneurs] and [is] trying to make everything official and get a kitchen space." Shaista mentioned that her family was one of the first Afghani families that settled in Atlanta. When later joined by other families, she began to help them, as she had been helped, by baby-sitting for them as they learned how to drive and helping file

applications or understand the new American healthcare system. However, her most important way of helping is by creating a means of employment through her catering company in the making. In that regard, Shaista shared that "by giving other Afghani women the opportunity to work and earn money, [she] would be empowering them and [helping them build] confidence that they do not need anyone all the time." She was inspired by "one of [her] friends [who] has a bad disability condition that she lost sight in one of her eyes, [which made Shaista think that if she] can do anything to make [women] more confident about themselves, that will be the greatest thing [she] can do in [her] life." Growing up in Afghanistan as the only child to a widowed mother, Shaista had heard from the time she was five or six how her family had wished her mother had given birth to a boy instead of a girl. This made Shaista wonder why women were so looked down upon in her community. First, she thought it was women's lack of education, so she decided to pursue higher education. Yet although she was a top student, her grandfather did not allow her to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor because the Taliban came to her hometown when she was in 12th grade. Later, when she resettled in the United States, she started working and earning her own money. She realized that "in Afghanistan the reason men are so respected is because they work and earn money to provide for their families. But for the women, the reason [they] are not respected is [their lack of independence and] always [needing] someone to support [them]." Through her business, Shaista is changing the narrative for her community members and offering them a platform to be self-sustainable.

Concluding every interview with the question of what the world would lose if their venture were to disappear tomorrow, the answers I heard were almost always regarding a value other than food. Tina, the Estonian baker, shared that her business brings her "pride and happiness, [and that] the name *Estoetno* adds to the adventurous experience of trying [her] new

products, [creating] curiosity and [serving] as a good conversation starter." Musa of *Bread and Butter Farms*, shared that "besides profit, [their] farm and business bring [them] freedom." He added that "being able to go outside and grab eggs or to go outside and make a living for oneself is one of the things that [his wife and himself] try to instill in [their] kids, that they can go out, provide for themselves with their own hands and minds, by just planting and knowing how to plant and build, going out and helping the community. That's freedom." Similarly, Nicola of Nicola's Restaurant shared that if his restaurant was gone tomorrow, "Atlanta would lose a loving place that cares for its patrons and a healthy meal that is prepared with care, love, and sensibility." He added that "[he has] had the most beautiful 35 years in life running this restaurant, [and that a business will never fail as long as it sells] a good quality product with a moderate price, and serve with care, a smile, and love." Therefore, the legacy of these businesses goes beyond their menus and extends to their customers' hearts and the personal satisfaction of the owners as well.

e. Hope:

Especially in today's world, where crime is facilitated by the dehumanization of others, and where division and hatred are drawing an othering and dehumanizing narrative against certain groups for reasons such as race and ethnicity or religion, which humans are born into and rarely opt to change, food can play a vital role in humanizing those who are othered, bringing together people through their shared hunger and satiation. Especially in today's world, where the news is bombarding us with stories on shootings, massacres, and hate crimes around the world, hope is needed. This hope is present, alive, and actionable, as embodied by these founders.

Leah, for example, shared the hope provided by *Just Bakery*'s unique programming, as "one creative solution to the lack of access to continuing education and professional

credentialing." Leah emphasized that by following this goal, "[they] cross some boundaries purposefully to try to create a more diverse community that is more reflective of the world and how the world should and could be." On the other hand, Leah's friend, Shaista, named her business *Amana Catering Company* because "the word Amani means hope, [and she thinks] this business will bring hope to all the Afghani ladies, [who] apply for jobs, including jobs at Walmart or cleaning jobs, and are not accepted, because they don't know enough English." She added that she will persist in launching her business successfully regardless of the obstacles, because "if [her] business does not work, [she does not] want the women to think that hard work does not pay off just because [she herself] worked very hard and didn't reach the goal."

Finally, Kerry, founder of Emma's Torch, concluded our interview stating that if Emma's Torch was gone tomorrow, the world would lose "a spark of hope", as this non-profit restaurant operates with the vision that "the way you can change hearts and minds is one dish at a time." Inspired by the torch of hope sparked by Emma Lazarus, about whom Kerry grew up learning, Kerry wanted to "[ensure] that Emma's Torch wasn't isolated but a part of the aspirations of this country, of welcoming a stranger." So, Kerry went on to found Emma's Torch "to empower people whose choices have been taken from them." While Kerry does not believe Emma's Torch disappearing would destroy anything, she does believe that it is "a tiny spark of light" and that "if we lose one spark of light, we lose one point of optimism." Therefore, hope is a strong asset provided by these entrepreneurs and a value added to the many other aspects of their businesses including heart-felt, healthy, and home-like meals.

Chapter VIII:

Non-Immigrant Perspective on Immigrant Food

The one-on-one interviews conducted for this study provided the perspective of immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs on the importance of their businesses for their personal sustenance as well as that of their communities. In addition, to complement this, I developed an anonymous survey published for the local community to reveal the perspective of consumers within the Atlanta metro area and their interaction with immigrant food, as well as their general food consumption behavior. All survey respondents were required to be 18 years or older and self-considered as residents of the Atlanta metro area. For full list of the survey questions, see appendix II.

According to the survey's first question, participants associated home food with the following key terms: familiarity, safety, love, comfort, nostalgia, cleanliness, healthy/nutritious food, sense of belonging, family members, and geographic belonging. One respondent gave the definition of home food as "food made with the intention not to feed others, but to welcome others home, to show others care, appreciation, and most of all, love." This definition and the other keywords found in the answers demonstrate that home food can simulate the experience of being at home, that is, being present within safety, comfort, familiarity, in which humans find safety, and experiencing a sense of belonging. Immigrant food entrepreneurs prepare home-food not only for the maintenance of their ties to their previous homes, but also for their fellow immigrants or even nonimmigrants to experience that sense of familiarity through a taste, which is associated with home. This is not to say a Lebanese restaurant will provide food that is only relevant and desired by Lebanese immigrants, but by anyone who would identify Lebanese food as familiar food and home food, whether that be a college student having grown up in a

household with Lebanese food, or artists who studied abroad in Lebanon and longs for their days there, or more.

The survey also asked about the participants' relations to ethnic cuisine and their eating habits around ethnic cuisine and in general. The answer choices included 12 different types of cuisines that the respondents listed as their favorites with Italian, Indian, and Mexican cuisines scoring the highest respectively. In order to comply with the anonymity of the study, the questions asked were designed to avoid obtaining personal information, which has made it difficult to analyze the relevance of information regarding respondents' favorite cuisines and their consumption behavior around these cuisines. Therefore, in a future study, it would be helpful to add a question about the respondents' personal ethnicity to observe whether there exists a pattern that ties one's own ethnicity with their favorite ethnic food.

To understand how people access their meals and what the percentage of their meals includes meals from their favorite ethnic cuisines, a question asked about the source of participants' meals. The participants had a selection of options to choose from and more than one option could be selected, so 83.33% selected that they cook and 63.33% buy food from outside, while 36.67% equally buy and cook, 30% have a meal plan, and 13.33% have meals prepared by others in the family. These participants were selecting more than one option at a time. However, the largest majority, cook and purchase their meals from restaurants, confirms the presence of a market for food prepared outside the home.

The next question specifically asked about how and how often participants ate their favorite ethnic cuisine. 47.22% accessed their favorite ethnic cuisine(s) regularly (weekly basis), 41.67% often (monthly basis), and only 8.33% rarely (yearly basis). In terms of how these meals were accessed, 66.67% prepare these meals themselves, 52.78% get them from a local restaurant,

41.67% have a family member/friend/partner prepare the meal for them, 19.44% order their meals online, and 8.33% get these meals when visiting home or by driving to another town/city.

In this study, participants were given the chance to select more than one option so the same 52.78% that get their meals from outside could have also selected the option of preparing these meals themselves as well as buying them from a local restaurant or having a friend prepare them. Therefore, it would be helpful to test in a future study whether there is a correlation between the different ways of accessing ethnic cuisine, whether those who prepare their food at home tend to only do that; whether those who eat at a local restaurant mostly do; whether those who access biryani at a local restaurant never cook it at home; or whether they mostly buy biryani from outside and occasionally cook it at home. There are many scenarios that could elicit how consumers access their favorite ethnic cuisine, but the importance of the results lies in the fact that a majority of consumers are accessing their ethnic cuisines regularly or often and more than half are accessing these meals at a local restaurant. This, if scaled to the larger Atlanta metro area, affirms the importance of supporting local restaurants, especially ones providing ethnic food that is culturally-relevant to community members.

In relation to food and community building, the survey tested whether participants agreed or disagreed with a list of statements about the role food plays in creating cohesion within communities. 97.14% agreed that food can bring people together, while 94.29% agreed that food can serve as a platform to craft connections, and 94.29% agreed that ethnic food is important in celebrating diversity and preserving culture. Another survey question showed that 97.30% participants like to try new food. This suggests the inclination of consumers towards new foods, especially ethnic foods that they stated through the survey to believe are important for preserving culture and building community. Only 11.34% of respondents believed Atlanta has enough

ethnic food restaurants, while 82.86% agreed that Atlanta has many ethnic food restaurants, but 60% agreed that Atlanta would blossom with more ethnic food restaurants, and 60% agreed that Atlanta needs more immigrant-owned restaurants. If the survey was scaled up to reach a larger response rate, these survey results could potentially provide evidence for the existing demand for ethnic food and home-food, which is typically served by immigrant-owned restaurants.

In conclusion, the survey for Atlanta suggests an existing demand for home-cooked meals and for ethnic meals. The trends in consumer behavior demonstrated show a market opportunity for more ethnic food restaurants and for more immigrant-owned food businesses. However, the results were not confined to consumer behavior and business opportunities, but also demonstrated consumers' willingness to try new foods and their belief in crafting connections and bridging gaps between communities through the medium of food. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to consider how local governments, non-profits, and corporations can support the local entrepreneurs that are responding to consumer demands through the home-cooked, ethnic meals provided by their restaurants, as seen in the examples provided by the ethnographic analysis of the interviews.

Chapter IX:

Limitations and Future Studies

While the ethnographic component of this research study provided qualitative data regarding immigrants' use of food as a platform to serve and connect with their new communities in the Atlanta metro area while earning a living, the survey results also provided quantitative data regarding market demand and consumption patterns of ethnic cuisine. Both the interviews and survey resulted in data regarding residents' views of immigrant-owned restaurants and the role of food in community building.

To bolster the findings in this study and further understand their context, it would be helpful to replicate the survey and obtain responses from a more representative sample of the Atlanta metro area population. There definitely exists the possibility of response bias considering the population that would have accessed the platforms and social media pages on which this survey was published. Therefore, it would benefit the applicability of the results to ensure accessing a diverse pool of participants and a larger pool of participants than the 68 individuals who took the survey and 37 who opted to answer every single question.

Furthermore, it could be impactful to also quantify consumption and spending behavior on food consumed or bought at a restaurant or local business in order to estimate the economic potential of currently-operating immigrant-owned food businesses, as well as that of growing and developing businesses. This could also be done through focus groups with residents of the Atlanta metro area to learn how much people are willing to pay for what products and services, as well what consumption preferences truly exist versus those collected on survey responses.

Chapter X:

Potential Answers

This section of the study expands on an actionable and solution-oriented intervention and recommended business proposal, in response to the research findings from the interviews and survey results. While these are not the end-all, be-all solutions for the migrant and refugee crisis, they serve as initiatives that can cultivate the culinary potential of resettled refugees in the community and facilitate their integration by investing in their culinary skills and supporting their entrepreneurial ventures.

a. Intervention: Recipes of Resilience

While conducting research for my study, I discovered local entrepreneurs whose businesses I would never have found. Upon further observation, investigation, and conversation with these local business owners, who operated small scale businesses and were either first- or second-generation immigrants, I learned that one of the two biggest obstacles they were facing involves marketing strategies to promote their ventures. Often times, these local entrepreneurs were investing their funds and energy into growing their businesses through product development and operational costs and little was left for marketing and promotion to generate more sales. Furthermore, most of these business owners, especially at the beginning of their business journeys, were operating through small teams of 1-2 staff members (and, later, more as in the case of older restaurants like Nicola's Restaurant). Therefore, it is to nobody's surprise that their marketing efforts could not compete with those of large corporations whose multi-billion dollar budgets and large teams allow for ad spending to reach "377 million dollars" as is the case for Coke (Fuller), and McDonald's, whose ad spending reached "687 million dollars in the U.S. in 2017." (Fuller) On the other hand, for smaller businesses with significantly less

revenue than that of fast food chains, spending on marketing and advertising is smaller in accordance with their small sizes and budgets.

Inspired by the stories I heard throughout interviews, I decided to create a platform called *Recipes of Resilience*, to share the stories of these entrepreneurs, and by doing so, also create a marketing outlet to expand their customers' reach. www*.recipesofresilience.com* is a website and social media platform on Facebook and Instagram that shares interviews with local small-business owners, who identify as first or second-generation immigrants, about the founding and impact of their businesses. The mission of this platform is to expose these businesses to a larger customer base, while the vision is to create a more connected community through engaging local food makers with consumers. Finally, but most importantly, the purpose statement of *Recipes of Resilience* is:

"Everyone eats; so, let's do it together, because together, we are better."

The Recipes of Resilience Platform is currently focused on entrepreneurs within the Atlanta area. However, it will expand in the future to other locations within the United States and potentially outside.

b. Anthropreneurial Proposal:

i. What is Anthropreneurship?

Inspired by the anthropological and entrepreneurial components of this study, I am proposing the term Anthropreneurship, which is a creative process that inspires human-centered business ideation for the enhancement of the human experience using anthropological research methods to illuminate insights on phenomena within the human experience. The power of Anthropology is derived from its insight-illuminated research methods, which if adopted by businesses, could transform the economy from a system that is driven by profits to one that profits the world. On the other hand, social entrepreneurship differs from business enterprises in that it "could be seen as a gathering of many business people with solid experience in the fields of management, finance and human relations sharing their know-how and experience along with money and ideas, in order to generate social welfare by removing some of the existing problems" (Tent). Therefore, Anthropreneurship is the implementation of social entrepreneurship using anthropological methods.

The use of anthropological methods to solve business problems is nothing novel, but is already recognized and being utilized by certain consulting firms and fortune 500 companies such as Microsoft, which "is reportedly the second-largest employer of anthropologists in the world" (Baer). Another company investing in the power of anthropological research methods is ReD Associates, which "is a strategy consultancy utilizing the engine of applied social sciences to build growth strategies and drive innovation for Fortune 500 companies" (ReD Associates). Their methods and case studies can be found in a book called *The Moment of Clarity: Understanding the Human Sciences to Solve Your Toughest Business Problems*, by co-founder and partner Mikkel B Rasmussen and partner Christian Madsbjerg. This research study does not

intend to expand on the anthropreneurial strategy but briefly introduces it, in order to provide context for the implications that resulted in the design of the shared kitchen and dining service facility explained in the upcoming proposal.

ii. The Proposal:

The second most common obstacle facing small-scale food business owners, especially immigrants and refugees, is accessing an affordable kitchen space to legally prepare food for sale. Considering that Clarkston, GA is the town where most refugees and immigrants are resettled, receiving "over 40,000 refugees over the past 25 years," (Long) and considering the lack of a shared kitchen facility in Clarkston, this study concludes with the proposal for a shared kitchen and dining service facility in Clarkston, GA.

"The self-proclaimed 'Ellis Island of the south' is now seeing not only refugees but also poor immigrants arrive. Its reputation has prompted a swell of middle-class professional Americans, who – in the words of the city's 34-year-old mayor, Ted Terry – are 'in search of all the trappings of diversity'" (Long). Therefore, this venture, could also serve non-immigrant community members through its dining service, and would attract members of the greater Atlanta Metro community, just as currently witnessed at Refuge Coffee: a non-profit coffee truck that provides immigrants and refugees of the Clarkston community "job training, mentorship, and community support" (Home Page) through its coffee service and frequent event hosting of local organizations.

Clarkston, has the potential to serve as the home of a venture, which provides employment opportunities for its resident refugees, especially women, who prefer to work close to home and are unable to secure jobs available to their male counterparts due to cultural or religious prohibitions of working with other men, because of the need to take care of family at

home, or lack language skills. These challenges leave many of Clarkston's refugee women, who are in search of financial stability, using their networks to sell home-cooked food through underground events or local non-profit programming and supper clubs that would otherwise not require them to have licenses or use a certified corporate kitchen facility, which they are unable to afford.

Therefore, having been exposed to the issues facing refugee women through a student organization on my university campus, through my internship with the Refugee Women's Network and mayor Ted Terry, as well as through my participant observation of different events and town halls in the Clarkston Community, such as the Atlanta Underground Market and the Refugee World Day event in the summer of 2017, and based on data collected from interviews, there seems to be a continually growing demand for opportunities to sell food: a language these women master when opportunities to perfect English are lacking. The success of ventures with similar missions, such as *Hot Bread Kitchen* in Harlem, NY, *Emma's Torch* in Brooklyn, NY, and *La Cocina* in San Francisco, CA suggests the existing demand and support of Americans for food crafted by new Americans.

iii. Case Study: Hawker Inspiration

While living in Singapore over the summer of 2018, I found around every corner of every block a cafeteria-like dining facility called a hawker Center. Having worked in Singapore during these summer months, I joined my co-workers every day for lunch at one of the three surrounding hawker centers within our block. Each of these three was occupied by stalls representing an array of cultural foods, from Chinese to South Indian, Malaysian, Indonesian, and often more. For five days of the week, I had at least one of my meals of the day in one of Singapore's hawker centers, eventually realizing that I was not the only one, but that hawker centers were designed to be included in the routine of most Singaporeans, who spend "almost nine hours [at] work a day." (Chia) Therefore, accessing quick, inexpensive, and culturally-appropriate meals are a need that was and is still being met today by Singapore's "13,828 hawker stalls" ("Number of Hawker Stalls Under Government Market and Hawker Centres, Annual").

My American co-workers and I could not fathom the inexpensive prices of such quality meals, sourced locally and crafted authentically. However, upon learning about the history of the nation and birth of hawker centers, we could understand why "for a nation with fifty years of history, hawker food is the cornerstone for building a sense of belonging," (Tam) despite it being simultaneously exclusive and inclusive at times. In the 1800s, Chinese immigrants arrived in Singapore aboard fleets of junks (Cameron), most of whom were "finding work in the ports, plantations, and mines, plying their trade in manual labor." "Cheap and convenient meals were thus in huge demand [such that] itinerant hawkers met [...] by providing an affordable lunch in the form of 'economical rice' and 'tuk tuk noodles'" (Tam). Because of the "low startup cost and lack of prerequisites," many more immigrants took up the profession of running hawker stalls to the point where there were too many that were "unsightly, unhygienic, and unlawful" (Tam).

"Following the independence of Singapore in 1965, hawkers would face stringent regulation under the new government. In 1968 a nationwide census was taken, allocating licenses to 18,000 hawkers and outlawing the rest (Kong 2007). Two years later, when the Housing Development Board (HDB) began its national housing projects, centralized hawker centers were constructed along with the housing projects in a systematized fashion (Kong 2007). The first modern hawker center was built in 1971, and since its inception it has been closely tied to the HDB residential estates, or 'heartlands'" (Tam). However, "while Indian and Malay food are commonplace, the representation of Filipino and Bangladeshi food is virtually nonexistent in hawker centers. This is partly a result of licensing regulations, since only Singapore citizens and permanent residents can apply for a hawker's license. As Filipinos and Bangladeshis are immigrants on temporary work permits, they are naturally excluded from the hawking occupation. Their ethnic food is thus lacking in representation within hawker centers" (Tam). Therefore, "hawker food in Singapore is a trope for multiculturalism and a tool for nation building, yet a demarcating line for racial inclusion and exclusion. Its origins have colonial and immigrant influences, yet it is heralded as authentic and local" (Tam).

The affordability and multitude of hawker stalls, some now awarded Michelin stars, brings together the people of Singapore regardless of racial, religious, or socioeconomic backgrounds. "In a hawker center, ladies in dresses sit in a communal space, adjacent to a table of elderly men in singlets (i.e., sleeveless undershirts) and shorts" (Tam).

Considering how "street peddlers, once an administrative problem, were refashioned into a potent symbol of Singapore's heritage [and how] hawker food has also been used as a trope of multiculturalism to unite a racially diverse people," (Tam) so can we refashion the "refugee

crisis" into an opportunity for growth and community building through the medium of a dining facility in Clarkston, where most of Atlanta's refugee population is resettled. In Singapore, 'the influx of foreign workers from the mid-1980s presented new tensions that shed light on the cultural power of food to articulate inclusion and exclusion" (Tam). Similarly, Clarkston has the potential of serving as Atlanta's window into the global community through a dining facility that celebrates and serves global food, thus providing job opportunities for refugee women struggling to attain them.

iv. Business Model: The Resilient Kitchen:

Background:

The refugee/migrant crisis has become a global problem, displacing families thousands of miles away from their homes. While there are numerous resettlement agencies working towards integrating refugees within the Atlanta community, mostly centered in Clarkston, GA, their programs focus on language literacy, cultural integration, as well as career support programming and employment opportunities that often exclude the women, whose cultural and religious beliefs prevent them from working alongside other males.

Vision:

The Resilient Kitchen envisions a future of a diverse, yet cohesive community that is interconnected through the shared medium of food and drink. This kitchen helps refugee women overcome the discomfort of unfamiliarity in a new environment through the re-creation, celebration, and sharing of familiar recipes.

Purpose:

The Resilient Kitchen aims to capitalize on the resilience of refugee women through the restoration and celebration of their recipes, thus providing them a means for self-expression through culinary creativity as well as financial stability.

Mission:

The Resilient Kitchen is a social enterprise that provides under-resourced refugee women the support and platform needed to become independent culinary entrepreneurs. This is accomplished through the *Resilient Cook Residency Program*, the *Resilient Kitchen Dining Experience*, and finally *The Resilient Kitchen* store.

The Resilient Cook Residency program:

A one-year program, where refugee women cooks join through an application process that includes a taste test of their most favored recipes and an interview. Upon acceptance into the program, the applicants enter as *Resilient Trainees*, receiving legal and logistical culinary support to become *Resilient Chefs*, serving their recipes at the stalls of the dining facility, and receiving business training during the second half of their residency, thus transitioning as *Resilient Graduates,* prepared to grow their ventures independently.

Legal and logistical training includes:

- ServSafe Manager Certification
- Food Safety Testing
- Health Department Permitting Process
- Food Process Flow Plan
- Recipe Scaling

- Sourcing ingredients (urban farms like *Bread and Butter Farms*, *Gaia Gardens*, and *Fresh Harvest*)
- Packaging
- Logo and label design
- Ingredient Labeling

Business support includes:

- Financial analysis and projections
- Business plan writing support
- Establishing business entity
- Trademarking business name

- Insurance

The Resilient Kitchen Dining Experience:

Open on specific hours of the day, a food-court like dining facility with several stalls will be occupied by the *Resilient Chefs*, serving different recipes that complement each other to create a full course meal. Entrance is by ticket and ticket purchases can be made at the door or online. The menu will change every week and will be themed on special occasions.

The logic behind this system is that changing the menu every week would allow the *Resilient Chefs* to test many different dishes for their businesses, by one week serving an appetizer and the next serving an entree or dessert based on a rotating system. Furthermore, with all *Resilient Chefs* each serving a different type of food, the diners will have an array of options to choose from, which would increase the value of this dining experience, and allow the *Chefs* to realize what there is customer demand for and what there is not.

The Resilient Kitchen Store:

A store for packaged goods to be sold with a major percentage of the sales revenue allocated directly to the manufacturing *Resilient Chef*. For example, if Chef Amina, makes a spice mix that is sold for $5 at the store, but which costs $2 to make, including the ingredients and packaging, The Resilient Kitchen would keep $3 for the supply of the ingredients, packaging, and facility, while Amina would keep $2 from that sale. Besides having products sold at the store, Resilient Chefs will also have the opportunity to have their products featured in The Resilient Kitchen Subscription Box Service, which ships to customers non-perishable goods prepared by the *Resilients*, such as breads, spreads, spices, nut mixes, and fermented products.

Key Partners:

The key partners for *The Resilient Kitchen* would include:

- *StartMe: Clarkston*, which is a business accelerator program for small-business owners of the Clarkston Community, and which is a branch of Emory University's Goizueta Business School. This partnership would allow the *Resilient Chefs* to tap into the business training resources of *StartMe*, while offering *StartMe's* students with food businesses access to the kitchen facility on set days and hours.
- Local urban farms to supply local and sustainable ingredients and to promote services.

Value Proposition:

The core value of *The Resilient Kitchen* is to provide refugee women cooks and aspiring entrepreneurs a platform for business growth and development as well as sales channels and exposure to a customer base. Furthermore, the Resilient Kitchen offers residents of the Atlanta Metro Community access to a unique dining experience containing sustainably-sourced and

locally prepared new foods that reflect different cultures and represent the global identity of Clarkston, GA.

Customer Segment:

The ticketed dining experience will operate similar to an open buffet with an entrance fee of approximately $20. However, the Resilient Kitchen will also offer lunch box service for $8.80 per box. While the dining service customers are predicted to be mainly residents of the community supporting the mission of the venture or people who are simply interested in the novelty of the foods offered every week, the lunch box service would be mainly purchased for events, conferences, business meetings, student organization events, and personal occasions and gatherings.

Customer Relationship:

Through the Resilient Kitchen's website, customers can opt-in to subscribe to the weekly menu that will be published and sent in advance. Customers can submit orders online for lunch boxes as well as purchase tickets for the dining experience.

Key Resources:

- Human resources
    - Management
    - Finance
    - Strategy
    - Operations
    - Marketing
    - Growth
    - Sales

    - Maintenance
- Facility:
    - Commercial kitchen
    - Packaging and processing prep area
    - Dining facility
    - Administration office
    - Store
- Inventory:
    - Kitchen supplies inventory
    - Ingredients
    - Packaging materials
    - Admin office inventory: computers and office supplies
- Digital tools and operations:
    - Website with built-in e-commerce platform for online sales
    - Screens to be installed to facilitate operational logistics of checking in and out from the kitchen facility
    - Social media presence
    - Professional camera for photos uploaded regularly online to keep customers engaged

Customer Outreach:

Ads will be created and shared with local nonprofits and resettlement agencies to recruit Resilient Cooks for the residency program. Both physical and digital ads will also be created to

promote the dining experience and kitchen services and products of *The Resilient Kitchen* in local newspapers and magazines, as well as on online blogs for "Things to do while in Atlanta".

Cost Structure:

- Rental and utilities
- Insurance
- Supplying and replenishing inventory
- Ingredients
- Packaging
- Salaries
- Software services (for admin, accounting, marketing, and operations)
- Miscellaneous costs

Revenue Stream:

- Daily tickets sales for the dining experience
- Online and in person sales for products from the store
- Online and in-person payments for *The Resilient Kitchen* Subscription box service

Chapter XI:

Conclusion

Eating is a timeless and universal act for the human race; it is a vital aspect of the human individual and communal life because of its ability to serve as a common denominator with which different groups identify. According to anthropological and historical analysis of archaeological sites and records of human history, our ancestors in different parts of the world at different points in time used food as a medium to celebrate or mourn, and to construct or deconstruct political and social barriers.

Similarly, in today's world, food helps guide social dynamics, especially for immigrants and refugees who benefit from the powerful potential of food as a platform to create familiarity in unfamiliar environments, to integrate into new communities, and to secure financial stability. Focusing on the study of this phenomenon in Atlanta, GA for its abundance of immigrant and refugee-owned food businesses and its close proximity to Clarkston, GA, where large numbers of refugees have been resettled, this study analyzes insights from eight personal interviews with immigrant restaurant owners as well as an anonymous survey for residents to gauge demand for and experience with immigrant food.

This study concludes with an intervention and a proposal for a social enterprise in Clarkston, GA. While the survey confirmed consumer demand for home-cooked, culturally-relevant, and healthy meals, the interviews also found that offering home-cooked, culturally-relevant, and healthy food were emerging themes that the entrepreneurs prioritized and to have built their businesses upon. Furthermore, the study found that immigrant entrepreneurs most struggle with securing an affordable commercial kitchen space from which to launch their businesses as well as accessing marketing support to reach a broader range of customers.

Therefore, the study ends with an intervention regarding the marketing challenges and a business proposal for a social enterprise in the city of Clarkston, GA. The intervention is an online platform called *Recipes of Resilience* that promotes immigrant food businesses, telling their stories through interviews with the founders. The business model proposes a complementary enterprise called *The Resilient Kitchen*, which provides refugee women a one-year residency program, where they would access legal and business support as well as a kitchen and sales channels, and from which they graduate ready to launch businesses independently.

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Appendix I: Interview Transcripts

Tina D'Souza, founder of *Estoetno Bakery*

Q: You mentioned first starting to make your products simply to expose community members to something new, can you share more about that?
A: That was just for fun for me. There are usually foods that when I had conversations with my friends or people, I didn't know so well, when we would talk about food, we all always remembered so fondly our food from childhood. Most of us remembered what our grandmothers made. When I talk about the foods that we eat and we serve for celebrations, people usually say "You eat what? I've never had that before. How is that made?" or people would come over to Christmas parties and say "What is this? You eat that with this?" But when they try it they say "Oh my God, what is that? It's sweet and creamy and delicious." You know just through these experiences, I wanted to address the logic route with this, and I did want to explore what are the options to serve this kind of food. I did not want to open a restaurant or start a catering business. I know nothing about the service industry, but my background is in manufacturing companies in Estonia. I know how to sell the food, so this is what I was exploring, and of course, I was having fun with it. Years ago, they had this underground food market and that is where I snuck myself in and was given the opportunity to test out the products and it just went from there.

Q: When did you move from Estonia to the United States?
A: It will be about 15 years in May.

Q: Do you feel like the meaning of food in your life has changed since moving from Estonia to the United States?
A: Absolutely. In Estonia, we eat a lot of home-cooked food, then you come to the States and realize that a lot of it is processed, and then you hear all those interviews where people say that it is much cheaper to buy food from Burger King or McDonalds and more expensive to buy food and cook it, which makes me wonder where things have gone wrong. If you try to go and buy pre-made, really salty, low-fat meal, it won't be that healthy for you when you might think it is. Fat actually makes you full. There are a lot of fads that are influencing how people eat and not much common sense left. When you live in a society that is highly manufactured and highly marketed, food becomes the same way. In Estonia, I never thought about food the same way. Healthy food is everywhere and if you read the research studies, you will learn that Estonia uses the least amount of pesticides. You can get a lot of pre-made healthy meals that are all cooked on the spot. This is how I thought everybody eats. When I came here and began to read the labels, I was just shocked. Some of the stuff that we buy here are illegal in Europe because it is considered unhealthy or harmful for people.
I am a total nerd. I read every single label. I really make an effort to avoid high fructose corn syrup and avoid preservatives.
That's what I try to preach to people: "Cook your meals at home. You can make them how you like them and it's always fresh with no preservatives." Sugar and salt are preservatives and that's why everything is loaded in them. You don't need loads of sodium in food. And look what's happening to society, high rates of diabetes and obesity are really soaring in the nation. Change needs to happen.

Q: It sounds like you're very interested in healthy eating. Is that why you started making and selling rye bread?
A: Bread was a product for which I saw a vacuum in the market. There is no such product now and very few bakers who are producing this type of bread in the Atlanta area. And even if you search online, there are very few who ship this type of bread, the Wheat-free rye Sourdough. So, I saw from a business perspective an opportunity for this product and this also interests me. I am very passionate about his bread because Estonians have lived off this bread for hundreds of years and that has been the main source of nutrition over the years when we didn't have refrigeration and all of that. And you know this bread also fixes the problem of shelf life. Breads go moldy or stale within couple of days but rye bread, unlike wheat bread, does not do that. It can last for a week and it has no preservatives. That's kind of where I saw a business opportunity. For business, I am not interested in catering. I love throwing parties for my friends. My Christmas parties always have 30-40 people, so I love to cook for my friends, but I don't want to cook for larger crowds as a business.

Q: When did you first decide to make your own bread?
A: In Estonia, I never made my own rye bread. There were 10-15 selections of all type and I never felt the need to make my own bread at home. So, I started baking here at home. For the first 10 years, I used to bring half a suitcase full of bread from Estonia every time I went to visit. I would freeze it and portion out. It was beginning to become tiring and I wanted to be able to bring other stuff from Estonia as well, not just bread, so I decided to learn how to bake it.

Q: Do you eat mostly at home or outside?
A: Home, because it's healthier. I feel like the food outside is too salty for me. My husband and I both love cooking so that certainly helps. We cook well enough for ourselves. If someone's having some sort of party or ask for dinner, that is the only time when we eat outside.

Q: You mentioned portions earlier, how has that changed?
A: Oh, that has changed a lot. I have gained about 20 lbs in the last 15 years. It sneaks up on you. In my culture, food was something that was valued and never thrown away. So, you fill your plate and you finish it. I moved here when I was 38 so it is hard to change the mentality that you grew up with. Here, people leave food on the plate or throw it out because the portions are just too large.

Q: What do you think about the additives in processed food? Are they addictive?
A: I've watched plenty of documentaries about this. I do believe that how food is manipulated is contributing to the obesity epidemic. The first thing is the Fat Fight. What fat does is keep you full, but if you're deprived from it, you keep eating and fill yourself up with some carbohydrates that are empty calories.

Q: It looks like you're delivering the opposite of that with your Wheat-free, Preservatives-free rye bread and "Not-so-sweet" baked goods.
A: I can't claim that desserts are healthy. A little bit of sugar is okay, but your sugar should really come from the fruits and natural resources. With the baked goods, the aim is to cut the sugar content. To be honest, I'm baking for myself and for my friends because I really didn't buy the baked goods. They're either tasteless or really sweet and there wasn't anything in between. I

didn't want to rely on only one product for my business because if the sourcing of its main ingredients goes wrong, the business cannot stand still, and that is why I began to add more products such as the baked goods. My goal is not making wedding cakes but to make desserts from real ingredients that you can taste and that are not too sweet that the sugar masks all the other flavors. This is kind of the description I'm going for.

Q: Have you ever thought about branding your products as diabetic-friendly products?
A: That would be very interesting to me. I would really have to pair up with nutritionists and nutrition consultants. I have actually consulted some about before about the bread specifically, but never officially partnered with anybody because I don't have in-depth knowledge in it myself, and the law are restrictive as to how you can use certain claims on certain products. I'm very careful about what I say on the website and how I speak about it, because I'm not claiming that any of my products will do anything particularly good for you. I'm just saying what research studies show and what my bread has, which is lower glycemic index level, which means that blood sugar will not instantly shoot up right after eating but will be more stable. In terms of my desserts, I certainly cannot claim all are diabetic friendly, some of them have high sugar and high fat contents, but there are desserts and delicacies. But I do follow certain limits on how much sugar I put into my cakes and products. I develop products and observe how my customers react to it, how they eat it, and with what. For example, I was approached by someone who asked me if my bread was vegan, and when I said it was, they were so happy. Bread is always vegan. Because I'm not vegan, I never paid attention to that. But now I realize the breads sold often have high fructose corn syrup and animal products, which I never grew up with. I only found this out when I was travelling one time and found only one bread type that did not have high fructose corn syrup. Since then, I travel with my bread. I always bake bread to travel with me because it keeps for a week and we are covered this way.

Q: How did you come up with the name EstoEtno?
A: Esto is short for expat Estonians and Etno is the word game from ethnic and refers to the Estonian ethnicity. I did some market research before I decided on it, but at the end, this was the name that everyone liked, even though some people still ask why I talk about Estonia when not everyone has heard of it. But to me, the name adds to the adventurous experience of trying my new products. The name creates curiosity and has served as a good conversation starter.

Q: Where do you sell your products besides on the website?
A: I've done two seasons of farmers' markets, and last year, I was in Alpharetta, Freedom park, and Avondale. These ones are confirmed for this year too! That's actually been one of the challenging aspects. You have no idea how hard it is to get into farmers' markets.

Q: If we take a moment and think about EstoEtno, what kind of value does your business add to the community? A novelty or specialty product? A healthy product? Both?
A: The value I offer comes from the healthier choices I offer that with no preservatives, naturally have a long shelf life for those who don't like to go to the grocery store several times a week. What I offer is a novelty product because it takes a lot of effort to prepare and so it costs more than regular store-bought bread.

Q: What were the biggest obstacles for you when you were first starting?
A: I actually think the biggest obstacles are still ahead of me. I work with a Cottage Food License, so I turn my house into a bakery, which if you can imagine, is not easy to operate out of. And of course, I thought that when I do such a specialty product and when there is such a vacuum in the market for products like these, it should be easy to get into farmers' market, which is my testing lab for consumer behavior because it's risky to jump start something without knowing how people are going to respond. Then, I realized that I needed to sign up for the market in the middle of the winter and there was a chance I wouldn't even make it as part of the market. Networking certainly helps. If you know of a vendor who can introduce you to a market manager, that really helps. But of all, the commercial kitchen has actually been the biggest challenge. Renting a kitchen is very expensive. I had a couple of negotiations with commercial shared kitchens, but they are too expensive to the point I wouldn't be profitable. Five hours would cost me about $100.
I was a part of *StartMe*, and before that, I wrote my business plan with the help of the Partnership for Community Action. So, I already had in my head the idea for the products and the brand but coming from a different country and having had my business training twenty-something years back, there were a lot of cultural differences. The *StartMe* training was an immense help when I felt alone and that is why I'm such a big advocate of it and am always there to support and give feedback. *StartMe* really made a difference for me. It gave me a team and significant feedback. I was able to lay out a logical plan.

Q: Besides the financial profit, what does the business add to your life?
A: In addition to the pride and happiness of doing something like that, it is a lot of work and stress on me and my family, but my husband has been an incredible help. I hope I get to the point where I can run a business and not be baking by myself all the time because that is where I want to be. I don't want to be a baker 8 hours a day and do that over and over again. I want to be able to create.

Nicola Ayyoub, founder of *Nicola's Restaurant*

Q: What was the first recipe on the menu?
A: Hummus, tabbouleh, and lamb. I put these because they are very healthy. These recipes are made of a combination of many different and healthy ingredients.

Q: What is your favorite recipe on the menu at Nicola's restaurant?
A: All of them!

Q: Did you learn how to make these dishes at home or did someone teach you?
A: I learned at home when I was a student by myself here. I learned how to cook everything because I did not have money to go out, so I had to learn how to make all the things that I love and enjoy.

Q: Was it easy or difficult?
A: It was the easiest thing in the world. All you have to do is to actually do it, you know. I tried it different times until I balanced the taste that I liked and that is how it came to be.
Q: If you think about home food, what does that mean to you?
A: Home food is food that is made of fresh ingredients. Cleanliness, of course, matters, and maintaining a balance between the authentic flavor of a recipe while playing with it according to your preference.

Q: Do you eat at home the same food that you eat at the restaurant?
A: Almost exactly the same. But also, I try a lot of new things when I go out.

Q: How would you describe the nature of Lebanese food?
A: Lebanese food has little meat with a lot of vegetables. So you consume little meat that adds flavor to your many vegetables.

Q: I read that you were first into the cookie business, how did you decide to start a Lebanese restaurant?
A: I looked around and there were no Lebanese restaurants, and everybody at that time in the 70s and 80s, especially during the 80s, was starting to look at healthy meals. I realized that our Lebanese food is very healthy, so of course, I decided to introduce it to Atlanta. I am very close to a Jewish community that appreciates the Hummus and Baba Ganouj and all other healthy things, and form there, it spread all over. There are also a lot of Lebanese families that are connected to American families, so between all these communities, I established a place for 36 years.

Q: How did you decide on the name Nicola's Restaurant?
A: I wanted to put my name on it and I'm very extrinsic so I thought why should I put any other name besides my name?

Q: When we think about the dining experience at Nicola's which is more than just the food but also the dining and atmosphere, what value do you think the restaurant is adding to the Atlanta community?
A: Today, we have Whole Foods, Sam's Club, and many other places that sell Hummus and Tabbouleh. We first introduced it. But most importantly, we offer more than the hummus and tabbouleh but an experience for people who look for it.

Q: Have you always had the dancing and belly dancers on Fridays and Saturdays or was that something you later introduced?
A: No, darling. It all happened by chance. Some people came in and they wanted to enjoy themselves and after they eat, which of course, I was a very trained dancer in Lebanon, you know, and so they asked let's dance the Dabkeh, so we did. My niece, who is a great dancer in France now, and have won modern dancing awards, joined me. When her and I started dancing in the middle of the restaurant, people responded very favorably. Following that, people began to ask, and belly dancers would come and ask to work. We continue the dance until today!

Q: Do you feel that the dance brings more customers on Friday and Saturday nights?
A: The dancing actually has both positive and negative outcomes. Some people, who prefer to eat quietly, come before 8, eat and stay until 8:15. When we start the dance party at 8:15, they get up and leave. But there are other people, who want to come for the party specifically. We have a private room for our customers, who want to stay past 8:15 but away from the music and dancing. We like to honor and respect our customers' preferences. In other words, we have a place for everybody.

Q: So, if you have to go back to when you were starting the restaurant, what were the biggest obstacles and challenges for you?
A: Really, there was not much. Before I started, I studied everything so well and worked in many different food businesses that gave me experience. The most important thing for somebody who likes to work in a restaurant or wants to open a food business, service and the love of service are the greatest things you can offer, and when you do that naturally, you will never fail. I looooove to serve people.

Q: If you had to go back, would you do anything different?
A: Uhhh, ummm, nooo. I don't think so. No. Yeah, no.

Q: Thinking about the business now, suddenly, God forbid, Nicola's Restaurant disappears, what would Atlanta lose?
A: A loving places that cares for its patrons and a healthy meal that is prepared with care, love, and sensibility. Everything has an end, you know, I am now 74 years old or however old I am, but as far as I'm concerned, I've had the most beautiful 35 years in life running this restaurant. What I have learned is that for any successful business, no matter what you are selling or are trying to do in life, my logo is sell a good quality product with a moderate price, and serve with care, a smile, and love. If you do that, and you will never fail, regardless of what kind of business you run.

Q: Do you miss the business when you're not there running the show on certain weekends?

A: I know I'm weird and different. I don't miss the restaurant when I'm gone, as I only leave when I need to. Honestly, in the last 30 years, I almost never missed a weekend, not a single one, and right now, I don't work all weekends. If I miss it when I'm gone, then I need to leave it. But as far as I know, when I do leave, I don't miss it, because I only leave when I'm doing something as joyful and nurturing as my business makes me feel.

Q: Do you have any advice for rising food entrepreneurs or anybody wishing to start whatever type of business, especially immigrants?
A: Yes, my logo is: whatever you want to start, be sure to have a good quality product/service, give it a moderate price, and then offer that with a smile and happiness, and I guarantee you will never fail.
Darling, I am so happy, and I hope you reflect the spirit of my feeling.

Nicole and Musa Hasan, founders of *Bread and Butter Farms*:

Q: How did you get the idea of starting Bread and Butter Farms?
A: We are a family owned business. We always wanted to grow as much as we can for ourselves. I was raised on a farm, so I've always had an understanding of farming and an attraction to it. As I got older and after graduate school, it is more important to grow your food if you can than to get it from grocery stores. We started growing it in our closet in our apartment. We would grow greens and herbs. Then we moved to our new small home and started growing about 10 acres in our backyard, which is actually where we grow right now. The idea was simply to just grow whatever we wanted to grow however we wanted to grow it to eat what we needed to it.

Q: There are not many local family-owned farms that offer what you do. What gap in the market did you intend to fill?
A: Right now, the focus is on food justice and food sovereignty. There is certainly a huge gap when it comes to accessibility. People in some areas have little to no access to local, organically-grown food with no pest control. So, I believe we are filling a small void when it comes to our delivery system.

Q: Do you have any favorite produce that you continually grow
A: Okra. We love okra. It's really easy to grow. It's also easy to manipulate so you grow more of it. We chop off the top of the plan and make it bush out to get about 50-20 okra per week per plan. Okra is also durable and nutritious.

Q: Besides produce, you and your wife Nicole, also make your own bread and butter. Can you share a little bit about how you started that?
A: In general, we make a lot of our own things. We make our own infused oils, skin products, and things like that. It wasn't anything new when we started farming, but one of thing we ran into when we got started is having an early start on the season, so when we went to farmers' market to sell for the first time, we didn't have a lot of produce because the market season had started so early, earlier than our harvesting season. To fill that gap, we started bringing bread and butters. We got approved by the department of agriculture to make the butter, bread, and oils. When we started selling these, people loved the breads and butters, so we decided to keep it going considering there was such a high consumer demand.

Q: Is that how you came up with the name "Bread and Butter Farms"?
A: No, we actually only wanted the name to be "Farms". Farming has so many different facets. Growing produce is one aspect, education is a whole another aspect as we want to ensure kids understand how to grow, what to grow and when to grow it, how to harvest and how to maintain it. We also wanted to incorporate technology. We do a lot of programing and coding from a big data standpoint. We want to have a diverse array of programs to teach people how to farm, teach them about technology, teach people how to fill general engineering practices on the farm that come in handy like electrical work and plumbing work.
My undergraduate degree is in animal and poultry science and my graduate degree is in cancer biology. I picked up coding on my own. When we decided to pursue farming full time, we left our jobs and before we left our jobs, we wanted to have something that we could fall back on, so

I kept it simple and began learning JavaScript, but to be competitive in the market, I started learning Engler and others. From there, everything spiraled out of control, as I began to get really good at it and actually like it. I'm still learning.

Q: Back to the farm, what value do you think your business is adding to the community? Have you noticed any changes in consumer behavior since you began to sell?
A: People love knowing what is in their food. People are becoming more and more aware of their own health. People are becoming more aware that what you eat directly affects your health. The more we learn, the more our customers learn. We are now getting more word of mouth and shares on Facebook. People now show up and tell us that they've heard about us from someone they know. In the beginning, many people were skeptical about our growing practices since we don't use any chemicals or pesticides. They're always intrigued about how we are able to grow the way we do.

Q: What were the biggest obstacles when you first started?
A: We started when we had our first kid and we were living in an apartment and literally were growing herbs in our closet as a hobby. Even once we had all our kids, we were beginning to sell at farmers' markets, but we still had our full-time jobs. Last year, we stopped working to farm full time and that was really nerve-racking, because we had four kids and were moving to a place that didn't have a lot of the things that we need. We didn't have running water or electricity, so we hooked up solar panels and had a well dug up, which helped a lot.

Q: If you could go back now to when you were first starting your business, what would you do differently and why?
A: Honestly, I don't know if I would do anything different. We really worked hard and have a huge support system. These two things are the key to anybody's success. Not to say that we are very successful, I mean we are very content with the fact that we are able to grow and feed ourselves but being able to support the community is like icing on the cake.

Q: Is there anything that you wish someone had warned you or told you about before you started your business?
A: Oh, yes, soil management. If you're going to be a farmer, soil management is key. We planned out a lot of things before we got started. We didn't take out any mortgages, any credit cards, or anything where we had a huge overhead. That's what we did when first started. The land was paid for, so we didn't need to pay taxes on that, and then whatever we were living in, we needed to pay taxes for that. The same thing when it comes to the vehicle. We bought an old car to reduce our expense and invest those funds into the farm or whatever else we wanted to do at the time. If you go out and purchase something with a mortgage, you don't know how things are going to go and that is the added stress that I believe a lot of farmers that I know of struggle with. We didn't go that route. We wanted to be able to fund the business ourselves, making sure we didn't have any overhead, even when it comes to tractors or anything like that. We decided to let the farm pay for these things. For people that are getting started, I would advise everyone to avoid loans. Start extremely low if you can. Investors are really beneficial, but it is better to use your own resources as much as possible.

Q: Besides the profit, what would you say is the farm adding to your life?
A: Freedom. I mean being able to go outside and grab eggs or to go outside and make a living for yourself. This is one of the things that we try to instill in our kids, that they can go out, provide for themselves with their own hands and minds, by just planting and knowing how to plant and built, going out and helping the community. That's freedom. When we were off the grid, we didn't have to pay electricity or anything. Last year was entirely off the grid for us. We only paid for our cellphones.
When we first quit our jobs and were living off the grid, we were only paying for our house taxes. We told each other, if anything goes wrong with the business, we can just go and work at McDonalds to pay it off. It was a really good experience because we learned how to do things that we didn't know how to do.

Q: If your business was gone tomorrow, what would Atlanta lose?
A: I feel like we are bridging the gap between individuals that don't have access to locally, organically-grown produces, including ourselves. I think there's not a lot of people who are willing to bridge that gap. We accept EBT and SNAP, which is huge that we are able to do such things that most other farmers are not equipped to do. There are a lot of farmers that are trying. We are able to do a lot of these things because of where we are. We served on the executive board of the Georgia Farmers Market Association, the executive board of the USDA's Farm Service Agency. Through that, we have access to information that a lot of people don't and we are able to utilize those things to our benefit. Of course, we disseminate that information as much as possible to whatever groups we are in.

Jackie Sterling and Wellyngthon Bueno de Souza, founders of *Bueno's Barbecue*:

Q: How did you guys meet?
A: Jackie laughs. She says: "We met on a hiking meetup."

Q: Jackie, do you remember the first time you ever had Brazilian steak?
A: It was before I met Wellyngthon. I think it was at Fogo de Chao. We had about 2 pounds of meat that day. I thought it was amazing, but then, after I ate real Brazilian steak with Wellyngthon then went back to Fogo de Chao, I wasn't as impressed, because now I've had the real thing.

Q: Do you remember the moment of epiphany when you decided to actually make this a business?
A: Um, it was more Wellyngthon. He's the entrepreneurial type.
Wellyngthon: I love to cook and many times on the weekends, I invite friends to come to my house for barbecues. As soon as they eat, they want to come back for more, and they tell me 'you need to do this for other people'. They loved the Brazilian flavor, so people began to recommend my barbecue to their friends! People started to come to my house and try this barbecue. From there I got the idea to turn this into a business and make money from it.

Q: Where in the process of launching the business are you guys now at?
A: We both still have our jobs, but maybe one day, we can pursue this full-time. We would love to work for ourselves and work with food.

Q: Can you share what home food means to you both, independently and together?
A: Jackie: I grew up in a big family with the whole family no matter how busy the day was, dinner time was our sacred time. We would have a hot dinner on the table every night. So, for me, that is what I know. I believe in the importance of food in bringing people together and making memories over food, whether it is just a dinner or a holiday. Mealtime was always an important part in my family life.
Wellyngthon: For my family, it was very important to make time to eat together as well. We always cooked together and that made our relationships stronger.

Q: You both mentioned that food brings people together, so considering how you both perceive home food as a means of crafting connections, how has that influenced your decision to offer a catering experience rather than meal delivery service?
A: Jackie: Oh, we like to be a part of the party. Our idea was to provide a live cooking element, which is an exciting part of the party too. When I host dinner parties at my house, I always try to make it interactive, whether by engaging guests in making fondue, grilling outside, or making personal pizzas. For our Brazilian steak business, we want to offer a sort of entertainment for the party, which is the experience of live cooking and eating straight from the grill.
Wellyngthon: We start the grill and the music starts. As we make the meat, people start to eat then we make more and people continue to eat with the music playing and the drinks pouring.

Q: You have a variety of recipes on your menu, which is your favorite and why?

A: Both answer: My favorite is the meat.

Q: Where did you learn how to prepare it for the first time?
A: Wellyngthon: At my home in Brazil, sometimes my dad does the barbecue, but because he worked at night, I decided to prepare it for him on his behalf. By the time he's home, all would be done. That's when everyone began to tell me that I could do it. I was fifteen at the time.

Q: Although this business sounds so promising and exciting, I assume the process of launching it is not all rainbows and daisies, so what has been your biggest challenge or obstacle?
A: Jackie: I think so far learning about the legal aspects of launching, such as the type of license we need and what certification and that sort of things.

Q: You mentioned being a part of the party, which makes me believe that the business is more to you than financial profit, can you tell how it's contributing to your life besides the money?
A: Wellyngthon: Our business has helped us make a lot of friends. For anybody new to town who comes to our dinners, they have a good time laughing and eating delicious food, and leave having made friends.
Jackie: W e are the entertainment for our friend group and we really cherish the good moments with family and friends. But we also understand that it is not natural for everyone to be that, so we want to give them the opportunity to host fun parties without having to stress about the food preparation and entertainment.
Q: If your business was gone tomorrow, what would Atlanta lose?
A: Jackie: People would lose a unique experience and opportunity to connect over a delicious and uniquely prepared meal.

Shaista Amani, founder of *Amani Catering Company*

Q: What is your favorite recipe and why?
A: All Afghani recipes are my favorite and I usually do not eat outside because I'm used to making my own food and enjoy the process. The recipe that I most love too cook and eat is Kabali Palaw, which is Afghani rice with raisins and carrots. I love it especially with lamb, but you can prepare it with anything!

Q: What memories does it bring to your mind?
A: My grandfather was like the leader of the village. We were living in a joint family. Within only our family, we had almost 30 people. The daughters and sons plus all the grandchildren. All were living together. We had everything disciplined, taking turns for cooking lunch and dinner. Once or twice a week, we had guests, like 60 or 80 guests at once. In the village side, the government is not so established so when people have problems, they come to the leader to solve them. We would serve this kind of rice for those kinds of gatherings but also for birthday parties or engagement parties. There were no wedding halls in the places we were living in so we were so dependent on ourselves. Everybody was working. I was used to cooking for a large number of people.

Q: It sounds like eating at home was a major social event, what would you say home food means to you?
A: If you do some research about Afghanis, you will find out that they are very guest-welcoming. We have it a tradition that once or twice a month, your relatives come over for a meal and you return that visit over a meal at their house. Usually, every family has guests over at least every other day. One type of food is not enough for guest. You make five or six dishes. It should be a feast if you have guests. This tradition makes women get used to cooking for large numbers of people. Everybody tries to make their food look beautiful and to make their guests happy and the guests are considered as friends of God, so everyone tries to make their guests very happy.

Q: Comparing the strong role of eating together in Afghani culture to eating in American culture, what differences have you noticed when you first moved to the United States?
A: When I was on the way to the United States, there were a lot of negative things coming to my mind. I was scared of the different culture, different place, and different people. I was feeling worried about how people would behave towards us. But when we arrived, there was a church that's called Oakhurst Baptist Church and we arrived to the airport, we saw a group of people that were members of this church and had come to welcome us. They had our names on boards. That was very surprising and unexpected. First, we thought we would be in a hotel for some days until we find a home, but they had already arranged our house for us and everything we needed in the house. My experience of the United States was really good and until today, they continue to help and support me. They helped me learn how to drive and helped my husband find a good job and helped me enroll my kids in school. Anytime I have a question, I text them and they help me. They took me to a special market where I could buy Halal meat. I thought everything would be very difficult in the beginning, but everything was very pleasant.
In the community where I live, I came first, but today, there are about 35 Afghani families. Now, I'm trying to payback the help I got. Right now, I'm baby sitting for my neighbor as she went to

learn how to drive. We are trying to be helpful to each other. I have a positive point that I know some English, so I helped them with their doctors' appointments, applying for food stamps and Medicare, applying for a license, etc. When someone is from your own country, you understand how they have grown up, especially the women, whom I feel really bad for. That's why I decided to do Amani Catering. A lot of them apply for jobs and are not accepted, including jobs at Walmart or cleaning jobs, because they don't know enough English. Knowing English is very important. You cannot even get a driving permit without English language skills. That's why I want to start Amani Catering and help these women so they can also help me with the cooking.

Q: When and how did you decided to start Amani Catering Co. and what does Amani mean?
A: The people from church were helping with everything and I thought to my self, "what should I do for them?" So, every weekend, I would invite a group of people and they would come and eat at our house. Maybe that was 7 months after I arrived in America. One of the ladies at church, whose name is Leah, founded Just Bakery. She loved the food and asked if I could cook for catering dinners for the non-profit, she runs and for birthday parties. It started like that. One time, there were only few people attending and she wanted me to make about eight types of food. I told her it would be difficult to make that much for a small number of people, so she told me to pack the rest in meals and she would let her neighbors know and ask if they would buy. The first time, everybody loved it. So, I started to cook every Friday according to what people had emailed me their requests were. I was doing this for a while then I realized that I had to get licenses and certifications to legally sell my food. That's why I joined *StartMe* and am trying to make everything official, to get a kitchen space.
And Amani is my surname, my husband's surname. After marriage, I took my husband's surname. The reason I chose Amani is because everybody knows me as Shaista Amani. Also, the word Amani means hope. I think this business will bring hope to all the Afghani ladies. Even when I was just starting, I would ask some ladies: "Can you cook me this food and I will pay you this much? Can you make me this amount of bread and I will make you this much?" It was very convenient for them too!
Right now, the biggest challenge is getting a kitchen. There are some kitchens, which are really out of my budget and there are some that are located very far away that all of the women, who would work with me, cannot drive that long. I'm just looking for a space to rent and get by, at least, in the beginning, so hopefully, something good will come in our way.

Q: Besides the kitchen space, what other hurdles did you face while starting or are still facing today?
A: The certification was very important, as well as the business plan, the branding, website, the Facebook page. Last week, we designed our menus, but not of that was too challenging. There was not anything really challenging for me.

Q: From what I have understood so far, the business is more than a catering company but a platform for women empowerment, can you please further explain that?
A: I'll tell you where that came from. I'm the only daughter for my mom. My father passed away when I was only six months old. As I was growing up, in my culture, people like the boys more than the girls. Since I was five or six years old, everybody was telling my mom, we wish you had a boy instead of a girl. So, I was thinking, what is the difference that makes them not like girls?

This question was always in my mind while I was growing up. I can do anything that a boy can do, so why does it make a difference for society? Then, I found out that maybe it is because of studying. You know I always had a top score in my school and I wanted to be a doctor, but when I was in 12th grade, the Taliban came, and everything was so hard on the women, and my grandfather told me I couldn't go to university because Taliban was not allowing girls to do it, so when I came here and I started making money, I realized that in Afghanistan the reason men are so respected is because they are independent, they work and earn money to provide for their families. But for the women, the reason we are not respected is because we are not independent and always need someone to support us.
By giving other Afghani women the opportunity to work and earn money, I would be empowering them and help them build confidence that they do not need anyone all the time. I love having a job because if my husband has an accident or something happens, at least I will have a way to support the family and something that I can do. One of my friends has a bad disability condition she lost her sight in one of her eyes, and when I see women like, I think if I can do anything to make them more confident about themselves, that will be the greatest thing I can do in my life.

Q: If your business was gone tomorrow, what would the world lose?
A: I would say the world lose great food cooked with lots of care. For the women, they would lose hope. I have set a big goal and I know that. If my business does not work, I don't want the women to think that hard work does not pay off just because I worked very hard and didn't reach the goal.

Q: Shaista, is there anything else that I did not ask about that you would like to share?
A: I firmly believe that Afghani food is very healthy. And because Americans mostly don't cook at home, the food we prepare is a hundred times healthier than any fast food. It is very tasty, healthy, and similar to Indian and Mediterranean food. There are not a lot of spices. With Indian food, my kid cannot eat anything because it is very spicy. But with Afghani food, there are typically options for elders and for the kids. There are options for the gluten free and vegetarians. Afghani food can be accommodating for many preferences.

Leah Lonsbury, founder of Just Bakery

Q: How did Just Bakery come to be?
A: I was living in Wisconsin and involved in a church that had a Just Bakery where men and women would train for job employment after leaving incarceration. I also hated my job. I was thinking about if I could do whatever I wanted to do, what is that I want to do? I moved back to Atlanta. I headed my church's sponsorship of a family being resettled from Afghanistan and began to really love the family. I also got involved with the International Rescue Committee and loved the work they were doing, so I got to see first-hand what the challenges for long-term resettlement were and identified continuing education and professional credentialing as two of the biggest hurdles. Establishing a new life here and securing economic stability were great challenges and a way for us to walk with the folks that were in our program and see them make change in their own lives.

Q: Why did you decide on chartering as a non-profit versus a social enterprise?
A: The nonprofit designation changes the way people think about the work that we are doing. It makes people be more willing to be our customer and work with us. It also gives us the chance to accept donations that are tax deductible. Businesses cannot accept donations, and nor does anybody donate to businesses. At the time when I was applying, Georgia did not have a B corporation designation. I don't know if they're more friendly to that now. Non-profit seemed to fit what we do so it was a good match.

Q: People don't typically associate non-profits with bakeries, where do you guys sell now and how did you start?
A: We sell at the Decatur Farmers' Market, which during winter season, becomes the Winter Market. When we started, our first items were French bread and multi-grain, Dark Chocolate Sea Salt cookies and Peanut Butter cookies were the first on our list.

Q: Is there a reason why you're leaning more towards an American-popular selection versus other baked goods that reflect the cultural heritage of the employees?
A: Well we are selling to Americans so we'll have to sell what they will buy. We found it to be incredibly hard to get recipes from our staff. We ask and ask and ask but it's very hard to get that information. Also, so many of the people who work with us have been living in camp for so long that they really got disconnected from such recipes. You know, baking is a luxury, bread is not a luxury, but it is also hard to make, when you're in that situation. We do always have one or two things that reflect our bakers' cultures. For example, we had a cookie recipe and a biscuit recipe that we had to double the amount of sugar to the original recipe so that people would eat them. So many of our staff members are from Africa, where there is not much baking anyway but more fired. And we can't fry things because we can't travel with them.

Q: How did you come up with the name Just Bakery?
A: The plan was to have a name that would point out the fact that we were different.

Q: In your opinion, why is food, in particular, an attractive means of entrepreneurship for immigrants and refugees?

A: Well, it is a language everybody speaks. You know, everybody eats. It is a sustaining act that we do. There's something very human about it that connects us because it speaks to everyone. It's a way of touching your identity and sharing with the world because we eat with our families according to our cultures. It's accessible, so it's not like you're opening a printing business that requires a lot of specialized equipment.

Q: What were the biggest obstacles and hurdles for you when you were first founding Just Bakery?
A: It took us a year and a half to get our 501c3 and the IRS blocked our first application and then our second one got high up because their departments don't communicate at all so that was tricky. It is expensive to pay a living wage. Every other Wednesday is when I do payroll, and that is when I realize how little money we actually have in the bank. Anytime you're going to pay a living wage and try to use locally-sourced and sustainable ingredients, we end up with little money. We currently don't have a store front, so we don't have consistent sales to support our operations. We can't be someone's main source of baked goods now because if they run out of bread, for example, on Wednesday, they won't wait until Saturday when we sell or drive out of their way 60 miles to buy our products. If we were selling everywhere, they would buy it. Baking equipment is expensive too. It cost more than $8,000 on ovens, but they are absolutely crucial. We had three old ovens that were slowly dying down and one quit before Valentine's Day. Also, with any workforce, you have people and people are complicated and when you to it that most people in our staff are living in poverty and don't have access to consistent healthcare or are trying to navigate life in a third or fourth language and are doing that with complications of family. All of our cooks have something going on for the most part like school or another job or family. So, we work on those pieces too.

Q: So, if you had to go back in time, would you do anything differently?
A: I'm sure I would. Yeah, I mean, I would make different decisions about trying to open our store front in Tucker, but there were a lot of pieces that I couldn't see going into it that all came together and pointed that it wasn't the right place or the right time. I don't know if I could change those things. I would have probably prepared myself more. I don't have a background in business. I never learned how to run a nonprofit before. So, the learning curve was very steep for me. I'm an extrovert who thinks out loud and would always rather work in a group or with a partner. So, parts of it were lonely. Now I have a wonderful team and staff manager, who it's good to work through things with and depend upon.

Q: If Just Bakery was gone tomorrow, what would Atlanta lose?
A: I see it as one creative solution to the lack of access to continuing education and professional credentialing. Atlanta would lose that and this opportunity to know our people, who come from around the world and bring gifts and humor. We cross some boundaries that we do purposefully to try to create a more diverse community that is more reflective of the world and how the world should and could be. We are not the only expression of that, but we are one way.

Kerry Brodie, founder of *Emma's Torch*

Q: What was your first introduction to Emma Lazarus and why did you think of her specifically when you were creating the nonprofit?
A: I'm a big history nerd, and in particular Jewish history, so I've grown up knowing about Emma Lazarus and the history of Jewish refugee work. I was really interested in making sure that Emma's Torch wasn't isolated but a part of the aspirations of this country, of welcoming a stranger. Emma's work was instrumental to conceptualizing what it meant to welcome a stranger and then also she was a very big advocate for refugee vocational training for refugees, not only to get here but to integrate in society. That was kind of where the rational came from.

Q: The restaurant serves new American food by new immigrants, could you tell us a bit about that?
A: Our restaurant is really a non-profit. The entire reason we even have a restaurant is to support our students, but part of the reason why we ensure that when they graduate, they can access the job market, so our menu itself is about how we can use food that is local and sourced in a responsible way and that integrates the skills that our students would learn in culinary school and familiarize our students with what we call as American food, which is constantly morphing and evolving and then also to allow for our students to have an impact so we would be learning from them as well. That is a big part of what we do here.

Q: In your opinion, why is food, in particular, an attractive means of entrepreneurship for immigrants and refugees?
A: Yeah, 69% of restaurants in New York are owned by first or second-generation immigrants. There's something about food that makes it a way for people to connect that really transcends language barriers and it is the type of thing that can be mentally comforting. I could talk to anyone forever about how important it is to welcome refugees and make them a part of our community and how they are such a big asset, but it is so much easier if I do that with putting food in front of them. There's also something very humanizing about the act of cooking. My memories of cooking were of my grandmother in Washington D.C. are not that different from one of my students' memories cooking with their grandmother in Afghanistan. That helps begin to see each other as human beings to overcome the dangerous rhetoric that we are hearing these days. There is just as well documented history of any wave of migration that has come to the United States and was able to integrate through food.

Q: Do you remember a specific moment of epiphany when you decided that you wanted to start Emma's Torch?
A: To make such a big decision, there are lot of moments that take place. The one that really stands out is that I had been playing with this idea around in my head and thought it would be really cool and that someone should do it. The only person I told about it was my husband. I was joking to him that you know someone should do this and I'll go work for them, and eventually he turned to me, and said, "Why not you?"
That was the first time when I began to think what my responsibility is. If I have this idea, why am I not doing it. That was the most pivotal moment for Emma's Torch.

Q: What were the biggest obstacles when you were starting the business?
A: Anytime you're starting something, you have a powerful vision of it in your head and you know it is going to be good, but on paper you don't have anything yet and the only person that has that vision is you. I've always seen the vision for Emma's Torch and what it could be but also the challenges that would come with it, and it never seemed impossible.

Q: If you can go back to when you were starting the business, what would you do differently and why?
A: I would tell myself to chill out a little bit. Every day, we learn something new and every day, we are changing and evolving. One of the big things is respecting the individuality of our students. Our program is about empowerment. We want to empower people whose choices have been taken from them to make choices, and so recognizing that every moment is very integral, and sometimes we forget that and forget that this individual's challenge isn't followed, and we should give them an opportunity to make a choice. We don't tell them what to do. That is something I think we are constantly working on, but I would have focused on earlier.

Q: We don't typically see non-profit restaurants, how was navigating the legal process of getting chartered?
A: I was very fortunate that New York City has an organization called the New York Lawyers' Alliance. Basically, you apply to them, and once you are accepted, they handle all of your legal needs. We are very fortunate that we were accepted as one of their portfolio projects and they helped us file all the paperwork with IRS to become a nonprofit, but I'm not going to lie, staying on top of the accounting and legal requirements as a non-profit and on top of it the legal requirements as a restaurant and because we are dedicated to workforce equity so unlike most restaurants that operate a 100% legally, there definitely has been some challenges. But I'm very thankful for all who have offered us probono legal support and probono accounting support. They really taught me a lot so that we were able to navigate those challenges.

Q: Where do you see Emma's Torch in the next 10 years?
A: Our vision has always been that the way you can change hearts and minds is one dish at a time, so it is one thing to do Emma's Torch in New York but our goal is to replicate the program across the country to make sure that in communities that are less welcoming to refugees, they are not talking about us and them, but about welcoming the people that are going to drive the economy and enhance the food that they are eating. So, over the next 10 years, we are going to start selecting strategic locations where we can make an impact every day in our restaurant.

Q: If your business was gone tomorrow, what would the world lose?
A: I think the world would lose something really delicious. I also think it would lose a little spark of hope. There is a really great speech by Peggy Noonan, and I don't know if I like Peggy Noonan, but one of the speeches she gave for better or for worse was about how the United States was made of tiny sparks of light. These sparks are what drives our country forward and what makes our people aspire to do more, have more, and be more. Emma's Torch is a tiny spark of light, so I don't think Emma's Torch suddenly disappearing would destroy everything. But if we lose one spark of light, we lose one point of optimism.

Malek Alarmash, founder of *Suryana Cuisine*

Q: What was the first item you placed on the menu and why?
A: The first item we placed on the menu was chick-veggie because we think the plate is just authentic, delicious, and represents Damascus with the spices in the chicken.

Q: What does "home food" mean to you?
A: Home food means everything about Syria. Means gathering with the family and friends for a picnic on a Friday which is our weekend.

Q: What role does food play in your culture?
A: Sharing food means generosity and when you share more food you are more generous.

Q: Why did you choose to start a food business and not a plumbing business or coffee shop for example?
A: I started a food catering business because for me smelling the spices from the food we make in the U.S reminds me of the smells from the street vendor on Damascus streets and give us (me and my mom -the head chef of Suryana Cuisine) the Feeling of Home.

Q: What does Suryana mean? How did you decide on this name for the business?
A: Suryana means our Syria in the Arabic. The word itself contains love, care and passion-I guess-

Q: What value does your food business add to residents of your community?
A: I guess Suryana Cuisine brings people together because we believe that food brings people together and with our touch it might even bring them closer.

Q: What were the biggest obstacles when you were starting the business?
A: Suryana Cuisine has been like a race one a road full of rocks for us (Malek-CEO and Majeda -Head chef and founder) and either we win, or we lose but we chose to be a winner and we are still challenging ourselves to do more.

Q: If you can go back to when you were starting the food business, what would you do differently and why?
A: I wouldn't have done anything differently because I believe that people would learn better after doing mistakes.

Q: Besides the financial benefit, what else, if any, is this business adding to your own life?
A: Suryana Cuisine is adding many skills to my personal life. Mostly management and leadership skills.

Q: If your business was gone tomorrow, what would Atlanta lose?

A: If Suryana Cuisine has gone. Atlanta won't lose anything because we believe that there are many food businesses are successful and do even better than us. However, we are doing our best to establish our mission and I guess that Atlanta won't let us down because we just love our New

Home and being here is a blessing to us and many refugees and us as refugees, we hope to be blessing to Atlanta, Ga and the United States of America.

Appendix II: Survey Questions

1. What does home food mean to you?
2. What is your favorite cuisine?
3. How and how often do you access your favorite cuisine? (please select all that applies)
    a. Regularly (weekly basis)
    b. Often (monthly basis)
    c. Rarely (yearly basis)
    d. From local restaurant
    e. I prepare it myself
    f. A family member/friend/partner prepares it for me
    g. I order it online
    h. Currently where I live, I cannot access my favorite cuisine
    i. Other (please specify)
4. Do you like trying new food?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Other (please specify)
5. Do you prefer to eat?
    a. Alone
    b. With friends
    c. With partner
    d. With family
    e. All the above
    f. Other (please specify)
6. Food and community building: select all that which you agree with.
    a. Food serves as a platform to create connections
    b. Food can help with community building
    c. Food can bring people together
    d. Ethnic food is important in celebrating diversity and preserving culture
    e. Atlanta has many ethnic food restaurants
    f. Atlanta has few ethnic food restaurants
    g. Atlanta would blossom with more ethnic food restaurants
    h. Atlanta needs more immigrant-owned restaurants
    i. Other (please specify)
7. What source do your meals come from? Please select all that applies.
    a. I cook
    b. I have a meal plan
    c. I eat at work from my work location's cafeteria (i.e. hospital, company, etc…)
    d. I buy food from outside
    e. I equally buy and cook
    f. Someone else (family/chef) prepares my meals