



EAT

Eating Alone Together

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EXPLORING DOMESTIC SPACE THROUGH FOOD-RELATED ACTIVITIES

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FOOD ARCHITECTURE DESIGN CONVIVALITY MEALS LIFESTYLE DOMESTICITY

---to anyone I have ever shared a meal with.

**“ If you really want to make a friend,
go to someone’s house and eat with them...
the people who give you their food
give you their heart.”**

Cesar Chavez
Mexican American civil rights activist

EAT

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exploring individual domestic space
through food-related activities

a magazine - thesis realized for

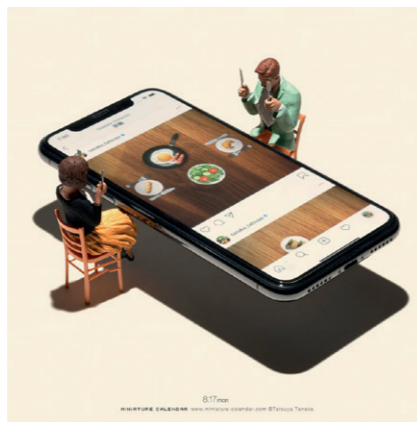
MA ca

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Cover artwork by Tatsuya Tanaka for his project "Miniature Calendar"
(source: <https://miniature-calendar.com/>)



Elvis Presley eating the iconic Fool's Gold sandwich in 1958
Fool's Gold Loaf is a sandwich made by the Colorado Mine Company, a restaurant in Denver, Colorado. The sandwich consists of a single warmed, hollowed-out loaf of bread filled with the contents of one jar of creamy peanut butter, one jar of grape jelly, and a pound of bacon.
(source: Hulton Archive/Getty Images
<https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/>)

- RESUMEN -

Esta tesis investiga la domesticidad individual y la percepción del espacio a través de un estudio de los hábitos alimentarios modernos en hogares unipersonales. La comida, el espacio, la individualidad, la cultura, la corporalidad, la convivencia y la tecnología son algunos de los polos básicos en torno a los cuales la investigación trata de establecer conexiones, relaciones y tendencias, para reflexionar sobre la importante, pero muchas veces infravalorada, relación entre las actividades alimentarias y la percepción espacial.

Comienza con la exploración de la comida como un ritual dentro del entorno doméstico de las culturas mediterráneas de alto contexto de Grecia y España y cómo los valores culturales, educativos y tradicionales de “comer juntxs” tienden a desaparecer a medida que la sociedad se vuelve cada vez más individualizada y la gente joven comienza a vivir y “comer sola”. Las actividades relacionadas con la comida afectan nuestra percepción del espacio y, a medida que nos trasladamos a hogares individuales, estas actividades se ven comprometidas.

A continuación, la investigación trata de localizar cambios espaciales, sociales y tecnológicos que han hecho posible la independencia personal, han afectado tanto al concepto de domesticidad como a nuestros hábitos alimentarios y han llevado a la individualización del espacio doméstico. Estos cambios, revolucionarios o más sutiles, afectan a variables que posteriormente influyen en la manera en que percibimos el espacio y los rituales y comportamientos alimentarios, tanto de manera positiva como negativa.

Añadiendo una dimensión práctica a la investigación que permite profundizar en los temas en cuestión, se publicó una encuesta online para obtener más datos sobre los hábitos alimentarios modernos y su relación con el espacio doméstico, la identidad y la tecnología. La tesis después pasa a estudiar a 10 personas que viven en hogares unipersonales en las ciudades de Atenas y Madrid. Se pone el foco en el espacio doméstico y cómo se desarrollan los hábitos alimentarios dentro de él, con el fin de comprender mejor los conflictos y tensiones entre el espacio, los hábitos alimentarios y la transición del entorno familiar al hogar individual.

Para concluir, se realiza una exploración de alternativas a comer a solas en casa, como una forma de reflexionar sobre cómo evolucionan nuestros hábitos alimentarios dentro del entorno doméstico y de buscar maneras de recuperar las dimensiones perdidas de la comida, formas de poder comer juntxs, mientras estamos solxs.

- ABSTRACT -

This thesis investigates individual domesticity and space perception through a study of modern eating habits in single-person households. Food, space, individuality, culture, corporality, conviviality and technology are some of the basic poles around which the investigation tries to establish connections, relations and tendencies, in order to reflect on the important, but many times undervalued relationship between food-related activities and space perception.

It starts with the exploration of the meal as a ritual inside the domestic environment of the Mediterranean high-context cultures of Greece and Spain and how the cultural, educational and traditional values of “eating together” tend to disappear, as society becomes more and more individualized and young people start living and “eating alone”. Food-related activities affect our perception of space and as we move to individual households, these activities get compromised.

Moving on, the investigation tries to locate spatial, social and technological changes that have made personal independence possible, have affected so much the concept of domesticity as our eating habits and have led to the individualization of the domestic space. These changes, revolutionary or more subtle, affect variables that subsequently influence the way we perceive space and food rituals and behaviors, both in good and bad ways.

Adding a practical dimension to the investigation that allows further exploration of the issues in question, a survey was released online to gain more data on modern eating habits and their relation to domestic space, identity and technology. The thesis then moves on to study 10 young individuals that live in single-person households in the cities of Athens and Madrid. The domestic space and how eating habits are developed inside it are put into focus, in order to better understand the confictions and the tensions between space, eating habits and the transition from family to individual home environments.

To conclude, an exploration of alternatives to eating alone at home is realized, as a way to reflect on how our eating habits evolve inside the domestic environment and to look for ways we can re-claim the lost dimensions of the meal, ways to can eat together, while alone.







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INTRODUCTION

TOPIC & CONTEXT

The domestic space, everywhere but more intensely in the city, is constantly changing, especially in recent years. The evolution of technology and the social, economic and urban developments are mutating the concept of family as we know it, as modern society is becoming more individualized than ever. The domestic sphere is strongly affected and one aspect from which we can study these changes is our eating habits.

C. Fischler has characterized the modern society as being in a state of “gastro-anomy”, which is the individual anxiety fueled by open-ended food choices and the lack of clear criteria for nutritional decision making, as well as the deviation from the eating habits of the traditional family (Friedland 94). That conventional family usually brought with it more strict rules, fixed eating schedules, but also healthier food choices and a more balanced diet, while it kept alive the social, cultural and educational dimensions of the meal, but it also meant the rigidity of roles and hierarchies in the family system.

Nowadays, we live mostly as individuals and the family nucleon tends to be a person between 20 and 40 years old, living alone in the modern city and faced with all these changes concerning domestic space and eating habits. As the way of life becomes more and more individualized, **food-related activities change** as well. Deviating from the typical family meals, eating is becoming an individual experience and its mere nutritional value is dominating over all the other aspects of the meal. This evolution would not have been achieved without the advancement of technology and its intrusion in our domestic sphere, more than anything.

The introduction of electric domestic appliances like the oven and, more importantly, the microwave in the kitchen, the appearance of the TV

in the living room and the addition of internet in our homes, which transforms them to hyperconnected hybrid spaces, have all played an important role in changing our eating habits. The kitchen, the dining and the living room are the rooms more affected by these changes in this point of view, but as they change, they also affect the rest of the rooms, formerly less connected with food-related activities, such as the bedroom and the bathroom.

Our kitchens are nowadays more equipped than ever, but we use them less and less, the preparation of food taking place out of our domestic space. And as the society is getting more and more individualized, dining rooms tend to disappear from the typical apartment, or replaced by other functions. Although the meals used to take place only in the kitchen or the dining room, they used to bring with them all the aspects that differentiate eating from a mere nutritional act; eating as a ritual, as culture, as an encounter, as entertainment, as pleasure. Nowadays, by the re-signification of the meal in the domestic sphere, all these elements tend to separate from one another and lose their importance; **we eat ready-made food alone in front of our TV or our laptop, in our living room or in our bedroom.** But it seems that by separating all these elements, food seems to have lost its potential as a social and cultural agent.

This realization makes us reflect upon **the role of food in everyday domestic life.** An investigation about the evolution of these technological advances around the food practices at home could shed light on the invisible layers of this process and enable us to think how we can turn this new status of the meal, these new forms of eating at home to something that is not losing its potential, but re-signifies it and re-gains all these lost dimensions of the meal. •

FOCUS & SCOPE

The investigation has an anthropological approach and follows a **semiotic analysis**, exploring the codes, representations and relationships around food-related activities in the domestic sphere. It is also an investigation on the topologies of food in the domestic space. **Balancing between an architectural and a sociological point of view**, the result of this work is a combination of multiple resources and draws information and data from a diverse field of study.

Although it is a mainly **theoretical and critical work**, it also incorporates practical elements, as the case studies are studied ethnographically, through actual visits in real life single-person households. •

HYPOTHESIS

From its conception, the present investigation starts with the conviction that **studying and analyzing the eating habits of young people that live alone could provide us with a better understanding of modern lifestyle and expand our knowledge concerning the perception of domestic space in modern society**. Mapping these habits and their relation to the intimate space of these individuals will shed light on the way family, education, culture, tradition and technology affect domesticity, space perception and user experience of the domestic space and could eventually serve as a detonator for the (re)definition of domesticity and modern living.

Going deeper, a series of general and specific hypotheses is needed, beginning from this general approach. These hypotheses focus on interesting aspects of the general hypothesis, to illustrate and further analyze this phenomenon.

General Hypotheses

The investigation is based on three general observations that allow the formation of three general hypotheses.

The first observation and the general starting point of this work is that **our eating habits affect the way we perceive space** and that all food related activities inside the domestic sphere play a major role in how we connect with space and corporality.

The second key point is that **in modern society more people tend to live, and therefore eat alone**. The emerging individual households are a result of social, economic and technological advancements that have transformed domesticity and have made possible a more individualized, augmented and expanded domestic space and time.

The third observation concerns the combination of the former two and offers the basis for this investigation. It is considered that **changing from a traditional, family household to a single-person household affects our eating habits strongly and, therefore, the way we perceive domestic space**. Especially in Mediterranean cultures, more specifically Greek and Spanish, where the notion of the family and the sense of tradition and conviviality are stronger, these changes affect individuals in a more intense way.

From these observations, we can then specify two more that support the former ones and lead us to a more specific field of analysis:

The first one supports that a **cartography of individual households** and an investigation of food-related activities and spatial habits of individuals that live alone will allow us a better understanding of this new lifestyle and a recognition of new domestic practices in the organization of time and the perception of corporality and space, which point out contemporary tendencies in the modern way of living.

The second one is that **domestic space and social changes do not adapt with the same rhythm and do not affect each other in the same way**. In the field of eating habits, this is more apparent, as individuals find themselves trying to adapt their former family habits inside their single-person households with difficulty. The compartmentalization of space inside the urban grid does not allow certain social and food related activities to take place as they used to, **and therefore tensions arise**, leading to changes in habits imposed by space and not vice versa.

Although 83.5% of the participants of the survey prefers eating with company to eating alone and 56.7% prefer eating at home to eating outside, 9,8% of them do not have any dining space in their houses, while 33% only has a small dining space in their kitchen that cannot host more than two diners.

(a survey was realized for the purposes of this investigation, more info on page 00)

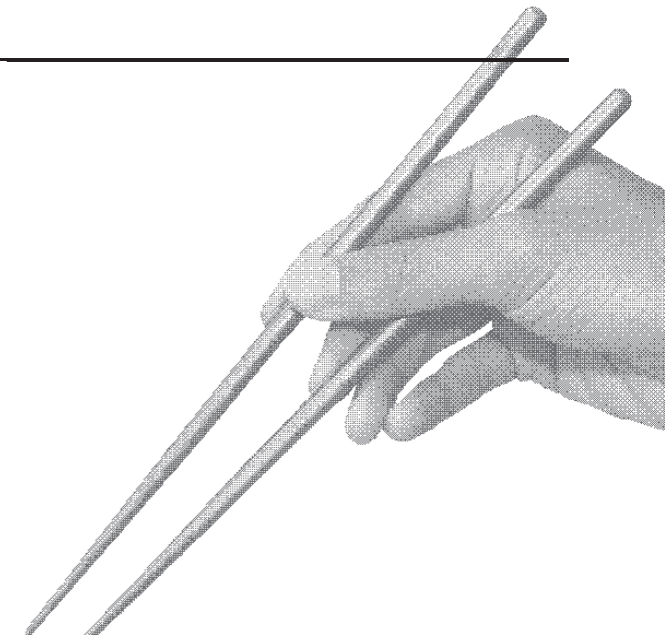
Other hypotheses:

1. In single-person households, as the needs and habits of only one individual prevail, the variety and multidimensionality of different spatial habits and the difference in how domestic space is perceived are more apparent than anywhere else.

2. Contemporary single-person apartments and studios consist of invariant fundamental spatial components whose form and distribution do not allow the development of diverse and alternative lifestyles. Single-person apartments are not usually designed with the aim of serving the needs of modern-day individuals, they tend to be smaller adaptations of the old concept of the “family apartment”, focusing on the reduction of space before anything else.

3. The lack of domestic spaces designed for individual lifestyles is a result of insufficient architectural and social investigation about domesticity and of ethnographic anthropological studies on individual households. As the typical family nucleon is being redefined, so should the norms for domestic space.

4. Eating habits are not the only, but one of the most important indicators of how domestic space is used and experienced and their analysis allows us to visualize contradictions on how domestic space is designed and experienced. •



OBJECTIVES

1 / Explore the concept of the meal in the domestic space of Mediterranean countries, in the past and on current days, in order to evaluate its evolution and understand how deeply it is connected with society, domesticity, corporality and identity.

2 / Study the social, economic and technological norms and changes that have affected the domestic space and our eating habits and have therefore allowed single-person households to become more common in recent years.

3 / Re-encounter and re-signify the social, cultural and educational dimensions of shared meals in the individualized domestic space.

4 / Visualize and understand the complexity of domesticity in the case of single-person households through food-related activities, in order to explore how these activities affect the perception of space.

5 / Obtain data about modern eating habits and their relation to domestic space, identity and technology, through a survey addressed to modern day individuals.

6 / Investigate concrete case studies of single-person households of people between 23 and 33 years, in Athens and in Madrid, and study their domestic space through their eating habits.

7 / Experiment with new forms of knowledge for the elaboration of procedures for the investigation of one-person domesticity and the reconfiguration of its spatiality and temporality, to better describe an emerging and complex reality.

8 / Working with data from different fields and combining cultural, anthropological, social and spatial elements, this investigation aims to **shed light** on the relationship between space and food, in the relatively understudied field of one-person domesticity. By doing that, it aspires to spark the interest in the future of domesticity and contribute to the wider emerging field of research concerning architecture, domesticity and individuality. •

STRATEGY, METHODOLOGY & STRUCTURE

This work tries to **investigate the changing habits around food-related activities in young, single-person households in Athens and Madrid in the first two decades of the 21st century**. It deals with how the ritual of the meal is perceived in modern Mediterranean societies, how food-related activities affect the perception of domesticity and space, what changes related to food in the domestic space allowed the individualization of the household and, finally living and eating alone in Athens and Madrid, in the 21st century. To do so, various methods of investigation are applied, that change throughout the course of the research and get combined with each other. Academic, ethnographic and architectural tools have been used in order to approach the subjects at hand from various scopes.

The first approach consists of the academic research, in order to obtain a more specific theoretical basis and locate other academic works related to the subject. Because the subject belongs to a relatively new field of study and its nature is complex, the sources include bibliography from various fields, like architecture, sociology, anthropology, technology and gastronomy. Various academic journals and magazines were accessed too, in order to locate other interdisciplinary works that combine knowledge from space, architecture, cultural and food studies.

This body of information, although it runs through the whole work, is mostly presented in the first two chapters of this research (apart from the introduction). The first chapter explores **the rituals of the meal in the domestic space** and how it changes when people who grew up in more traditional, nuclear family structures transit to individual households in modern society, households that are no longer isolated but expanded and augmented from the influence of technology. The second chapter attempts to locate and analyze **the social, economic, cultural and technological developments that have affected the domestic sphere** and food-related domestic activities and have thus allowed the individualization of the domestic space.



The second approach has to do with data collection from an online survey. The aim of the survey was to gather data about current eating habits, their relationship with domestic space, culture, and technology, and people's opinions and behavior concerning food-related activities. It did not have any age or geographical restrictions, neither was it addressed only to people living alone, as its purpose was to establish more general tendencies and patterns on eating habits, before focusing to young individuals that live alone. Although the study focuses on young individuals that live and develop their eating habits in single-person households, the survey was addressed to a wider public, in order to gather information between different age groups and understand the differences, confusions and continuances between these young individuals and other age and social groups.

The results of the survey are presented through graphics, infographics, text and mixed presentation methods throughout the main body of work, to support the arguments made in each chapter. By reinforcing the theoretical basis of this work, the survey results offer a second reading of the subject, link the academic research with user experience and help to establish tendencies and patterns.

The third approach of the subject in hand concerns various case studies in the cities of Athens and Madrid. Young individuals living in single-person households in these cities, 10 in total (4 in Madrid and 6 in Athens) were chosen as case studies in order to study their eating habits inside their domestic space more profoundly. The aim was to create cartographies of food-related activities and how they are linked to domesticity and the interviewees' backgrounds. The information was gathered through interviews, photos, house visits and plans of the apartments, and the case studies are presented in the third chapter, in the form of conceptual cartographies, following the example of George Perec's work in *Species of Spaces* (1974) and *Life: A User's Manual* (1978) and of the Master thesis of Rubén López Sánchez *Solos en Casa: Espacio y tiempo domésticos de los jóvenes solos en Madrid* (2018) for the same Master's Programme.

The final chapter of this investigation tries to define some conclusions based on the work presented in the previous chapters. By connecting the results of the survey, the analysis of the case studies and the bibliographic research, this concluding chapter reflects about the future of eating habits and domestic space and aims to open and amplify the debate on the subject.

SURVEY

Before closing this introductory chapter, a general description of the survey mentioned above should be made, in order to be able to understand better its results, that are presented throughout all of the work.

The survey was created and shared through Google Forms. It included 55 questions, 5 of which were about demographics. From the rest, 27 questions concerned eating habits and domestic space and required either a small text or a multiple-choice answer. The other 23 questions concerned behaviors and opinions about food-related activities and different dimensions of the concept of the meal, and they followed the forced Likert scale format, which only has a four-point scale instead of the typical five-point range, in order to make the participants think better and force them to have an opinion, by eliminating the "neutral" middle point.

The survey was open for submissions from the 1st of July until the 15th of August 2020. It took averagely 12 minutes to complete and the participants rated it with an average 4.38 out of 5 for its interest and satisfaction/enjoyment. In the 45 days the survey was open, it was completed by 165 individuals from 11 countries, the majority of which were from Greece and Spain. The participants were from 20 to 67 years old, with an average age of 30 years. Out of the 165 participants, 140 have an education level higher than a high school degree and almost all of them live in neighborhoods that are considered middle to high class, while 46 of them are currently living in single-person households. Of them, 38 individuals expressed further interest in the subject by willingly leaving their contact details. Some of them fitted the other criteria set for the case studies and 2 of them were selected as such, while the rest of the case studies were chosen through the broader social circle of the author.

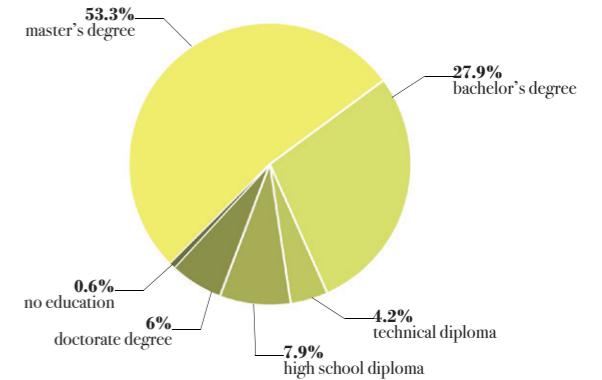
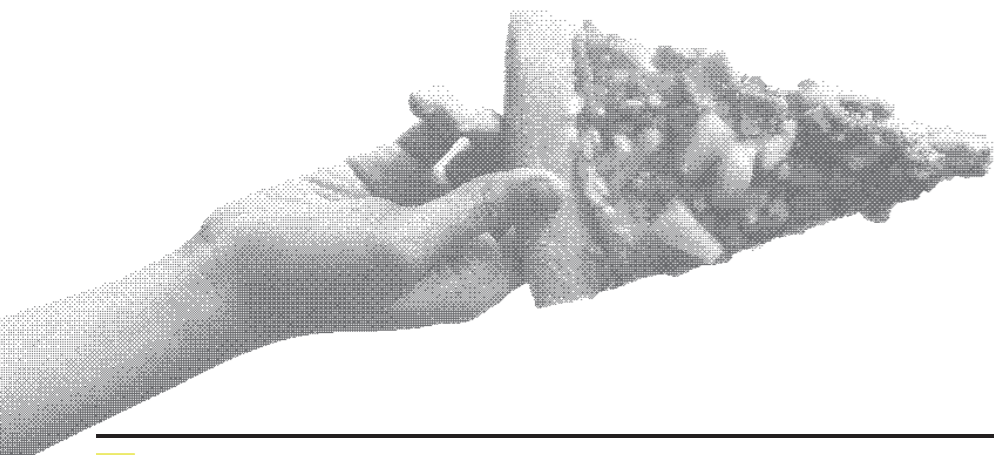
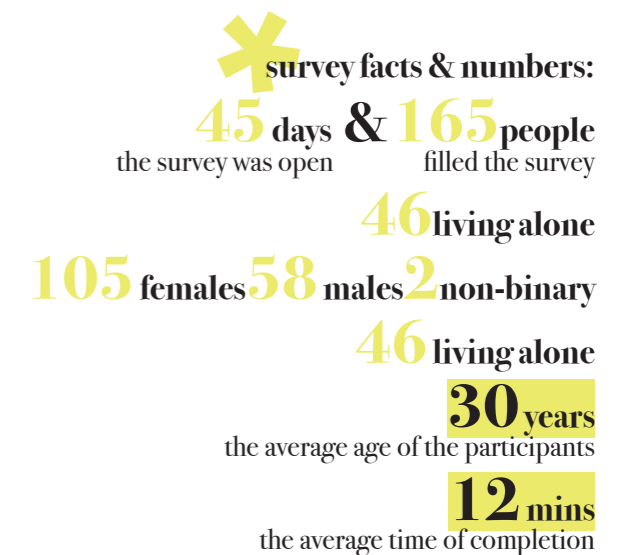


figure 1: educational level of survey participants



CASE STUDIES

As far as the case studies are concerned, they were chosen based on certain criteria that serve the purpose of this investigation:

First of all, **the individuals selected all live in the urban centers of Madrid and Athens**, as, on the one hand, these were the two cities accessible for ethnographic investigation and, on the other, the Greek and the Spanish cultures share certain similarities. As Mediterranean cultures, they are considered high-context cultures (Hall) and they have similar diets, ingredients and traditions around family and food, and it is exactly these cultures that are of more interest for the investigation, as meals are an important part of their lifestyle. Furthermore, Madrid and Athens are cities of similar size and urban sprawl, their rhythms and lifestyle are very similar and the average social and economic status of young people mostly are relatively close. Studying cases from these two cities therefore offers a relatively unified body of individuals, whose analysis could locate both similarities and differences that make the general results more interesting and more widely applied.

Secondly, **the individuals chosen all belong to the age group of 23 to 33 years and live alone**. This choice was not random, as this generation is of particular interest. Based on the changes that will be presented on the following chapters, the individuals of this age group grew up in households where family meals still played an important part of everyday life. The generation of their parents has already experienced changes in traditions around food-related activities and has tried to pass on some of them to their offspring, but most of them have been living in multiple-person households all their life. The generation at hand is the first one that has lived the individualization of domesticity so intensively and most of the case studies selected have started their adult life

in single-person households, so they present a bigger interest in how their eating habits and their perception of personal space have transformed in this transition. The fact that they live alone also allows for their personal habits to dominate the domestic space, as there are no conflicts with other individuals, and therefore they can be studied in an environment where they have not been through any mutation by other human agents. Finally, the generation selected is the one of the first affected so majorly by the intrusion of technology and the augmentation and hyper-connection of the domestic sphere and this, as a relatively new phenomenon, plays an important part, from an investigative point of view.

Procedure

All the cases were studied within the period from the 1st of July to the 31st of August 2020 and in all of them the same process has been applied. Firstly, they were **approached online and given a brief introduction to the subject**, along with an invitation to fill out the survey, if they have not already done so. After that, a convenient date was set up, and **a visit at their household** was arranged. There, **an interview of approximately 1 hour was carried out** and recorded with the permission of the individual, based on a pre-defined questions layout that can be seen in the Appendix, where notes were being taken. The layout was followed every time, in order to gather the required data, but the interview many times deviated and was carried out in a relaxed way, between the interviewer and the interviewee. After, during or before the interview, depending on the individual, **a series of photos of the household were taken and a sketch of the house plan was created**, accompanied by a more detailed register of the kitchen and the dining space. After the house visit, the recorded interview was transcribed, and the house plan was transferred to a digital version based on the sketch realized. •



Barack Obama enjoying some french fries

Former US President Obama has a fondness for junk food, saying his 'big thing' is tortilla chips and guacamole. The "French" fry may not actually be French. Some claim that fries originated in Belgium, where villagers along the River Meuse traditionally ate fried fish. In winter, when the river froze, the fish-deprived villagers fried potatoes instead. It's said that this dish was discovered by American soldiers in Belgium during World War I and, since the dominant language of southern Belgium is French, they dubbed the tasty potatoes "French" fries. (source: National Geographic)

(source: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/28/barack-obama-seven-almonds-every-night-new-york-times>)



DYNAMICS OF THE MEAL

FOOD & SIGNIFICATIONS

The polysemy and important value of food-related activities derive from the fact that they are cultural activities, not just natural instincts. **Eating is not just consuming food to survive, just as getting dressed is not just getting protected from the elements of nature and having sex is not only for reproduction.** These fundamental elements of human life – food, clothing, and sex – show us how human beings are symbolic animals. Eating is a daily activity necessary for survival, of course, but also something else. As the French semiologist Roland Barthes said, **food is “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior”**. In view of the richness and the diversity of gastronomic cultures, one would be tempted to define the human being as the one who turns the issues of survival into aesthetic pleasures, into practices of living well, which inevitably transforms the physiology in culture (Aduriz).

Food, however ordinary or modest it may be, always carries significations. What and how we eat is never an act of mere necessity, but something that includes determined significations, that differentiate or unite cultures and social groups. **Our eating habits and our gastronomic culture – what, how, when, with whom, where and why we eat – are a result of a plurality of cultural, social, historic, and economic motives** (Aduriz). Even without an obvious pretense, eating is an action where many anthropological and social dimensions are reflected, in which are inscribed previous experiences of a social and cultural character.

In a way, we could say that we eat signs and significations. By eating, voluntarily or involuntarily, we express ourselves beyond food. Eating refers to social fashions, historical developments, individual sensibilities, social belongings, social roles, and specific situations. All acts

related to food are symbols with great communicative power. (Aduriz) With each act of eating, meanings are introduced into the world, so that each diet, personal or collective, is also symbolic. **The meal’s diversity of articulation probably results from each being one among many that, over time and through memory, accrue a history endowed with richly stratified meanings.** Prosaic habits are not rituals, for they lack the latter’s mythical substrate; but when meals are the practice under consideration the first may transcend their origins and become the second. Each serving spreads itself out over memories of antecedent practices whose historical accumulation saturates the situation with content that can be called symbolic, for its foundation or presumed origin it is believed to be “right” (Leatherbarrow 212).

Meals can be a means of communication or of creating identity, an activity with religious significance, a political act, and many other things. Food integrates functional (caloric, sanitary etc.), hedonistic (of taste, aesthetic etc.), symbolic and moral values. **Food consumption is a complex construction that articulates increasingly unique configurations, according to personal, collective, and cultural criteria.** The individual’s diet thus becomes a personal creation. It is nothing more than the desire to consider the scope of food as a space for personal fulfillment and expression, of exclusivity or inclusivity, of belonging, and of communicating (Aduriz). •

“The rituals of eating played out on the plane of the dining table are similar to the rituals of domestic life.”

FOOD & SPACE PERCEPTION

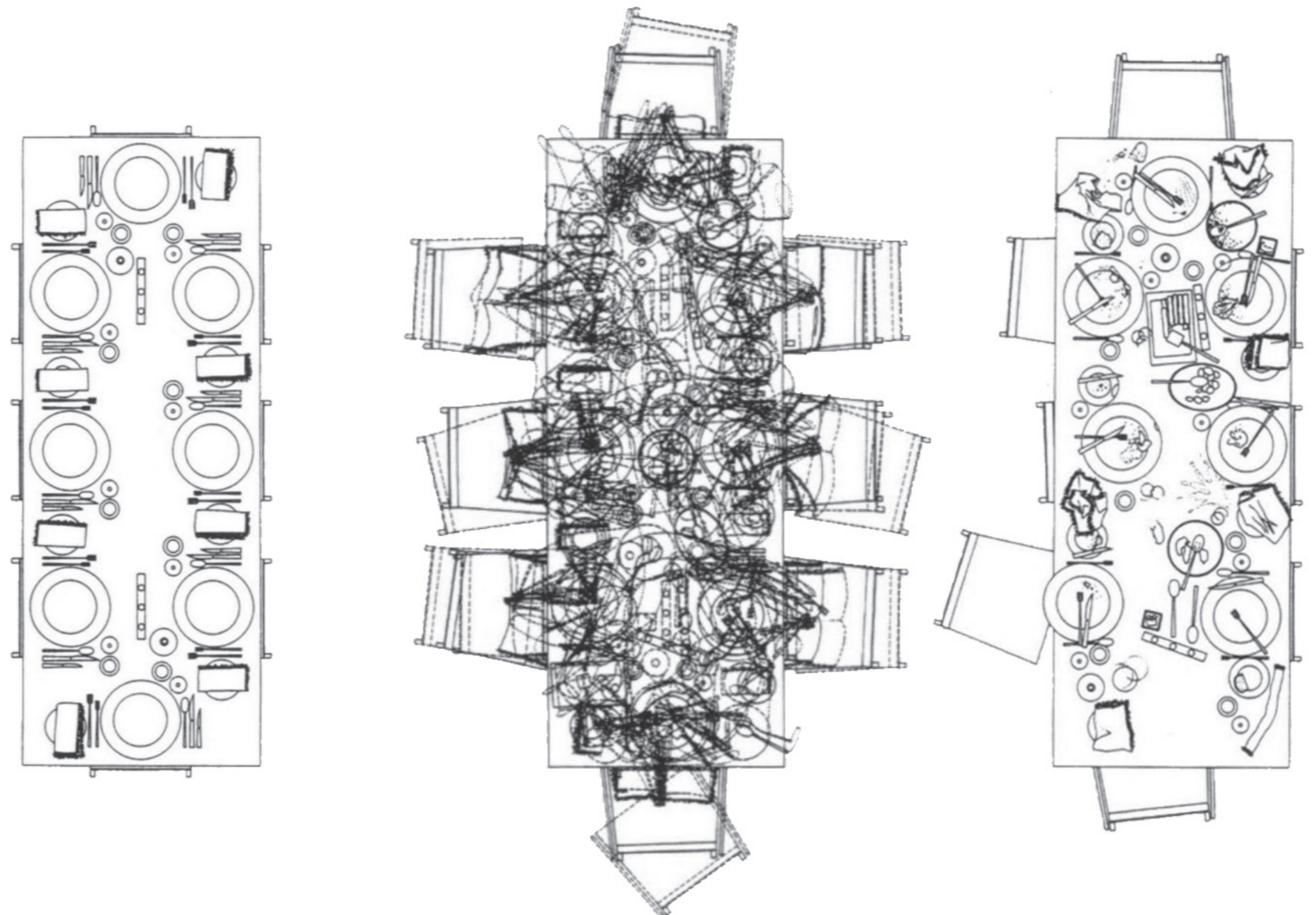
Apart from its cultural and communicational dimensions, food can also be seen as an indicator for our perception of space. Familiar to everyone in experience, but often neglected in architectural study, the everyday meal is a particularly interesting case of how spatial settings make sense and affect us in different ways. The meal is a temporal, social and spatial event, with performative elements that are inscribed in space and memory.

When a typical meal takes place, inscribed onto the table's surfaces are traces of what just occurred, in all its particularity. Like the workspace and the clothes of a painter at the end of the day, the table, the chairs, the tablecloth, the napkins, the cutlery, all elements fully indicate and project the ways they were used. But to notice only these traces is to neglect a different way the elements that make up the meal perform and present themselves throughout the meal's duration. To describe a table—or for that matter a room, sidewalk, or garden—as a trace in space and time is to recognize that it also served once as a prescription. Thus, a symmetry: inscription after the meal, prescription before it. But that is not all the setting had to say, or to imply. The enjoyment of a meal hardly requires steady attention to the elements that allow it to take place. The “service” they perform involves not only subjection and anticipation but a kind of recession, a retreat or withdrawal from perception. During a meal, the serving not the setting, sustains one's interest. The setting, although quiet, is not inarticulate. In our subliminal consciousness, a meal cannot be realized without its setting (Leatherbarrow 211).

These drawings of a dining table before (left), during (centre), and after (right) a meal, drawn by Wigglesworth, explore how the relationship between diners around a table can be compared to the interactions between occupants in the home.

(source: Architectural Review

<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/folio/folio-sarah-wigglesworths-dining-tables>)



Every meal can also be staged in various ways, depending on the desired meaning: **it can be something important or functional, blunt or extraordinary, extrovert or private, professional or casual.** Every object comprising the dining space plays an important role and the way a meal is set can signify power, prestige, status, tenderness, affection or anything else. (Aduriz) Throughout history, dinner settings have been used in many ways to symbolize meanings and create effects, and even in current years, the setting of a meal has a strong effect on its participants, it conveys messages and influences our feelings, our emotional state and our perception of space.

Part from the actual meal and its setting, our eating habits and the way we develop any food-related activities, them being eating, cooking, or buying and storing goods, affect the way we perceive space, domestic space in particular, in many dimensions. **The practical experience of food activities gets inscribed in the way we prioritize and use space inside our homes, especially when we live alone, and our personal habits are the only ones inscribed in the domestic space.** For example, think of the way we do our shopping. People that tend to do their shopping in a more organized way, by buying products and keeping them in stock in order to have them available when they want to cook need more storage space than people that tend to buy ingredients right before cooking a meal. This means that the organized ones will seek for a house that has a lot of storing cabinets. Also, people that tend to cook a lot, spend a lot of time in their kitchen and will give more importance to that space when choosing where to live than people that tend to eat prepared food. People that choose prepared food and delivery to eat frequently also have a tendency to eat their meals without the need of a table, as the packaging allows them to be carried to their sofa, their bed or their desk, while people that cook and eat home-made meals tend to relate the activity of eating with a more typical dining setting of a dining table or, at least, a coffee table.



Dutch painter Pieter Claesz's *Still Life with Turkey Pie* (1627)
(source: Wikimedia Commons)



Adolf Hitler eating with his sergeants while Nazi soldiers are watching (circa 1940)
(source: <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/943398/>)



The dinner scene at the end of *The Godfather, Part 2*
(source: <https://www.quora.com/Why-did-they-add-the-dinner-table-scene-at-the-end-of-The-Godfather-Part-2>)

Meal scenes from history and cinema

This relation between food-related activities and the domestic space can often work the other way round. **As people tend to leave their family homes and live alone more easily than ever before, many times economic and social factors make them compromise with the house they choose and they may have to choose a space that does not necessarily suit their needs and their habits.** The bedroom and the living room are of the most importance, as the survey also demonstrates, so the quality and size of the kitchen and the dining room can be compromised. Therefore, the individuals living with these compromises, because they do not have the luxury to choose a bigger house, must adapt their eating habits based on their available space. Most single-person houses and apartments do not include a dining room and in many cases the kitchen is only big enough for the necessary surfaces and appliances, so sofas, coffee tables, desks and beds are used as dining rooms instead, in lack of a proper dining table.

“My kitchen is almost non-existent. Its size affects everything. I used to cook and eat a proper meal with my family, now I eat on my small desk the ‘junk’-like food that my space and tools allow me to prepare”

Carmela

one of the case studies

survey facts & numbers:

from the **165** participants

83 prioritized the living room or the bedroom

when asked to rate house rooms based on their importance when choosing where to live

while only **32** chose the dining room or the kitchen as the most important house rooms.

This struggle between needs, habits and the availability and adaptability of domestic space is more apparent than ever in single-person households, as the practical experience and use of the domestic space subconsciously affects our spatial perception. **Although not thoroughly studied, these habits are an important indicator of modern everyday life** and influence not only the concept of domesticity, but the general value of the domestic space and the prioritization of rooms and spaces of the individuals. Studied from a wider point of view, our eating habits can be seen as an important inscription of modern life. And this is **more apparent in single-person households whose inhabitants come from high-context cultures and more traditional families, where food-related activities are most important**, so they must sacrifice and adapt a lot when living alone. •

FOOD ACTIVITIES IN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

Mediterranean cultures, just like most Asian cultures, as the Japanese, and in contrast with cultures of the developed western world, like the American culture or the Scandinavian cultures, are high context cultures. High-context cultures, as anthropologist Edward T. Hall first discussed in his 1976 book *Beyond Culture*, are those in which the rules of communication are primarily transmitted through the use of contextual elements (i.e., body language, a person's status, and tone of voice) and are not explicitly stated. The individual is not as important as the group and the situation, people, and non-verbal elements are more important than the actual words that are communicated. That is why, **in these cultures, indirect communication through activities, symbols and values, like conviviality and group rituals and activities, are more important than others.** Because of that, meals have always been a core activity to these cultures, and they have served as the means to develop social relations and transmit educational and cultural values.

In Mediterranean countries like Greece and Spain, when the term "family meal" is mentioned, they do not think just about food. A family meal consists of a gathering of many related individuals, usually from more than one generation, of a meal setting that includes an ample space, a large table, many chairs, a tablecloth, many utensils and occasionally decorative elements and, most importantly, food, big amounts of it, various plates, appetizers, bread, drinks and desert. This kind of performative event, along with all the preparations and planning in order for it to take place and satisfy its participants, although nowadays it takes place mostly on Sundays and celebratory days, if not even more rarely, used to be an everyday activity for most families, sometimes taking place more than once a day.

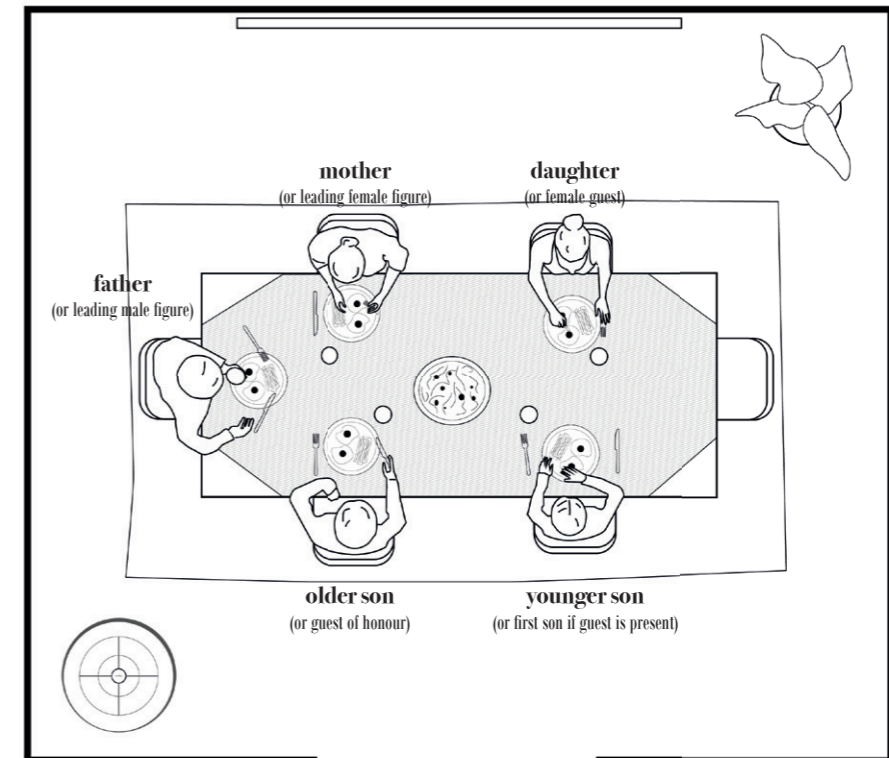
The high importance of the meal in these cultures was also inscribed in the domestic space, temporarily or permanently. **Almost every household not so long ago used to have a separate dining room, which was also one of the most heavily decorated spaces of the house.** A big table with more chairs than the members of the household, sideboards, china cabinets, paintings, art, family photos and memorabilia, plants and, in occasions, elaborate chandeliers used to make up the permanent setting of the dining room. This setting was complemented by temporary elements when a meal was about to take place. Additional chairs or a secondary table were added, depending on the expected guests, while the napkins, the cutlery, plates, glasses and tablecloth used depended on the importance of the meal and the occasion. Only in warmer weather would the meal be transferred to the outside patio or terrace if the space allowed it.

Family meals still take place and settings like this still exist in domestic environments, but every time more rarely. Both the kitchen and the dining room have been going through changes, following social and economic developments of modern urban lifestyle. But, not many years ago, these family meals used to be the principal activity of everyday life, playing an important role in the daily schedule of the family. **The whole structure of the traditional family nucleon in high-context cultures and the hierarchy in family relations were also reflected in the meal and its preparation:** the father was always the provider, bringing in the money to buy the ingredients and getting involved occasionally in the preparation only of the expensive and luxurious proteins like meat and fish, while the mother was responsible for everything else, as the basic caregiver of the family. She was the one that had to do the shopping, buying products and scheduling the meals based on a balanced diet and the economic allowance

of the family, she was the one preparing the meal and all its courses and she was the one cleaning up afterwards, occasionally assisted by the children or other female guests. **The setting of each meal also reflected the social structures inside the family:** the seating arrangement always saw the father on the head chair and his wife and children on his sides. When guests or other family members were present, usually the wife moved down on the hierarchy, with the male guests took up the seats on the sides of the husband.

Despite this archaic role delegation and the crystalized social dynamics that these family meals used to represent, **they also conveyed important ritualistic, cultural, and educational**

values for their participants. The importance of a balanced diet and of a wide taste spectrum, but also the values of conviviality, of sharing, of exchanging opinions and of tradition, were passed on from one generation to the next, always around a table. A meal used to be much more than nutrition, much more than a necessity, much more than a mere act of survival. It used to serve as a point of reference throughout the day, it was a pause from everything else going on, it was a temporary space of frictions and dynamics, a kind of ritual in its core. **The family meal and its preparation used to be a social, spatial, and temporal procedure that passed on traditions and educated its participants about food choices, cultural and social values that transcended the meal.** •



typical social and spatial distribution of a family meal
(source: author)

But all this is not necessarily bad. If the family table was, and sometimes still is, a field where the tension or order of a meal is inscribed by the setting, and the arrangement of seating mirrored social power and stereotypes, then these individualized meals in modern society have permitted a departure from the accepted social, temporal and spatial conventions of the food axis. **Eating alone at home creates a liminal space, offering a departure and even a rupture with all the crystalized structures of the traditional family** (Horwitz 260).

Eating alone while facing all these aspects of gastro-anomy can be frustrating and disorienting on the one hand, but, on the other, it offers a complete liberation from all the norms. It is not irrelevant that the last years a big increase of people adopting different diets such as vegetarianism and veganism has been noted (Bradley), now that people are free to follow their own food choices outside of restrictions imposed by the parents through the absolute surveillance of the family eating habits. Apart from that, **the overall individualization of the meal has permitted a different relation between the individual and their personal space.** Eating, and sometimes also food preparation, is a process that nowadays takes place outside of the kitchen and the dining room and this has allowed us to create new spatial dynamics inside the domestic sphere, which can have a big impact on how we perceive space and could be potential conditions to create new meal narratives.

It is important to dive into the changes that allowed this individualization of the household and lead to this state of “gastro-anomy”, as we will find out that they are not irrelevant to how domesticity has changed in recent years. **And, even though living alone is not necessarily a bad thing, losing these parallel dimensions of food-related activities and not paying attention to how these activities affect our perception of space in modern day life can be damaging.** We should be able to understand these shifts and tendencies better, in order to manage to preserve the values that are important, while liberated in our new individual domestic spaces. •



Audrey Hepburn eating pasta with Oscar de la Renta in Portugal, c. 1968. Pasta is one of the most famous foods globally. The United States is the largest pasta market, with 2.7 million tons of pasta consumed annually, according to data from the National Pasta Association. In France, per capita pasta consumption is now 8.1 kg, and in Germany 7.7 kg per capita, based on I.P.O. data. (Food Business News)

(source: <https://rareaudreyhepburn.com/post/67900633765/audrey-hepburn-eating-pasta-with-oscar-de-la-renta>)



CHANGES IN DOMESTICITY AND BEYOND

Although this shift we studied towards single-person domesticity and the establishment of the phenomenon of “gastro-anomy” are indeed a reality, it would be interesting to investigate how we have arrived to this state, by diving into certain changes that have contributed in both the individualization

of the household and the evolution of eating habits. These changes and developments are intricately linked in many ways and have in one way or another affected the characteristics of domestic space and food-related activities.

FEMALE EMANCIPATION

Traditionally, throughout human history, the kitchen has always been “run by” women. **The female figure of the house has always been in charge with caregiving and all housework, and the kitchen has been a vital center of her life.** Doing the shopping and storing the goods, planning the meal schedule, preparing the meal, serving it, cleaning up afterwards, all have been tasks executed by women, while they also had to take care of the house, raise the children and, among everything else, stay available to attend to their husbands. In many societies this is still the case, despite the process of female emancipation and the steps towards gender equality.

Hidden inside the functional rooms of the house, doing chores and caring for everything while her husband is relaxing after work or attending to family guests, this stereotype of the woman has been crystalized throughout the course of history and even in more recent years it has been represented in the organization of domestic space. Only some decades ago, the space of the kitchen had been completely closed and unrelated to any other room besides the dining room, and women were not even allowed to leave the room and sit on the dining table. **For women, even the consumption of food has been complicated. Gender norms dictated, and in many cases still do so, when and where they should eat, how to eat with grace, while their**

hunger must be disciplined to avoid overeating and weight gain (Cassidy 66). Although the kitchen has opened up to the rest of the house, as we will see in the next paragraph, the woman’s role has been following the same restricted path it has for ages, a fact that has been further promoted and augmented not only by the family but also by advertising and commercials of the 50s, 60s and 70s, especially of cleaning and food-related products.

Women’s role, so much in society as inside the household, is still changing and in no way can we say that we have reached gender equality, but, surely, especially after the WW II, things have changed more drastically. Women began to have high labor market participation during the war, as so many male soldiers were away. Women replaced their husbands in the labor market and were the ones to fill in the demands for war industry and war factories with their labor. With the feminist movement growing in the 60s, more women began to enter the work force in great numbers (Sichter mann).

Until then, women were limited to domestic work, caregiving and raising the children. **Their introduction in the labor market meant that they had less time in their hands for their domestic responsibilities, but it did not mean, at least at first, that they started sharing these responsibilities with their husbands.** So, to make up for the hours they spent at work, they had to delegate differently the household chores. Considering that the women of middle and low social classes were the ones entering the labor market, due to lack of money, hiring house help was not an option. Therefore, as the care of the children and the basic household chores could not be neglected, meal preparation was one of the household tasks that was mostly affected and the time for it was considerably reduced (Boatman).

This phenomenon sparked a series of changes in the domestic space and food-related activities, as pressure for time-saving and efficient food preparation became intense. The kitchen and its appliances started to be seen as a production line, helping “housewives” to become more efficient, while food technology focused on products and processed ingredients and meals, in order to save even more time. It may sound as an exaggeration but finding processed meat or already cut pineapple in the supermarket is not just a result of technological advancements in the food industry, but also of female emancipation. •



Woman cooking with her kitchen apron (circa 1950)
(source: Vintage Images
<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1950s-woman-housewife-in-kitchen-apron-vintage-images.html>)

* survey facts & numbers:

34% of the participants believe that **cooking and food preparation in modern society are still female-related activities.**

CHANGES IN THE KITCHEN

The domestic kitchen has been an ever-transforming space. Always a principal space of any household anywhere in the world, it has been through countless changes and has seen numerous transformations and additions, following technological, economic, political, social, religious, and ideological developments. The kitchen space has been experiencing expansions and reductions and it has been separated from or incorporated with other rooms of the domestic space, depending on these developments (Pardo VIII).

An interesting field of investigation, the evolution of the kitchen has been extensively studied and analyzed, but here we will focus on the **changes of more recent years, that have affected the efficiency, the time and the independence of food preparation, thus contributing to the individualization of our eating habits** and making individual households possible. These changes are closely related to the tendencies and evolution of industrialization, technology, and standardization, following the advancements of the Modern Movement after the dawn of the 20th century.

The Frankfurt Kitchen

One of the first and biggest steps towards the modular kitchen of today, was **the effort for the systematization and standardization of the kitchen in Germany's social housing**, during the '20s. The matter of the *existenzminimum*, the minimum living, became crucial, as Germany was looking for ways to construct efficient and cheap housing, away from the previous century's bourgeois and excessive standards. The Modern Movement proposed a more functionalistic approach of the domestic space, in which every citizen had the right to minimum surface housing, but with all the minimum

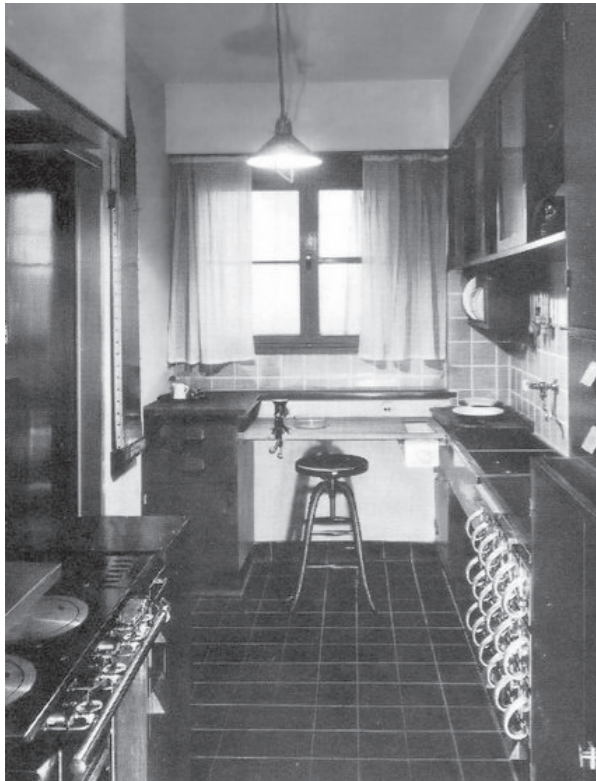
guaranteed necessities like electricity, heating and hot water access (Pardo 45).

In 1925, Ernst May was assigned as the director of the Housing and Urban Planning department of the city of Frankfurt, that was created to meet the huge housing demands created by World War I. A female member of his team, **Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, an Austrian architect, was responsible for the design and construction coordination of the kitchen spaces of the post-war residential buildings.** Investigating on what makes a good and efficient kitchen and inspired by the kitchen wagon of the German train company Mitropa, Schütte comes up with the kitchen model that became known as the *Frankfurter Küche* of 1926 (Pardo 45).

This type of kitchen was a result of **not only technological advancement, but also of social and cultural changes.** The domestic space is perceived as the machine for living, where every function becomes more effective in minimum space. The Frankfurt Kitchen aimed to optimize the work and the movements inside the kitchen space, in just 6.5 square meters. It was not just a matter of saving space in the new social housing apartments, but to make the space more efficient for its primary user: the housewife, but now seen as the new modern woman. (Pardo 46). **Schütte designed this kitchen for the wife that prepares every meal, sets the table and cleans up everything afterwards and her aim was to help her save time and be more efficient, in order to get liberated from the household tasks quicker and have time for other activities, and even for herself** (Pardo 46).

Frankfurt Kitchen's design was made possible by technology, but it was a societal change that made it conceivable, as its objective was not just to facilitate women with their house tasks, but to help them improve

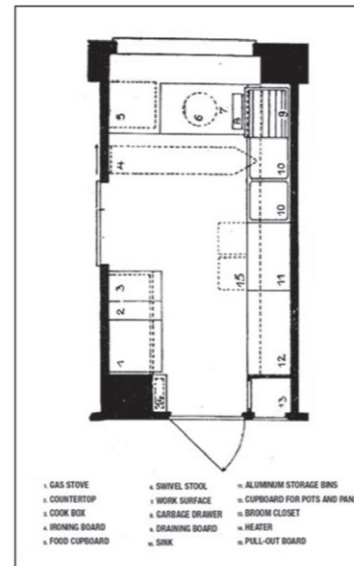
their position in the society, by allowing them to save time and dedicate it to activities outside the domestic space. Most importantly, the Frankfurt model was the first kitchen model able to be produced in mass scale, making it accessible to the middle classes and not only the upper ones (Pardo 46). **And, even though the kitchen was still female territory, its conversion to an actual production line, to a machine, opened the way for it to be perceived differently, not as the kingdom of the housewife, but as a space for food production and maintenance.** This model was conceived for a single user (a woman) to assist her and make her movements as efficient as possible.



The Frankfurt Kitchen (1927), view from the entrance (above) & plan (right)
 (sources: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt_kitchen
 & <https://designinfrastructuresinclusion.wordpress.com/2018/11/28/the-frankfurt-kitchen/>)

The Munich Kitchen

Maintaining that functional perception of the kitchen, other kitchen models following the Frankfurt Kitchen changed its relation to other rooms in the domestic space. The Munich Kitchen of 1928, designed by Robert Vorhoelzer and Walter Schmidt with the help of the architect Janna Löw, **allowed the kitchen to truly communicate with the living room or the dining room for the first time.** Just by adding an open door and an open window in the height of the dining table, the kitchen became visibly and audibly connected with the space in which the meal takes place (Pardo 51). With the same aim, to connect the spaces of food production and food consumption, Bruno Taut, in the kitchens designed for the Onkel Toms Hütte residencies in Berlin in 1927, adds an interesting element: a small folding table or high bar inside the kitchen itself, for smaller meals to take place or for children activities, allowing the housewife to keep on with her house tasks while keeping an eye on the children (Pardo 51).



These new ways of perceiving and designing the urban house kitchen have contributed to a shift of its role in the domestic space. From the center of female household activities, hidden in the back of the house, slowly the kitchen is transforming. It is beginning to be seen as a production space, a machine, whose role in the domestic space is depicted in its position in the house and its relation to the other rooms. With the Munich model, the kitchen opens up to the rest of the house and soon the walls surrounding it give their place to a half-wall and then to nothing at all: **the kitchen becomes one with the living room or the dining room and gains its place as a point of vigilance for the entire household, a point of reference and a center of operations** (Pardo 51).

Changes based on “habitus”

Investigating nineteenth- and twentieth-century American domestic architecture, Elizabeth Collins Cromley discovers how such models and designs are actually not products of architectural thought. Changes in spaces related to food are better understood as shifts in “a food axis”, which she defines as the “acceptable relationships between cooking, storing, serving, eating, disposing” and the spaces, tools and furniture that make them possible. (Horwitz 267). **These changes are not revelations of ambitious architects, but consequences of the everyday - where economic and political factors (such as mass consumer appliances and workforce participation) intersect with what the anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as habitus: the “habitual and improvisatory, the rote and novel”** (Horwitz 268). It is also important to keep in mind that the habitus inside the kitchen is more apparent than many other spaces of the house. The kitchen is a room that plays a very different role

depending on its users and in some cases, problems occur, that in others do not exist. For example, cooking smells in a single-person household may not be a problem for its inhabitant, but in a family house, where cooking remains a vibrant activity, the users may be bothered by this invisible side effect of cooking. The problem is that most kitchen design proposals try to find a general “formula” that serves a general, undefined user, while instead they should be offering alternatives for many different user types. Different design models should go along different actual uses of the kitchen and understand better what cooking as an activity entails.

Standardization and Appliances

Mass industry production of kitchen furniture and appliances came to augment the role of the kitchen as an efficient, factory-like space. Kitchen furniture became standardized following the advancement of industry and the tendencies of the Modern Movement about economy and efficiency.

The widespread use of the oven (late 20s) and, later, the fridge (late 40s) in urban households (Sandvik), contributed even further to the systematization of food preparation. They did not only affect the time and efficiency of food preparation, but they also changed the whole procedure. Having a fridge and a freezer meant that what was bought and what was cooked did not necessarily have to be consumed right away, so shopping, preparing and saving food for later consumption were also affected. **But the most important technological advancement that changed the way the meal was perceived completely was just a small appliance that came to fit perfectly in these new kitchen models: the microwave oven.**

Although the microwave oven was accidentally invented in the end of WW II by the American engineer Percy Spencer (Ross) , it was not until the 80s that its use spread throughout the US and not until much later, in the late 90s, that urban homes in Europe were equipped with it. The innovation of the microwave was not that much in technology that it involved, but in the revolution it brought in the field of food preparation and the time it saved. Not long after its invention, frozen goods began to appear in the supermarkets. The concept really gained popularity in 1954 when Swanson's frozen meals appeared. Swanson was a well-known brand that consumers recognized, and Swanson launched a massive advertising campaign for their product (The Library of Congress). They also coined the phrase "TV Dinner", which helped to transform their frozen meals into a cultural icon. •



Swanson TV Dinners promotion (circa 1953)
(source: <https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2015/11/23/thanksgiving-dinner-by-swanson/>)



Amana Microwaves - one of the first microwave oven promotions (Oct 31, 1969)
(source: <https://clickamericana.com/topics/discoveries-inventions/introducing-microwave-oven-kitchen-appliance-1970s/>)

THE TV DINNER PHENOMENON

Easy to prepare, cheap and supposedly nutritionally balanced, frozen meals quickly spread to every urban household, as a convenient solution to the problem of food preparation, since women were no longer full-time housewives. Furthermore, their packaging, allowing them to be independent of any plates or even a horizontal table-like surface for them to be consumed, and their advertising as TV Dinners, linking them to television and entertainment, also caused a shift to the way the meal was perceived. For the first time, the meal was unlinked from the dining room and its preparation no longer took place at home. Anyone could heat and eat a frozen meal anywhere in the house. **The concept and the consumption of the TV Dinner offered a deviation from the traditional meal norms and hierarchies, as well as a rupture with the temporal, spatial and social restrictions of the family meal** (Horwitz 261).

Since then, the advancement of technology around food has been evolving without precedent. Both in the field of kitchen appliances and the field of food preparation and prepared meals, nowadays the variety of choices available is endless. Our kitchens are equipped with all kinds of advanced appliances and specialized gadgets for any type of preparation and, besides that, we can nowadays find every kind of food imaginable in a frozen, pre-made version of the original (The Library of Congress). And there is a big irony in that: **our kitchens are more equipped than ever, but we use them less and less every day, since we can find everything already prepared.** As we pass less time inside our domestic space, due to work and social activities, while at the same time options for prepared food can not only be found in the supermarket but in delivery applications as well, we tend to cook less and less.

That is because the appearance of the TV Dinner transformed the way the meal is perceived, not only in the domestic space but in general. **The break of the link between the meal, its preparation before and the cleaning up afterwards not only saved time but changed the spatial relationship between food and the kitchen.** The meal now took place in front of television, outside the dining room, while at the same time the social aspect of every meal started to disappear, as the participants now communicated with the television and not with each other. The eating schedule started to change, in accordance with the TV programs, which tried to follow the working and eating times of the family. Spatially, socially and temporarily, the family meal was changed forever and this shift, triggered by advancements like the TV Dinner, has been going on ever since: the fast-food movement, food delivery and the "Netflix and Chill" phenomenon all owe their existence to this. •



Family eating TV Dinners in their living rooms (1952)
(source: <https://fredarnow.com/tag/frozen-meals/>)

ADVERTISING

Parallel to the TV Dinner, when television became popularized and started entering urban households, another big influence concerning our eating habits started to emerge, that of advertising. **TV commercials were the first external agent addressed to consumers that entered households with such force and impact.** Although the analysis of the history and the field of advertising is an extensive subject of investigation alone, it is a fact that advertising of food has a big impact on our consumer behavior. Commercial narratives create ideal representations of life, of which the viewers want to be a part and relating these narratives with food and drink products has a very intrusive, yet sometimes subliminal, effect on our behavior.

Coca-Cola and MacDonald's, for example, two international brands that are also considered pioneers in the field of advertising, have become extremely popular and they owe it basically to their advertising campaigns. **Powerful images and elaborate commercial clips of great symbolic value have affected, and still affect, consumers in a great extent.** Promoting imaginary ideal scenarios of life, both inside and outside the domestic space, commercials represent values that affect the way we perceive the advertised products, by linking them with values of culture, family, tradition, prestige and domesticity in order to achieve their goals. Food advertising is one of the most influential and at the same profitable fields of advertising. In the United States only, advertising within the grocery stores industry alone generates over 190 billion U.S. dollars annually. In 2016, the advertising for the industry for canned, frozen, and preserved fruits, vegetables and specialty foods amounted to approximately 1.36 billion U.S. dollars. During entertainment programming on cable TV, the advertising of food, produce, and dairy prevail above other advertising categories such as entertainment, automotive sector, insurance, and pharmaceuticals,

while commercials for fast food restaurants are by far the most viewed food/beverage advertisement by children in the United States (Guttman).

Apart from the numbers, the representations of everyday life in food advertising have been affecting the symbolic values of food consumption. Subliminally, the narratives constructed focus on the products being consumed in the commercials and not that much on the other symbolic values of the meal, reducing it to just the consumption of the products. Furthermore, the evolution in the advertising narratives is a great indicator of the changes that we commented above. Advertising about food and kitchen appliances and products has gone through a great shift. From the typical commercials showing happy housewives with clean homes and big smiles, using the advertised products, we now see more product-oriented narratives, avoiding the conflict about household hierarchy and role delegation. Although progress has been made, in no way have we reached equality in advertising: cars and alcoholic drinks commercials are still addressed to males while food and cleaning products have females as their targeted receivers. •

“I now eat alone everyday and I am missing the communication of shared meals. I want to make my own family and share my meals again, like the families in the TV commercials”

Giorgos
one of the case studies

COOKING SHOWS



Promotional image for MasterChef US. The positioning of the contestants finds women on the backseats. (source: <https://medium.com/123serieszone/masterchef-usa-season-10-episode-15-hd-tv-305523f563b2>)

Besides advertising, food is represented nowadays in television by numerous lifestyle and reality shows, both as popular culture and as gastronomy. We are all familiar with lifestyle shows, usually airing daily around noon, as housewives are their main target, including a chef, male or female, presenting affordable and easy to make recipes, addressed to the popular masses. The role of the chef-presenter was principally given to women and it was one of the first work markets where women dominated. But it is arguable that it was done for the wrong reasons, as **the female chefs-presenters used to legitimize the role of women as housewives and pass on archaic stereotypes** (Krishnendu).

On the other hand, in order to promote high cuisine and introduce gastronomy to the popular culture, the phenomenon of Master Chef appeared very recently, only in 2010. High-profile chefs invited home cooks to show them their skills and earn a chance

to enter the luxurious world of high gastronomy. **The introduction of these shows to the public through our TV screens had a tremendous effect in popular culture** and the show immediately became famous around the world (Bradley). Not only did gastronomy enter every urban household, but food started to get related to the world of entertainment. At the same time, cooking started to be seen widely as much more than a household task for women. But just as popular lifestyle shows keep promoting the role of the kitchen-bound woman, Master Chef follows the same path: women keep being depicted as home cooks by inclination while the figure of the professional chef remains almost exclusively male. Even though Master Chef promotes a rhetoric of inclusivity and has announced female winners worldwide, it has little to challenge norms of the professional field of gastronomy that have been devaluing female cooking as “home cooking” while idolizing masculinized culinary cultures led by men (Redden). •

THE INTERNET

Despite the big role television culture has played in the configuration of modern eating habits, there is a more recent medium that has had, and keeps having, an even bigger effect, and that is the Internet and, following, the social media. **Apart from eliminating geographical borders and bringing us close to the whole world, different cultures and, consequently, different cuisines, Internet and social media have also eliminated the physical borders of the domestic space, connecting us digitally to a vast network of spaces, services, experiences and narratives.**

#foodporn

All around the internet but on Instagram in particular, more and more images with the hashtag #foodporn are circulating. Pancakes with dripping syrups, perfectly nested pasta plates with colorful garnishing, huge, rich burgers with crispy fries on their side, just a quick search of “foodporn” gives as a result a universe of images that make us drool. But, apart from waking up our appetite, these images, and the hashtag itself, can give us a lot of information about

food, eating habits and their representation today.

The first documented use of the term “food porn” comes from the feminist writer Rosalind Cowards’ 1984 book *Female Desire*, but the term has started becoming known and growing in reach in the early 2000’s with the vast spread of social media. “Foodporn” as a term comes from **the combination of gastronomy and pornography, two practices that are more similar than we think.** Both practices, even though not willingly, have had something in common for a while, given that they are usually equated, in the negative, as patent metaphors of an artistic practice, regarded as degraded because they represent an enticing and explicit quest for a fatally démodé and “cheap” aesthetical pleasure. Art and gastronomy, as well as art and pornography, have been indicated as antithetical practices, despite the attempts by culinary chefs and professional pornographers to highlight the artistic relevance of food and pornography alike. Cooking, on the one hand, and sexuality, on the other, go beyond the narrow enclosure of commodification to be established as practices with socially positive values. They do so by playing with the boundaries of joy, pleasure, expression and even art (Marrone 6).



Kim Cattrall as Samantha Jones in the famous naked sushi scene from *Sex and The City* (source: <https://www.theloop.ca/a-brief-history-of-eating-sushi-off-naked-people/>)

In both the fields of gastronomy and pornography exists a kind of symbolic annulment of the female figure, who, according to the generalized social mandate for years, has been charged to offer both kinds of pleasure, sexual and gastronomical. **The closure of every recipe (“to place the dish on the plate and serve it”) turns out to be an expression that synthesizes a much wider and more profound servitude: that of the woman as a cook and care-giver for a man, thought of as greedy and unable to stand over the stove.** The photography considered “foodporn” though, comes maybe as a deviation from that norm, as the plate and its contents, and only them, are the sole protagonists of the image. Media food is eaten, more than anything, with the eyes. Foodporn seems to be mostly practicing an exclusive preference for the visual aspects of food, leaving outside those other sensory channels, which, ultimately, should be concerned with it (taste, smell, touch) and, above all, in ignorance of its synesthetic aspects (Marrone 7).

Food gets photographed rather than eaten; sharing online pictures of food takes the place of sharing food in a moment of a conviviality which nowadays emerges as irreparably fading. Furthermore, this hypertrophy of visuality in the field of food at the disadvantage of the holistic experience of eating and sharing a meal with others finds its greatest expression on the internet. In almost every photo with the hashtag #foodporn, there is no human figure present. Not only is there a lack of conviviality, but the act itself of ingesting food, much less of enjoying it, is absent. This absence is not just about people but also about things. The dish is alone, without context. Whereas in earlier representations of food, in paintings showing still-life or banquets and abundant table sets of the middle ages, contemporary pornographic culinary photography excludes and

isolates, it hypostasizes. The obvious communicative purpose of these photos is to stimulate appetite, anticipate the taste, or give the idea of a taste. They are not mimic but rather performative images: even though they are photographs of something real, they are not a realistic depiction of the world, but they create an imaginary image. More precisely, by representing something of the world, they intend to intervene in it (Marrone 12).



Instagram search of #foodporn (29/05/2020)

As forms of representation, the foodporn images are also interesting. As we already said, even though they depict actual food, their editing, and the signs they carry with them, transform them to symbols, to imaginary landscapes. They represent a certain lifestyle, the “life of the influencer”, where the food is an element of status, a status that makes the photographer “cooler” than the rest of us. Food becomes a means to promote the self-esteem, a way to not only boast about cooking skills, but also about the fact that the subject can produce this kind of drooling pictures, can consume its contents and also communicate all this with their social circle (Spence).

Foodporn, with all these “side-effects”, is indeed a global trend, but it addresses the individual viewer. We should not forget that these images are meant to be viewed through the screen of a smartphone. They transmit their message and their significance to a single, isolated individual each time, and, as we already said, in no way do they promote the social part of the consumption of food. The conviviality is absent in #foodporn, but it is also disappearing from our everyday lives, in the modern, individualized society we live in. **In the end, food should indeed be shared, but around a table, not through a screen.** And instead of giving a “like” to a picture on Instagram, we should remember the importance of *sobremesa*, and leave our smartphones aside.

Food delivery

An even bigger influence than #foodporn concerning the way we eat and perceive food are the delivery apps that have been emerging the last years. Since Pizza Hut launched the first-ever pizza online order back in 1994, online food delivery has become a billion-dollar business (Statista). **Food delivery has already been growing in popularity, but through smartphone apps and services it has reached a vast audience in big cities.**

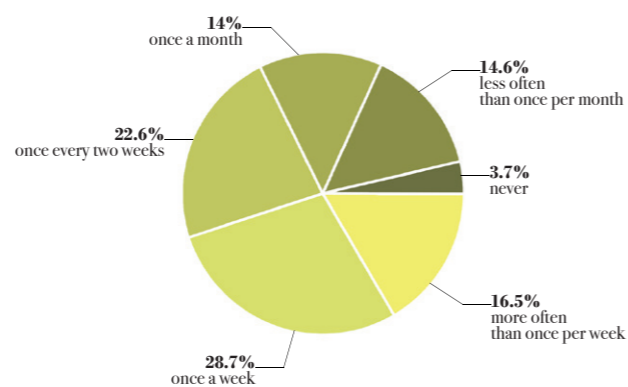


figure 2: How often do you order food delivery at home? (survey results)



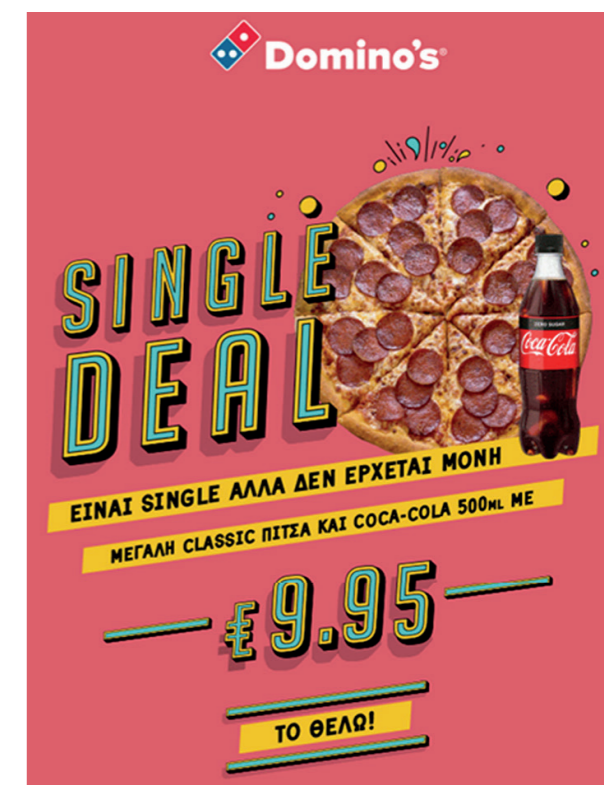
sobremesa (noun, f): literal translation “upon the table” a unique Spanish word meaning the **time spent at the table after eating; the habit of relaxing at the table after a heavy meal.**

Having food delivered opens new taste opportunities but at the same time disconnects us with home food more than ever. Eating delivered food at home could be compared by some to eating at a restaurant, as far as food preparation is concerned, but it goes a bit further than that. The importance of eating at a restaurant is not that it relieves us from the manual tasks of food preparation and cleaning up, but that it is an activity that offers us new spatial and social experiences. Having food delivered at home, although it indeed relieves us of the same tasks, it also dislocates the home meal from the domestic space. Not only do we leave the preparation to others, but we cannot anymore control the origin of the ingredients. And even though food delivery can be a safe and convenient solution for a night at home, **for many it has become an everyday habit that alienates them completely from any task related to food at home.**

Furthermore, having literally any type of food accessible with just a few clicks on our smartphones, photographed under the demands of #foodporn as we mentioned above, priced and delivered within a short period of time in our doorstep seems like a simple, user-friendly procedure but has greater effects than we imagine. **A whole infrastructure, visible, hidden or invisible, turns into motion that affects even our city’s circulation,** with all the drivers moving from restaurants to houses and vice versa.

It is also note-worthy that through the vast demand and use of online food delivery services, the phenomenon of *Ghost Kitchens* has emerged. A ghost kitchen is a professional food preparation and cooking facility set up for the sole purpose of the preparation of delivery-only meals, with no actual space for diners. Many restaurants that appear nowadays on these delivery applications are ghost restaurants, with no facilities apart from their ghost kitchen (Bromwich).

But, focusing on the domestic space alone, the effect of the extended use of food delivery can be so massive that it raises the debate on how useful our over-equipped home kitchens are nowadays, if they are not used at all throughout the day. •



Domino's Greece e-mail advertising campaign targeting “singles” **“SINGLE DEAL: She’s single but she doesn’t come...”** (source: author’s email account)

WE'RE GOING THROUGH CHANGES...

Not all the above changes have led necessarily to a better lifestyle or a healthy development of food-related activities inside modern households, but they surely have contributed to the growth of the single-person domesticity. The rupture of traditional family structures, who saw the woman as the only person responsible for food-related activities as any type of domestic care, has allowed everyone to see themselves as more independent, able to take care of themselves and thus able to live alone and leave the family nucleus earlier and easier. The advancement of technology, providing better equipped households and affordable and easy solutions concerning all types of household care, but especially food preparation and accessibility, has augmented this sense of independence and ease on taking care of oneself. Finally, the spread of the use of the internet, which allowed our homes to become hyperconnected, made long-distance communication immediate, and many services available with the click of a button, contributed further to making independent life easier and allowed people to live alone but not isolated. **All this, combined with the fact that social expectations and demands no longer see getting married and having a family as the only socially accepted way to happiness, has liberated individuals from many social and practical hesitations about choosing to live alone.**

Along with the domestic space, our relation to it and our perception of it change, as do our eating habits. Female emancipation and the liberation of women from their house chores generated a series of changes in the domestic space that led to a gradual change of food-related habits and patterns inside the household. The kitchen has opened up to the rest of the house and food-related activities thus became part of the integral life of the household, not hidden anymore, just like women got gradually liberated and their tasks stopped being in the “dark” of the household. At the

same time, with the help of technology, the kitchen went through a transformation and it became a sort of “production line”, making food preparation easier and allowing women to spend less time in it. Furthermore, the “TV Dinner phenomenon”, the advancement of food technology that made processed food possible and the growth of the internet and delivery services allowed the gradual devaluation of family dinners and their relation to the dining room as an integral part of family life. **Food can now be prepared anywhere outside the domestic space and enter the household already ready to be consumed, while its consumption is no longer related to a specific space, nor is it an activity restricted by time, space or domestic social demands.**

Summing up, it is noted that nowadays food-related activities in the domestic space are no longer strictly defined or restricted by traditional family norms concerning role delegations, time, space and behaviors. **All the above changes and their consequences have allowed independent households to become a growing reality and, within them, new behavioral patterns concerning eating habits to manifest themselves more profoundly.** Without necessarily being better or worse, the new eating habits in single-person households are certainly different than the traditional family ones, and studying them further can offer great insight in how family, culture and tradition but also technology and modern lifestyle affect the development of food-related activities and, therefore, the perception of domestic space. •



Chandler (M. Perry), Ross (D.Schwimmer) and Joey (M. Le Blanc) devouring a pizza in the famous american sitcom FRIENDS ('90s)
Pizza is one of the world's favourite junk foods. Only in Europe, the pizza market generates approximately \$ 59 billion every year. (Pizza Magazine)
(source: <https://www.bustle.com/articles/107808-8-times-friends-was-as-obsessed-with-pizza-as-you-are>)



MAPPING DOMESTICITY & FOOD

SINGLE-PERSON DOMESTICITY & EATING HABITS

After having studied the changes around the rituals of the meal, space perception and domesticity on a conceptual and theoretical basis, it is time to deep into the practical analysis of the subject. Focusing the study on the eating habits of young individuals that live alone, more specifically on Mediterranean countries, whose transition from their family homes to single-person households implies more conflicts concerning their domestic environment and their eating habits, the ten case studies selected for this investigation are presented on the following pages.

From the target age group between 23 and 33 years, the individuals that agreed to be part of this study have an age range from 23 to 30 years and they all live in Madrid or Athens. Even though the order of presentation is irrelevant for the analysis and the results, firstly we will see the individuals living in Madrid and then the ones living in Athens, sorted by age, from younger to older. For all case studies, the same procedure described in the introduction was followed, and they are presented in the same way, based on the layout shown below. •

Case Studies

floor plan/diagram

the floor plan layout is the same for all case studies: the furniture involved in food-related activities are shown with color and the temporal spaces generated by these activities are put in circles

data/ interview extracts

4 drawers
3 double cabinets
2 single cabinets

equipped with:
fridge
4 kitchen hole oven
microwave
bread toaster
sandwich toaster
mixer
hand mixer
espresso machine

Giorgos grew up in a house with a spacious dining space. In his small apartment he tried to maintain this organization of space by squishing in a small table, which he always uses for his meals. The spatial organization remains the same, but he now watches series on his laptop while eating, instead of talking with someone, which he loved.

#XX
G I N A M E

Personal Trainer, Athens 29 years old & 1.5 years living alone

30 sq. m. the size of his domestic space

30 mins avg. daily time in the kitchen

3 meals physically shared with others

2 times per week ordering delivery

his laptop the device he relates eating most with

photos

description / interview extracts

Raised in a traditional four-person family, where dinner and weekend lunches were a point of reference for the whole family, Giorgos now lives alone in an one-bedroom apartment, within walking distance from his family house. His adult life as a personal trainer and his limited free time and domestic space have made him change his eating habits a lot. As he claims,

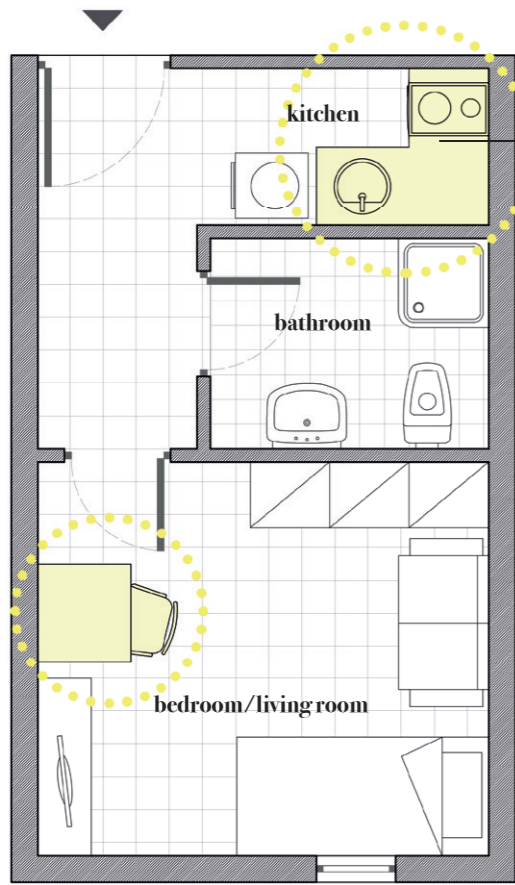
Although now I eat healthier than I used to, I am struggling with maintaining a rich diet and I am totally missing the communicational part of daily meals with the family.

He would prefer eating with "rules" if that meant that he would share every meal. Although he has rented a very small apartment, based on his limited free time and domestic space, he has managed to fit two chairs inside it here he eats all his meals. He has a "rule" for his "personal company". He cannot eat big meals for his friends, but he eats dinner at home with his girlfriend once a week. He still visits his parents very weekend for lunch, trying to maintain their relationship around food. He commented that he had found a new way to communicate with his mother, by often calling her to ask for tips and recipes. He would not move back with his parents, but he is keen to start his own family and share all of his meals again, "like the families in the TV commercials".

photos

bad storage distribution results to lack of food preparation space

page layout for the presentation of the case studies (source: author)



+ equipped with:

- 2 double cabinets
- 1 single cabinet
- fridge
- 2 kitchen hobs
- microwave

Carmela's available space does not allow her to have a space dedicated only to eating. In her tiny studio, she only eats on her individual desk which she also uses for studying and working. The spatial organization of her domestic space, has not taken into account any food-related activity.



Communication Manager, Madrid 23 years old & 6 years living alone

22 sq.m²
the size of her domestic space

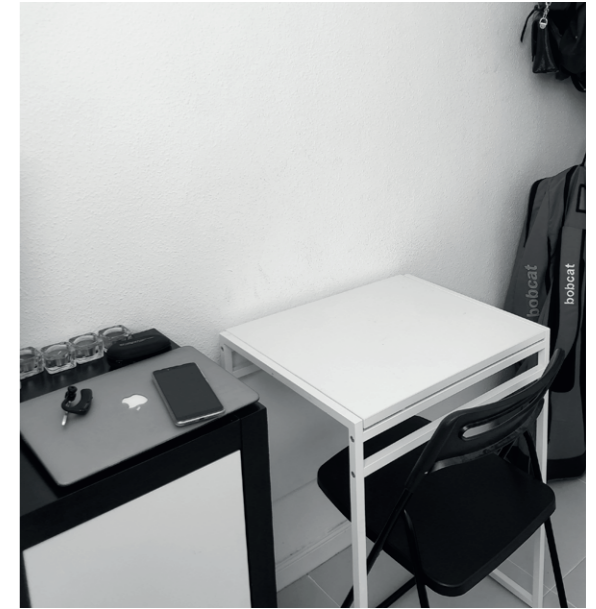
1.5 sq.m²
the size of her kitchen

60 mins
avg. daily time in the kitchen

0 meals at home
physically shared with others weekly

2 times
per week ordering delivery

her smartphone
the device she relates eating most with



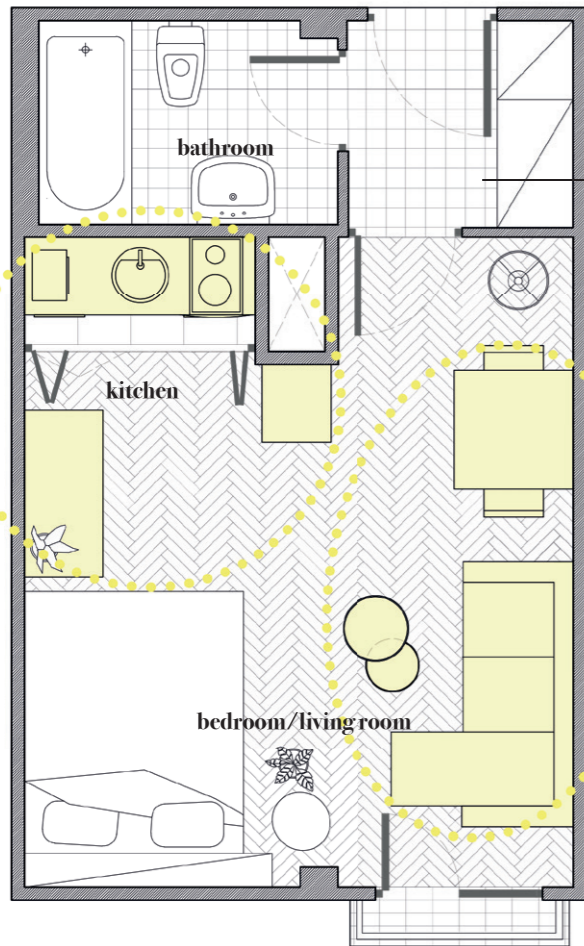
Growing up in Argentina, in a single-parent family where she and her sister were helping her mother to cook almost daily, Carmela has spent all of her adult life living alone. The last 2 years she moved to Madrid, away from her family and with a low income that only allows her to rent a tiny studio, which has no dining space and barely has a kitchen. For her, entering this studio has changed everything.

“When I was living with my mother and sister, our meals were every day's ‘plan’. We all sat together, ate and talked and no mobiles were allowed on the table. Now I eat to survive.”

She claims she does not even have a kitchen. Her very limited food storage and preparation space and her lack of kitchen equipment only allow her to prepare “junk food”. She eats a lot worse than she used to, without any meal schedule or following a balanced diet. She now links food to “alcohol, stress and boredom”. Due to lack of space, she never invites friends over for a meal and she always eats alone, on her small desk, browsing the internet or chatting with friends and family through her smartphone. The distance with her family does not allow her to visit them often, but when she does, family meals mean even more to her than they used to.

* There are no surfaces available for any food preparation, so the user has adapted her habits and now opts for processed products or fruit and vegetables





+ equipped with:

- 4 drawers
- 1 double cabinet
- 4 single cabinets
- fridge
- 2 kitchen hobs
- small oven
- toaster
- blender

Kostis had a very small hidden kitchen inside his studio but, because cooking is important to him, he adapted his space to his cooking needs, by expanding the kitchen. The addition of two portable furniture offered him more storage and more space for food preparation.



Illustrator/Designer, Madrid 26 years old & 1 year living alone

29 sq.m²
the size of his domestic space

2.2 sq.m²
the size of his kitchen

90 mins
avg. daily time in the kitchen

6 meals at home
physically shared with others weekly

0.5 times
per week ordering delivery

his table
the object he relates eating most with



While growing up, Kostis used to have lunch every day with his family, but the rest of the meals were not so important to them. He still likes to eat with his family, and when he visits them or they visit him, some weekends every year, they still gather to eat. For him, his eating habits have not become worse, on the other hand, maybe they are even better.

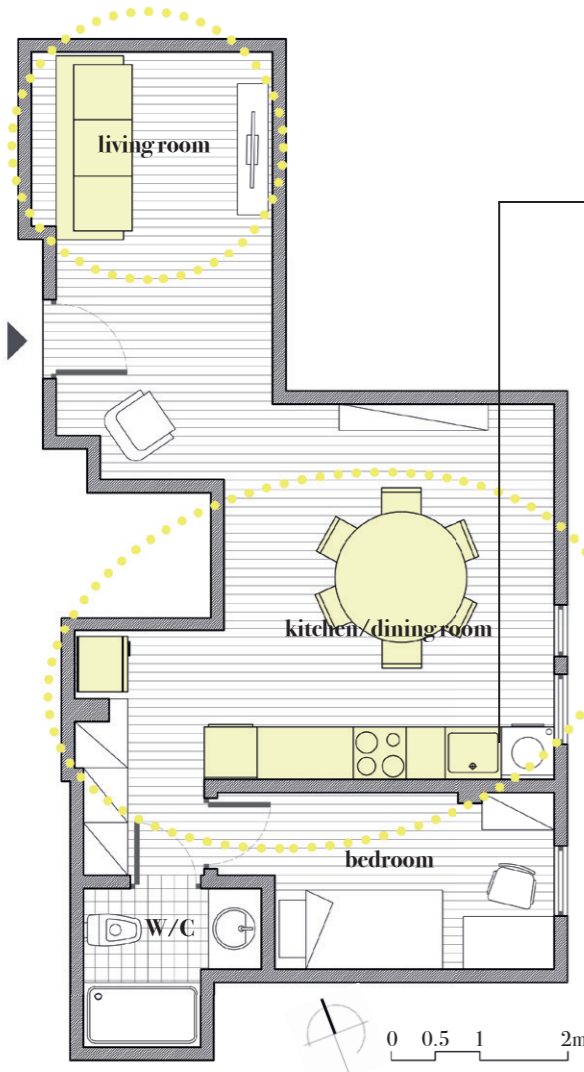
“Meals are important in my daily routine and I try to eat with someone else at least one meal per day. My diet hasn’t changed since I rented my own place, but I surely eat a better breakfast, as now I can make my proper choices.”

Kostis lives in a studio and works for home, so being in one single room all day can be difficult, but he tries to change places throughout the day. He works on his table, so he usually moves to the sofa to have his meals to “change his position”. When he cooks more elaborate meals that require a bigger surface for them to take place, he uses his table again, where he also invites friends to share his meals with. He avoids eating on the bed and tries to keep a certain space delegation, even in a single room space.



Having a hidden kitchen can be practical in small apartments. However, as the user’s needs are bigger than the kitchen space available, he expanded it and he always keeps the kitchen open.





+ equipped with:

- 2 drawers
- 1 double cabinet
- 4 single cabinets
- fridge
- 4 kitchen hobs
- oven
- microwave
- toaster
- water heater
- mixer
- coffee grinder
- dishwasher

Maria values cooking and eating so much that she chose an apartment where the kitchen and dining space prevail over any other room of the house. She preferred having a spacious kitchen and dining room so she sacrificed a big bedroom.



Architect, Madrid **28** years old & **1** year living alone

45 sq.m²
the size of her domestic space

7 sq.m²
for food-related activities

3-4 hrs
avg. daily time in the kitchen

7+ meals at home
physically shared with others weekly

never
orders delivery

her mental state
the thing she relates food most with



Having to grow up on the move, as her family kept moving from place to place while growing up, Maria learnt from a young age that **cooking and sharing meals can offer a sense of stability** while everything else is uncertain. The family's different schedules made them eat separately during the week, so it was **"extremely important to eat together"** as a complete family on weekends. Nowadays, Maria tries to share even more meals, as she loves cooking and thinks that **"a meal not shared is a wasted meal"**.

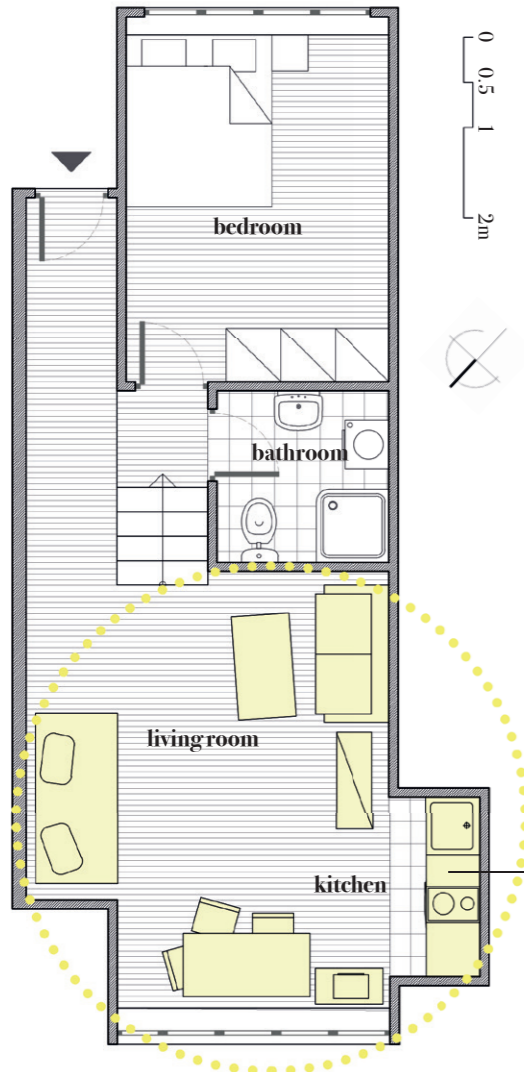
“Cooking for me is de-stressing. I love cooking, I would have no problem if I had to do this all day long. I think a lot while I cook and I mentally organize myself.”

Meals are definitely seen as **"gatherings"** for her, and she does not enjoy eating alone, so she always invites her partner or friends over to cook dinner for them. Her family is away, so she **"makes her own family"** around the table. When she has to eat alone, she has her meal in the living room while watching TV, to keep her company. She never orders delivery because, as she claims, cooking is just as important as eating, sometimes even more.



Maria likes the size and distribution of the kitchen, but she does not like the open space plan of her flat. As she cooks daily and many recipes, the cooking smells go everywhere and the poor ventilation of the house does not help either.





+ equipped with:

- 2 drawers
- 2 double cabinets
- 2 single cabinets
- fridge
- 2 kitchen hobs
- small oven
- microwave
- mixer
- water heater

In order to be able to cook and store, Esteban has bought two extra pieces of furniture. He tried to adapt his space to his needs but ended up with a small crumpled space with a lot of mixed uses. The only really intact rooms of his flat are the bathroom and the bedroom.

* The lack of space makes Esteban struggle between having more space and maintaining his eating habits. His living room, kitchen and dining space are literally the same space and none of them works well.



Computer Scientist, Madrid 28 years old & 1.5 year living alone

40 sq.m²
the size of his domestic space

2 sq.m²
the size of his kitchen

60 mins
avg. daily time in the kitchen

3 meals at home
physically shared with others weekly

0.5 times
per week ordering delivery

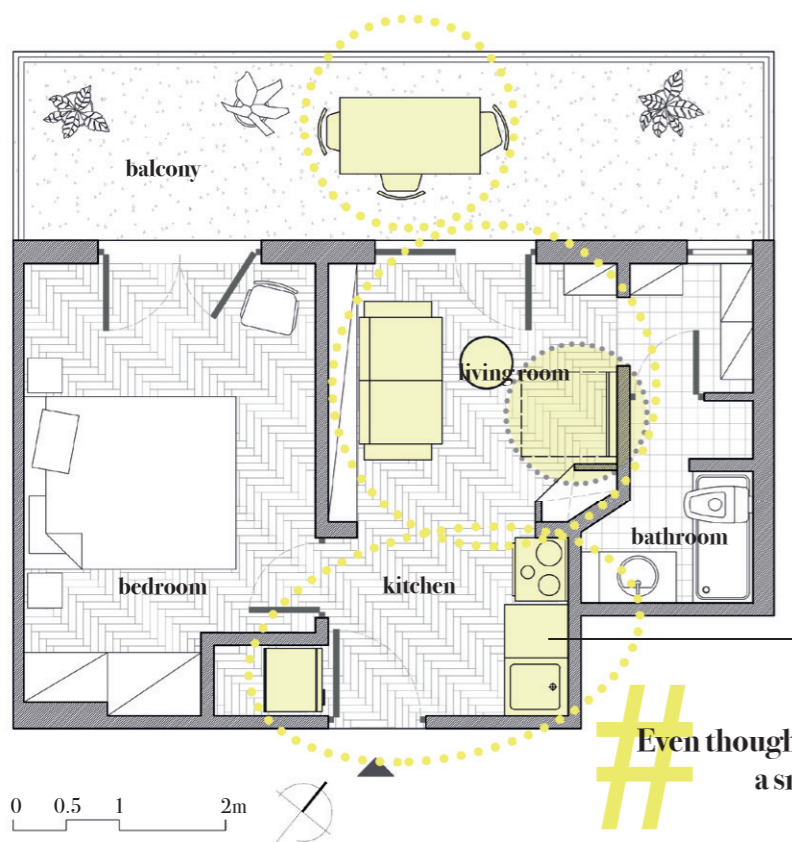
his laptop
the device he relates food most with



Even though when growing up, meals were not so important at his family, Esteban shared his dinner daily with his parents and his older brother, because it was the only time when they could sit all together. Now, he visits his parents every weekend for lunch and he says it is the only time they really talk. Although he likes living away from his parents, he misses his old eating habits.

“I used to have better and more balanced meals. Now, having to plan what I am going to eat stresses me and I believe that if I keep living alone, I will lose the variety of my diet I struggle to maintain.”

He says that he hates cooking, “because of this house”. His available space affects what and how we cooks. He cannot afford a bigger apartment but in the one he rents, he does not have any space to prepare his meals and has to go to the supermarket 2-3 times a week, because his fridge is so small that he can store almost nothing. He does not like eating alone and every other night he invites his partner for dinner. When his partner is there, they sit on the table and talk “like a proper meal”, but when he is alone, he eats on the sofa while watching Netflix.



+ equipped with:

- 2 drawers
- 3 double cabinets
- 3 single cabinets
- fridge
- 3 kitchen hobs
- small oven
- toaster
- juicer

Even though Christina's house is equipped with a small folding table, she rarely uses it, as for her it is not practical. She tries to create a sort of dining space in her balcony, but its use depends on the weather. Based on her simple eating habits, the kitchen is barely used.

* In Christina's case, even though she claims that food-related activities do not matter that much to her, she still cares about sharing moments around the table with other people. Lacking any proper dining space, the balcony is a nice alternative as an extension of her domestic space.



Social Worker, Athens 26 years old & 8 years living alone

42 sq.m²

the size of her domestic space

2.1 sq.m²

the size of her kitchen

20 mins

avg. daily time in the kitchen

1 meal at home

physically shared with others weekly

rarely

orders delivery

relaxing

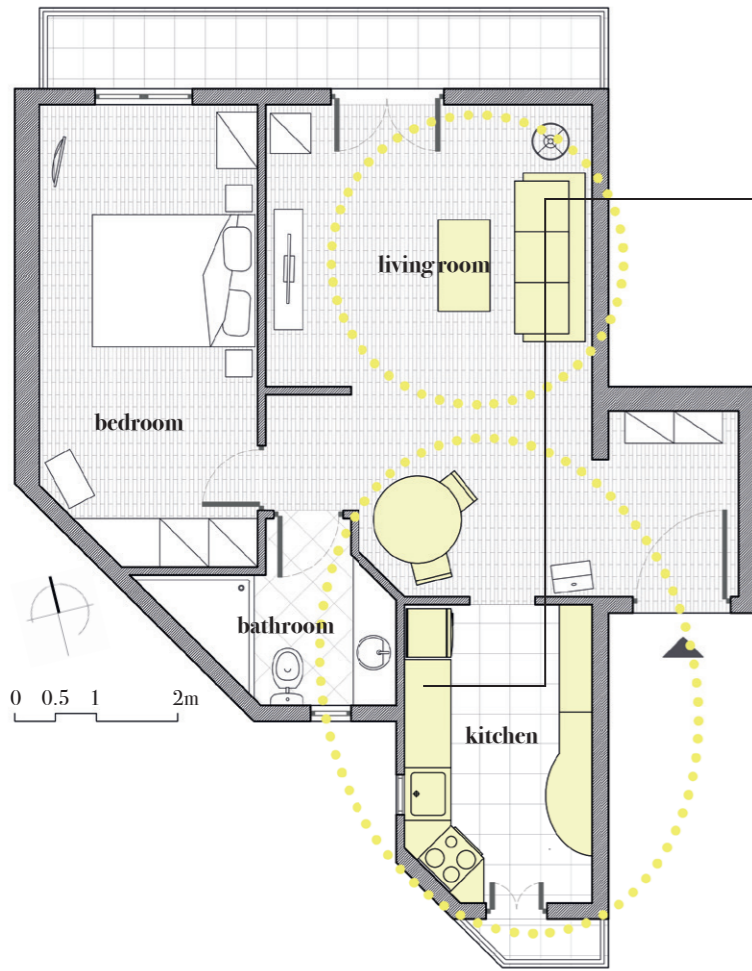
what she relates food most with



Christina grew up in a family that saw meals as important and with parents that insisted on their children being on the table, even if they did not want to eat. Moving alone to Athens, she discovered that she eats more out of necessity, especially when she is alone. She claims that she eats a lot healthier now, as she has given up on meat and introduced more fruit and vegetables in her diet. As she does not cook a lot, having a very small kitchen and no dining room does not bother her.

“Even though I am mostly alone when I eat, I like to see meals as an opportunity to disconnect from everything and forget my phone for a while. I take my small meals on my sofa, doing nothing more than relaxing.”

When the weather is bad she usually stays home alone, but during spring and summer she takes advantage of her big balcony to invite her friends over, who usually bring food with them so they can all share. If she had a better salary, she would rent a bigger place with a larger kitchen and dining space. She believes that if she had a bigger kitchen, she would start cooking more and invite people over, as “meals can be a ritual that brings people closer together”.



- + equipped with:
- 4 drawers
 - 1 double cabinet
 - 6 single cabinets
 - fridge
 - 4 kitchen hobs
 - oven
 - microwave
 - mixer
 - water heater
 - toaster
 - coffee machine

Although Miltos's apartment was furnished when he rented it, there was no dining space. He bought a dining table with some chairs, in order to maintain the space distribution he needs. He would also like a balcony, as "balconies are a big part of Greek culture" and he always wanted to be able to host dinners there.



Marketing Assistant, Athens **27** years old & **5** years living alone

59 sq.m² the size of his domestic space

5 sq.m² the size of his kitchen

90 mins avg. daily time in the kitchen

6 meals at home physically shared with others weekly

1 time per week ordering delivery

his dining table the device he relates eating most with



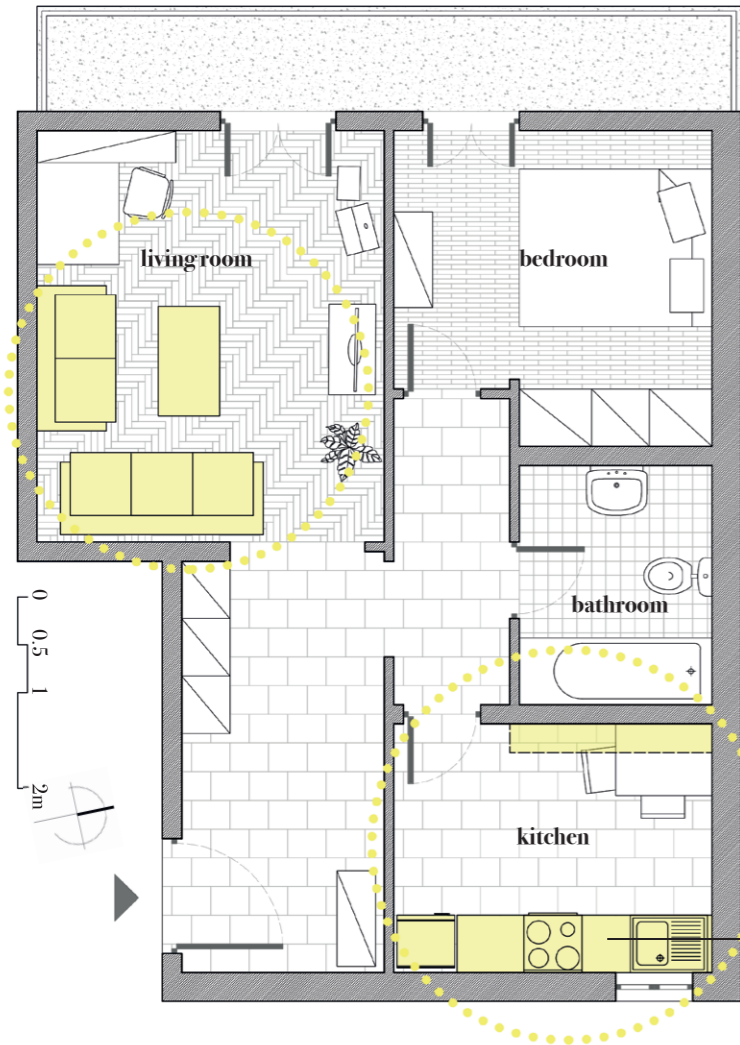
A strict eating schedule characterized Miltos' everyday life when growing up, because of his father's working schedule. It used to be a "family obligation" for him, but now that he lives alone he sees meals as a lost element of domestic life and when he visits his parents he enjoys eating with them more than he used to.

"I realize now how important food preparation is, as my mother was in charge of food and I did not have to worry about my daily meals, as I do now."

When he is alone, he eats at his sofa, watching TV. He eats his lunch at work on his desk and that is why dinner has become more important to him and he tries to have his partner or friends over at home almost every night. He has discovered that "cooking is a creative activity" and he experiments with recipes he finds online, and that is why he follows "#foodporn" on social media. He believes that dining spaces tend to disappear from the domestic sphere and that is why he tries to resist this tendency and has found a flat that has space for at least a small dining table. Although he admits that, by changing various flats, his available space affects his eating habits a lot, he now knows his needs better and prefers to pay a higher rent than compromise with a smaller apartment that does not match his needs.

* The small built-in table that exists in the kitchen is big enough for two people to eat, but "facing the wall" is not welcoming and Miltos never uses it.





+ equipped with:

- 3 drawers
- 2 double cabinets
- 3 single cabinets
- fridge
- 4 kitchen hobs
- oven
- mixer
- blender
- water heater
- toaster

In the case of Katerina, changes in space are not allowed, so she has to adapt her habits to the space and not vice versa. Her habits are in such a conflict with her space, that she would prefer moving to another apartment and sacrificing her small salary, if that meant having a space that meets her needs.

* The lack of light and the old distribution of the kitchen keep Katerina away from it as much as possible. She avoids it so much, that when she cooks a more elaborate meal, she prefers to go to her partner's house to eat it with him, instead of staying at her "miserable kitchen".



Kindergarten Teacher, Athens 28 years old & 2 years living alone

55 sq.m²
the size of her domestic space

6 sq.m²
the size of her kitchen

60 mins
avg. daily time in the kitchen

4 meals at home
physically shared with others weekly

2 times
per week ordering delivery

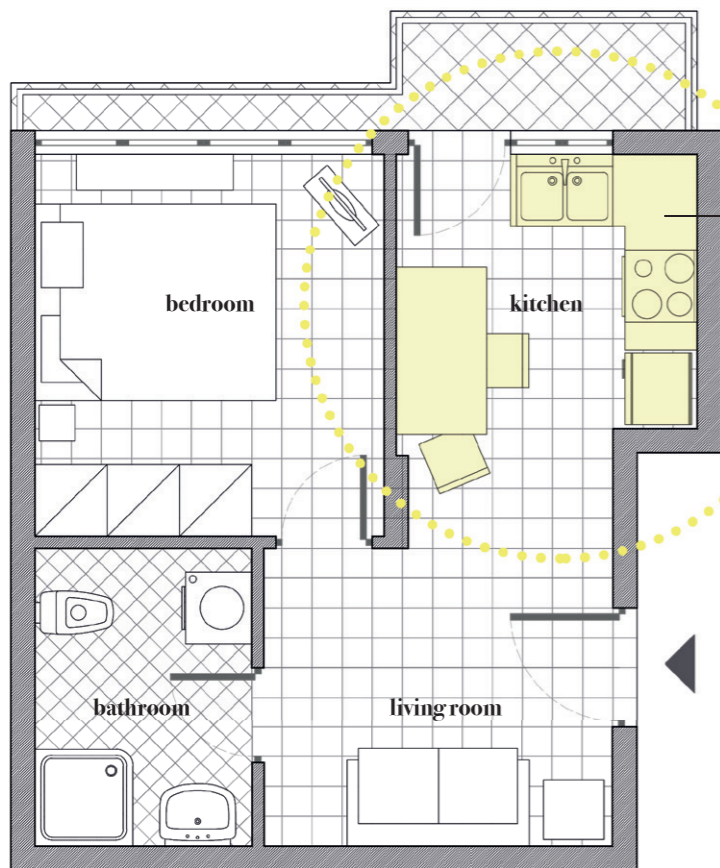
her TV set
the device she relates eating most with



When Katerina was a child, she remembers big meals not only with her parents, but with her broader family as well, three or four times a week. When she was a teenager, these gatherings became rarer and now she attends them only in special occasions, as she lives far from her family. She and her brother have moved to Athens, in adjacent flats owned by her parents.

“It is strange because, even though I have my own personal space, my parents have organized the flat based on their old habits, that don't agree with mine. They do not allow me to make changes, so I must adapt my habits to the space they chose for me.”

She prefers the living room for her meals, where her brother also joins her some nights every week. They both love delivery food so usually they order online and eat while watching movies. She misses the variety and heartiness of her mother's food, but she also cooks, discovering recipes through “#foodporn” and posting them online, as a way to communicate with her friends. She now eats healthier and whenever she wants, but she “misses a table and company” on a daily basis.



+ equipped with:

- 4 drawers
- 3 double cabinets
- 2 single cabinets
- fridge
- 4 kitchen hobs
- oven
- microwave
- bread toaster
- sandwich toaster
- mixer
- hand mixer
- espresso machine

Giorgos grew up in a house with a spacious kitchen, which included the family dining space. In his small apartment, he tried to maintain this organization of space by squishing in a small table, which he always uses for his meals. The spatial organization remains the same, but he now watches series on his laptop while eating, instead of talking with someone, which he loved.



Personal Trainer, Athens 29 years old & 1.5 years living alone

30 sq.m² the size of his domestic space

6 sq.m² for food-related activities

30 mins avg. daily time in the kitchen

3 meals at home physically shared with others weekly

2 times per week ordering delivery

his laptop the device he relates eating most with



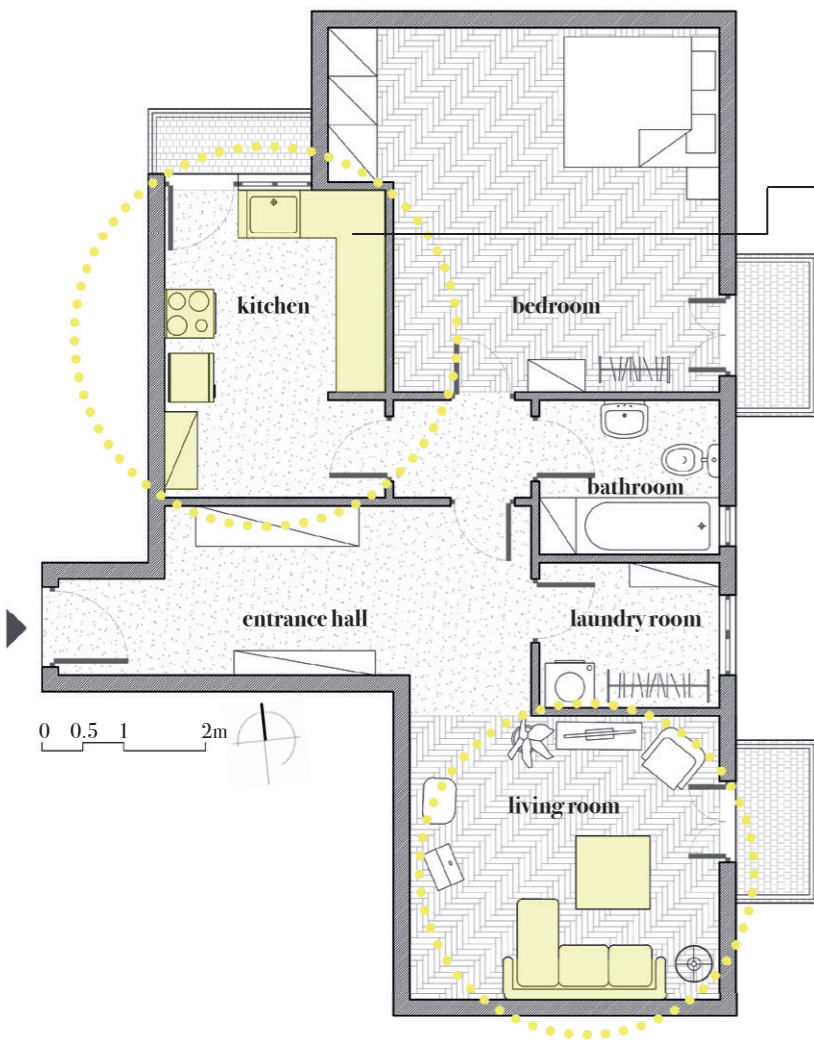
Raised in a traditional four-person family, where dinner and weekend lunches were a point of reference for the whole family, Giorgos now lives alone in an one-bedroom apartment, within walking distance from his family house. His adult life as a personal trainer and his limited free time and domestic space have made him change his eating habits a lot. As he claims,

“Although now I eat healthier than I used to, I am struggling with maintaining a rich diet and I am totally missing the communicational part of daily meals with the family.”

He would prefer eating with “rules” if that meant that he would share every meal. Although he has rented a very small apartment, based on his financial allowance, he has managed to fit in a small table with two chairs inside it, where he eats all of his meals, no matter what, but always watching series “to keep him company”. He cannot host big meals for his friends, but he eats dinner at home with his girlfriend once a week. He still visits his parents every weekend for lunch, trying to maintain their relationship around food. He commented that he had found a new way to communicate with his mother, by often calling her to ask for tips and recipes. He would not move back with his parents, but he is keen to start his own family and share all of his meals again, “like the families in the TV commercials”.

* Bad storage distribution results to lack of food preparation space.





+ equipped with:

- 5 drawers
- 5 double cabinets
- 1 single cabinet
- 4 storage shelves
- fridge
- 4 kitchen hobs
- oven
- microwave
- mixer
- juicer
- water heater
- coffee machine

Anastasis' apartment is big enough to have a laundry room, but the space distribution does not allow him to have the dining space he wants.

Even though he could make changes, his lifestyle is so busy and his salary so low, that he adapts his needs instead.

* Unable to afford big changes in his house right now, Anastasis has invested on an armchair and some floor cushions that he uses in order to host more people in his living room.



* Sales Assistant, Athens 30 years old & 6 years living alone

70 sq.m² the size of his domestic space

6 sq.m² the size of his kitchen

75 mins avg. daily time in the kitchen

1 meals at home physically shared with others weekly

0.5 times per week ordering delivery

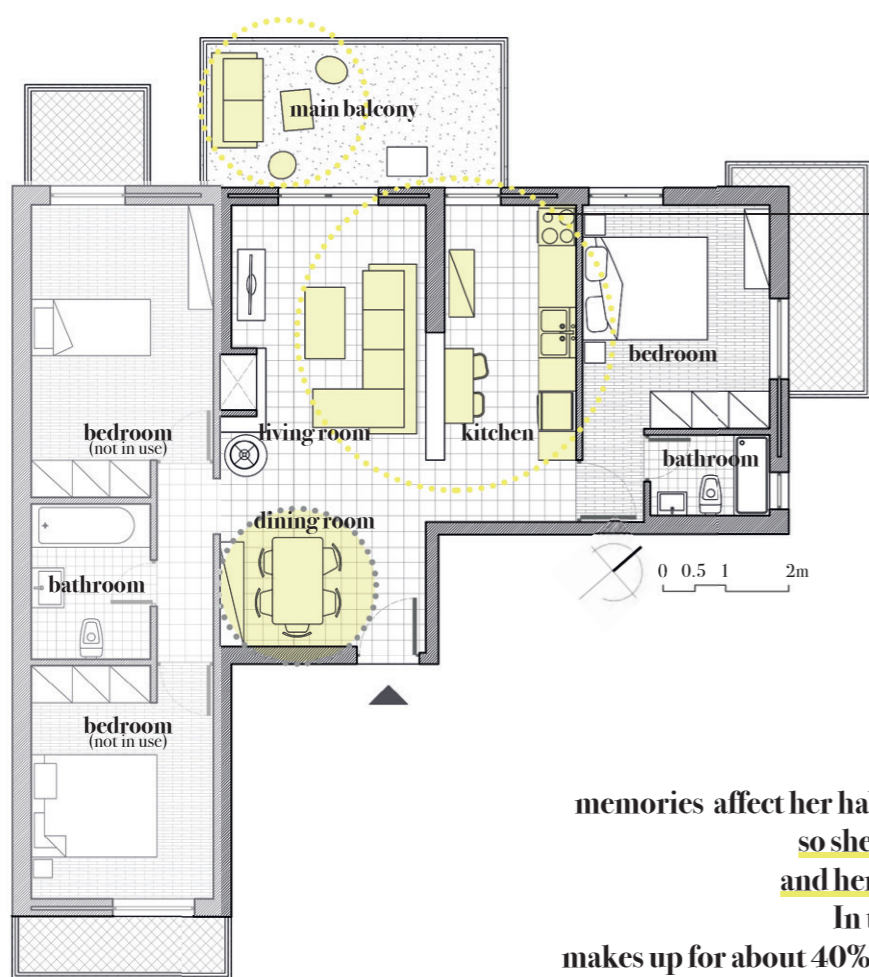
his TV set the device he relates eating most with



Having the kitchen as her kingdom, Anastasis' mother did not allow him to cook what he wanted when he discovered how much he likes cooking, so he felt liberated when he started living alone. Now, even though he is free to cook, having to follow a diet restricts him once again. However, that does not stop him from inviting his friends over for dinner once a week, when he cooks elaborate recipes and puts his kitchen in "full use".

"I miss sharing meals and, even though I don't have a proper dining space, I invite my friends for dinner every weekend. The irony is that, even when eating together, we still end up watching Netflix, without any interaction between us."

That is why he now enjoys going back to his hometown to visit his family. They share every meal for the few days they are together, "like the old days". His love for cooking and the lack of communication have made Anastasis find new ways to combine them, through social media. Even though it is not the contact he wants, he enjoys posting his creations online and them being a means for people to communicate with him.



+ equipped with:

- 5 drawers
- 5 double cabinets
- 4 single cabinets
- 3 storage shelves
- fridge
- 4 kitchen hobs
- oven
- mixer
- hand mixer
- toaster
- coffee machine

In the case of Ifigeneia, memories affect her habits more than the space itself, so she has redefined her living room and her balcony as new dining spaces. In total, the space not used by her makes up for about 40% of her domestic environment.

* The old dining corner of the house stays frozen in time and unused as it represents an emotionally charged domestic space, where the family that no longer exists used to eat.



Psychologist, Athens 30 years old & 10 years living alone

105 sq.m²
the size of her domestic space

6 sq.m²
the size of her kitchen

50 mins
avg. daily time in the kitchen

0 meals at home
physically shared with others weekly

0.5 times
per week ordering delivery

her kitchen table
the object she relates eating most with



Losing her mother at a very young age and even though her dad cooked a lot, she did not share a lot of meals with him because he was away for work. That is why the family meals she remembers were the ones happening on weekends and special occasions of the wider family. After her dad passed away too, she gradually stopped meeting her wider family so often and became more independent. Still living at her family house, but alone, her eating habits gradually changed:

“The dining room stays the same, but I avoid it because it reminds me of my parents. Eating there now feels like “an act” and I only do it on the rare occasions I have a lot of people over.”

She now eats mostly in the kitchen, when she is in a hurry, or in the living room with the TV on, when she is more relaxed. When she has friends over, they usually order delivery and eat it in the balcony, if the weather allows it. She still maintains the diverse diet and the recipes her father taught her, but she recognizes that she has “un-learned to share meals”. She misses the conviviality of shared meals though and she believes that when she makes her own family, she will try to spend more time in the dining room, because, as she said, “sharing home-cooked food means caring”.

COMPARISONS, TENDENCIES & CONFLICTS

Having seen and studied the ten case studies, we can establish connections between them and encounter tendencies. We can safely say that the transition from a family environment to an individual household indeed generates problems between space and needs, problems that some times are easily overcome, but in many cases result to alterations of behaviors and habits, especially around food-related activities.

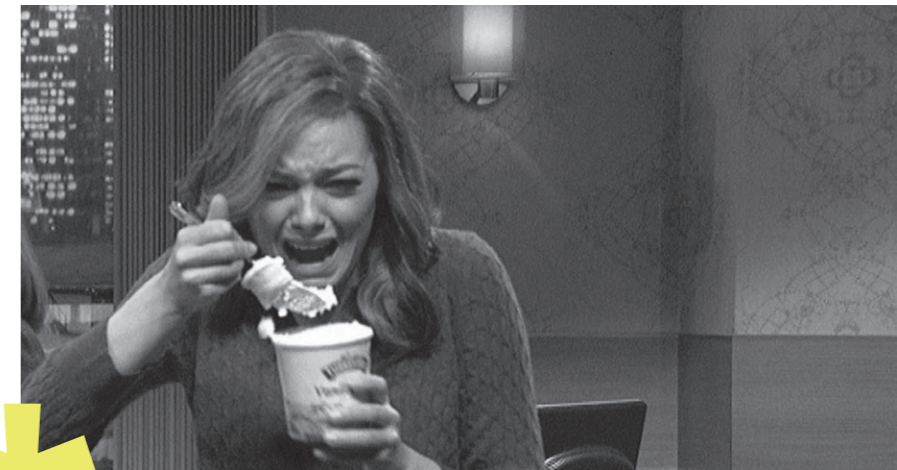
1/ Concerning **spatial conflicts** that arise, we have seen that most case studies have very limited space to develop the eating habits they carry with them from their families. Most individuals cannot afford a bigger place, so they must sacrifice space and needs like family and friends' gatherings or even eating at a proper dining table. In some cases, like Carmela and Esteban, the kitchen itself is so small that it does not allow its users to cook or store food, so they resolve to prepared food or avoid eating at home, as eating is converted to a mere necessity. Most individuals have to adapt their eating habits to their available space, but we have also seen cases like Miltos and Kostis, that manage to adapt their space to their habits, that sometimes results in other compromises. For example, Maria has a very small bedroom in order to have a big dining space and host meals, that are valuable to her. The existence of balconies also helps as a solution in some cases, when the interior of the house is limited (Christina) or, in the case of Ifigeneia, when parts of the interior domestic space are avoided due to the importance of memories.

2/ The lack of **communication** has been proven a problem that almost every case study has pointed out when living alone. The individuals try to tackle this problem in various ways. Miltos, Kostis and Maria regularly invite friends over to share their meals with, even without a proper dining room, while Giorgos, for example, found a new way to communicate with his mother over the phone, talking about food and

recipes, and Katerina and Anastasis have turned to social media, as a means to communicate with others through the online trend of #foodporn. Technology and the digital world can indeed help to tackle the isolation during meals, but in many cases it constitutes part of the problem: most case studies admit that while eating, they use online platforms like Netflix or their TVs to accompany them, an activity lacking any kind of interaction. Finally, we have Christina, who, even though she has lost the communication involved in shared meals, prefers to take the time she spends eating as an opportunity to relax, alone, so she does not look to recompensate the lost conviviality so often.

3/ The **family background** can also be either a problem or something positive when living alone. For many of the case studies, like Giorgos and Kostis, having a balanced diet as a background helped them maintain richer and more healthy eating habits when moving alone. In other cases, family past creates conflicts. In the case of Ifigeneia, the loss of her parents generates emotional charges that make her avoid certain parts of her domestic space and she has to find new ways to develop her habits. In the case of Katerina, the spatial distribution and the decoration of her apartment, imposed by her parents and their old needs around food, force her to compromise, even though she has the available space she needs.

All in all, we realize that despite the conflicts and problems that arise in individual households, where the domestic space was not properly designed to suit current needs and demands and the space available many times does not fit its user's needs, individuals try to adapt their space with their available tools or find new ways to develop their habits. Despite the situation, one thing is proven certain: meals are to be shared with others in one way or another, and they always should be. •



Actress Emma Stone eating ice cream and crying on a comedy snip for American TV show *Saturday Night Live*. Ice cream is considered a "comfort food" to go through break-ups and this trend has been shown many times in movies and entertainment. This may have a scientific explanation too: for many, ice cream is subconsciously related to happy childhood memories, so, when upset, we may see it as a way to feel happy again after our hearts are broken. (Huffington Post) (source: <https://www.insider.com/is-it-actually-ok-to-eat-an-entire-pint-of-healthy-ice-cream-2018-3>)



REFLECTIONS & CONCLUSIONS

REFLECTIONS

Living alone is a growing phenomenon and a situation that more and more people aspire to be in, as social and financial independence becomes a more important objective than having a family for young people, in the more socially liberated, open and hyper-connected cities of today. The exponential increase of the number of individuals living alone in recent years allows us to talk about **“living alone” as a new reality that affects modern day life, especially in big cities.** Surely, it is in the developed countries, and more specifically in the developed metropolises of the world, that this phenomenon is possible, depending on the social and financial development of each country of the developed world. In some cities like Paris, people living alone in certain regions consist the 50% percent of the total population (López 146). This signifies **a revolutionary shift in how we inhabit our cities and how we perceive contemporary living and domestic space.**

Domestic space is highly affected by the dominant habits of its users and, at the same time, the space itself influences the way we develop our habits in it and the way we perceive space and domesticity. Especially in single-person households, that are on the rise, this relation between space and habits is more apparent, as a single user has total dominion over the domestic space and his/her habits are the only ones inscribed and developed in it. As the individualization of modern cities starts to prevail, demand for small homes is rising, along with the growth of short-term rental platforms, which reduces the availability of small homes, flats and studios for the sake of tourism. This, combined with the fact that houses in cities become smaller every year (Daly), makes the real estate market really competitive and difficult for individuals looking to live alone. **Smaller and fewer homes, combined with any other social or financial difficulties that young people aiming to live alone are facing, results**

in sacrifices when choosing where to live. Therefore, individuals have to make compromises concerning their domestic space, by choosing houses that do not necessarily meet all of their needs and by doing so they then face the challenge of adapting their habits to their available space.

Our eating habits, a crucial part of everyday life, are primarily affected by this new reality. Changing with a slower pace than other dimensions of our lives, as they are more deeply rooted to our traditions and our past, inside the family environment and our wider culture, **food-related activities are facing an unprecedented crisis.** We all face the “gastro-anomy” (Friedland 94) as we try to adapt our eating habits in a fast and constantly changing lifestyle, with less square meters available than ever. It is not irrelevant that, as most of the case studies demonstrate, the dining room is a space that is often sacrificed and is almost non-existent in single-person households. Individuals adapt their needs for their desired dining space and therefore transform coffee tables, beds and sofas to “dining rooms”. In many houses, even the kitchen is often sacrificed and adapted. Many times, the kitchen is converted to a kitchenette, with small preparation surfaces and insufficient storage spaces and is incorporated into other domestic rooms, in an effort to include as many uses as possible in the limited space available. This, combined with the fact that food technology and services have allowed the reduction of food preparation to the minimum and the availability of ready-made food more easy and affordable than ever, has led to great changes to our eating habits, leading to **individualized and freer eating patterns and space-restricted food activities.**

In this new domestic reality, **eating habits change not only spatially**. As we have already seen, developing individual eating habits in the domestic environment, away from any family restrictions, spatial, temporal or social, allows individuals to have freer eating schedules, follow their own nutritional patterns and diets and eat literally anything, anytime and anywhere they want. This allows a liberation from old family norms, but it also comes with a price: isolation. Along with the restrictions and the negative elements of family past and other shared meals, the conviviality disappears as well. **The communicative, ritualistic, educational, cultural and traditional values of meals give way to the mere nutritional service that a meal provides**. Not only do individuals stop sharing meals with their family when they move to a single-person household, but, bringing into the equation the disappearance of dining spaces and the reduction of the size of their households, they rarely have the possibility to invite people to their households for a shared meal. **Long gone are the days of daily big family meals, nowadays we eat alone in our sofas, combining eating with activities like watching TV or browsing the internet, instead of communicating and sharing with others.**

We can say for certain that shared meals in the domestic space are on the decline, and, as tendencies show that single-person households are becoming more and more common, **these meal experiences will almost disappear from the domestic environment if we do not react**. But that does not mean that the elements of conviviality and the communicative dimensions of the meal will disappear as well. As the case studies and the survey results prove, individuals still find these elements of the meal important and irreplaceable and tend to try and maintain them in the modern lifestyles they follow and in their restricted domestic space, as long as outside of it.

The question is not if shared meals have disappeared from the domestic space of individual households, but how we will adapt to this new reality and how we will make it possible to find new ways to maintain the conviviality every meal should contain and to reclaim the lost values of communicating by sharing meals and experiences around our food-related activities. This is an important field of reflection and there are many ideas put into action that could offer an alternative to the individualization of modern society. **Finding new points of view about ways to share meals can offer great “food for thought” to reflect about the current eating habits and their future, as well as to re-interpret domesticity in general.**

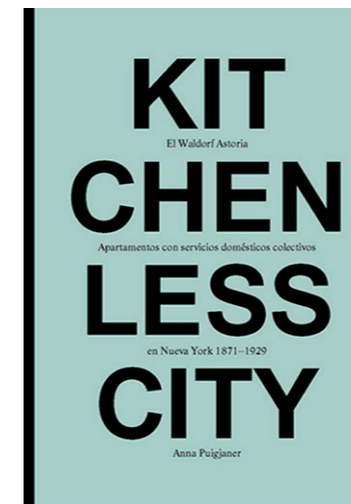
People are starting to find alternatives to re-encounter conviviality while developing food-related activities. Some of them are simple and less intrusive but others require a change of mentality in a wider scale. Although simple every-day solutions can be one way to adapt, **sociologists and architects come to play an important role in re-defining the role of food and meals in the ever-changing domestic environment of today.** •

ANNA PUIGJANER'S “KITCHENLESS CITY”

Architect Anna Puigjaner, for example, won the Wheelwright Prize of Harvard University with her innovative project “*Kitchenless*”. She imagines a future in which the domestic space is adapted to the need of its inhabitants, and that could mean not having a kitchen. As she claims, she:

“started with this idea of ‘no kitchen’ because it was the most provocative, I realized that when we talk about housing there was no problem if you eliminated the living room or bedroom, but if you touched the kitchen it generated a very curious adverse reaction. Kitchens were instilled with certain ideological values during the twentieth century linked to the role of women, politics, and the construct of the ideal family.”

(Thorns)



Anna Puigjaner's research *Kitchenless City*

(source: https://worldarchitecture.org/articles/cevnl/harvard_gsd_announces_anna_puigjaner_the_winner_of_the_2016_wheelwright_prize.html)

For her, the thought of eliminating the kitchen from the domestic space requires a large change of mentality, but it simplifies everything, yet being very provocative. Inspired by the communal kitchens of the past and believing that outsourcing domestic services is crucial in today's society, she proposes replacing the traditional kitchen of the domestic space with a kitchenette, that will serve smaller needs and meals and offer the possibility of cooking as a hobby, while introducing communal kitchens inside residential buildings. She believes in her project and says that

“when we talk about the idea of a conventional family we are only talking about a small percentage of people when compared to other social types. [...] Patterns change. Sometimes people who were reluctant at first are more open when they are looking at it out of necessity.”

(Thorns)

Her idea could be a healthy alternative to isolation as well, as spending time in communal kitchens and dining spaces would mean spending more time with others, sharing meals and communicating, while these kitchens and residential services could offer a job to professionals and help fight unemployment, another pressuring problem of modern lifestyle.

The innovation of Puigjaner's proposal is not that it proposes something new and unseen, but a combination of already applied models of kitchen spaces and a vision for how they could be organized and function well, while predicting solutions for other problems as isolation and unemployment. The concept of the "kitchenette", a very small kitchen that can sometimes be hidden and "folded" has already been seen in many models of small single-person homes, as it saves space and offers practicality and versatility in limited square meters. It is not a bad solution, although it must be applied in a correct and useful way, in order for it to offer all the necessary services to its users. As we have seen from the case studies, just limiting the size of a regular kitchen distribution does not bring the same results, as what it ends up doing is affect the user's food-related activities in a bad way, instead of an innovative and smart way.

Both Puigjaner's proposal and the existence of kitchenettes, although they try to tackle the spatial problem of today's small houses and single-person households, they do not necessarily address the important matter of today's meals: the loss of conviviality. While living and eating alone, we can still find solutions to meet with others, using the tools of modern lifestyle. •



Anna Puigjaner photographed by Alba Yruela for *Metropolis Magazine* (source: <https://code-studio.es/blog/diseño-code-studio-interiorismo-arquitectura-kitchenless-anna-puigjaner/>)

WEIRD SPACE



One could argue that going out to eat with friends and family could be the only needed alternative to the isolation we face today, but that is not always the case. Restaurants, bars and other similar spaces can indeed be an alternative, but not the only one, as not everyone can afford the luxury of going and eating out regularly, as financial and time management issues can arise. But this does not mean that having shared meals outside of our domestic space cannot be explored as a way of re-claiming lost values of the meals that we can no longer find in the domestic environment.

For example, "Weird Space" was a series of workshops that explores the city through the production of urban dinners in unusual spaces inside the Community of Madrid. The Weird

Space team together with the INJUVE Creation Areas organized the dinners in October 2018 as a way to use the dinner as an element to activate creative processes and explore urban space. The creators understand **the dinner as an experimental and performative method that generates affective and relational spatialities** and forms of appropriation of the city. Taking place in rare places and on different conditions, these dinners brought together their participants in order to create a collaborative experience, re-claim the city and find new ways to interact with one another (Matesanz). •

The exhibition for the closure of the *Weird Spaces* workshops (source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/talleresweirdspace/albums/72157700685392212/>)

AUGMENTED TUESDAY SUPPERS

The recent Covid-19 pandemic, which brought with it domestic confinement in many countries, in order to limit the spread of the virus, may have given us some ideas on how we can still meet while being apart. All around the world, people started to use video call internet services in order to share the meals they used to share with their families and loved ones. What is more, they domestic confinement shed a light on the absence of conviviality, sharing and communication, as even people that used to eat alone started wanting to re-encounter with their familiar faces. The virtual and digital world, although it can indeed affect our interpersonal relationships in a negative way by isolating us and making us spend more times passively interacting with a screen, can at the same time be a tool to re-signify our ways to communicate while developing our food-related activities, if used in the right way.

Back in 2013, long before the pandemic, “*Augmented Tuesday Suppers*” was a project that explored this concept of communicating while eating, using the digital tools in its advantage. HipoTesis, 100x10 and Especulaciones, three collectives linked to the Architecture School (ETSAM) of the Polytechnic University of Madrid (UPM) in different ways, designed this innovative experience as a disruptive interpretation of online courses. Its aim was to **create a knowledge community based on dialogues about everyday life subjects, around a dining table during supper time.** Drawing an analogy with Epicure’s philosophical garden, this space-time experience has been based on the belief that knowledge is better produced and assimilated by people while they are not expecting it. In a relaxed environment of a dinner at home or at work, the creators proposed a series of independent Augmented Suppers, where seven face to face commensals, including two experts and coordinators from the collectives, gathered to eat and talk about certain subjects, while an unlimited number of virtual commensals could join them, eat, and discuss

with them. The virtual commensals were projected on the kitchen surfaces.

The topics selected were situations faced by everyone in our everyday lives, like fear, anxiety, addiction, lack of love, mistakes, loyalty and loneliness. As the project’s creators say,

“Although these subjects are common to everybody, we hardly feel estranged and analyze them from an outer perspective.”

Although the idea was applied in a controlled environment, it could teach us a lot about how we can gather and communicate with each other even when we are physically apart, while sharing the common experience that is a dinner and talking about intimate matters.

Ideas like “Augmented Tuesday Suppers” could be applied in a more extensive way even with our own social circle, inside our domestic space, without any coordination. **The virtual and digital tools we have at hand nowadays could be a way to fight the lack of shared meals and re-signify the ways we “eat alone together” in the modern, fast-paced and sometimes hostile and uncertain, environment of the urban grid and beyond.** Erasing physical and social restrictions, shared meals could be re-introduced as an experience, taking example from projects like that. •

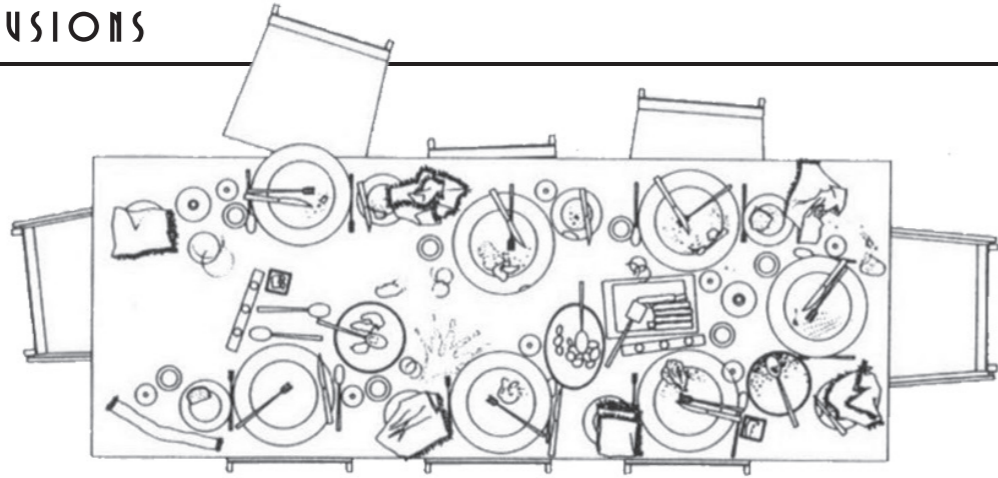
(courtesy of Gonzalo Pardo,
based on the MOOC description of *Augmented Tuesday Suppers*)



Recordings of *Augmented Tuesday Suppers*
(source: Gonzalo Pardo
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E83r7Qr8sZs>)

These are a few of the projects that have shown alternative and diverse ways to tackle the loss of shared meals, in the individualized society of today. But, even without the intervention of specialists and experts, by adapting our habits and our domestic space, using the digital and virtual tools we have at our disposal or re-signifying our perspective about what sharing a meal means, we discover new ways to find what is lost and open new paths to conviviality and domesticity. •

CONCLUSIONS



As we can realize, it is indeed a fact that nowadays, with the individualization of society, the reduction and the changes of the domestic space, the introduction of technology and the fast-paced, hyperconnected lifestyles we follow, food-related activities tend to get reduced to a minimum and our eating habits are compromised, trying to adapt to this new reality. We have seen both how our eating habits affect the way we perceive space but also how the limited domestic space of today, that does not necessarily follow the needs of its users nor the demands of modern lifestyle, affects our food-related activities, especially in the single-person households of today.

Except for the spatial dimension of food-related activities, we have explored the other elements of shared meals and the meaning of family meals as rituals, inside the domestic space. Family meals, especially in Mediterranean countries like Greece and Spain, came with stricter rules and many times reflected crystalized social stereotypes, but they also carried with them educational, cultural and social values that used to be passed on from generation to generation, around the dinner table. As young generations nowadays pass from living with their families to living alone more often and much faster, following the fast rhythms and demands

of modern lifestyle, they face the situation of “gastro-anomy” and their values around food-related activities are compromised more than anyone else’s and more than ever. Although still a vital part of their everyday life, eating has been reduced to a mere nutritional activity and the values of shared meals with family and friends in the domestic space tend to disappear, while the development of their eating habits has to be adapted to their limited available space.

As the practical analysis of the situation has shown, through the investigation of real case studies of younger individuals that live alone and their domestic spaces, this crisis concerning our food-related activities is indeed a reality. Dining spaces are almost non-existent in these small single-person households and many times the kitchen is also relatively small and does not allow them to develop their eating habits and cover their needs around food and meals the way they want to. However, in these new conditions and while carrying a certain family education and specific expectations about food and about how meals should be shared, we see that they indeed try to find new ways and explore new paths of their domesticity, in order to find the values of their eating habits they are missing.

The developments and changes in the domestic space have indeed affected our eating habits and, therefore, our perception of space and of the ritual of the shared meal in the domestic environment, but, apart from their negative influence, they can lead us to new and interesting scenarios about how we related with space and food. It is in our hands to re-claim them and find the lost conviviality of eating together, as architects, designers, sociologists and creators can show us new ways to re-encounter one another around food, as we have seen above. Exploring these new spatialities and temporalities of eating together can prove of great importance, as the results of such investigations and the debate they could possibly open, can offer greater conclusions and define tendencies in how domesticity is changing in general, not only around food-related activities. Keeping such dimensions of domesticity when selecting or designing domestic space could help us predict negative effects and adapt more aptly to changes, in order to avoid putting our needs in danger and prevent conflicts between space and user needs, inside domestic environments.

Summing up, this work was an exploration on food, domesticity, space and conviviality and aimed to wake up the appetite for realization and reflection. It was an attempt to investigate how thought is cooked and how food is thought, while experiencing the current situation of “gastro-anomy” and living alone. This work has been successful if it has aroused curiosity and called attention to dimensions of our eating habits that we do not usually notice. •

...and, after all,
we can indeed eat together, while alone.

-ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS-

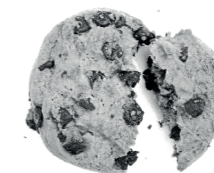
This work was realized during a tough but unforgettable academic year, between Athens and Madrid, Architecture and Communication. Bringing it to an end seemed very difficult, and it would have been impossible without the help of many people, directly and indirectly.

I would like to thank firstly my tutors, Maria and Gonzalo, who put up with my bad time management and helped me with their valuable comments and insights. Antonio, thanks to you I changed my way of thinking and without you I would not have been able to understand and manage the ethnographic and social approach of the subject. Atxu, my mother in Madrid, if I had't met you, I wouldn't even have a home to work this thesis from, much less a master's programme to do it for. If you are my mother in Madrid, then Natasa is definitely my sister and I'm thankful for everything she has done for me.

Huge thanks go to everyone that filled out my survey and especially to the 10 incredible and unique people that were my case studies.

I am also very lucky to have known my fellow classmates of the MaCAfamily and I will always carry with me what they taught me, as well as their friendship, I hope. Thank you for all our discussions and all the moments we've shared inside and outside of the (expanded) MaCAula. We've been through a lot, but we made it through!

With the danger of sounding cliché, I will always thank my family and friends. Sophia, Lucila, Kostis, Melissa, Kiko...special thanks to each one of the five of you for... well, everything.





...APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONS

First Section - General Questions

01 / In which city do you live?

Short text answer.

02 / In which neighborhood of your city do you live? (State the name of the neighborhood.)

Short text answer.

03 / What type of household do you live in?

Multiple-choice answer. (I live alone. [single-person household] / I live with my parents. [1st generation family household] / I live with my partner. [two-person household] / I live with my own family. [2nd generation family household] / I live with roommates. [multiple-person household] / Other)

04 / Please write 3 words that describe “food” for you. (separated by comas)

Short text answer.

05 / Which is the most important aspect of a meal for you?

Multiple-choice answer. (Nutritional value / Taste / Price / The space where it takes place / Conviviality [sharing a meal with others] / Other)

06 / Do you follow a specific/restricted diet?

Multiple-choice answer. (I eat everything. / I only don't eat things I am allergic to. / Vegetarianism. / Veganism. / Pescaterianism. / Raw foodism. / Gluten-lactose free diet. / The Atkins diet. / Low-carb diet. / The Keto diet. / Other)

07 / Is there a separate kitchen room in your house?

Multiple-choice answer. (Yes, there is a separate room just for the kitchen [only for food preparation]. / Yes, and the dining space is included in it [food consumption takes place in the same room]. / No, the kitchen is located in a shared space [with the living room, for example]. / There is no kitchen in my house. / Other)

08 / Is there a separate dining room/space (min. considered a table & 2 chairs) in your house?

Multiple-choice answer. (Yes, there is a separate room just for dining. / The dining space is incorporated in the kitchen. / The dining space is part of another room [the living room for example]. / There is no dining room in my house. / Other)

09/Would you live in a house without a private kitchen?

Multiple-choice answer. (Yes/Maybe/No)

10/Would you live in a house without a dining space (without at least a small table with 2 chairs)?

Multiple-choice answer. (Yes/Maybe/No)

11/Please, rate the following spaces based on their importance when choosing where to live, from the least to the most important: (balcony, bathroom, bedroom, dining room, kitchen, living room).

Short text answer.

12/In which space of your house do you usually eat when you are alone? (up to 2 answers accepted)

Checkboxes answer. (Kitchen/Dining room/Living room/Bedroom)

13/In which space of your house do you usually eat when you share a meal with other people?

(up to 2 answers accepted)

Checkboxes answer. (Kitchen/Dining room/Living room/Bedroom)

14/Please, from the list below, check all the appliances related to food that can be found in your house.

Checkboxes answer. (Fridge/Microwave oven/Kitchen hobs/Oven/Cooking appliance [hobs & oven]/

Dishwasher/Toaster/Mixer/Specialized gadgets/Other)

15/How many basic and small meals do you have every day? (basic meals are breakfast, lunch and dinner and small meals are the ones in between)

Multiple-choice answer. (1-2/3/4-5/More than 5/Other)

16/Please, rate the three basic daily meals, from the least to the most important to you:

(breakfast, dinner, lunch)

Short text answer.

17/How often do you cook?

Multiple-choice answer. (Every day/3-5 times a week/Once a week/Once in two weeks/Once a month/

Only when I invite guests/Never)

18/What type of food do you usually cook/prepare? (up to 3 answers accepted)

Checkboxes answer. (Elaborate recipes I find online, in magazines etc./ Easy recipes I find online, in magazines etc./ Recipes I know from family, friends etc./ I make my own improvisations./ I cook/ prepare easy things with minimum elaboration [toasts, sandwiches, pasta etc.]/ I prepare pre-made food [frozen food, TV dinner etc.]/ I never cook or prepare food./Other)

19/How often do you order food delivery/take-away food at home?

Multiple-choice answer. (More than once a week/Once a week/Once every two weeks/Once a month/ Less often than once a month/Never)

20/How does that kind of food arrive at your place usually?

Multiple-choice answer. (I go to the place/restaurant, order take-away and bring it home myself./ I order and have the food delivered through apps [Glovo, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, E-food etc.]/ I order and have the food delivered through the place's/restaurant's own delivery service./ I never order food./Other)

21/How often do you go to the (super)market to buy food?

Multiple-choice answer. (More than once a week/Once a week/Once every two weeks/Once a month/ Less often than once a month/Never)

22/What are the 2 most common food product categories you buy from the supermarket?

(please select only 2 answers)

Checkboxes answer. (Fruits & Vegetables/Dairy products/Meat/Fish/Pasta & Rice/Beverages/Baked goods/Processed & Pre-made food or Frozen Goods/Other)

23/Approximately how much of your monthly income do you spend on food?

(supermarket, eating out, ordering food and everything else included)

Multiple-choice answer. (Less than 10%/10-30%/30-50%/50-70%/More than 70%)

24/How often do you use the internet and social media for food related search?

(recipes, tutorials, foodporn etc)

Multiple-choice answer. (Daily/Often/Rarely/Never)

25/What platforms do you use in your food-related searches? (multiple answers accepted)

Checkboxes answer. (YouTube/Instagram/Tasty/Recipes websites/Other)

26/How often do you upload photos with the #foodporn on any social media? (posts, stories etc)
Multiple-choice answer. (Daily/Often/Rarely/Never)

27/In your opinion, which field related to food has technology affected the most?
Multiple-choice answer. (The quality of food-products./The availability of food-products./The taste of food-products./The time and the practicality of meal preparation. The sharing of food-gastronomy between cultures./Other,)

28/Have you ever used any edible substance in sex-related activities?
Multiple-choice answer. (Yes/No)

Second Section - Evaluation Questions (forced Likert 4-scale format)

29/When I shop for food, I am more:
1:organized - 4:impulsive

30/When I shop for food products, a more important criterion is:
1:the price - 4:the quality

31/The origin of the food products that I buy & the eco-friendly packaging are very important to me.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

32/My food choices can play a vital role in changing the food system and the uneven food distribution worldwide.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

33/For me, it is more important that my food is:
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

34/Eating is much more than a mere nutritional activity for survival.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

35/Through sharing food with others, people can form social relationships and educate themselves.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

36/Eating gives me a kind of pleasure that can be compared to having sex.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

37/I enjoy trying new food and experimenting with new flavors.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

38/I prefer eating:
1:alone. - 4:with company.

39/I prefer eating at:
1:a restaurant. - 4:home.

40/Family meals are very important in my life.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

41/I eat better than my parents used to eat in my age.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

42/I eat healthier than my parents.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

43/I dedicate a lot of my time to prepare/cook my meals.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

44/When deciding my daily meals I am more:
1:spontaneous - 4:organized

45/I enjoy cooking.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

46/Cooking should not be the responsibility of only one person in shared households.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

47/Cooking and food preparation in modern society are still female-related activities.
1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

48/What I eat is a fundamental part of who I am and my food choices shape my identity.

1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

49/My eating habits affect the way I perceive space.

1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

50/Eating is a home-related activity.

1:strongly disagree - 4:strongly agree

Third Section - Demographics

51/Sex:

Multiple-choice answer. (Male/Female/Other)

52/Age:

Short text answer.

53/Highest level of education completed:

Multiple-choice answer. (No education completed/High school degree/Technical-Apprentice diploma/Bachelor's degree/[Integrated] Master's degree/Doctorate degree/Other)

54/Did you enjoy filling out this survey?

1:Not at all - 5:Very much

55/If you are interested in the subject and you live alone, would you like to participate in more ways in the investigation? If you do, please type below your email address or any social media I could contact you at.

Long text answer. •

INTERVIEWS LAYOUT

The plans and photographs for all case studies were realized in situ by the author of this thesis. Following this step, all the interviews with the individuals selected as case studies were realized between the 6th of July and the 9th of September 2020. They took place with the following methods:

Carmela, Kostis, Maria: video call via the WhatsApp application

Anastasis, Eleni, Esteban, Giorgos, Ifigeneia, Katerina, Miltos: in person

All interviews have been recorded with the permission of the individuals. However, due to their extent and the difficulties caused by the fact that they were realized in three different languages (English, Greek, Spanish), they could not be transcribed. Presented here is the layout on which they were based, in a printed copy of which the author was taking notes during every interview. If you would like to listen to the interview recordings, please contact the author.

First Part - General Information

Name, Age, Sex, Profession, Nationality

Monthly Salary/Money spent for rent monthly

Time living alone (in general)

City, Neighborhood

Second Part - Family Background

Parents (Both alive? Still married?)

Siblings (sex/age/profession)

Place of growing up

Where do family members live now?

How often do you visit them?

How often do they visit you?

Family meals then and now: (When you were living with your family, how strict was the meal schedule, did you share all meals of the day, was it important to eat all together? Now, when you visit them or they visit you, is it still important, how often do you gather together to eat, where? etc.)

Third Part - The House

Size (in sq.meters), Type (studio/one-bedroom/etc.), Property Status (owned/rented), Time in this house

Kitchen (separate room or shared with..?)

Dining room (separate room or shared with..?)

Comments (Satisfied? Planning to change? If yes, why?)

Fourth Part - The Kitchen

Size (in sq.meters)

List of kitchen appliances (fixed and portable)

Frequency/Type of use (Do you use the kitchen for every meal? When you cook, do you use a lot of the appliances or just easily-prepared meals, for which you only use the counters for example?)

Time spent in the kitchen (on average per day and/or on special occasions)

Satisfaction (Would you change anything concerning the size, its place in the house etc? Would you buy or throw away anything?)

Fifth Part - Current eating habits

Type of diet

Number of meals per day

Number of meals alone/with company at home (frequency per day/week and when with company, meaning actually sharing the meal, not just eating at the same time at work for example)

Type of meals (elaborate full meals, something more simple, frozen meals..?)

Meals alone at home (where/when/why/how)

Meals with company at home (where/when/why/how)

Shopping (Describe how you do your grocery shopping: Impulsive buys? Organized with list? Frequency per week? Only supermarket or local shops?)

Cooking (Describe how you are as a cooker: Enjoyment? Do you cook a lot? Do you experiment with recipes?)

Eating (Describe how you eat: Do you combine eating with other activities? Do you dedicate time only to eat?)

Food delivery (frequency/method/reasons)

Comments about the relation between your space and your eating habits (Does your domestic space affect how/where you eat/cook? Have you adapted your habits on your current home or did you adapt your home to your habits? etc)

Sixth Part - Eating habits compared to the past

General comparison between meals at the family home and meals now (Do you eat healthier or better now than you did when living with your parents? Are meals equally important in your daily routine?)

Elements kept/to keep (Habits or elements you have kept from your family household, concerning eating schedule, diet, the meal as a gathering etc)

Elements lost/discarded (Habits or elements about food-related activities that you have deliberately discarded or that you have lost without wanting to)

Elements in danger (Habits or elements that you feel that you will lose if you keep eating/living alone)

New positive elements (Habits or elements about food-related activities that you have found when living alone and you like)

New negative elements (Habits or elements about food-related activities that you have found when living alone and you don't like)

Seventh Part - Evaluation/Thoughts on Future

Do you like living alone? Why (not)?

Do you like eating alone? Why (not)?

Thoughts on how technology affects your eating habits?

Comments on #foodporn?

Habits/elements you would like to change? (Anything you recognize that you would like to change concerning food-related activities.)

Future of eating (alone) habits? (Thoughts on how our eating habits will change in the future, in general or personally, based on the influence of individualization, of technology etc)

Anything else you would like to comment? •



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