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Bringing Culinary Justice to the Table: A Conceptual Approach to Enrich the Debate on Food Justice

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Abstract

The concept of food justice is widely used in urban geography and agri-food studies in the Anglophone context. Much of the literature revolves around questions of how access to the land and resources to produce food can increase the ability to fulfil the food needs of low-income communities and communities of color, as well as the issue of food access in urban contexts. Less attention has been paid thus far to food preparation practices and culinary aspects. Against this background, we propose the concept of culinary justice, which links culinary practices and power, pointing to injustices in food provisioning and eating while also focusing on the symbolic and cultural components of food. Our central argument is that culinary elements and practices are important dimensions in questions about justice, as they enable a more nuanced understanding of socio-cultural, ecological, political, and historical food (in)equalities. Building on a review of existing approaches that touch upon the issues of culinarity and food justice in the areas of critical food studies, Black food studies, and postcolonial studies, we apply the concept of culinary justice to four contexts: private households, commercial restaurants, public catering, and community kitchens. In each area, we illustrate the role of food knowledge, care work, commensality, and spatial settings in issues of justice. As part of our contribution, we point toward future directions in food justice research, as well as future research needs in the practical field of food inequalities in culinary contexts.

Keywords food justice, culinary knowledge, care, intersectionality, power relations

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1. Introduction

The concept of food justice is widely used in the fields of urban geography and agri-food studies in the Anglophone context (see, for example, Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Garth & Reese, 2020; Guthman, 2012; Motta, 2021). Much of the literature on food justice circles around questions of how access to the land and resources necessary to produce food can increase the ability to fulfil the needs of low-income communities and communities of color, as well as the issue of food access under unequal conditions in urban contexts. Less attention has been paid to practices of food preparation and the culinary aspects of food.

In the effort to spotlight the culinary elements of food in the food justice debate, we propose *culinary justice* as a new concept for analyzing power relations in practices of food preparation and eating. In our understanding, culinary justice links dimensions of culinary food practices and justice, and thus points to the injustices that can arise in food provisioning and eating while also emphasizing the symbolic and cultural components of food. Culinary justice involves the sociocultural meanings and values that people attach to food, such as pleasure in preparing and eating it, and the creativity involved in cooking. Since food is a catalyst of social practices, culinarity also refers to the cultural relevance of certain preparation methods and food items, as well as the cultural interactions and commensality that can arise in eating. In addition, spatial aspects play a role in how food is valued in different (private or commercial) contexts. Everyday culinary practices are embedded within power relations and inequalities; issues pertaining to justice become apparent in the (gendered or racialized) division of care work in preparing, cooking, serving, eating, or sharing of food. The foundation of culinary justice is the labor, knowledge, and skill that help to create and build culinary cultures. Our central argument is that those culinary elements and practices are important dimensions of justice, as they allow a more nuanced understanding of the social, ecological, and historical contexts of food, of the ways people experience culinary labor as food providers, and of the culinary aspects of eating as consumers. For all these reasons, bringing culinary justice to the table can help us to understand better how the culinary needs and practices of different social groups can be addressed in food justice debates.

Culinary practices, processes, and (in)equalities run through the entire agri-food system and can affect all the nodes along the value chain. Processes of exploitation and marginalization, such as enslavement, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism, deepen inequalities in the agri-food system. All of these processes have a strong impact on agricultural practices, as well as on the agency of individuals and communities to make decisions about their own food and diets. Communities of color, migrants, and indigenous people, in particular, have experienced and continue to experience such oppression. Food inequalities can be found on the farm, for example, when farm workers work in exploitative jobs or when those who are producing food are affected by food insecurity (Hammelmann et al., 2020). Those who work directly in the agri-food chain are just as affected as those who consume food, and often struggle to meet their own food needs. Because culinarity is embedded in every part of the agri-food system, we refer to it as a *culinary continuum*. In this paper, we focus on culinary justice from the kitchen to the plate—from the food providers to the eaters—thus illustrating justice aspects in the realms of both food provisioning and eating. Our goal is not only to argue for the integration of culinary aspects and conceptualizations in the food justice debate, but to consider how the understanding of food justice changes when we think about culinary inequalities, culinary histories, and culinary labor, as well as culinary desires.

In this paper, we use the term "culinary" with an awareness of its frequent association with exclusive, high-status, and pleasurable activities related to cooking and eating, which is also replicated in agri-food studies. The term is often perceived to have a classist connotation, suggesting that culinary culture is the domain of high-class cooks and a small (male) elite. This dominant narrative has limited the understanding of what culinarity is, and where and by whom it is created and enacted. We deliberately connect the concept of culinarity to everyday activities and cultural practices, particularly those associated with the domestic sphere of the household. Although culinary practices are not confined to the private sphere, as the paper will show, many culinary practices are grounded in learning and experiencing food and cooking at home. Our approach is informed by the understanding that culinary practices transcend class boundaries and that culinary aspects of food also play an important role in contexts of food scarcity. A meal that is prepared on the basis of a limited budget can be culturally appropriate and offer a sense of belonging and identification.

In the first section after this introduction, we introduce the concept of food justice and identify culinary aspects within the food justice literature. Building on these conceptual insights, we then develop a framework for culinary justice in which we integrate four conceptual aspects of food knowledge, care work, commensality, and the role of spatial environments. In the second section, we put forward four culinary contexts as fields of application to show the relevance of culinary justice in private households, commercial gastronomy, public catering, and community kitchens. In all four of these contexts, we analyze food inequalities in the aforementioned aspects of knowledge, care, commensality, and the spatial dimension of culinary justice. We take a broad view of culinary justice and draw on examples from different regions, thus taking a global perspective on the issue.

Using these empirical fields, we developed four questions: (1) How is culinary (in)justice enacted in different contexts? (2) Who owns culinary knowledge and how is it embedded within power relations? (3) Who is doing culinary care work and under which conditions? (4) How does the social and spatial setting impact the culinary experience of the eaters? In the final discussion, we highlight the potentials and limits of culinary justice as a conceptual framework for enriching the food justice debate and point to further research needs.

Our methodological procedure is based on a literature review of food justice articles and culinary aspects within this realm. We carried out a qualitative search of papers with culinary aspects in the fields of Black food studies, critical food studies, and postcolonial studies and complemented it with a literature search on Scopus. Our conceptual work is informed by an empirical study about school food procurement in five cities of Southern Germany, including interviews with producers, kitchen workers, parents, and pupils, as well as on an empirical study of the post-Covid effects on food-related care work in households in Berlin (Čajić et al., 2021) and a more recent study on community food action in Berlin.

We were inspired to write about the topic of culinary justice in two ways: first, by our academic work on food and care practices in the Global South and North over the past few years, and second, by our daily life experience as (single) mothers, which has shaped our thinking about food and care work. We had the privilege of carrying out our doctoral fieldwork in Kenya and Colombia, and through these projects we, positioned as white German researchers, perceived how persistent colonial structures influence contemporary food practices and these communities' abilities to meet their food needs, depending on gender, race, and class. Although the agri-food system follows a hegemonic, neoliberal model in these contexts, while we were in private kitchens or community gardens in Kenya and Colombia, we could observe how people attach other values to food. We saw people cultivating and preparing food as a means to connect with one another, to create desired tastes, and to (re)produce the culinary knowledge they gained from their community—mainly from women. We also observed that the cooks and the eaters we met were proudly consuming food that was part of their agricultural and culinary heritage, while price increases and neoliberal food policies were impeding their ability to consume the food they want. Similarly, in recent fieldwork undertaken by the second author on public kitchens at schools in Germany, we can see that selecting and cooking food is likewise subject to rigid cost calculations, with hardly enough time or sufficient financial means to incorporate culinary aspects into menu planning. Likewise, fieldwork by the first author on community kitchens and their potential for social justice and environmental sustainability in Berlin highlighted financial restrictions, low-paid work, and the lack of volunteers. The results from these two studies informed this paper and will be presented alongside the other literature in parts 4.3 and 4.4. In all kitchens, we witnessed that the work behind meals is highly gendered and invisibilized. The mismatch between culinary desires and economic parameters has prompted us to highlight the culinary aspects of food while at the same time uncovering the power-laden contexts in which food is prepared and eaten. Our positioning as women working on feminist topics and gender equality, as well as the experience of exclusion of feminist perspectives on food in academic knowledge production, has clearly shaped our interest in addressing this mismatch.

Issues of power, work, and visibility are major topics in Black food studies, a field that offered us significant epistemological and practical inspiration on how culinarity and justice can be addressed. In preparing this paper, we communicated extensively with our colleagues about knowledge production and epistemic injustices (Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2023) and reflected on our own role within the scholarly food and culinary justice debate. How can we suggest cu-

linary justice as a new concept while at the same time giving adequate credit to the conceptual contributions that have already been made to the field? This question and the feeling of discomfort surrounding it has creatively stimulated our desire to develop a concept that can contribute to the broader exchange of knowledge and collective intellectual activism (Haraway, 2016) and foster a dialogue with researchers and activists in different contexts.

2. Food Justice as a Framework to Analyze Food Inequalities

This section introduces the origins of the food justice debate and explains how it can serve as an analytical framework for researching food inequalities. In Great Britain in the 1990s, and in North America in the 2000s, several studies on "food deserts" raised awareness about the limited access of low-income, migrant, and Black neighborhoods to fresh and healthy foods due to the closure of supermarkets or their relocation to high-income neighborhoods (Reisig & Hobbies, 2000, p. 138). Alison Hope Alkon and Kari Marie Norgaard have shown the origins of the food justice debate in the bridging of the movement for sustainable agriculture (which was lacking social justice issues) and the environmental justice movement (Alkon & Norgaard, 2009). While the environmental justice movement is primarily concerned with the unequal exposure to environmental damage (such as water contamination, toxicity, etc.), the food justice approach focuses on equal access to environmental benefits in the sense of healthy food (Heynen et al., 2012). Food justice authors utilize intersectional perspectives to identify the factors (such as class, race, gender, age, etc.) that lead to exclusions from the urban agri-food system. According to Bradley and Herrera (2015), the original notion of food justice integrates struggles against racism, exploitation, and oppression with "practical efforts to establish fair, equitable access to fresh, healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food in vulnerable neighborhoods, especially low-income neighborhoods and communities of color" (Bradley & Herrera, 2015, p. 101).

Conceptually, food justice encompasses several dimensions, including a distributional justice dimension in the sense of limited access to food, as well as a procedural justice dimension in the sense of enhancing *food sovereignty*, or empowering people to take part in decisions regarding the local food system (Heynen et al., 2012, p. 306). Thus, food justice as an analytical framework helps us to analyze the racial and social inequalities that are inscribed in the current agri-food system but also allows us to reflect on the participatory ways for "a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities" (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. ix).

Over time, the scholarship on food justice expanded, and its conceptualization has constantly evolved. Feminist food justice authors emphasize, among other issues, the revaluation of feminized food work, such as providing food and nourishing family and community members (Sachs, 2020). In the same vein, Renata Motta shows the multiscalarity of food inequalities in the sense that inequalities can be observed at the levels of bodies, households, communities, and transnational alliances (Motta, 2021, p. 619). She highlights the need to integrate a "politics of care" into the analysis of food inequalities by conceiving of food not only in an instrumentalized way of human nourishment, but in the sense of "webs of life to be cherished and maintained" (Motta, 2021, p. 621). In a study of a Black neighborhood in Washington, DC, Ashanté Reese (2019) questions the notion of *food deserts* as a static phenomenon with a narrow focus on supermarkets (Reese, 2019, p. 6). Instead, she speaks of *food apartheid* in order to highlight the structural causes that lead to the racist and classist exclusion of Black people from the food system. In her research, Reese proposes community markets and gardens as potential sites of a communal responsibility for healthy food provision and resistance. In the context of urban gardening, food justice also deals with the integration of diversity by integrating and acknowledging the diverse food habits from different migrant communities that cultivate varieties from their home countries in their gardens and share their knowledge about different recipes. Beyond academia, the food justice approach has found resonance in community work, nongovernmental organizations, and social movements (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). Food justice activists, for example, organize socio-ecological change processes around agriculture and food, working towards a more democratic, community-led food system (Alkon & Guthman, 2017). Recent food justice investigations have analyzed how food and agriculture are reinterpreted by eco-queer movements (Sbicca, 2012).

This brief overview of the rich literature on food justice shows that the focus has mainly been on issues of food access and inequality. Less emphasis has been

given to culinarity, food preparation, care work, and diversity. To underline our observations, we undertook a Scopus search in which we combined the keyword "food justice" with the keywords "culinarity," "diversity," "care," and "participation." This search showed that culinary aspects have not yet been the focus of the food justice literature. However, as the search strings were only applied to English articles, it is possible that there are more contributions about culinary justice in other languages or regions, or in the "grey literature" published in activist contexts. In the following section, we examine the current status of culinary aspects and conceptual approaches in the food justice literature and in studies on food inequalities more generally.

3. Culinary Aspects Within Food Justice Literature

Culinary practices can be a window to present and past injustices and inequalities. A growing body of research aims to unpack how culinary aspects influence food and agricultural practices and asks what role inequalities play. Until now, as shown above, culinary justice has not been introduced as a specific concept in food justice literature. However, culinary aspects have been discussed in the fields of critical food studies, Black food studies, and postcolonial studies, as well as in activist contexts. In the reviewed literature, culinarity and justice have been addressed through different terms. We identified four main themes—*culinary appropriation*, *culinary oppression*, *culinary colonialism*, and *Black culinary epistemologies*—that will be outlined in the following.

Chef and culinary historian Michael Twitty (2017) is the only author who explicitly mentions culinary justice. In his book, *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South* he describes culinary justice as "the idea that people should be recognized for their gastronomic contributions and have a right to their inherent value, including the opportunity to derive empowerment from them" (Twitty, 2017, pp. 409–410). This points toward a foundational issue of culinary justice: its socio-historical context—in the specific case of Twitty's book, the enslavement of Africans in America—which shapes contemporary food cultures and access to food. The quote makes clear that one has to be aware not only of the origin of a food item, preparation method, or dish, but also of the violence that has been enacted toward people and nature. One example of this is the Brazilian dish *feijoada,* a stew made of black beans and pork cuts, usually served with rice, *farofa* (cassava crumbs), and a variety of green cabbage. Formerly, feijoada was food for enslaved people, who only received the leftovers from the pork meals. They added cassava flour to the black beans because cassava is very filling. Nowadays, feijoada is Brazil's national dish, and is served in the gourmet restaurants at the Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro. However, the roots of the recipe and the corresponding struggles and culinary knowledge of enslaved people are unknown and invisible to most tourists and customers. Similarly, Judith Williams, a Black Jamaican author who grew up in Miami, shows in a case study the cultural appropriation of Caribbean food that has its origins in immigrant communities and is valorized and commodified by gourmet restaurants. She describes *culinary appropriation* as the "unauthorized use of Latin-American and Afro-Caribbean foods, recipes, and cuisines, as well as the intellectual and physical exploitation of Latin American and Afro-Caribbean cooks" (Williams, 2020, p. 252). With this quote, she underlines the symbolic-epistemic appropriation of food knowledge as well as the material appropriation of cooking care work of deprivileged immigrant workers—in this case, mainly from Haiti and Jamaica. Using the case of the "Mango Gang," she describes how a group of white cooks appropriated Afro-Caribbean cooking methods and recipes, then "whitewashed and rebranded" these foods as "New World Cuisine" (Williams, 2020, p. 251). While benefiting from the food knowledge and labor of Caribbean workers, their struggles remained invisible to mainstream American eaters. Williams calls this a "colonization of labor, culinary knowledge and skills," which becomes also evident through the racial segregation within the kitchens (Williams, 2020, p. 262).

From a postcolonial and feminist point of view, Juliana Camacho analyzes the different valuation of European and Colombian cuisine and identifies intersectional power relations in the way how food and the care work for preparing it is appreciated:

> In many contexts, the daily cuisine is not valued, neither socially nor economically; it is perceived as feminine practice, as worldly and domestic. These prejudices aggravate with an accentuated classism, since in many cases the [female] cook or domestic worker is of rural origin. (Camacho, 2014, p. 170)

Thus, Camacho calls for a deeper analytical view into the household sphere to visibilize the work and knowledge of women, especially those of subaltern contexts (Camacho, 2014, p. 176).

In a literature review, Lisa L. Price et al. (2021) used the term *culinary oppression* to describe the devaluation and neglect of the traditional foodways of Indigenous peoples[1] who had been relocated from their lands to less fertile ground. Building on Devon Mihesuah's (2016) work, Price et al. conclude that "foods currently consumed are historically in intimate alignment to oppression, exploitation, and disenfranchisement of Indigenous and traditional peoples. These foods are often married to hardship but become significantly incorporated into the core diet and viewed as culturally 'traditional foods'" (Price et al., 2021, p. 2), as the example of the feijoada shows. Marilisa C. Navarro (2021) analyzes how food is a medium that constructs racial identities and coined the term *black culinary epistemologies.* With this approach, she demonstrates how, in the popular and academic debate, Blackness and food have typically been framed as deficient, the food habits of Black communities depicted as unhealthy, and their engagement in alternative food practices overlooked. Her analysis of Black cookbooks counters these narratives and demonstrates how Black communities have historically used food as medicine, ate locally and seasonally, and, moreover, "have produced recipes, dishes, and meals that try to heal the damage of the industrial food system" (Navarro, 2021, p. 204). From an activist perspective, Wendie Wilson, an educator and activist in the Black Food Sovereignty movement in Nova Scotia (Canada), points out that the colonial food system has led to several food-related diseases that have affected Black and Indigenous people; she thus calls for the right of people of African-descent to determine their own food systems. In a public lecture, she mentions "culinary justice" in the sense of the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food and emphasizes the importance of recovering and sharing food heritage in diaspora communities, such as among people of Afro-Caribbean origin (see also Yanful, 2024)[2]. She is engaged in the Coalition for Healthy School Food, a broad network that is working to provide access to healthy and culturally appropriate food in school canteens in Canada.

Based on a literature analysis and two empirical case studies (in Peru and Canada), Grey and Newman (2018, p. 726) demand the right for Indigenous peoples "to hold gastronomic capital back from the market." In this context, they speak about *culinary colonialism*, meaning the "historical transit from destruction and denigration of ingredients and cuisines, to forced assimilation to a Settler gastronomic norm, to cultural appropriation of Indigenous foods and dishes" (Grey & Newman, 2018, p. 726). As has been shown in the previous examples, when food is adapted and customized to hegemonic culinary norms, it becomes commodified, and the context it originated from is often overlooked. Therefore, in addition to holding capital back, Grey and Newman argue for a food system literacy embedded in Indigenous rights and the history of colonialism. In several Latin American and African countries, local culinary cultures were neglected during colonialism, as new food crops produced for export replaced local crops. The culinary practice and knowledge linked to those crops has been disregarded, and the "[c]olonial powers considered the food of the other to be inedible, primitive, revolting and proof of the need to civilize the population through civilizing the palate" (Van Esterik, 2018, p. 1). As shown in a field study in Kenya, however, even in the face of this structural racism, local communities tried to preserve ties to "their food" and the skill and knowledge about it through production and consumption (Brückner, 2020).

It is important to acknowledge that food has not always been treated as a *commodity* to which customers have access due to differences in purchasing power. As José Luis Vivero-Pol (2019) outlines, the transformation of food into a capitalist commodity first appeared in the twentieth century: Food has always been a tradable good, but its insertion into the global capitalist trade regimes strengthened the dimension of "food as commodity" (Vivero-Pol, 2019, p. 34). According to his framework of six food dimensions, however, food can also be seen as a *commons* to which all citizens should have "guaranteed fair and sufficient access, regardless of his/her purchasing power" as decided upon in democratic processes (Vivero-Pol, 2019, p. 35). The notion of food as a commons is also inspiring for the conceptual development of culinary justice, since it strengthens the view of food as part of participatory processes.

To summarize, the literature on culinary practice and justice described above shows, firstly, that certain food items, dishes, and agricultural practices hold intense culinary importance. Secondly, it shows the importance of culinary traditions and culinary

knowledge and how those have been neglected, appropriated, and commodified in different regions. Thirdly, culinary aspects involve aspects of post-colonial, intersectional, and capitalist power relations, such as when we speak about the cultural appropriation or commodification of food; they also involve issues of justice in the distribution of care work (e.g., by immigrant gastronomy workers or female domestic workers). In the next section, we use these conceptual aspects to come to an understanding of culinary justice that will guide our discussion in different culinary contexts.

4. Towards an Understanding of Culinary Justice

In this section, we take up the previously identified conceptual aspects in order to elaborate on an understanding of culinary justice. These aspects are based on our definition of culinary justice in the introduction, but are also derived from the explanations in the previous section. The first three identified conceptual aspects (*knowledge*, *care work*, and *commensality*) therefore stem from our own idea of culinarity and justice as well as the reviewed literature. We add a fourth conceptual aspect (*space*) to be able to spatially embed and frame the culinary contexts in the following analysis. This geographical lens helps us to situate culinary justice in a concrete physical environment. In the following subsections (4.1–4.4), we explore these conceptual aspects through a range of culinary examples, socio-economic realities, and geographical contexts in both the Global North and South. Some of the examples are based on our own experience and work. In the following, we first explain the conceptual aspects and then step to the application in the culinary contexts.

Culinary justice involves several different forms of *knowledge*: knowledge about food provisioning, nutritional and ecological characteristics, as well as knowledge about cooking, serving, and composting. Without this knowledge and expertise, culinary desires and preferences cannot be enacted. In this regard, we understand kitchens as places of creativity (e.g., when trying out new recipes) and productivity (Brückner, 2020). In the following, we use *knowledges* in the plural form to convey the idea of a plurality of diverse forms of knowledge (see, for example, Kothari et al., 2019) and their dialogue (Castro-Gómez, 2007). We understand the plural form as more appropriate for highlighting the diverse local and regional knowledge forms that are necessary for the cultivation, provisioning, and preparation of meals.

Care work is related to knowledges, as knowledge is a prerequisite for being able to perform care work. Already in the 1990s, the practice of cooking was highlighted as important "feeding work" from a feminist political economy perspective (DeVault, 1991, p. 12). According to DeVault, feeding work involves all facets of care work, including planning recipes, procuring ingredients, preparing, serving, and afterwards cleaning and disposing of food. With the notion of feeding work, DeVault and other early feminist contributors wanted to contrast the view of cooking as "unproductive" work that is not visible in private households due to its non-remunerational status (Bauhardt, 2018; Waring, 1989). They emphasize that, without this work, processes that are recognized as "productive" (because they are remunerated) could not function. Thus, the care work of cooking is a vital part of any economy. By focusing on food-related care work through this perspective, the second aspect of culinary justice becomes visible: the work necessary for caring and nurturing. These two aspects are brought together through culinary justice, which contends the gendered or racialized division of care work and of culinary knowledges, such as when traditional recipes become commodified and appropriated. This is also a devaluation of care work, as the work that went into developing these recipes goes unacknowledged.

The third conceptual aspect we want to elaborate on is *commensality*. Food is often interpreted as a social encounter and as a powerful communicator of diverse societies and socio-cultural contexts. Scholars have long investigated the power food has to create and maintain conviviality and social cohesion. To focus on these dimensions, we use the term commensality, which can be defined as "eating at the same table. In its broader and general meaning, it describes eating and drinking in a common physical or social setting" (Kerner & Chou, 2015, p. 1). At the same time, commensality can have exclusionary effects and reproduce hierarchies along the lines of class, gender, location, religion, or race/ethnicity. Commensality also involves the senses through the tasting, smelling, and feeling of food. This is in line with what the Black food theorist Hannah Garth describes as a *decent meal*—the "aesthetic and moral imperative to meet cultural standards for food consumption and the ability to create meals that are desirable, enjoyable, and that one is

proud to serve to others" (Garth, 2019, p. 417). This shows that food is not just for eating; it also involves questions of cultural relevance and symbolic meaning—especially at occasions of eating together. In this sense, food resonates with local identities, with a sense of place, and with feelings of belonging.

Finally, the role of *space* is closely connected to commensality, since the places where food is prepared and where people sit together to eat are crucial for reflecting on justice issues. Our focus lies on the social relevance of places of preparing and provisioning food and their spatial settings. This allows for a critical perspective on how culinary needs and wishes are taken into account or not, and how this inclusion or exclusion materializes in spatial settings. As shown in the rich literature in the field of critical geography on the social production of space and spatial justice, societal power relations shape space and can lead to exclusions and marginalization (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1974). In addition, gendered norms that are associated with certain spaces (e.g., the public space, or political spheres) can lead to the exclusion of social groups who do not correspond to the white male norm (Wastl-Walter, 2010, p. 66). This also applies to the way in which the physical space where culinary (in)justice is experienced—such as kitchens and canteens—is designed and how the existing infrastructure can reflect or contrast intersectional power relations, as shown in Section 4.3.

To develop this concept further, we want to show the relevance of culinary justice in four different realms of society where food provisioning and eating take place: private households, commercial gastronomy, public catering, and community kitchens. In our analysis, we illustrate how the four conceptual aspects (*food knowledge*, *care work, commensality*, and *space*) are treated in these different areas of application, which we call culinary contexts. In our understanding, culinarity is a topic that cuts across these contexts. In the sense of the culinary continuum, we will highlight the relationships between food provisioning, cooking, and eating and identify, for example, how inequalities in food provisioning ultimately shape and determine people's eating practices in different contexts.

4.1 Culinary Context 1: Private Household

In the following, we expose how culinary justice applies to private spaces with a focus on the four previously identified conceptual aspects. The private household is of particular interest because it is the place where reproductive work is invisibilized and feminized. Feminist scholars have long demonstrated the life-sustaining role of food-related care work and the significant differences in the division of knowledge and care work among different genders. This first conceptual aspect of food knowledge can be viewed as a precondition for the second one, care work, which includes the creation of tasty meals. Seen in this light, cooking is a practice that requires knowledge, skills, and capacity, and is not something that women are innately capable of due to their sex. At the same time, however, studies over the past 40 years have shown how meal planning, providing, preparing, and cooking is linked to femininity. Drawing on a qualitative study from Canada, Oleschuk (2019) argues that women are the primary teachers of culinary knowledge and skills. She calls this practice "cooking by our mother's side," which leads to an unequal division of knowledge regarding normative cooking practices (Oleschuk, 2019, p. 609). From a Global South perspective, Mary Njeri Kinyanjui (2022) uses the term *fireside knowledge* to refer to the unseen and unacknowledged system of household economics practiced by women in Kenya. "Fireside knowledge represents an African feminist form of knowledge that consists of women's perspectives of knowing, norms, values, methods, and strategies of doing and engaging the world" (Kinyanjui, 2022, p. 33). This notion of fireside knowledge illustrates the plurality of knowledge forms that contribute to an understanding of culinary justice.

A central concern in feminist discussions about the unequal distribution of care work, which relates strongly to culinary justice, is abolishing the naturalized connection between women and food that constructs food work as a feminine activity. Studies show that women still hold the main responsibility for food-related care work across different geographical contexts and socioeconomic backgrounds. A study in the Nordic countries by Holm et al. (2015), for example, indicates that although a slight change in the gender order can be observed, and men have become more involved in food-related care work, women still spend significantly more time on it than men do. In the context of sustainability, studies point out that pro-environmental food practices in the household are often implemented by women (Cairns et al., 2013; Čajić et al., 2021). In this context, Ellie Perkins (2007) asks: "Who will do the work of growing the tomatoes on urban rooftops, recycling the post-consumer materials,

carrying the glass jars to the bulk food stores to be refilled with beans, soaking and cooking and refrying the beans?" (Perkins, 2007, p. 238). We identify two contrasting strands in the debate about the feminization of food and care work. The first of these works toward challenging the gender order in cooking and relieving women of this responsibility, which in turn argues for a new division of care work. The second strand emphasizes the knowledge, capacity, and skills of women in providing food and, rather than relieving women of cooking, it argues for its valorization. This strand challenges the victimizing view of women and suggests that the narrative of food-related care work as an oppressive activity must be rejected. While we should not neglect the power relations in which care work takes place, nor ignore the harms and inequities that care work can bring, more attention should also be given to culinary creativity, agency, and autonomy. Relying on a historical overview of agriculture, and on recent examples of urban agriculture, Silvia Federici (2011) stresses how, under capitalism, the work of reproduction has become completely privatized. She sees the emancipatory potential of organizing care work in a more cooperative way, which can in turn help overcome this division between the private and political spheres (Federici, 2011, p. 6–8; see also 4.4).

In the household, the experience of commensality depends on its makeup. The social function of food comes especially into play when eating as a family, and the important role of family meals for bonding and connecting has been highlighted in sociological and anthropological research. Udagawa (2022), however, maintains that family meals can also produce and reproduce power relations. This is the case when, for example, food providers—mainly women—have to have the meal ready for serving when the family comes together. For children, "meals are a kind of a training ground for becoming well-behaved and educated" (Udagawa, 2022, p. 114). Despite these ambivalences, we see the potential of family meals as a tool for developing food literacy and for gaining competence and knowledge about food items, their production, origin, value, preparation, and taste —all of which are key components of culinary justice.

Regarding the spatial dimension, Christie's (2008) findings from work with communities in central Mexico question the framing of the kitchen as a site of the oppression of women. She shows how women use food-related care work to sustain traditions and to organize meaningful community relations via the kitchen. In this case, we can see how space plays an important role: The private kitchen is a place where culinary knowledge is produced and transmitted, where female cooks organize everyday meals, and from where they build community bonds based on culinary exchange. The spatial dimension also plays a role in private households' access to food. A qualitative participatory study by the first author (Brückner, 2023) that mapped the everyday activities and experiences of providing food in Kenya showed that a household's food practices are significantly influenced by the food environment in that household and beyond. What enters the kitchen, what is cooked there, and what is served on plates depends on the kitchen infrastructure and on the access to food in the local environment. These material realities of place within certain spaces shape culinary (in)justice. The cross-cutting culinary continuum perspective becomes evident here and shows the entanglement and dynamic between the provider and eater.

4.2 Culinary Context 2: Gastronomy as Commercial Cooking Sites

Restaurants, where different kinds of foods and cuisines are commodified and transformed into a consumable experience, are emblematic sites of culinary appropriation. In this section, we shed some light on this broad field of culinary experiences. The context of gastronomy is inspiring for reflections on culinary justice because there, according to Vivero-Pol's categorization, food is mostly treated as a commodity to which people have different levels of access according to their purchasing power. This has a differentiated impact on the eating experiences of the restaurant visitors and on the working conditions in the kitchen, as we will show in the following. This step of commodification can flatten the complexity of the food and simplify it into a consumable and profitable product. Moreover, the existing literature assumes that restaurant chefs hold a pivotal role in representing culinary cultures. Due to their public positioning, celebrity chefs, for example, have the power to discursively (re)produce hierarchies in the agri-food system and shape not only the food and eating practices of households but also culinary food politics (Abbots, 2015; Johnston & Goodman, 2015). As Johnston and Goodman (2015) observe,

> food celebrities are increasingly vital figures in defining, framing, and mediating the grammars of good food for much of the contemporary foodscape. They do this by telling us what we should

> or should not eat in order to define our identities, maintain our health and household budgets, as well as experience pleasure and conviviality through tasty food. (Johnston & Goodman, 2015, p. 211)

Regarding the conceptual aspect of knowledge, we have already shown in Section 2 how traditional food knowledge (e.g., recipes) is appropriated by gourmet restaurants. Acts of the cultural appropriation of food have also been captured by Lisa Heldke's (2001) early reflection on *cultural food colonialism*. From a restaurant eater's perspective, Heldke recalls different moments from her *food adventuring* and her exploration of new foods, tastes, and smells. Despite her aim of being respectful, she reflects on how driven she has been by "exotic" foods or the authentic representation of dishes, which in turn makes her complicit in cultural and economic colonialism: "Food adventuring makes me a participant in cultural colonialism, just as surely as eating Mexican strawberries in January made me a participant in economic colonialism" (Heldke, 2001, p. 78). In a similar vein, Emma McDonell argues that "celebrity chefs" in Peru, who promote Peruvian food and want to break down colonial culinary hierarchies, actually recreate and multiply colonial power relationships as the "lost/discovered food narratives" (McDonell, 2019, p. 3) they use on their menus have neo-colonial overtones. In this commodification of culinary culture by restaurants, knowledge plays a key role and is strongly connected to the imaginary of the "unknown." McDonell explains that this claim of the "unknown" made by chefs "offers an attractive marketing strategy that feeds into the novelty and adventure consumers desire" (McDonell, 2019, p. 13).

Regarding the recognition of care work, Patricia Allen and Carolyn Sachs (2007) have shown that, in the USA, less than 40% of paid cooks and less than 20% of head cooks and chefs are women (Allen & Sachs, 2007, p. 8). Wages for cooks vary significantly by the type of eating establishment, from fast food establishments to gourmet restaurants. Although the study is from 2002, it is likely still true that women predominate in cooking occupations with lower earnings (Allen & Sachs, 2007, p. 8).

In her aforementioned work, Williams (2020) points out the social differences between famous chefs (like the so-called "Mango Gang") and immigrant kitchen workers. These huge differences in social status are observable in many countries, including Germany, where the Covid crisis revealed the precarious working conditions of kitchen workers, who often work without contracts and regularized working hours. Thus, depending on the context, the care work of cooking in commercial spaces like kitchens can be highly valorized (particularly with regard to the often white male chefs) or neglected (other cuisine workers, who are often immigrants).

One key aspect in this regard is time, which can be a key resource for culinary justice and for successful care work in restaurants. A study by Abarca (2021) tells the story of the cook Antonio Elías López, a Chicano person with Mexican Indigenous heritage based in El Paso, Texas, who says that the constant time pressure in restaurants clearly shows the lack of valuation and appreciation for the work invested in culinary processes. The example illustrates that having more time can create culinary justice, as it allows the knowledge based on Indigenous culinary practices to be gained by the cooks and shared with the customers in a respectful manner.

Restaurants are spaces where people can eat together and experience commensality. They can connect people and serve as spaces of social cohesion:

> In a restaurant or hub of restaurants, we likely will know the people sitting at the table with us, but often not the people at other tables, or on the street. The act of going out to eat with family or friends at a common location creates an urban space in which people eat separately, together. (Newman, 2014, p. 1)

With regard to the third and fourth conceptual aspects—commensality and spatial setting—class issues are again crucial. In some cases, the more expensive a restaurant is, the more attention is paid to a comfortable and attractive eating space. Newman also cautions that not all social groups have access to restaurants, and therefore the possibility for culinary experiences is not available to everyone. This calls into question the potential of restaurants to be spaces for culinary learning, skilling, and education, as well as the transformative potential of this culinary context.

4.3 Culinary Context 3: Public Food Provisioning

Public food provisioning, such as the food served at schools, hospitals, or other public institutions, is an interesting site for reflections on culinary justice. On the one hand, it resonates with Vivero-Pol's framework and the dimension of "food as public good" (2019, p. 35) to which all citizens should have fair access. Accordingly, food in public catering places is inherently a social justice issue (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023). On the other hand, recent budget cuts have led to a transition of food provisioning toward private catering companies, which fits more with the logic of food as a commodity. In Germany, for example, 89% of school meals are delivered by external private companies (Jansen, 2019, p. 70). To show the relevance of culinary justice in public food provisioning, we rely on a qualitative study conducted between 2021 and 2022 in school canteens in five cities in Southern Germany by Hoinle and Klosterkamp that included 18 semi-structured interviews with producers, kitchen workers, and pupils, and highlight the results that correspond to the four conceptual aspects of culinary justice.

Regarding the conceptual aspect of care work, it is observable that the work behind the meals is usually invisible, especially in the external provision model. The societal lack of recognition of the manual work of cooking is particularly evident in the public food provision sector. Although workers have the advantage of more regular working hours (compared with private gastronomy), they are—at least in Germany—paid very low wages.[3] Recently, this lack of recognition became evident with the public discussions of the skilled labor shortage and the lack of young people interested in taking on an apprenticeship in gastronomy (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 7). This observation was underlined by a quote from a producers' association: "In the kitchens, there is often a harsh tone. They should be a space for creativity and for trying out new recipes. We need fair salaries there and more investment in apprenticeship and qualification"[4] (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 7). In the case of school catering, the notion of "food from nowhere" (McMichael, 2005, p. 287), as introduced by food regime theorists, becomes evident in schools, as the schoolchildren have no knowledge about who prepares their meals and under what conditions. One exemption can be found in the school-owned kitchens where pupils are able to participate in the processes of meal preparation and gain insight into kitchen work. Here, they can get to know the cooks personally and participate in different food preparation tasks (e.g., chopping vegetables), which also helps to share food knowledge.

Regarding the aspect of food knowledge, the rigid time constraints of public catering places, as in restaurants, can limit the potential of these kitchens as places of creativity and experimentation. In public tenders for food services, the most relevant criterion is usually the price, so canteens are incentivized to produce meals in the most economical way. Recently, however, there has been a public debate on making school meals healthier and more sustainable, such as by offering more organic products and vegetarian options. One interesting example is the city of Freiburg, which has decided to serve only vegetarian meals in kindergartens and primary schools for climate and quality reasons. The interviews indicate that although Southern Germany experiences a rising number of pupils from different migrant contexts, recipes based on the food knowledge of diverse cultures have not yet become a part of the menu at school canteens. Overall, diversity was not an issue for the interviewed stakeholders from the school food value chain. Only a few interviewees acknowledged the potential of integrating food knowledge from other regions, for instance, by preparing meals with legumes as a plant-based (and therefore more climate-friendly) protein; as one project coordinator stated: "There is a huge culinary playground for creativity to discover new things from other kitchens" (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 8).

The relevance of the spatial setting as an essential aspect of culinary justice was highlighted by the German Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Agrarpolitik, Ernährung und gesundheitlichen Verbraucherschutz (WBAE [Scientific Advisory Board on Agricultural Policy, Food and Consumer Health Protection]). In their policy paper on *Integrated Food Policy*, the Board pronounced the need for creating "fair food environments" and recommended key measures such as "advertising-free spaces" and the creation of "pleasant eating environments in preschools, schools, nursing homes and hospitals" (WBAE, 2020, p. 7). The idea of pleasant food environments also corresponds to the wishes of pupils interviewed in the study by Hoinle and Klosterkamp, who emphasized their desire for a "more colorful" and friendlier space[5] (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 8). Instead of sitting at long tables, they would prefer to sit and eat in closer proximity to their peers (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 8). This shows that the spatial setting stimulates or impedes commensality, the third aspect of culinary

justice. A quote from a project advisor underlines this observation: "For a long time, school food was treated as something functional, just like the heating."[6] More investment in creating attractive canteens as "places of wellbeing" (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 8) where pupils enjoy going is necessary to promote the social justice dimension of fair access to healthy food.

Other countries are already forerunners of a more sustainable and inclusive public catering that reflects the idea of what Vivero-Pol called "food as public good" (2019, p. 34). In Brazil, 30% of all publicly provided food must come from sustainable, small-scale regional agriculture. The national school feeding program (Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar, [PNAE]) is a public policy guaranteeing universal coverage through cost-free meals to pupils at public schools in Brazil (Nogueira & Barone, 2022, p. 95). This outstanding program guarantees the right to food for all pupils and promotes adequate and healthy meals to combat hunger and malnutrition. Interestingly, the program also incorporates the aspect of cultural and regional appropriateness of food: as Resolution No. 26 of 2013, Art. 14 outlines, meals must contain "basic foods, respect nutritional preferences, eating habits and local food culture, and must be guided by the region's sustainability, seasonality and agricultural diversification, and healthy and adequate food" (Brazil Ministry of Education, 2013). In the case of Brazil, this means considering the regional food habits of different social groups, including Indigenous and Black food needs. Although there are challenges in putting this ambitious program into practice, the example of Brazil provides much inspiration for culinary justice.

4.4 Culinary Context 4: Community Kitchens

As a fourth area of application, we propose community-based food sites as a means for enacting culinary justice, since these correspond to the ideal of *food as a commons* (Vivero-Pol, 2019, p. 35). Community-based sites are related to the idea of the commons as spheres outside of the market or the state that are shaped and governed by the people who use them, who in turn establish rules to organize the sustainable use of resources (Helfrich & Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2012; Ostrom, 2015). In our paper, we relate this idea to community kitchens organized by groups of people who share space and resources on a voluntary level, outside of primarily market-led dynamics.

Regarding the aspect of diverse food knowledge, in a recent publication, Oona Morrow (2023) investigates how cooking, eating, and sharing knowledge about food is used in community food initiatives in Berlin and New York to address racism and xenophobia. These initiatives attempt to appreciate culinary heritage and share the culinary cultures and knowledge of migrants. Referring to the Black feminist bell hooks (1992), Morrow expounds on the risk of *eating the other*, such as when food authenticity is staged for commercial reasons. She also points to the dilemma that consumers want to acquire knowledge about the situations of the migrant cooks, but the cooks themselves may not be comfortable sharing intimate experiences of conflict, violence, and loss (Morrow 2023, based on hooks, 1992). This risk applies not only to community kitchens but to gastronomy entities in general. Thus, the challenge lies in creating respectful cooking and commensality sites in which food knowledge is exchanged and acknowledged. We argue that community kitchens provide huge potential for this. Ferne Edwards' (2021) research on community kitchens and meals in Melbourne, Australia, shows that community kitchens can be places where the cultural connection to and symbolic meaning of food is respected and the specific needs and preferences of consumers are fulfilled, for example, when halal meals are offered. Since respect for different food needs and backgrounds is at the heart of culinary justice, community kitchens are central in organizing and practicing culinary justice.

Regarding the aspect of recognition of care work, the study by Natalia Quiroga Díaz and Verónica Gago about the economic crisis of 2001 in Argentina provides interesting insights. The authors observed that the crisis opened up windows of opportunity for a commonalization of resources, knowledge, and reproductive work, which also led to changes in the gendered division of labor (Quiroga Díaz & Gago, 2014, p. 11–12). Due to rising unemployment and poverty, people started to organize community kitchens in their neighborhoods. In these contexts, "the reproductive ceased to be a responsibility of the family or the private realm and was brought into the public sphere" (Quiroga Díaz & Gago, 2014, p. 11). The authors highlight how this helped to make food work more visible and recognized. At the same time, food was de-commodified and organized as a commons to which all people could have fair access. This relates to Federici's (2011) approach on the emancipatory potential of organizing care work in a cooperative way.

While there is the potential to re-organize food-related care work, to build collective infrastructures of food provisioning, and to de-privatize care work through community kitchens, it is notable that those kitchens are mostly organized and run by women (e.g., Hartley-Pinto, 2020; Immink, 2001). The first author of this paper made similar observations in community kitchens in Berlin of a traditional and rigid division of labor where organizing, cooking, and serving communal meals is a feminine task. However, the example of Argentina shows that food care work can be highly appreciated when it is undertaken in a collective way, thus overcoming the private-public division by creating community spaces.

So far, few other examples with a similar potential have been documented, also in the Global North. In Frankfurt, for example, a solidarity-based canteen called Ada was started in 2020 during the Corona crisis, when a collectively organized team was motivated to serve meals for neighbors and people in need. This group wanted to address people who could not afford to go out for lunch as well as business people living nearby who are now working from home and prefer to go out for lunch. The meals are provided in exchange for a voluntary donation, creating solidarity between people with high and low incomes. One important aspect of the project is the principle of commensality: All meals are served to the guests as if they were sitting in a restaurant. As one member of the collective explains, this aspect is essential for low-income or homeless people so that they can have the sensation of receiving a decent meal in a respectful atmosphere (field observations, September 2023). The commensality relates also to the spatial setting that the collective wants to offer: "We want to be a space in which people can stay comfortable, sit together at the table, talk to each other and exchange ideas" (Obid, 2021). All the ingredients of the vegetarian meals are donated by Foodsharing and other initiatives. Thus, the project not only promotes social integration but also ecological sustainability by reducing food waste.[7] The study by Ferne Edwards (2021) on community meals points to the important role of a respectful atmosphere in the dining room, relating to the relevance of places of provisioning food and their spatial settings, where "people have the option to stay, sit and eat together or to grab food and go. This adaptability allows people to maintain their dignity." (Edwards, 2021, p. 405; see also Andriessen & van der Velde, 2023).

Projects like the community kitchens, in which the gendered division of reproductive labor is questioned and food care work is organized on a basis of solidarity, give hope for *food utopias* (Stock et al., 2015)—visions of what a future food system could look like. Aspects of culinary justice should be an essential element of food utopias and the transition to a sustainable and just food system. For us, food utopias are contexts in which culinary justice is enacted by acknowledging diverse food knowledges, sharing food-related care work equally, and creating community spaces that allow an atmosphere of commensality in which people share a decent meal. A community-led study by Nyaba et al. (2024) on the emergence of community kitchens in Cape Town, South Africa, illustrates how hunger and food insecurity can be destigmatized in community kitchens, and how they are able to repair and reinvent the "broken social fabrics" (Nyaba et al., 2024, p. 61) in and of a community. Those women-led community kitchens are situated in peri-urban, low-income places where the spatial politics of Apartheid and post-apartheid manifest in socio-economic inequalities. Despite these precarious conditions, the organizing and solidarity of women provided not only food but also room for networking, belonging, and hope (Nyaba et al., 2024) in the sense of food utopias. Pursuing food utopias in different culinary contexts can have an enormous emancipatory potential for underprivileged social groups that are involved in daily practices of food preparation.

5. Discussion and Further Perspectives

The aim of this paper was to elaborate an initial conceptual approach to an understanding of culinary justice. Culinary justice takes into account the gendered and racial power relations behind the knowledges, work, practices, and meanings of food preparation and eating. It can be used as a conceptual tool for researching food inequalities through postcolonial or patriarchal power relations in food preparation and consumption while honoring the meanings and values that people attach to food.

The following table (Table1) summarizes our results and answers to our first research questions on how culinary (in)justice has been enacted in different private, commercial, public, and community contexts. For every conceptual element (knowledge, care, commensality, space), it offers analytical insights into the relevance of culinary justice issues. With this table, we

Table 1 *Culinary justice and its Four Conceptual Aspects Regarding Four Culinary Contexts*

Private households	Gastronomy	Public food provisioning	Community kitchens
Knowledge			
Gendered knowledge: "cooking by our mother's side" (Oleschuk, 2019, p. 609) *Fireside knowledge* (Kinyanjui, 2022) as part of plural food knowledge forms	Culinary appropriation of traditional food knowledge and recipes in gourmet restaurants Culinary colonialism by *food adventuring* and exoticizing local dishes (Heldke, 2013)	Time and economic constraints impede the unfolding of creative food knowledge Rising demands for more healthy and sustainable food in public canteens Potential of diverse food knowledge remains mostly undiscovered; Brazil: including cultural appropriate food and regional food networks in public school meal program	Attempts to appreciate culinary heritage and share the culinary knowledge of migrants (Morrow, 2023) Risk of appropriating food authenticity for commercial reasons (Morrow, 2023) Potential of community kitchens for creating respectful cooking and commensality places in which diverse food knowledge is acknowledged
Care work			
Gendered division of food care work (e.g., Holm, 2015) Unequal division of sustainability practices (Perkins, 2007) Two strands of conceptualizing care work: a) just division of care work b) valorization of care work	Pay gaps between male and female cooks/cooking workers (Allen & Sachs, 2007) Social inequalities between immigrant kitchen workers and chefs (Williams, 2020)	Invisibilization of cooking work when food is delivered by external catering companies (food as commodity) in the external provision model Lack of recognition of cooking work	Care work (cooking) is more valued when undertaken in (visible) public space and as a collective (Quiroga & Gagó, 2014), however there are still gender imbalances regarding care work distribution. Emancipatory potential for organizing care work in collective ways (Federici, 2011)
Commensality			
Ambivalences: Gendered expectations about family meals Food literacy, social ties and local culinary identities at kitchen table	Influence of class issues on commensality experiences	Recommendation: "Pleasant eating environments in preschools, schools, nursing homes and hospitals" (WBAE, 2020) Wishes of pupils for more friendly and colorful school canteens and spatial settings that allow to sit together with their peers	Example Ada Frankfurt—initiative that brings homeless people and neighbors together; all meals are served like in a restaurant.
Space			
Ambivalences: Kitchen as sites of oppression and as spaces of creativity and productivity (Brückner, 2020) Organizing meaningful community relations via the kitchen (Christie, 2007)	Restaurants as spaces of social cohesion (Newman, 2014) or of social exclusions	Many school canteens are very functional, not welcoming buildings Potentials of kitchens as "places of wellbeing" for trying out new (sustainable) recipes (Hoinle & Klosterkamp, 2023, p. 8)	Creation of community spaces for *sharing food as a commons* (Vivero-Pol, 2019) Eating with dignity and destigmatization in community spaces (Edwards, 2021, Nyaba et al., 2024) Foodopias (Stock et al. 2015)—community kitchens as experimental spaces of future food visions

Note. Source: Authors' elaboration.

would like to invite further research and case studies on the ways culinary justice can be enacted in different areas and fields in order to develop the conceptual framework further.

The table shows the four conceptual aspects that we consider important for an understanding of culinary justice. One is *food knowledge*, which relates to our second research question: Relying on several conceptual contributions from Black food studies, we have shown that local food knowledges are gendered, contested, and involved in postcolonial and intersectional struggles over local identities, culinary oppression, appropriation, and commodification. Food knowledges are diverse and can comprise different forms, as shown by the term *fireside knowledge* (Kinyanjui, 2022). The focus on knowledges underscored the pivotal role of food literacy for culinary justice, which can be transmitted at the kitchen table or in public food provisioning entities such as schools. This food literacy must be grounded in colonial history and Indigenous, Black, and peasant perspectives.

A second crucial conceptual aspect is *care work*, which has been also addressed with our third research question on who is doing care work and under which conditions. Care work is usually invisibilized and feminized (especially in private household spaces) or organized in precarious conditions (e.g., by migrant workers in restaurants). There are severe class discrepancies in the context of commercial restaurants between gourmet chefs and low-paid food service workers. The example of Argentina showed the emancipatory potential of community kitchens when care work is organized in a cooperative and visible way (see Quiroga Díaz & Gago, 2014; Federici, 2011), however, still strongly gendered.

As a third point, *commensality* constitutes a crucial conceptual aspect of culinary justice. This was illustrated by an empirical study on school canteens in Southern Germany, which showed that commensality could be achieved by creating fair and pleasant eating environments (WBAE, 2020) that promote social integration. In the case of restaurants, class issues determine the possibility of experiencing a decent meal or not (Garth, 2019).

As a fourth conceptual aspect, we have underlined the relevance of cooking and eating *spaces*. Kitchens can be seen as places of labor exploitation but also as spaces of care, creativity, agency, and knowledge exchange (see also Brückner, 2020). In all four culinary contexts, kitchens and spaces where people eat together can be a window of opportunity for both knowledge transmission and decolonization, although time pressure, economic constraints, and other goals can severely restrict their full utilization. The focus on space also allowed us to examine the symbolic dimension of food environments: Community kitchens can, for example, be seen as experimental spaces of future food visions, where food is provided and eaten with a focus on sustainability, care, and equity. Looking at the social setting (commensality) helped us to find answers to our fourth research question on how spatial settings impact the culinary experience of the eaters.

The illustration of the conceptual aspects of culinary justice in these four culinary contexts has brought initial insights into how the concept can be applied in practical research (see also Table 1). Based on these results, we would like to suggest three future research areas and two suggestions for conceptual development in the broader area of socio-environmental justice. First, other contexts in the culinary continuum than those investigated in this paper, such as farms or (community) gardens, could be interesting research areas to study culinary justice in growing and producing food, as well as specific aspects related to agricultural production. Using the lens of the continuum could provide a comprehensive view of the causes, experiences, and consequences of culinary injustice and how those are related. Second, additional empirical studies could focus, for instance, on the role of community kitchens in transforming gendered responsibilities and allocations of care work. Third, more research is needed about the working conditions of cooks in commercial restaurants and public catering places, since this work remains invisible, and the working conditions there also have a strong impact on the eater's culinary experiences. In this sense, the concept of culinary justice can be a useful analytical tool for worker unions, activists, and politicians.

At the same time, it is necessary to develop culinary justice further as a conceptual framework. One conceptual link we would like to suggest is placing culinary justice into dialogue with climate justice. As Schlosberg and Collins (2014) argue, there are sociocultural practices currently undergoing changes due to the climate crisis that will have a negative effect on the adaptive capacity of communities: "Climate impacts on cultural practice limit adaptive pathways, as they undermine the most familiar and shared expe-

riences, as well as the social capital that comes with them, that could otherwise be the basis of adaptive capacity" (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 369). As the climate crisis intensifies, meal practices will have to change, and food crises will occur more often. Investigations into these developments from a culinary justice perspective could contribute to a critical understanding of how the climate crisis impacts the access to culturally appropriate food for diverse social groups. Moreover, a link to the emerging debate of multispecies justice (e.g., Winter & Schlosberg, 2023) could be made. Using a culinary justice lens does not mean thinking about oppression and precarity only in the human sphere; it also means taking the justice of soil, plants, animals, and other entities into account and asking how consumption and culinary choice intersect with multispecies justice. Thus, a second area of conceptual development could involve the non-human world.

In any case, the given examples indicate that the fight for food justice is inherently one for culinary justice, and that the concept of culinary justice can further enrich the food justice literature by highlighting the culinary aspects of meal preparation and eating, and by showing the relevance of diverse knowledge dimensions. The strong focus on the division of care work within this concept helps to uncover gendered and racial power relations in specific spatial settings. At the same time, the concept could open up spaces for thinking about food utopias (such as the example of Ada in Frankfurt), which can transform power relations in food preparation processes and lead to valuing food as a commons. We are sure that there are many more food utopias in existence which remain invisible but are already putting aspects of culinary justice into practice. With this paper, we would like to invite further research on culinary justice in different contexts and inspire different academic and policy fields to think about agri-food systems from a culinary perspective.

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Notes

[1] Since the paper is structured as a review, it uses several regional examples of Indigenous communities in Canada and Mexico.

[2] Public lecture, "Advancing Black/African Nova Scotian Food Security & Sovereignty," held online on 16 October 2024, see also Yanful 2024; https://nccdh.ca/learn/podcast/disrupting-for-african-nova-scotian-food-sovereignty

[3] Discussion during a network meeting of the Food Policy Councils Cologne, 11 March 2023.

[4] Interview with a producer cooperative, Tübingen, 1 July 2022.

[5] Interview with a student at a public school, Baden-Württemberg, 22 October 2022.

[6] Interview with consultancy agency for public catering, Stuttgart, 17 March 2023.

[7] Observations based on a field visit on 22 September 2023; see also https://ada-kantine.org/ (accessed 9 December 2023).

Contributions

MB and BH developed the concept for the article together and have been equally involved in writing the paper. MB had the lead role in coordinating the submission process. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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