

**SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN: CHINESE IDENTITY AND
COMMUNITY IN ST JOHN'S AS SEEN THROUGH CHINESE
RESTAURANTS**

by © Tanyan Ye

**A Thesis submitted
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Abstract

This thesis investigates the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador through the lens of Chinese restaurants in St. John's. It employs interviews and participant observation to uncover how Chinese immigrants, as members of a minority group in a mostly white community, preserve and present their identity while negotiating their relationship with the majority society. The thesis outlines the development of the Chinese community, Chinese restaurants, and Chinese food in Newfoundland and Labrador. It explores the foodways of Chinese residents in St. John's, particularly the debates over what constitutes "real" Chinese food, discusses the décor of Chinese restaurants, and examines the community events that Chinese restaurant owners are involved in. Based on this research, the thesis intends to shed light on how ethnic restaurants help to facilitate an ethnic group's integration into a larger community. These locations of business and culture help individuals navigate their own ethnicity as well as contribute to intercultural communication and understanding.

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This thesis has taken most of my time after I finished all my courses required for my master's program. Now with the thesis almost done, I realize that my two years' stay at the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland is coming to an end. Looking back, I feel that I owe so many people a sincere "thank you." I could never have been here or completed my study so smoothly if it had not been for the help and support I got from faculty members, my classmates, friends, and especially my supervisor, and my beloved family.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	v
Chapter One: Introduction	1
The Goal and the Scope	1
A Brief Literature Review.....	4
<i>Studies on the Chinese Community in Newfoundland</i>	4
<i>Food and Identity</i>	7
<i>Spaces, Places and Ethnic Restaurants</i>	13
Significance of this Thesis	14
Methodology and Summary of Fieldwork	16
Structure of the Thesis	27
Chapter Two: Everything Is Changing: Chinese Community, Chinese Restaurants, and Chinese Food	30
The Changing Chinese Community in St. John's.....	30
<i>Before Confederation (Pre-1949)</i>	30
<i>After Confederation (Post-1949)</i>	35
Chinese Restaurants in St. John's	38
Chinese Restaurants: Family Businesses Seldom Passed Down	42
The Diversification of Chinese Food in St. John's	48
Chapter Summary	56
Chapter Three: “Real” Chinese Food: A Declaration of Chineseness and a Strategy for Power	58
“Real” Chinese Food: The Problem of Authenticity	58
“Real” and “Fake” Chinese Food in St. John's.....	61
Authentication of Chinese Food: Declaration of Identity and Negotiation of Power Relations	68
Chapter Summary	75
Chapter Four: Chinese Restaurants and More: Negotiating Independent Group Identity and Integration into the Larger Community.....	77
Décor: Chinese Restaurants' Preferences and the Larger Community's Expectations.....	78
Community Events: Maintaining and Blurring the Chinese Community's Boundary	92
Chapter Summary: A Conscious Choice for Somewhere In-Between	99
Chapter Five	103
Conclusion.....	103
References	112

Chapter One

Introduction

The Goal and the Scope

The idea for this thesis stems from my experiences of cultural difference. I was born and grew up in a village in Southern China but received my undergraduate education in Beijing, one of the biggest cities in China. There, after graduation, I worked in a company for five years, in a position that required me to frequently travel overseas. These educational and work experiences often exposed me to different cultural contexts: the urban, modern lifestyle in big cities that is quite a contrast to the rural, old ways of life with which I was familiar growing up, and the diverse cultures in Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and North America that are very different from Chinese culture. The cultural differences that I experienced between countries and regions gradually gave me an awareness of my own cultural background and, consequently, my own identity.

I have been thinking about issues of identity since then. When I moved to Newfoundland and Labrador for my graduate program, I became a member of a visible ethnic minority in a mostly white community; my Eastern cultural background was also distinct from the local Western culture. At that point, identity and ethnicity turned from questions that occasionally appeared in my mind, to the reality of my everyday life. This drove me to think more about these issues.

Because of my ethnic background, I knew some other Chinese students when I arrived on

this island and gradually came to know more members of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in St. John's. People who belong to the same minority group and come from a similar, if not the same, cultural background often share a similar sense of identity and ethnicity. However, there were also occasions when I realized that the Chinese community in Newfoundland is not a homogeneous group that remains the same over time. This expanded my academic interest from ethnicity and identity to other aspects of the minority community. Therefore, when I was thinking about my thesis research, I decided to focus on the Chinese population on the island and to explore questions of identity and ethnicity related to it.

Before further discussion, it is necessary to define the Chinese community that I intend to examine in this thesis. The question of who may be considered as part of the Chinese diaspora, or overseas Chinese, has no fixed answer (see Ang 1993, 1994, 1998, 2001; Chow 1998; Chun 1996; Tu 1994; Wang 1991; Wu 1991). Allen Chun defines the Chinese diaspora as "the ethnic Chinese who live outside the national borders of China" (Chun 1996, 122), but many scholars, such as Weiming Tu, who proposed the concept of "cultural China" (Tu 1991), stress the importance of cultural identity in the definition of overseas Chinese. After an overall consideration of the different definitions, I decided to use the term "Chinese community" to refer to immigrants and permanent or temporary residents living in Newfoundland and Labrador who were originally from China; people with Chinese heritage born or coming from places outside the national borders of China who identify themselves as Chinese; and descendants of these groups born in Newfoundland and Labrador. In this thesis, Chinese community members may

also be referred to as Chinese people. Since most Chinese people on the island live in St. John's (Statistics Canada 2017), the capital of the province and the largest city on the island, and because of my own geographical location in St. John's, my research focuses primarily—although not exclusively—on the Chinese community in the St. John's area. I would like to note, however, that although I refer to the province as Newfoundland and Labrador, its official name since 2001, my research is based only on the island portion of the province.

As Mu Li notes, although Chinese people comprise one of the largest visible minorities in Newfoundland and Labrador, they remain largely “invisible” (Li 2014b, 1). The restaurant trade, being historically one of the most important and successful businesses Chinese people have worked in, still attracts a large number. Chinese restaurants also provide places for Chinese people to socialize within and beyond the Chinese community. Therefore, Chinese restaurants are places in which the “invisible” Chinese community becomes more “visible” and offer a window through which an outsider may obtain a better understanding of the Chinese community. Because of the essential role Chinese restaurants play in the community, this research uses them as the entry point. By examining the food and the physical appearances of Chinese restaurants in St. John's, the community events that those establishments are involved in, and the views and comments on the restaurants from people, including both the restaurant owners and customers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, this research attempts to explore aspects of the city's Chinese community and speak to questions of change over time. The thesis examines expressions of Chinese identity and considers the Chinese community's interrelationship with the

larger community. It looks critically at how Chinese restaurants are perceived by both Chinese and non-Chinese people in St. John's.

Before any further discussion, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of previous academic works that have examined relevant questions or issues, so as to lay a more solid foundation for our understanding of Chinese identity and community in St. John's. Since this study explores issues from the perspective of menus and décor of Chinese restaurants, as well as the role restaurants play within and beyond the Chinese community, the literature reviewed here primarily consists of three parts: works about Chinese ethnicity and community in Newfoundland; analyses of food and identity; and studies exploring the significance of spaces and places. The following is a brief review of some relevant works in each of these areas.

A Brief Literature Review

Studies on the Chinese Community in Newfoundland

The recorded history of the Chinese community in St. John's starts in August 1895 when the first Chinese laundry, Sing Lee & Co. Laundry, was opened on 37 New Gower Street, by Mr. Fong Choy, the first Chinese immigrant in Newfoundland (Chang 1981; Sparrow 2010; Li 2010). The lives of early Chinese immigrants are not very clearly documented. The language barrier that prevented them from interacting with local people, and the lack of standardized Romanization of Chinese names, both contributed to the vagueness of the accounts of the Chinese pioneers on the island. However, some scholarly and popular works do outline a number of historical milestones.

Margaret Chang describes the Chinese immigrants who arrived on the island before the **Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons** was enacted in 1906, and their work life in Newfoundland (Chang 1981). Krista Chatman Li applies a gender analysis to local news reports of Chinese men from 1895 to 1906; she explores how the presses' portrayal of early Chinese immigrants as morally corrupted and effeminate convinced the public and the legislators to believe that "the Chinese were not only incapable of participating in economic rejuvenation but of becoming citizens and participating in Newfoundland's national project" (Li 2010, iii). John K. Sparrow's work covers a longer period of time and gives accounts of the major shifts that happened in the Chinese community in St. John's before the 1960s, including the launch of the laundry trade, the imposition of the head tax, and criminal cases and their immense harm to the reputation of the Chinese community (Sparrow 2010). He also talks briefly about changes in the Chinese community such as its increasing heterogeneity and the shifting popular perceptions of the Chinese after the 1960s (Sparrow 2010, 345). Apart from these publications, the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (CANL) has produced a few brochures that provide an insider's view of the ethnic group, including *Past, Present, Future: An Commemorative Book Honouring the 100th Anniversary of the Chinese Community in Newfoundland and Labrador (1895-1995)* (Chinese Association, 1995).

In addition to historical accounts, some facets of the lives of Chinese residents have been well studied. Students in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland have contributed greatly to the literature on this ethnic community (see Thomson 1993; Kozar

1993; Zhu 1991; Liu 1991; Li 2014a; Li 2014b). Margaret Jillian Thomson researched the festive customs of Chinese immigrants living on the Avalon Peninsula (Thomson 1993); Seana Kozar and Nianqiang Zhu explored the oral narratives of Chinese in Newfoundland (Kozar 1993; Zhu 1991); and Mu Li's PhD dissertation, *Wanderers between Cultural Boundaries: Exploring the Individual Expressions of Chineseness in Newfoundland*, gives an ethnographic panorama of the Chinese community in Newfoundland, particularly in the St. John's area (Li 2014b). These thorough accounts of Chinese people's history, foodways, festive celebrations, and artistic performances comprise an encyclopedia of the Chinese community to which one may refer for background information.

While these works are helpful in gaining a better understanding of the Chinese community, the most relevant to this thesis are publications on the community's foodways. These include Jianxiang Liu's thesis, *Continuation and Acculturation: A Study of Foodways of Three Chinese Immigrant Families in St. John's, Newfoundland* (1991), and Mu Li's article, "Negotiating Chinese Culinary Traditions in Newfoundland" (2014). Liu argues that Chinese people in St. John's tend to hold on to the food traditions they inherit from their home country, even though they often face difficulty finding ingredients (Liu 1991). Li's article sheds light on the ways in which Chinese community members negotiate culinary authenticity by looking at the "three related and overlapping Chinese culinary traditions in Newfoundland: domestic foodways of Chinese residents...North American style Chinese food served in the majority of local Chinese restaurants, and 'traditional' dishes" (Li 2014a, n. pag.). While Liu's focus is mostly on the

domestic foodways of Chinese people, namely the food they eat at home, Li emphasizes the Chinese restaurants and grocery stores in the city. However, while these two works outline some aspects of the Chinese foodways in St. John's, how Chinese food and restaurants mediate interactions within and beyond the Chinese community requires further research.

Food and Identity

Food studies as an academic field emerged as recently as the 1980s (Long 2004a). However, studies on food and its interrelationship with various facets of human society appeared much earlier than that, and a large number of such studies have been conducted in different regions from the perspectives of many disciplines, including folklore, anthropology, history, and sociology. Because the focus of the study is on Newfoundland and Labrador, this literature review will mostly touch on relevant works from North America. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of food studies, the literature that will be covered here comprises works from several fields, among which folklore weighs the heaviest.

Lucy Long writes that “[f]olklore as an academic discipline has a long history of including food as a subject for study and theorizing” (Long 2004a, 8). As early as 1895, John Gregory Bourke put effort into identifying and describing “folk foods” of the Rio Grande Valley and Northern Mexico (Bourke 1895). However, nowadays, as the term “foodways” indicates, folkloristic scholarship has expanded from the identification and description of food itself to the study of beliefs, traditions, customs, and behaviors concerning food. In tracing the history of

foodways research, Lucy Long writes that “[f]olklorist Don Yoder borrowed the term from anthropologist John J. Honigman to refer to ‘the total cookery complex, including attitudes, taboos, and meal systems—the whole range of cookery and food habits in a society’” (Long 2004b, 23). As Long argues, this term “suggests that food is a network of activities and systems—physical, social (communicative), cultural, economic, spiritual, and aesthetic” (Long 2004b, 23). In this thesis, the term foodways and food studies will be used interchangeably.

There are many academic works that examine foods from the perspective of aesthetics (see Jones 1983), beliefs (see Esterik 1998), and gender (see Lewin 1943; DeVault 1991; McIntosh and Zey 1998). Among the sub-fields of food studies, the construction, negotiation and expression of ethnic identity through foods and food-centered activities is one that has attracted considerable attention. As Barre Toelken points out, food is a significant way to celebrate ethnicity and group identity (Toelken 1979). When people serve traditional ethnic foods at any occasion, “they communicate a message about identity, focusing attention on their membership in a group with a particular background and set of values” (Kaplan, Hoover, and Moore 1998, 130). Because of the close connection between food and ethnicity, sometimes eating one’s own ethnic foods can be a way for members of cultural groups to affirm their ethnicity and their resistance to acculturation (see Bentley 1998; Montañaño 1997).

Foodways of ethnic groups represent a considerable focus in food studies. Some researchers observe that despite the acculturation of ethnic groups, their foodways seem to be the most resistant to change (Kalčík 1984). However, that does not mean that ethnic food will remain

untouched and unchanged, or “ethnically pure,” as Susan Kalčík points out (Kalčík 1984, 39). She quotes Don Yoder to argue that “regional and ethnic foodways are often intertwined” and that thus the ethnic identity of “individuals without a strong sense of ethnicity” may drift to regional identity (Kalčík 1984, 39). The factors that Kalčík argues will influence changes in the foodways of an ethnic group include generation (age), social status, official attitudes, and gender; she also observes that people’s food choices may differ from the private sphere to public domains where their foods need to match with the contexts (Kalčík 1984, 39). Anne R. Kaplan, Marjorie A. Hoover, and Willard B. Moore echo Kalčík’s arguments by suggesting that ethnic foodways are shaped not only by natural elements such as climate and geography, but also by socioeconomic conditions, and that members of ethnic communities often make safe choices that are less likely to cause any misunderstanding or embarrassment when they need to present their ethnic foods to the public (Kaplan, Hoover, and Moore 1998).

Many academic works about food and ethnic identity explore the mechanisms and reasons behind the popularity of ethnic foods in wider communities. Heldke argues that the search for novelty, exoticism, and authenticity is a major driving force behind people’s accelerating acceptance of foods that are traditionally unfamiliar to them (Heldke 2008). It is generally agreed that while to some extent embracing foods from foreign cultures, from the “Other,” demonstrates people’s willingness and democratic efforts to appreciate different cultures, underneath the surface, eating ethnic food is also often an activity of cultural appropriation and colonialism (see Heldke 2008; Johnston and Baumann 2010). Lisa Heldke explores this issue by examining the

recipes of ethnic groups and discussing the legitimacy of cookbook authors collecting recipes from ethnic communities and publishing them as their own intellectual property; she reveals the colonialism as well as the racial, ethnic, gender, and class privileges underlying the activities of middle-class white women cooking foreign foods in their kitchens (Heldke 2008). Sociologists Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann's work *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (2010) studies the foodie phenomenon, including the themes of authenticity and exoticism, from several perspectives. The authors' interpretation of foodies' search for exotic ethnic foods is that it is simultaneously an activity of culinary colonialism and one of culinary cosmopolitanism (Johnston and Baumann 2010). It is culinary colonialism in the sense that exoticism is evaluated against the Western foods, although the foodies' embracing non-Western foods indicates their acceptance of unfamiliar culinary cultures which is a manifestation of cosmopolitanism. The Western is the standard and the "Other" is thus not standard, and by implication, inferior and/or primitive (Johnston and Baumann 2010).

Ethnic restaurants are places where ethnic foods are presented to ethnic and cultural outsiders as well as insiders to consume. As such, they are ideal sites for fathoming the interrelationship between food and ethnic identity. Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli examine the intercultural contact in Quebec City's ethnic restaurants and draw the conclusion that ethnic restaurants in postcolonial societies have become places for the consumption of the Other (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002), which can be compared with the points made by Heldke, and Johnston and Baumann. Their treatment of ethnic restaurants as "microspaces of intercultural

encounter and exchange, places where people can see, touch, and consume the cuisine of the ‘other,’” and as “‘ethnosites’ in which the foreign is made familiar and the global miniature” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 247), was very inspiring for the development of this thesis.

Some scholars study ethnic restaurants from the perspective of **culinary tourism**. A good example is “Tasting an Imagined Thailand: Authenticity and Culinary Tourism in Thai Restaurants” by Jennie Germann Molz. In this article Molz focuses on the controversial topic of authenticity and its influence on the identity of not only cultural insiders but outsiders as well (Molz 2004). In another work, Gaye Tuchman and Harry Gene Levine probe the phenomenon of New York Jews frequently patronizing Chinese restaurants, and reveal how Chinese food is used to construct and negotiate their Jewish identity (Tuchman and Levine 1998). This work is especially interesting in that it demonstrates that ethnic identity is often intertwined with regional identity as well as with other groups’ ethnicity, and that the construction and expression of ethnic identity can be accomplished via other ethnic groups’ foodways. Another useful publication for this study from the perspective of culinary tourism is sociologist Lily Cho’s examination of Chinese restaurants and cafes in small towns across Canada. Cho writes from the lens of colonialism and post-colonialism and provides a detailed account of how Chinese foods mediate the reception and interpretation of Chinese diaspora in Canada (Cho 2010). One of the particularly interesting arguments she makes is about Chinese cooks’ strategies of resistance to colonial consumption. She argues that because the Chinese cooks modified their culinary tradition and even created new dishes specifically for non-Chinese food consumers according to

their tastes, when the non-Chinese customers want to devour a chunk of “otherness,” a piece of themselves may be served back (Cho 2010, 31).

This thesis draws on several informative works that are dedicated to Chinese food in the Western world. J.A.G. Roberts studies Western people’s contact with Chinese food from two perspectives: West to East and East to West. In examining West to East, he explores how Western people discovered and reacted to Chinese food at an early stage of cultural contact and how their reactions changed over time. In considering East to West, he analyses how Chinese food became globalized throughout history (Roberts 2002). Andrew Coe’s comprehensive account of the history of Chinese food, tracing its introduction to, and spread over, the United States, provided me with a rich background for understanding the foodways of Chinese people in North America (Coe 2009). Finally, Yong Chen’s work on Chinese food’s rise to popularity in America raises fascinating questions as the author argues that Chinese food’s popularity reflects not only “marginalization and exploitation but also...the resistance and perseverance of Chinese Americans in the face of enormous hostilities” (Chen 2014, 4).

In general, scholarship on food and ethnicity, especially those works that focus on ethnic restaurants, underpin the theories and methodologies of my thesis. In particular, publications that look at Chinese food from spatio-temporal perspectives lay a foundation for my research. However, while these studies are almost exclusively focused on North America, very little has been written about Chinese restaurants in St. John’s and their role in the Chinese community and its relationship with the larger community. This thesis will try to at least partially fill the gap.

Spaces, Places and Ethnic Restaurants

When reviewing works about ethnic restaurants, I noticed that some of them explore the restaurants as spaces for intercultural interactions, and/or pay attention to the restaurants' physical designs (see Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002; Molz 2004). Restaurants are essentially places. Therefore, if we are to better understand how ethnic restaurants mediate the food-centered activities that shape and present the ethnic identity, and how they play a role in community building, reading them from the angle of places and spaces is necessary.

Some scholars examine the layout of restaurants. For example, Erving Goffman identifies differences between the back region and front region of a restaurant (Goffman 1959). Dean MacCannell furthers Goffman's theories to claim that the back region equates with the authentic while the front region offers staged authenticity to diners (MacCannell 2013). Restaurants' décors are often mentioned and their functions discussed in many scholarly works. Molz describes the common décor of Thai restaurants to demonstrate how authenticity is negotiated there (Molz 2004). My consideration of the physical appearance of Chinese restaurants in St. John's in this thesis draws on these works as well as Mu Li's directly related article, "Chinese Restaurants' Interior Décor as Ethnographic Objects in Newfoundland" (2016). Li's analysis of the décor of Chinese restaurants in the city provides an important starting point for my discussion.

In addition to their interior layout and décor, ethnic restaurants may be examined as

significant places for community members. A restaurant in a community, ethnic or not, may be categorized as what Ray Oldenburg terms as a “third place.” In his book *The Great Good Place* (1997), Oldenburg uses the term to define places in the community other than the home (the first place) and the workplace (the second place). These include cafés, community centers, bars, and so forth, where people from the community may come together to socialize and mingle with each other, and thus build a stronger connection and a sense of belonging (Oldenburg 1997).

Oldenburg argues that a third place can unite a neighborhood, assimilate newcomers, provide a place for people to find support in time of crisis, blur the boundaries between generations, and function in many other ways that make the third place a significant piece of the mosaic of the community (Oldenburg 1997). We can easily see how either by definition or by function many restaurants fall into the domain of the “third place.” Therefore, this theoretical construct can help illuminate the role that Chinese restaurants play in St. John’s.

Significance of this Thesis

Foodways and ethnic identity is a topic that has been so well discussed that sometimes it seems as if there is not much untouched space left to explore. In fact, as the brief literature review above shows, existing academic works have already probed into almost every corner of the massive interdisciplinary field that can be roughly labeled as food studies. Why then did I decide on this topic for my thesis? What will this study contribute to the already ample literature on foodways and ethnic identity?

My project builds on the extensive research already carried out on ethnic groups in North America and their foodways. Chinese immigrants, comprising one of the largest visible minorities in North America, have received considerable attention from folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists and scholars from many other fields, and this thesis draws on works mentioned above, such as *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America* by Yong Chen, *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States* by Andrew Coe, and *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* by J.A.G. Roberts. These publications create a general profile of the foodways of the Chinese diaspora in Western countries. They join other studies focusing on the integration of Chinese food with that of other ethnic groups, such as Jews in New York (Tuchman and Levine 1998), to provide a firm foundation for my research.

Few researchers, however, have focused on Chinese restaurants and their significance in the life of the Chinese diaspora and their wider community; those centred on Chinese restaurants in Canada are even rarer. Lily Cho's prominent work on Chinese eateries in small towns across Canada probes the culture of the Chinese diaspora and the negotiation of their identity (Cho 2010) but does not give much consideration to the heterogeneity of the Chinese community and the differences between provinces or territories in a country as large as Canada. The Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador shares some features with Chinese communities in other provinces, but it also has its distinctive characteristics. With the exception of works by Jianxiang Liu (Liu 1991) and Mu Li (Li 2014a, 2014b, 2016) that look at the foodways of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador, the significance of Chinese foodways and

Chinese restaurants on this island has remained largely unexamined.

This thesis focuses on Chinese restaurants in the St. John's area in an effort to explore the significance of foods and food-centered activities within and beyond the city's Chinese community. It tries to answer questions concerning the Chinese on the island, including, but not limited to, what meanings about this ethnic group are encoded in and conveyed by food, how the ethnic group negotiates their identity with the larger community, and how boundaries between different communities are maintained or blurred. By answering these questions, this study hopes to add to the understanding of Chinese immigrants in St. John's. I hope to contribute to a better appreciation of the province's largest visible but largely "invisible" minority and to facilitate cultural diversity within the city. Against a background of globalization Newfoundland and Labrador is welcoming more and more immigrants from many different cultures. This thesis will be even more meaningful if it can help facilitate deeper intercultural communication and understanding among members of the city's changing population.

Methodology and Summary of Fieldwork

This study explores the interweaving of food, Chinese ethnicity, and community. I draw on my participant observation as a client of Chinese restaurants in St. John's, library and archival research, and most importantly, interviews conducted with both owners and patrons of the Chinese restaurants. Participant observation was particularly helpful for documenting the layout, décor, and atmosphere of the restaurants, as well as for observing interactions among patrons and

staff members. These intergroup and interpersonal exchanges contribute to shaping Chinese Newfoundland identity and presenting that identity to the larger community. Décor and other material elements in restaurants are embodiments of “culture made material” that can help with our understanding of “human thought and action” (Glassie 1999, 41). An analysis of those elements may enable us to see the role of Chinese restaurants within and beyond the Chinese community in St. John’s, as well as many facets of the ethnic group’s culture.

The voice of those who are involved in various activities in Chinese restaurants, as both owners and customers, matters significantly when investigating the Chinese community through these establishments. Therefore, during the summer of 2017 I spent four months conducting interviews with over a dozen interviewees with various cultural, ethnic and occupational backgrounds and of different ages. My goal was to obtain the restaurant owners’ and customers’ opinions on a range of subjects, including how they perceive the food they provide or consume in the restaurants, how they create or enjoy the atmosphere in the restaurants, and what roles they think the restaurants play in the community. The interviewees include seven clients of Chinese restaurants and seven owners/partners of six restaurants. Here I provide some background information on each interviewee in order to give a context for the interviews.

The restaurants owners I interviewed included Yuwen Zhang and Tao Zhang, the co-owners of City Light; Wallace Hong, a previous co-owner of the Kenmount Restaurant; Shirley Hong, the owner of the Rice Bowl; Paulo (Leiguang) Lee, the owner of Peaceful Loft; Rennies So, the previous owner of the Magic Wok; and Yongtao Yu, the owner of the Golden Phoenix.

Yuwen Zhang, originally from Southeast China, immigrated to Washington D.C. in 1991 and has been working in Chinese restaurants since then (Zhang and Zhang 2017). In 2008, he came to St. John's to investigate the market while attending his sister's commencement from Memorial University of Newfoundland. He had been thinking about establishing a business in a city other than Washington D.C. where the competition among Chinese restaurants was so intense that it put too much pressure on his business (Zhang and Zhang 2017). He found St. John's to be a good site for his new restaurant because at that time there were few big Chinese restaurants serving a high-quality buffet (Zhang and Zhang 2017). He and his wife opened City Light on Topsail Road in 2008. In 2016, Tao Zhang, a friend of Yuwen Zhang, joined the restaurant as a co-owner (Zhang and Zhang 2017). At the time of our interview, Yuwen Zhang was interested in reducing his share of the business and selling his share to the staff because he was planning his retirement and did not intend to pass the restaurant to his children (Zhang and Zhang 2017). The restaurant provides a buffet of over one hundred different dishes, snacks and desserts. These include some dishes that are very typical in Chinese restaurants in Canada and very popular among Canadian non-Chinese clientele, such as chicken balls, wonton soup, and chop suey. The buffet also features foods that are not originally from China, such as sushi and onion rings. During Chinese festive seasons, the restaurant serves seasonal snacks as well, such as moon cake for Mid-Autumn Festival and *zongzi* (sticky rice dumpling) for Dragon Boat Festival (Zhang and Zhang 2017). City Light's menu has other dishes that are not included on the buffet but most customers do not order from the menu. Although some diners resort to the menu,

especially when they come before or after regular buffet hours, many clients are not aware of this option (Zhang and Zhang 2017).

Wallace Hong, who is in his eighties, is a co-founder and co-owner of the Kenmount Restaurant, one of the oldest Chinese restaurants still operating in St. John's. Located on Kenmount Road, the restaurant was opened in 1965 by the Hong family. The owners previously owned a grocery store on Bell Island that was patronized primarily by miners there, but they closed the grocery store and moved to St. John's after the closure of the iron ore mine (W. Hong 2017). At the time when Kenmount Restaurant was opened, there were not many Chinese restaurants in the city. Wallace's nephew decorated the restaurant based on those he had seen in Toronto and purchased all the decorative materials from Taiwan or Hong Kong (W. Hong 2017). The dining area of the restaurant consists of three sections and while most parts of the restaurant have been redecorated, the middle section maintains its original décor (W. Hong 2017). Two cooks from Toronto were in the charge of the cooking, although Wallace Hong and his nephew both learned to cook as well soon after they started the restaurant (W. Hong 2017). The restaurant was an immediate success when it was opened (W. Hong 2017). According to Wallace Hong, "over 99.9% of the customers" were non-Chinese local Newfoundlanders at that time and only very few Chinese people, mainly Chinese students, occasionally went there. He remembers that the Chinese patrons sometimes would ask the restaurant staff to cook some "real Chinese food" for them (W. Hong 2017). Wallace Hong also mentioned that when the staff cooked for themselves, they would make dishes that were not offered to the customers such as stir-fried

squid (W. Hong 2017). Wallace Hong sold his share of the restaurant to his nephew in 1985, after his father and brother both passed away. A few months later he started his own small Chinese restaurant, the Silver Bowl, in the Village Mall food court. He sold it in 1998 when he decided to retire (W. Hong 2017).

Shirley Hong owns the Rice Bowl, a small Chinese restaurant in the food court of the Avalon Mall. She was born in a small town in Newfoundland, with no Chinese heritage. She married a Chinese man who was related to the Hong family who operated the Kenmount Restaurant and was consequently very familiar with the restaurant business (S. Hong 2017). After getting married she and her husband spent a few years in Toronto but when the Newfoundland government introduced policies to encourage local people to start businesses, the couple moved back to St. John's. Initially they opened a small take-out downtown but launched the Rice Bowl in the Avalon Mall in 1977 when the food court there opened. They did not close the downtown take-out immediately in case the Rice Bowl was not successful and Shirley Hong was left to take care of it on her own for a short period of time while her husband worked at the Rice Bowl. She was forced to learn how to cook all the Chinese dishes that were provided at the take-out and these are similar to those sold at the Rice Bowl today (S. Hong 2017). According to Shirley Hong, the dishes available at the Rice Bowl are mostly what have been served in Chinese restaurants in St. John's for decades, such as chop suey and beef and broccoli. Although at times she has altered dishes based on customers' feedback or requests, she claims not to have put much innovation into the food (S. Hong 2017). She believes that the best way to run the business is to

maintain good community connections (S. Hong 2017). Despite the fact that the Rice Bowl is only a small restaurant, it has run successfully for four full decades, during which the food it provides has not changed significantly (S. Hong 2017). Now Shirley's daughter is taking over the Rice Bowl and her grandson has expressed his interest in running the restaurant after her daughter retires (S. Hong 2017). It is worth noting that Shirley Hong and her husband once owned nineteen restaurants of all sizes across the St. John's area, including two Chinese restaurants, a fish and chips establishment, and a traditional Newfoundland eatery called "Mom's Place." Over time they sold or closed all the restaurants except for the Rice Bowl, and this, to some extent, demonstrates their special attachment to the establishment (S. Hong 2017).

Peaceful Loft was opened by **Paulo (Leiguang) Lee**, a Chinese man from Macao, in December 2014. Located in downtown St. John's, it is one of the newest Chinese restaurants in the city and its food differs from that of most other Chinese restaurants in that it is exclusively vegan food. As Paulo (Leiguang) Lee explains, he and his wife moved to Canada from Macao after their retirement. They stayed in Toronto for a few months before moving to St. John's following a friend's recommendation (Lee 2017). They liked this place immediately but found it difficult to get good vegan food here. This made their life quite inconvenient as they had been vegans for their whole life because of their religious belief in Buddhism (Lee 2017). As a result, Paulo Lee started to learn to cook vegan food himself, getting recipes from the Internet. After he mastered the cooking skills, his friends suggested he open a Chinese vegan restaurant to spread the Chinese vegan food culture; it was a suggestion he finally acted on (Lee 2017). After

Peaceful Loft was opened, Paulo Lee hosted a few cooking classes in the first year of operation, introducing cooking skills and recipes to local people who were interested in vegan food (Lee 2017). The classes had to be stopped after the restaurant became too busy to continue the practice (Lee 2017). Peaceful Loft is ranked among the top Asian restaurants in St. John's on the TripAdvisor website, but when asked whether he considered his food as Chinese food, Lee admitted that there had been some controversy around this question (Lee 2017).

Rennies So and his wife **May So** opened, owned and ran Magic Wok for almost three decades before they sold it to their friends. Rennies So came to Canada as a trained cook in 1976 at the age of 24. He stayed in Ontario for a few years, came to St. John's in 1983, and opened his own restaurant six years later when the owner of a local restaurant sold his business. Rennies So changed the name to Magic Wok (So 2017). When it was first opened, the restaurant consisted of only thirty-six seats, but later So expanded the space to include the storefront next door (So 2017). In 2000, a fire burned the restaurant to the ground and after considering whether to retire or to rebuild, Rennies So and May So finally rebuilt the building and continued the business (So 2017). Rennies So believes that a very important factor contributing to the Magic Wok's success was the community connection they managed to build and maintain (So 2017). They put great effort into creating that community connection: they supported many community events including sponsoring a team in the annual Royal St. John's regatta and the Avalon Dragons Festival. Rennies So personally participated in community groups, such as a dancing club and a diving club, and the couple spearheaded two province-wide fundraising initiatives

among members of the Chinese community for victims of natural disasters within and beyond Canada (So 2017). Being a well-trained professional cook before he immigrated to Canada, and having worked in restaurants for his whole life, Rennie So deliberately added some traditional dishes (Cantonese cuisine) to the menu of the Magic Wok in addition to “North American Chinese food” (So 2017). The distinction between these two types of Chinese food will be elaborated later on. This may be a reason why the Magic Wok is one of the most popular Chinese restaurants in St. John’s and why some customers feel that its dishes are “realer” (Cahill 2017).

Yongtao Yu, the owner of the Golden Phoenix Buffet, came to St. John’s in 1998 and has been living in this city ever since. His main business interest is actually not his restaurant but international trade. He imports fishing tools and other items from China to sell to local people and exports local products to other countries (Yu 2017). He opened his first Golden Phoenix in 2005 on Sagona Avenue in Mount Pearl, not far from a warehouse he owned. His goal was to help his sister, who had just immigrated to St. John’s at that time, settle into the city (Yu 2017). He hired his sister to manage the restaurant; however, it turned out that she was not interested in the restaurant business, so later he took over himself (Yu 2017). In 2010, he opened another two Chinese restaurants bearing the same name, one in Grand Falls-Winsor and the other one close to the Avalon Mall (Yu 2017). Later he closed the operations in Grand Falls-Winsor and on Sagona Avenue due to the high demands of managing all his businesses. He kept only the restaurant near the Avalon Mall (Yu 2017). He was considering selling this last Golden Phoenix when we met for our interview, saying that it took too much time for him and his son to manage the restaurant.

He felt that it would be worthwhile to give up the profit it was making in order to free himself and his son to do other work. This was despite the fact that his son was willing to assume responsibility for the restaurant (Yu 2017). Yongtao Yu does not cook himself, but hires cooks, primarily Chinese immigrants, to work in the kitchen (Yu 2017). However, he insists on hiring only non-Chinese waiters and waitresses to do the service because he believes it reduces miscommunication with the patrons, the majority of whom are local non-Chinese people (Yu 2017). The food provided in the restaurant is quite typical for a Chinese buffet in North America, including Chinese dishes such as sweet and sour chicken balls, chop suey, and chow mein, as well as dishes and desserts that are not usually considered Chinese food, such as sushi and ice cream. The Golden Phoenix sponsors community events but Yongtao Yu himself seems to be uninterested in getting deeply involved in the Chinese community here (Yu 2017).

The restaurant patrons I interviewed include Robert Cahill, Kim Hong, David Adams and Barbara Adams, Iris Wong, Ling Li, and Aedon Yong. **Robert Cahill** is a freelancer in his thirties. He is a local Newfoundlander who has lived in St. John's for most of his life, except for five years in Toronto and one or two more years in other places (Cahill 2017). He likes ethnic restaurants in general, and goes to Chinese restaurants about four to five times annually, always with family members or friends (Cahill 2017). His favorite Chinese restaurant in St. John's is the Magic Wok because he feels the food there is "realer." He usually goes there only with his friends, while he more often goes with his family to City Light (Cahill 2017). According to him, this is because those he is with often choose for him (Cahill 2017). In other words, his family,

especially his parents, prefer buffets, such as City Light, while his friends, probably young people like himself, prefer the Chinese food served at the Magic Wok, which they consider “realer” (Cahill 2017).

Kim Hong is a first-generation immigrant who came to St. John’s in 1950 at the age of thirteen and has been living in this city ever since (K. Hong 2017). He founded Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (CANL) in 1976 and was the first president of the Association (K. Hong 2017). He often goes to Chinese restaurants with his families and friends, both Chinese and non-Chinese. His favorite ones include the Hong Kong Restaurant, the Magic Wok, the Kenmount Restaurant, and the Golden Phoenix (K. Hong 2017). When talking about why people’s opinions vary on the Chinese food available in restaurants in St. John’s, he commented that “Chinese food” is a term that is used loosely. A lot of different types of food can be roughly categorized as Chinese food so it is more than reasonable that people will understand it differently and thus have contrasting opinions (K. Hong 2017).

David Adams and Barbara Adams are a retired couple. David, a native Newfoundlander, moved to St. John’s in the 1950s and has been living here ever since, while Barbara came to live in the city in the 1960s (Adams and Adams 2017). They frequent Chinese restaurants every few weeks, most often going to City Light because of its wide selection and good quality food and service (Adams and Adams 2017). Having lived in St. John’s for decades, they are familiar with the Chinese food sold here, which they feel tastes better than what they have eaten in Toronto or Florida, despite the fact that they have heard many people claim otherwise (Adams and Adams

2017). During our interview, they told me that sometimes their Chinese friends will tell them that the St. John's restaurants do not serve real Chinese food, but "Canadian Chinese food" instead (Adams and Adams 2017).

Iris Wong, the current president of CANL, is a first-generation immigrant from Northern China who has lived in St. John's for about fifteen years. She often goes to the Hong Kong Restaurant because her husband and in-laws were originally from Hong Kong. She personally likes the New Moon as well, saying that the spicy food offered there attracts many younger people and newcomers (Wong 2017). She feels that Chinese food in St. John's is undergoing a transition. Formerly, the foodscape was dominated by Cantonese cuisine, but now a variety of cuisines coexist (Wong 2017). Because of her position as the president of CANL, she organizes and participates in many food-centered community events, such as the annual Chinese New Year celebration, that are attended by both insiders and outsiders to the Chinese community (Wong 2017). She discussed these events extensively during our interview (Wong 2017).

Ling Li is a Ph.D. student at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She is from Northern China and has been in St. John's since 2015 (Li 2017). She did not speak very highly of the Chinese food here, missing the Chinese food back in China very much (Li 2017). Among the Chinese restaurants she has visited, including the Magic Wok, Bamboo Garden, Golden Phoenix, Peaceful Loft, and New Moon, she likes the New Moon most. She views the spicy food there to be more authentic (Li 2017). The foods in other Chinese restaurants seem to be "fake" to her (Li 2017). She also commented that the décor found in the Chinese restaurants in St. John's seems to

deliberately highlight particular Chinese elements and she compared this practice with that of some ethnic restaurants she patronized back in China (Li 2017).

Aedon Yong is a Ph.D. student at Memorial University of Newfoundland of Indian descent. She grew up in Vancouver but has been living in St. John's since 2002. She used to go to Chinese restaurants very often when she was in Vancouver, but after moving to St. John's, she patronizes them less frequently. This is both because there are fewer Chinese restaurants located here and because she feels that the food they provide is more Westernized and not very satisfactory. She complains that some restaurants seem to spend more effort on decoration than on food (Young 2017). She commented that Chinese food in St. John's, and in Western societies at large, is a "hybrid," and she shared with me her experiences of eating Chinese food in every country she has visited (Young 2017).

The words of these interviewees, including both the owners and the clients of Chinese restaurants, form the basis of my analysis of the Chinese community in St John's, particularly its identity and relationship with the larger community.

Structure of the Thesis

This study of the Chinese community in St. John's consists of five chapters. The first chapter, which has provided background information, serves as an introduction and lays the foundation for the rest of the work.

The second chapter discusses the Chinese community in St. John's in more detail. It

explores changes in the Chinese community via changes in the Chinese restaurants and Chinese food in the city. It traces the history of the Chinese community and Chinese restaurants in St. John's and discusses how the evolution of Chinese restaurants reflects developments in the community.

Questions of whether or not the Chinese food served at Chinese restaurants in St. John's can be considered "real" Chinese food, and what constitutes "real" Chinese food, made up a significant part of the interviews I conducted. Almost all the interviewees expressed their opinions on these issues. Based primarily on the interviewees' comments, the third chapter explores what constitutes "real" Chinese food. It also considers connections between "real" Chinese food and the identity of food producers and food consumers. In doing so, the chapter takes up the complex and controversial issue of authenticity.

Chinese restaurants are places where the members of different communities come to interact with each other. As a result, they play an important role within and beyond the Chinese community. The fourth chapter focuses on how Chinese restaurants help to mediate the interrelationship between communities. The décor of the restaurants, and their owners' support for community causes and events, convey important messages in terms of intercultural interactions. They help bridge individuals and communities. This chapter explores changes in the decorative styles of Chinese restaurants as well as the events that their owners participate in.

The last chapter reviews the main points of the thesis and draws conclusions. Here I reflect on the restaurants' role in constructing the hybrid nature of Chinese identity (local Chineseness)

in St. John's and consider the extent to which the Chinese community's characteristics may apply to other cultural communities in Newfoundland and elsewhere.

Having laid the theoretical and methodological foundation for the thesis, in the next chapter I turn to an examination of the Chinese community in St. John's and the development of Chinese restaurants in the city.

Chapter Two

Everything Is Changing: Chinese Community, Chinese Restaurants, and Chinese Food

The Changing Chinese Community in St. John's

Before Confederation (Pre-1949)

As mentioned in Chapter One, the documented history of the Chinese community in St. John's dates to 1895 when an advertisement for the first Chinese laundry, Sing Lee & Co. Laundry, appeared in two local newspapers (Chang 1981; Sparrow 2010; Li 2010). According to oral history accounts, the laundry was opened by Fong Choy, who was said to be the very first Chinese settler on the island (Chang 1981). However, Fong Choy is a historical figure who has become legendary, so the accounts about him may not necessarily be accurate. According to some accounts, there were already some Chinese settlers living in the city when the Song Lee & Co. Laundry was opened (Li 2014b). While Fong Choy was probably one of the earliest Chinese settlers on the island, the exact identities of the first Chinese immigrants are uncertain (Chang 1981).

Whatever the exact date of its establishment, since at least 1895 there has been a Chinese population in the city of St John's. However, in the first few decades of settlement, the number of Chinese residents remained minimal and increased only at a very slow rate. In 1906, the Newfoundland government decided to follow the practice of the Canadian government and imposed a head tax on Chinese immigrants, aiming to limit the number of Chinese people

entering the island. In April 1906, The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons was passed (Li 2014b; Sparrow 2010) and it was enforced on August 8, 1906 (Li 2014b, 58).

In May 1906, fifty Chinese people arrived in St. John's by train before the effectuation of the Chinese Immigration Act (Sparrow 2010). According to Sparrow, "[this] was the largest single influx of Chinese people into St. John's before Confederation...In a single day, the Chinese population in St. John's doubled" (Sparrow 2010, 336). Yet over a dozen of the fifty Chinese who arrived in May left the island before the month was over (Chang 1981, 6). Soon another twenty-six Chinese people arrived in the city before the execution of the Chinese Immigration Act (Hong 1987, 55).

After the Chinese Immigration Act came into force, and before it was repealed in 1949 when Newfoundland became a province of Canada, 384 Chinese people in total paid the head tax to enter Newfoundland (Sparrow 2010, 336). However, during the same period of time, 436 Chinese people left the island, either returning to China or going to other places (Sparrow 2010, 336). As a result, the Chinese population of Newfoundland remained small before Confederation. According to Miriam Yu, the second president of CANL, there were only around seventy Chinese living in Newfoundland by 1922 (Yu 1986, 20). The number increased to approximately 175 in 1931 (Yu 1986, 21) and remained somewhat steady for the following decade, dropping slightly to about 160 by 1942 (Yu 1986, 23). The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons not only slowed down the arrival of Chinese immigrants, it had a far-reaching influence on the demographic structure of the Chinese community in Newfoundland. Because the \$300

head tax was a huge financial burden, Chinese people who intended to enter Newfoundland often needed to borrow money in order to pay it. As a result, Chinese immigrants were almost exclusively young men, who were the most likely to find jobs and make money in the new social context at that time. They were the ones best able to repay the debt and to send financial support to their families back in China. Women and children were left at home, making the Chinese in Newfoundland an all-male bachelor community.

The head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants also contributed to chain migration, which was the common practice at that time (Li 2014b, 50). Because the \$300 head tax was often beyond an immigrant's ability to pay, he would not be able to enter Newfoundland without sponsorship. Many potential immigrants sought sponsorship from family members, relatives, or fellow villagers already settled on the island, who knew and trusted them and were therefore more willing to help. At the same time, Chinese people with established businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador who needed more workers or saw new opportunities were likely to encourage other Chinese men, connected to them by geographical proximity or kinship, to immigrate. As a result, the early Chinese settlers were often related to each other in one way or another. They came almost exclusively from Guangdong (Canton) Province in Southern China (Li 2014b; Yu 1986). For example, the small county Kaiping (Hoi Ping 开平) was the origin of Mr. Fong Choy, the first Chinese immigrant, and it was home to many other early Chinese immigrants as well (Li 2014b; Yu 1986). Based on the gravestones of early Chinese residents in St. John's, most of the early Chinese immigrants came from four geographically close counties

of Guangdong (Canton) Province: Kaiping 开平, Taishan 台山, Enping 恩平, and Xinhui 新会 (Barrett et al. 2016). In fact, about 90% of Chinese immigrants entering Newfoundland between June 1910 and March 1949 were from these four counties, according to the Registration of Persons of Chinese Race Admitted into the Colony of Newfoundland under the Provisions of the Chinese Immigration Act (Barrett et al. 2016). As Yu notes, “The most common family names in Newfoundland were and still are Au (Aue, Que), Hong, Tom (Tam, Hum), and Jim (Gin, Jin)” (Yu 1986, 21). Stones marking the graves of Chinese people buried in both the General Protestant Cemetery and Mount Pleasant Cemetery also reveal that a large proportion of the early Chinese residents on the island shared the same family name and were probably related (Barrett et al. 2016).

During the fifty-odd years of Chinese people’s presence in Newfoundland before the island joined Canada, the only Chinese person who was naturalized was Au Kim Lee (or Kim Lee Au according to English tradition). Fluent in English upon his arrival because of his previous experiences in England (Li 2014b, 49; Sparrow 2010, 339; Yu 1986, 20), he became a liaison between the Chinese people and the locals and Newfoundland institutions and organizations. He emerged as a patriarchal figure of the small Chinese community (Sparrow 2010, 336). He was also the only Chinese resident in the city who was allowed to bring over his Chinese wife before Confederation. His wife stayed for only a very short period of time, leaving the Chinese community once again an all-male bachelor enclave (Sparrow 2010).

Most of the early Chinese immigrants worked in laundries. After the Sing Lee & Co.

Laundry was opened on New Gower Street in August 1895, another Chinese laundry—Kam Lung Laundry—was opened only two months later, at 214 Duckworth Street (although another account indicates that it was located 41 Cochrane Street) (Li 2014b, 49; Sparrow 2010, 334). In 1904, Au Kim Lee opened the Kim Lee Laundry which became the third Chinese laundry in St. John's (Li 2014b, 49; Sparrow 2010, 335). Many more Chinese laundries were opened in the following years. In his dissertation, Mu Li provides a list of these laundries that indicates how successful business was and gives a clue to how many Chinese residents in Newfoundland and Labrador were involved in the hand laundry trade:

As listed in the *International Chinese Business Directory of the World for the Year 1913*, there were eight Chinese hand laundries in St. John's: Fong Lee Laundry, Jim Lee Laundry, John Lee Laundry, Hong Lee Laundry, Hop Wah Laundry, Kam Lung Laundry (41 Cochrane Street), Kam Lung laundry (Harbour Place) and Yee Lee Laundry. According to William Ping, in St. John's in the 1930s to 1940s there were twenty-odd Chinese laundries that employed more than two hundred Chinese workers (Li 2014b, 51-52).

In addition to laundries, Chinese people also established other businesses; they included Kim Lee and Lee Lee who ran a general merchandise store known as the Kim Lee and Lee Lee Oriental Store that featured Chinese dry goods and Sam Hing who was a silk merchant (Li 2014b, 52). Others operated cafés, such as the King Café that opened circa 1918 and the Dominion Café in 1922 (Li 2014a, n. pag.). Some early Chinese residents in Newfoundland were also hired to work at the Bell Island iron ore mines or in the fisheries (Chang 1981, 7). Still others took on employment as gardeners, domestic servants, and cooks (Chang 1981, 7).

After Confederation (Post-1949)

After Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949, the Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons was repealed and the \$300 head tax lifted. The Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947 was immediately applied to Newfoundland, meaning that Chinese settlers on the island were now allowed to bring over their wives and children under twenty-one years old (Yu 1986). The once all-male bachelor community started to welcome a small influx of women and children. As a consequence of the family reunions, there was a baby boom in the Chinese community in Newfoundland” (Li 2014b, 67), and the Chinese population in Newfoundland soared after Confederation. The first Chinese baby born in Newfoundland with both Chinese parents was reported to have been born in February 1950. His father was Roy Lee, an employee of the Dept. of Transport (*Evening Telegram* Feb 27, 1950, quoted in Li 2014b, 71). However, at this stage, Chinese immigrants were still primarily uneducated laborers who came to the island because of kinship ties. Most people came from similar socioeconomic conditions, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and geographical regions: the southern coastal areas of China, particularly the rural areas of Guangdong (Canton) Province.

The situation changed significantly only after the 1960s, with the adoption of a more inclusive immigration policy in 1967. This allowed all potential immigrants to be evaluated with a non-discriminatory Universal Point System (Li 2014a; Li 2014b; Sparrow 2010; Yu 1986). Under the new immigration regulations, ethnicity or place of origin no longer mattered for the application, but instead “skills and education became paramount in the selection process,”

allowing “[all] new potential immigrants...[to be] placed on an equal footing” (Sparrow 2010, 344). This policy attracted many trained professionals from China to Newfoundland and Labrador, including some physicians (Li 2014a; Li 2014b; Yu 1986). Additionally, as Mu Li writes, “[in] the mid-1960s, Memorial University of Newfoundland began to recruit foreign students who intended to pursue higher education in Canada,” and as a result, an influx of Chinese students arrived on the island. Some of them stayed after their graduation (Li 2014b, 74).

Because of the implementation of the new immigration policy, more and more Chinese people came to Newfoundland who had no preexisting links to earlier immigrants. However, due to the political situation in China in the 1960s, the Chinese immigrants during this period were almost exclusively from places other than the mainland of China. They mostly came from Hong Kong and Taiwan; some immigrants arrived from Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia (Li 2014a; Li 2014b; Yu 1986). From the late 1970s, the mainland of China started to send immigrants to Newfoundland as well (Li 2014a; Li 2014b; Yu 1986), and “in the last two decades, they [people from the mainland of China] become the major source of Chinese immigration to Newfoundland” (Li 2014a, n. pag.).

After the implementation of the new immigration policy, Chinese immigrants were generally better educated or better trained compared to the early immigrants. Consequently, they were able to pursue a variety of careers. This led to an increasing number of professionals in the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador after the 1960s. A survey conducted by

CANL in 1978 showed that there were sixty-seven professionals among the Chinese population, including twenty-five in health care (Yu 1986, 23). In addition to the increasing number of professionals, another important change occurred in the Chinese residents' occupational landscape in Newfoundland and Labrador. The primary business they owned or worked in shifted from laundries to restaurants. The same survey in 1978 clearly proved this, as by that time there were eighty-three Chinese-owned establishments in the province, of which seventy were restaurants (Yu 1986, 23).

The Chinese population of Newfoundland and Labrador, as mentioned above, increased significantly after the head tax was lifted in 1949. According to Yu, statistics shows that “the Chinese population [of Newfoundland and Labrador] continued to increase from 160 in 1942 to 580 in 1971; to 780 in 1975; to 835 in 1978; and to 850 in 1981” (Yu 1986, 23). The population declined slightly from the late 1990s to the early 2000s because older people either moved to the Canadian mainland to live with their children or passed away, and many younger people also moved to other provinces due to the weak economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, according to Kim Hong, the previous president of CANL (Li 2014b, 115). However, by 2006, the number of Chinese residents in the province had increased to 1,325, making up 0.26 percent of the province's total population (Statistics Canada 2009). 985 out of the 1,325 Chinese people lived in St. John's (Li 2014b, 2). The number almost doubled in the next decade. According to census statistics, by 2016 the Chinese population reached 2,325, of which over 80 percent (1,870) lived in St. John's (Statistics Canada 2017). The population with Chinese origins was even larger than

that, reaching 2,700 in total by 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017). In addition to this number, there are about 700 Chinese students attending colleges, university, or high schools in the province, who are not included in the previous statistics, according to Iris Wong, the current president of CANL (Wong 2017).

The increasing number of Chinese community members after the head tax was removed, the more diverse educational and occupational backgrounds of Chinese residents after the introduction of a new immigration policy in 1967, and the different origins of the Chinese immigrants, have all contributed to diversification of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador in recent decades.

Chinese Restaurants in St. John's

The Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador has been involved in the food industry for over a century (Li 2014b), and as mentioned above, by the late 1970s there were seventy Chinese-owned restaurants in Newfoundland and Labrador (Yu 1986, 23). Given this long history and this large quantity, it is easy to assume that the restaurant business has been a significant force in shaping and presenting/expressing the identity of Chinese residents of the island. In this section, I will outline the development of Chinese restaurants in St. John's.

As early as 1906, an anonymous Chinese vendor sold food on Bell Island where the iron ore mine hired a number of Chinese workers (Li 2014b, 164). The vendor was not a professional cook nor did he own a restaurant (Li 2014b, 164). Nam How Tong, the first known Chinese chef

in Newfoundland and Labrador, came to the island in around 1915 (Li 2014b, 164).

The first Chinese-owned restaurant was the King Café opened by Charlie Fong (Fong Moo Sic) in 1918 or 1919. In 1922, the second Chinese-owned restaurant, the Dominion Café, was opened in St. John's by Au Kim Lee, the first Chinese immigrant to be naturalized in Newfoundland (Li 2014b, 166). More restaurants were opened in the following two decades and by the 1940s, there were over twenty Chinese-owned restaurants in downtown St. John's, including small snack bars, take-outs, and fish and chips shops (Li 2014b, 166). The increasing number of restaurants indicates that as more Chinese immigrants came to Newfoundland and Labrador, they began to seek employment opportunities apart from laundries, and that restaurants gradually became important employers of Chinese immigrants (Li 2014b). However, at that time the restaurants owned by Chinese people in Newfoundland and Labrador did not serve Chinese food. Instead, as was common practice throughout North America, they provided Western food such as steak or fish and chips (Li 2014b, 166). Because the food sold in Chinese-owned restaurants was not from China, and had not been even remotely influenced by Chinese culinary culture, these establishments may not be considered as Chinese restaurants. According to Kim Hong, a reason behind the prosperity of the restaurant business was that opening and running restaurants did not require much education or many skills; sometimes not even a certificate would be needed (K. Hong 2017). The restaurant business allowed undereducated, poor Chinese settlers to earn more money in slightly better working conditions than they could working in laundries (K. Hong 2017).

The first Chinese-owned restaurant to serve Chinese food in Newfoundland and Labrador was opened in the 1950s (K. Hong 2017). Mu Li recorded an interview with Dr. Kim Hong in 2013 in which Hong gives details about how Chinese-owned restaurants started to serve Chinese food:

The Chinese-owned restaurants started to serve Chinese food in around 1954 to 1955. At that time, there was a small café called Deluxe Café on Water Street. The Deluxe Café was first owned by Charlie Ding Au. He had a son Wing Ding Au who came to Newfoundland in 1946. Wing Ding went to local high school to learn some English and got his head tax back (\$300). After Confederation, he went to Toronto with some others to work at a famous Chinese restaurant called Litchi Garden as a waiter. In 1953 or 1954, Wing Ding came back from Toronto and took over the business. He must have learnt how to cook Chinese food from the working experience in Toronto and when he came back, he started to serve Chinese food (quoted in Li 2014b, 168).

After the Deluxe Café, many other Chinese restaurants serving Chinese food gradually opened in St. John's. According to Kim Hong, there were over forty Chinese restaurants in St. John's by the 1970s (K. Hong 2017). This estimate is supported by the survey conducted by CANL in 1978 quoted earlier which shows that by that time there were seventy restaurants in the province, of which forty were in St. John's (Yu 1986). The food served in these Chinese restaurants was what Kim Hong terms "typical American Chinese food" (K. Hong 2017), Iris Wong labels "Canadian Chinese food" (Wong 2017), and Mu Li describes as "North American Style Chinese food" (Li 2014a, n. pag.). Referred to by different names¹, this food typically consists of dishes such as chop suey or sweet and sour pork. This kind of Chinese food is characterized by its generous use of sugar and mixture of Chinese and local ingredients and

¹ in this thesis I will use these three terms interchangeably

tastes. Sometimes people compare American/Canadian Chinese food to Cantonese cuisine in China and argue that the two resemble each other in taste (Wong 2017). Apart from American Chinese food, early Chinese restaurants in St. John's generally also served some Western dishes, such as steak, and fish and chips. Some Chinese restaurants even sold other ethnic food, such as pizza, in addition to Chinese dishes (K. Hong 2017).

After the prosperity of the 1970s, Chinese restaurants faced a severe challenge from non-ethnic restaurants when local people started to open eating establishments as well (K. Hong 2017). These non-ethnic restaurants became alternatives for many customers, especially those who had been asking for local Western food from Chinese restaurants (K. Hong 2017). People preferred to go to non-ethnic restaurants for Western dishes; as a result, Chinese restaurants gradually ceased to serve those dishes (K. Hong 2017). Additionally, the large number of Chinese restaurants led to fierce competition among themselves (K. Hong 2017). Consequently, a large proportion of the Chinese restaurants in the city closed in the following decades. Now, according to Kim Hong's estimation, there are about twenty-five Chinese restaurants, including small take-outs, in the St. John's area (K. Hong 2017). Listings in the Yellow Pages supports his estimation, recording eighteen Chinese restaurants in St. John's and several others in the surrounding area.

While the number of Chinese restaurants decreased, the food served in the restaurants diversified. In recent years, apart from the typical American Chinese food, new dishes, especially those of Szechuan (Sichuan) cuisine, which features spicy hot flavors, have been introduced into

some Chinese restaurants in St. John's, such as the New Moon and China House. Some new Cantonese-style dishes became available in certain Chinese restaurants as well (Li 2014a, n. pag.). Compared to the American Chinese food, these new dishes seem to be more "traditional" because they adopt the names, and resemble the tastes, of traditional Chinese dishes. Thus they are often advertised as "traditional Chinese food" (Li 2014a, n. pag.), in contrast to "American Chinese food" represented by dishes such as chop suey and sweet and sour chicken balls. The question of "traditional" Chinese food will be further discussed later in this chapter. First, however, I turn to another issue that relates to a traditional business practice—or lack of it. When conducting my fieldwork, I noticed a very interesting pattern: in St. John's, a Chinese restaurant is rarely passed down to the next generation within the owner's family. Rather, it is more often sold outside the family. In the next section I try to interpret this phenomenon.

Chinese Restaurants: Family Businesses Seldom Passed Down

Two years ago, when I was at the Department of Folklore's field school, I interviewed Ernie Green Jr., the owner of E & E Drive-In, a family-owned restaurant in Brigus, located about an hour's drive outside of St. John's. He explained that the family-operated small business was opened by his father about half a century ago and then passed down to him and his brother. If everything goes according to plan, the third generation will take over the restaurant after he and his brother retire. Passing down a family business to the next generation within the family seems to be a quite common practice, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador, but in other cultures as

well. In China, the practice of parents accumulating savings, or creating a business, to leave to their children still influences people strongly nowadays. Therefore, when restaurant owner after restaurant owner responded negatively when I asked if they would pass on their businesses to their sons or daughters, I was quite surprised.

Among the seven restaurant owners I interviewed, only two spoke of businesses being handed down in families. Wallace Hong, a previous partner in the Kenmount Restaurant, was one who told me that the restaurant was passed down generationally in his family. It went from his father to his brother, and now is owned by his nephew. Given the current state of the business, however, it is unlikely to be passed to the next generation (W. Hong 2017). Shirley Hong, the owner of the Rice Bowl, also talked about letting her daughter take over her restaurant (S. Hong 2017). The owners of the other four restaurants, however, either had already sold their businesses or were intending to do so, without any plan of leaving them to their children. Compared to the Kenmount Restaurant, which opened in 1965, and the Rice Bowl, which has been operating for four decades, the other establishments are relatively new. It seems that the older restaurants are more likely to be passed down to the next generation within the family. This changing situation may be worth exploring.

A most important reason why Chinese restaurant owners report not wanting to hand their establishments over to their children is that they feel that work in the restaurant trade is too demanding and tiring. They would prefer to see their children take on other kinds of jobs, preferably professional positions. Yuwen Zhang, the owner of City Light, said that he would not

leave the restaurant to his children because he wanted them to have professional jobs and live a “normal” life:

At present my family are helping me in the restaurant, including my wife and children, but they are all part-time here. Most of the time they are not in the restaurant...I don't want the next generation to continue with restaurant trade. It will be a one-generation family business, because working in restaurant trade is really very heavy and weary, and I don't want them to live such a hard life like I did. Everything about running a restaurant is so difficult, it takes up all your time, it is difficult to find proper cooks who can adapt to the working environment and work well. It is so tiring and tedious. I have been working in Chinese restaurants for over 20 years. Now I am so fed up with the restaurant trade. Over the past decades, I put all my efforts into my children's education. My keenest hope has always been that they would become professionals and live a normal life. I don't plan to let my children take over the restaurant after I retire. In fact, I already invited all the employees here to purchase shares of the restaurant. I am hoping that they will gradually take over all my work and then I can withdraw myself from the restaurant. I may want to keep some shares but I will let them run the business without me. That's my plan for my retirement, and I hope that day will come soon (Zhang and Zhang 2017).

Yuwen Zhang's attitude represents the opinions of many other Chinese restaurant owners.

Chinese restaurant owners are often personally involved in the cooking and/or serving in addition to management, and this adds extra pressure. They usually need to work nonstop for long hours every day, purchasing and preparing the ingredients before the restaurant opens, cooking food, serving customers and dealing with all kinds of situations that can happen during the day, and cleaning up late at night. For example, Paulo (Leiguang) Lee, the owner (and the only waiter) of Peaceful Loft, told me that he and his wife (the cook) usually go to the restaurant at eight o'clock in the morning and leave for home no earlier than eleven thirty at night (Lee 2017). Sometimes they even have to stay up working in the restaurant till two or three o'clock in the morning when the ingredients and materials they order regularly from outside Newfoundland

arrive (Lee 2017). Not all Chinese restaurant owners work exactly like this, but from this case we can gain a glimpse into the working conditions of Chinese restaurant owners. Even those owners who do not engage in the cooking themselves are usually extremely busy. Yongtao Yu, the owner of the Golden Phoenix, told me that his whole family is able to sit down together for dinner on only three days a year, usually during Christmas time, because at other times either he or other family members have to be in the restaurant to take care of all sorts of things (Yu 2018).

The routine is repeated every day, for a seemingly endless time. Many Chinese restaurant owners, after repeating the routine for many years, or even decades, know all too well how hard and tedious the work is and they want their children to avoid this kind of life. As a result, they usually do not want their children to take over the business if they have any other career choices. Sometimes their wish for their children to have a better life can be so strong that they actually persuade their children not to work in restaurants. For example, Yongtao Yu told me that he did not want his son to continue the restaurant business and successfully persuaded him to sell it:

I am planning to sell Golden Phoenix, and already asked the real estate agent to spread the word over a month ago...My son does not insist to keep the restaurant, because the kitchen is really a headache for him just as it is for me. He was actually the real founder of this restaurant. He was still in university when Golden Phoenix was opened, and he did most of the preparation work. After it was opened, he also did most of the management work. Otherwise, I could never have opened three restaurants. When I told them I would like to sell the restaurant, my son and my wife disagreed at first. So I persuaded them to agree. I told them that I am old and would retire soon, and my son is too young to be tied down to restaurant work. He has devoted over ten years to the restaurant, since he was in his twenties. He is now thirty-five. I don't want him to be like this. He certainly can make some money from the restaurant, but other than buying one or two houses, one or two luxurious cars, he can do nothing else because he will be tied down to the work and will have no much free time (Yu 2017).

While the restaurant owners' unwillingness to let their children repeat the tiring, hard life they have been living is an important factor in their decision not to pass down the business within the family. The fact that the younger generation has more choices and opportunities because of higher education and social context is another crucial reason.

As indicated earlier, the younger generation of Chinese residents is generally better educated than the early Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a trade that has relatively low requirements for skills or education, the restaurant business was a good choice for the generally undereducated early Chinese settlers on the island, but now with higher education, younger Chinese immigrants are able to, and are sometimes expected by their families to become professionals or to take jobs that will "match" their educational background. The two quotes above from my interviews with Yuwen Zhang and Yongtao Yu reveal some common expectations of Chinese parents in Newfoundland and Labrador for their children nowadays: they should receive a higher education, take a professional job, and not be tied down to physical labor in a restaurant.

These parental expectations reveal that despite the fact that it has brought fortune to many Chinese community members and has provided them a way to make a living, the restaurant trade is somewhat stigmatized as work suited to undereducated, unskilled laborers. Arguably, Chinese restaurants have become a symbol that is attached to the image of the poor, uneducated, unskilled Chinese person who is an outcast from mainstream society. In other words, this is the image of early Chinese immigrants to Newfoundland. Lily Cho discusses this image of Chinese

restaurants in small towns in Canada in her book *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* (Cho 2010). She argues that because restaurants are closely connected to the early Chinese diaspora in Canada and their poor living conditions at that time, the mainstream society wants to erase them for the purpose of erasing the memory of oppressing and exploiting the early Chinese immigrants in the country. At the same time, recent Chinese immigrants also reject the tradition of small Chinese restaurants located in remote towns or countryside, and desire to construct and present a new, cosmopolitan Chineseness that is distinct from the outdated, degraded Chinese identity created and represented by the early Chinese immigrants (Cho 2010, 77-79). It seems, however, that not only the small Chinese cafés in remote places connote the low socioeconomic status of the early Chinese immigrants. Rather, the restaurant trade in general is representative of Chinese immigrants from a time period before community members had more diverse occupational choices. Similarly, it can be seen as a symbol of the early Chinese community in Newfoundland. From this perspective, underneath the wish for one's offspring to live an easier life lies the hope of an older generation of Chinese people that the younger generation achieves a higher social status than they have.

This explains why in earlier times Chinese restaurants were more likely to be passed down within the family, whereas nowadays Chinese restaurant owners often tend to sell their businesses to others instead of letting their children take them over. However, this does not mean that restaurant owners do not take pride in their work and accomplishments. For example, Shirley Hong, owner of the Rice Bowl, sees the business as a tradition and a source of pride that

she wants the family to carry on. She is obviously proud of her late husband, of the business they established together, and of their achievements in building a successful life together from nothing. That pride is a contributing factor in her hope that the forty-year-old Rice Bowl will be passed onto her daughter and then to her grandson (S. Hong 2017).

The Diversification of Chinese Food in St. John's

I mentioned earlier that the food served in Chinese restaurants in St. John's underwent some changes since it was introduced here. In this section, I would like to further explore the changes in the city's Chinese food in an effort to give an overview of the culinary landscape of St. John's Chinese restaurants.

As indicated earlier, during the first few decades after the 1950s when Chinese-owned restaurants in St. John's started to serve Chinese food, it was almost exclusively the North American style Chinese food (or American/Canadian Chinese food) with the most popular dishes being things like chop suey and sweet and sour chicken balls. The relative homogeneity of Chinese food in St. John's during earlier years may be a result of several different factors.

Guangdong (Canton) Province was, and still is, a predominant place of origin of not only the Chinese people in Newfoundland and Labrador, but the overseas Chinese diaspora at large. Consequently, the Cantonese cooking style significantly influenced the foodways of many Chinese communities overseas, including those in Canada. Some features of the Cantonese cooking style therefore have remained and been integrated into Canadian Chinese food. For

example, the relatively plain tastes of Cantonese cuisine in comparison with the usually more salty and spicy food of other cuisines in China, and the use of sugar in cooking, are characteristics that feature in Canadian Chinese food as well. Since the majority of Chinese residents in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially the early Chinese immigrants, were from Guangdong (Canton) Province, it is not surprising that the food sold in Newfoundland's Chinese restaurants adopted these characteristics as well. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the North American style Chinese food in Newfoundland and Labrador is exactly the same as Cantonese food in China. In Newfoundland the food has been modified to cater to local people's tastes. For example, one obvious difference is that while sugar is found in some Cantonese dishes in China, it is not used as widely and heavily as in Newfoundland's Chinese food.

Another important reason for the relative homogeneity of Chinese food in St. John's until recently is that it was similar, at least in name, to what would have been found on menus in many Chinese restaurants in other cities across Canada and the United States. Many Chinese restaurant owners or chefs were trained to become professional cooks only after they immigrated to North America. This was especially true in the early stage of Chinese people's settling in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of them learned to cook by working in Chinese restaurants in other parts of North America after they emigrated from China. For example, as Kim Hong indicated above, Wing Ding Au, the owner of the first restaurant to serve Chinese food in Newfoundland, "must have learnt how to cook Chinese food from the working experience in Toronto", so "when he came back [to Newfoundland], he started to serve Chinese food" (quoted

in Li 2014b, 168). If cooks obtained their skills in Chinese restaurants in Canada, what they learned were most likely the ways to cook Canadian Chinese food. That led to the spread of similar cooking skills and dishes across the country. Rennie So, the previous owner of Magic Wok Eatery, made a similar comment that many Chinese chefs in Newfoundland only learned to cook after their immigration. He explained why North American Chinese food prevails in Chinese restaurants in St. John's:

Many Chinese restaurants here are doing very well, but the owners were not in restaurant business before they came here. After they came here, they worked in Chinese restaurants, because, you know, working in Chinese restaurants does not require many skills. That way they were able to learn how to cook. Of course what they were able to learn were the ways to cook North American Chinese food. They don't know how to cook traditional Chinese food. Besides, in Newfoundland, although people are saying that Magic Wok serves traditional Chinese food, if you want to make money you still need to depend mostly on local clients. It will never work if you don't serve North American Chinese food. St. John's is not like Toronto or Vancouver, where there are lots of Chinese people. If you open a Chinese restaurant in a Chinatown in those cities, then you don't need to serve North American Chinese food (So 2017).

Wallace Hong, the previous co-owner of Kenmount Restaurant, was in charge of the kitchen when the restaurant was opened in 1965. He told me that they hired two or three cooks from Toronto and that he himself learned how to cook by observing them:

I worked in the kitchen. I worked in the outside too at first, then I told them, "no, I gonna go inside." Someday you would lose all the cooks, then you need to cook then. I said I had to do that. So I put myself in the kitchen...Someday you would lose all your cooks then who would cook for you then? You need to know how to cook. You know, as they always say, when you start a business, you need to know how to do it yourself first. You never open a restaurant if you know nothing. Right? Then if the cooks quit, you can take over the kitchen... We got two or three cooks from Toronto. We hired two or three from Toronto. They don't teach you. You don't forget that no Chinese cook would teach you anything. But you got to look what they do and then you do what they do (W. Hong 2017).

Yuwen Zhang, the founder and now one of the owners of City Light, was a construction contractor before he immigrated to North America. After he immigrated to the USA in 1991, he started to work in a Chinese restaurant in Washington, D.C. because restaurants provided many working opportunities that did not require a lot of skills or experience (Zhang and Zhang 2017). He started washing dishes and preparing ingredients until he gradually got the chance to learn how to cook in the restaurant and finally became a cook (Zhang and Zhang 2017). He mastered cooking when he was in the USA and brought those skills to St. John's when he opened City Light in 2008. Therefore, it is no wonder that the food served at City Light resembles the flavors of Chinese food in big American cities. Individuals like Wallace Hong and Yuwen Zhang, who worked or are still working in restaurants as cooks but were only trained after they immigrated to North America, are not unusual. This may be one reason why Chinese food served in restaurants in St. John's used to so closely resemble that of other regions of North America.

Mu Li argues that the North American style Chinese food came into being as a result of immigrants' negotiation of Chinese culinary tradition and Chinese identity in unfamiliar social and environmental contexts, and that American Chinese food reflects a strategy of catering to the locals in an attempt to overcome the clients' misunderstanding and distrust of Chinese food (Li 2014a, n. pag.). It is certainly true that the diasporic Chinese combined aspects of their native foodways with those of their new community. The two traditions combined to shape the Chinese food that is regularly served in Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, Canadian Chinese food, which was the only Chinese food restaurants provided for many

decades, and which is still the most commonly served food nowadays, is a result of a combination of influences that includes aspects of Chinese immigrants' original traditions, local culinary culture in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the foodways of diasporic Chinese communities in other cities or regions of North America.

In recent years, the flavors of Chinese restaurant foods in St. John's have become more diverse. As mentioned above, many restaurants have started to provide "traditional" Chinese food, such as new dishes drawn from Szechuan (Sichuan) and Cantonese cuisines. For example, the Magic Wok Eatery designates a separate section in its menu to "traditional Chinese food" and in addition to "North American style Chinese food," spicy dishes are available in Chinese restaurants such as the China House and New Moon. The causes of this increasing diversity of Chinese food in the city are manifold and worth investigating.

The increasing heterogeneity of the Chinese community in St. John's is surely one of the reasons behind the rise in popularity of "traditional" Chinese food. As previously mentioned, after the new immigration law was implemented in 1967, educational background and professional skill replaced the kinship recommendation and became the most important factors for consideration in most immigration files. Consequently, the Chinese community in St. John's embraced an influx of Chinese people with different educational and professional backgrounds. Instead of a community made up of people who came from the same area, spoke the same language, and were often tied to each other by kinship, a new, more heterogeneous, Chinese community gradually formed. They brought various culinary traditions from their hometowns to

St. John's and these infiltrated the local Chinese restaurants. As Mu Li points out, some dishes that were "[p]reviously prepared only in the private sphere or embodied as memories in the minds of immigrants" have "emerged into the public space of restaurants" (Li 2014a, n. pag.).

The availability of more professionally trained cooks also contributed to the rise of "traditional" Chinese dishes, as Chinese restaurants started to hire well-trained cooks to work for them. In a casual conversation, CANL president Iris Wong told me that the China House, a long-time Chinese restaurant in St. John's, once served mostly Cantonese and Hong Kong style dishes but after several professional Szechuan (Sichuan) cooks joined the restaurant, some traditional spicy dishes appeared on the menu.

However, if we consider the fact that over 90 percent of Chinese restaurants' customers are local non-Chinese people, it is easy to see that if a Chinese restaurant wants to succeed it will give priority to the majority's tastes. Therefore, the appearance and popularity of "traditional" Chinese dishes in the Chinese restaurants in St. John's also reflect local non-Chinese people's acceptance of, and appetite for, this kind of Chinese food. Just as North American style Chinese dishes were deeply influenced by Chinese food producers' desire to cater to local people's tastes, so has the rise of "traditional" Chinese food been customer-driven.

Increasingly open and adventuresome attitudes toward new foods on the part of local non-Chinese people play an essential role in the introduction of more traditional Chinese dishes to St. John's diners. Newfoundlanders, especially the younger generation, are becoming more open towards food from other cultures. Some people may be more adventurous than others and

purposely seek new flavors. Robert Cahill, in his thirties, compared his own food choices with his parents'. He talked about the different restaurants they patronized, which to a certain degree demonstrates a change of attitude towards foreign foods:

...Like my parents, who are thirty years older than me, they, Chinese food is probably the first ethnic food that they had, right? And, it's probably familiar for them, you know? I think like it's not really adventurous, you know? It feels like, it's pretty, it's pretty normal like there has been Chinese restaurants in St. John's for, you know, forty years probably, right? So, it's not like scary for them. But for me, I like everything, right? Like, I like to try different things, but for them it's like 'Is it safe? Pretty safe choice?'...What if I were to say like 'Let's go to the Afghan restaurant,' they would say 'Afghan food? I don't know what that is!' Right? They would say 'No, no, no, no.' But like, Chinese food is very familiar for them, I think. They know what, they know what they're getting (Cahill 2017).

It is not that the older generation is necessarily less willing to accept or less likely to enjoy unfamiliar foreign food. Instead, what is suggested by Robert's remarks is that there have been cultural shifts that mean at least some people in Newfoundland are becoming more adventurous in their food choices. North American style Chinese food has been a presence on the island for so many decades that it can hardly be considered an exotic ethnic food, but rather, one may argue that this type of Chinese food has actually become an element of the local culinary landscape. More adventurous food consumers like Robert Cahill doubtless expect ethnic restaurants to provide some exotic, novel food they are not very familiar with, and restaurant owners have introduced "traditional" Chinese dishes in part to fill this need. In other words, the more adventurous local food consumers' search for exoticism and novelty is a very important reason behind the increasing popularity of "traditional" Chinese food.

In order to cater to local non-Chinese people's tastes, "traditional" Chinese dishes that are

served in the Chinese restaurants in St. John's are often modifications of their counterparts in China in terms of taste, ingredients, and/or cooking methods (see Li 2014a, n. pag.). That is why I use quotation marks around the term "traditional." The lack of availability of certain ingredients is still a problem in St. John's and according to some restaurant owners I interviewed, such as Paulo (Leiguang) Lee, the owner of Peaceful Loft (Lee 2017), this is a reason why the "traditional" Chinese dishes in St. John's are different from those in China. However, having the ingredients sent to Newfoundland from Toronto, or even directly from China, is not very hard nowadays, and many Asian products are available in Chinese stores here in St. John's. Therefore, it is logical to infer that pleasing customers is a more significant reason behind why Chinese restaurants, while advertising those new Chinese dishes' "traditionality," modify them in ways that make them a hybrid of Chinese and Newfoundland culinary traditions. On the other hand, the dishes satisfy local people's more adventurous appetite but on the other hand they do not challenge their tastes too much.

As discussed in the first chapter, people's growing acceptance of foods that are traditionally unfamiliar to them demonstrates their willingness and democratic efforts to appreciate different cultures, but underneath the surface, eating ethnic food is often an activity of cultural appropriation and colonialism as well (see Heldke 2008; Johnston and Baumann 2010). The rise of traditional Chinese food in St. John's may appear to reflect local people's increasing willingness to embrace culinary traditions from another culture, yet as Vincent Cheng argues, the Chinese food served in Chinese restaurants in North America is essentially American instead of

Chinese, in terms of what and how people eat in those restaurants (Cheng 2011). Chinese culinary tradition is integrated into, and modified by, the mainstream North American culture, and what local people appreciate may be more their own culture, than Chinese.

Chapter Summary

The Chinese have been a minority group in Newfoundland and Labrador since their arrival on the island in 1895. For over a century of living here, Chinese people overcame various obstacles imposed on them by laws, language, culture, social contexts, and institutional or individual prejudice, and gradually integrated themselves into an increasingly diverse Newfoundland culture. During this process, the Chinese community underwent significant changes. Chinese immigrants from various places and of diverse backgrounds are moving to the island. Chinese restaurants, as important establishments that influence Chinese people's lives significantly, waxed and waned during their presence in Newfoundland and Labrador. From the trend that few Chinese restaurants are passed down within the owners' families, we can see that as the Chinese community has become more heterogeneous, the newer immigrants are intentionally or subconsciously drawing a distinction between themselves and the early Chinese residents. The increasing heterogeneity of the Chinese community, the Westernization of the younger generation, Chinese people's reflections on their ethnicity, and other factors, seem to have led the Chinese community in St. John's to gradually lose its centripetal force that strengthens the intragroup connections (Wong 2017). It is certain that the Chinese community

will continue to change in future. However, no matter how much the community has grown, and how loose the intragroup connections seem to have become, there is still a shared identity that Chinese people treasure, preserve, and perform as a group. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the Chinese community in St. John's articulates complex issues of identity through their foodways, particularly in debates over whether the food served in Chinese restaurants is "real" Chinese food or not.

Chapter Three

“Real” Chinese Food: A Declaration of Chineseness and a Strategy for Power

During my fieldwork, one question was raised repeatedly in almost all my interviews with both restaurant owners and clients: is the Chinese food offered in local Chinese restaurants real Chinese food? Interestingly, almost all of my interviewees, Chinese and non-Chinese, restaurant owners and restaurant goers, asserted or suggested that they believed it was not “real” Chinese food. What is even more interesting is that when asked what they thought would be real Chinese food, they did not always have an answer. This chapter explores these questions further: Is the Chinese food available in Chinese restaurants in St. John’s “real” Chinese food? If it is not, what can be considered as “real” Chinese food? Who has the authority to decide what is “real” Chinese food and what is not? Why do people want or need to tell “real” Chinese food from “fake” Chinese food?

“Real” Chinese Food: The Problem of Authenticity

Before I start to address the questions of what is “real” Chinese food, it needs to be pointed out that this question is centered on one essential but elusive concept: authenticity. A brief discussion of the findings of other scholars who have studied this concept is necessary in order to lay a foundation for further exploration of the “realness” of Chinese food in St. John’s. Authenticity is a problematic and controversial notion, yet it is an important one as well, especially for folklore studies. As Regina Bendix argues, “the notion of authenticity legitimated

folklore as a discipline” at an early stage (Bendix 1997, 5). There are many works discussing authenticity that are very insightful and helpful for understanding this concept. For the purposes of this chapter, I am drawing primarily from the arguments of sociologist Jennie Germann Molz and folklorist Regina Bendix.

Authenticity played an essential role in the formation and legitimation of folklore as an academic discipline during its early stages of development, but later this concept underwent severe scrutiny, especially in recent decades (Bendix 1997). However, Molz argues that authenticity is still very relevant and useful for food studies and that the notion is often regarded as problematic and thus discarded largely because some scholars tend to see authenticity as an objective quality rather than a “negotiable, emergent, and socially constructed” concept (Molz 2004, 62). She also suggests that authenticity is not only about the identity of the food producers but also about the identity of the food consumers. What food consumers regard as authentic reveals their cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds, which together influence their judgments (Molz 2004, 62). Only when facing another culture’s food can one reflect on their own food culture and realize that what they eat daily embodies their identity (Molz 2004, 62).

Bendix deconstructs the notion of authenticity in tracing the formation of folklore studies (Bendix 1997). Her understanding of people’s obsession with authenticity is that “[d]eclaring something authentic legitimated the subject that was declared authentic, and the declaration in turn can legitimate the authenticator...Processes of authentication bring about material representations by elevating the authenticated into the category of the noteworthy” (Bendix

1997, 7). However, she points out that seeking authenticity is problematic in several ways, an important one of which is that declaring something to be authentic “implies the existence of its opposite, the fake,” while in fact what may be seen as “fake” is just “new” or “unconventional” because culture and tradition are always changing (Bendix 1997, 9). She argues that “[a]uthenticity...is generated not from the bounded classification of an Other, but from the probing comparison between self and Other, as well as between external and internal states of being” (Bendix 1997, 17). She also suggests that instead of asking what authenticity is, we should think instead about who needs authenticity and why, and how authenticity has been used (Bendix 1997, 17).

Molz’s and Bendix’s arguments offer some valuable insights on questions about “real” Chinese food. They both imply that authenticity is not a fixed quality of a certain subject, but rather a changing concept that depends on who is examining the subject, how they examine it, and numerous other factors. Instead of trying to determine what is authentic, which unavoidably implies that something else is fake, what may be more meaningful is to see who declares anything authentic, and why they do so. This approach will help us to understand the identity of the people involved, which, in the case of this research are the producers and consumers of Chinese food, and the Chinese community in St. John’s in general. Because authenticating a subject will legitimate the subject as well as the person who authenticates it, by looking into who needs authenticity and why, and how authenticity is used, one will also uncover underlying power dynamics.

“Real” and “Fake” Chinese Food in St. John’s

In the last chapter, I outlined the culinary landscape of the Chinese restaurants in St. John’s. As discussed, for several decades after the first Chinese restaurant that serves Chinese food was opened, the only Chinese food available in restaurants was Canadian Chinese food. It still dominates the menu in most Chinese restaurants today. However, as also pointed out, in the past one to two decades, so-called “traditional” Chinese food, namely dishes that more closely resemble those served in China both in flavor and in name, have gained popularity in Newfoundland. Therefore, when talking about Chinese food served in Chinese restaurants in St. John’s, one must refer to both categories of dishes.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, when asked whether they thought the Chinese food served in local Chinese restaurants was “real” Chinese food, most of my interviewees gave negative responses. The owners of restaurants such as the Rice Bowl and City Light straightforwardly stated that the food regularly served in their establishments, which consists primarily or even exclusively of North American Chinese food, was not real Chinese food (S. Hong 2017; Zhang and Zhang 2017). Rennie So, the previous owner of Magic Wok, where “traditional” Chinese food constitutes the restaurant’s specialty, also commented that the “traditional” Chinese food provided there is significantly different from its counterpart in China. He stressed that modifying dishes according to local people’s tastes is a common practice and that traditional Chinese food in China varies in taste from place to place as well (So 2017). Many

Chinese restaurant patrons, including Iris Wong and Ling Li, also bluntly denied that dishes on the menus of local Chinese restaurants constituted real Chinese food, whether it is North American style or “traditional” Chinese food (Li 2017; Wong 2017). It seems, then, that it is not only North American Chinese food that is considered “fake.” A careful exploration may reveal that even though many people seem to buy into the concept of “traditional” Chinese food, they do not necessarily believe that it is authentic. Viewing North American style Chinese food as “fake” Chinese food may seem logical, even if questionable. However, the judgment that “traditional” dishes do not constitute “real” Chinese food either, seems to indicate that the Chinese restaurants in St. John’s are not providing “real” Chinese food at all. This leaves one wondering what “real” Chinese food is and whether it is entirely unavailable in St. John’s.

Some of my interviewees offered insights into these questions. For example, when Iris Wong commented on the Chinese food in St. John’s not being “real” Chinese food, she went on to name a few dishes she thought were “real”:

TY: Which Chinese restaurant do you like the most?

IW: Well, my family go to Hong Kong Restaurant a lot, because they have really traditional Hong Kong or Cantonese style food. Of course we order not from the menu. We have a special order. They will make traditional Chinese food for us. We also go City Light buffet a lot. It’s close to my house. And, the food, they have more dishes you can choose from. I pretty much go to every single Chinese restaurant. Oh New Moon. New Moon is another restaurant. A lot of young people like it too. Traditional spicy Chinese food. The owner’s from Hubei [a province in central China where the food is famous for being spicy], I think. So, pretty much every single restaurant I tried before.

TY: I’m quite interested in the special order in Hong Kong Restaurant. How do you make these special orders?

IW: We just have known the owner for, my family have known the owner for probably over thirty or forty years. The chef and owner came from Macao. So, we just order, like the steam fish, or lobster, or shrimp. It’s all, you know, it’s not

Canadian Chinese food, it's a special, like, Chinese food.

TY: But these dishes are not on the menu?

IW: No, it's not.

TY: So you must know the chef personally to make the special order?

IW: Yeah. We know the owner, so that's why we can order, right?

...

TY: I just noticed that you said it's real Chinese food. So do you mean that some food in the Chinese restaurants here is not real, or less real?

IW: Of course. Most of the Chinese restaurant, because in Newfoundland, there are not many Chinese people. The clients, the customers, are still local Canadian people. If the restaurants want to survive, they still need to provide food the Canadian people like. So like chicken balls. I don't think Chinese people ever had chicken ball in China. It's not Chinese food. But if you ask Canadian people, they'll probably say what Chinese restaurants have are chicken ball, beef and broccoli, fried rice and noodles, you know, guy ding. That is Chinese Canadian food for local people (Wong 2017).

Another answer to what dishes can be considered as "real" Chinese food is provided by Shirley Hong, owner of the Rice Bowl, who also used steamed fish to exemplify "real" Chinese food when talking about her experience of cooking at home:

TY: How did you learn how to cook Chinese food?

SH: Well, I was always around there [in the restaurant], right? But mainly I learnt it all when we started in that first take-out, right? Because my husband was gonna come in here and start this stall, so we had to keep the other one just in case this one didn't work. So he taught me how to cook everything on the menu, that I could cook. And I learnt to cook it all. And then I hired a girl to work outside, and one girl on the counter and me in the kitchen. Cause it's, you know, a take-out on the corner doesn't do a lot of business, right? So I could easily learn how to do that, right? Then when we came in here in the mall and started cooking, my husband was doing all the cooking then. I watched him all the time, but I didn't do it. But I love to cook. I cook Chinese food at home. I learnt how to cook everything. The real Chinese food, not this [food served at the Rice Bowl]. We don't eat this at home. I cook for my Chinese friends now, and they're so amazed. They are like, "I never saw a person that's not Chinese cook this kind of food," like steam fish and, you know, all these nice Chinese dishes.

...

TY: Did you also learn it from your husband?

SH: I wanted him to teach me how to cook everything. And he did. We often cooked together, for example cooking for our friends, right? So I learnt a lot about

the real Chinese food. Cause that's what he liked. I mean, he is from China.
Right? So that's the kind of food that he wanted to eat.
(S. Hong 2017)

These extracts help us to understand what allows some food to qualify as “real” Chinese food. Dishes such as sweet and sour chicken balls and beef and broccoli that are considered typical North American style Chinese food, or as Iris Wong puts it, Canadian Chinese food, are not “real” Chinese food. “Real” Chinese food, according to both of these interviewees, consists of steamed fish and other dishes that generally speaking are relatively plain in taste and do not use a lot of spice. If we take steamed fish as an example, we may see that unlike the customary way of cooking fish in Western countries, steamed fish usually uses a fish that is not deboned. In addition, the fish is prepared with an old and simple Chinese cooking method of steaming, which is less frequently used than baking, frying, boiling, or roasting in Western culinary traditions. Plain in taste, and unusual in the way it is prepared, steamed fish cannot be found on the menu of any Chinese restaurant in St. John's to my knowledge. It is likely that the plainness of taste and the slightly unfamiliar cooking method prevents it and similar dishes from being presented on the tables of, and appreciated by, the non-Chinese population. This only adds to its exoticism and consequently its “realness.” As Johnston and Baumann observe, simplicity of taste and cooking method conveys honesty and effortlessness, which are often associated with authenticity and individual sincerity. They write, “it [simplicity] also emphasizes food's distance from the complexities and manufactured quality of modern industrialized life” (Johnston and Baumann 2010, 70). Therefore, it is understandable why many people see simple Chinese dishes, such as steamed fish, as representative of “real” Chinese food.

However, what makes certain dishes “real” Chinese food goes beyond the dishes themselves. From the extracts quoted above, we can see that “real” Chinese dishes are not totally unavailable. Iris Wong and her family are able to specially order some uncommon dishes from the Hong Kong Restaurant because of her family’s long friendship with the restaurant owner. Although Shirley Hong does not provide dishes like steamed fish in her restaurant, she sometimes cooks them for her friends, especially the Chinese ones. Such comments reveal that some uncommon Chinese dishes do exist in St. John’s but only in confined, more private, spaces to which only certain people have access. These uncommon dishes are labelled as “real” Chinese food. In other words, “real” Chinese food is provided in the private sphere to be shared by friends; if the food is available in the public space of a Chinese restaurant, it is not on the menu for average customers to order freely. Only customers who know about the existence of such dishes are able to request the restaurant owners or chefs to prepare them. If we see the Chinese restaurant as a heterotopia that can juxtapose several mutually incompatible spaces (Foucault 1986), it can be viewed as coexisting public and private spaces. “Real” Chinese food is reserved for the private space of the restaurant and only available to those who have access. Significantly, ethnic and/or cultural insiders are the ones most often able to access these special spaces and dishes.

Based on my interviews with restaurant owners, there is another situation where “real” Chinese food is provided. Wallace Hong, previous co-owner of the Kenmount Restaurant, told me that the staff (which consisted primarily of members of the Hong family and several Chinese

cooks hired from Toronto) would cook dishes for themselves that were not the typical North American Chinese food they served to the customers. Instead, they made special food such as fuzhu² soup and stir-fried squid. The latter dish sometimes scared the waitresses, who were local non-Chinese women, if they happened to be in the kitchen when the Chinese staff members were cooking or eating it. Hong did say that some waitresses actually liked the taste after they dared to try it (W. Hong 2017).

Hong's experience clearly shows that the seemingly "realer" Chinese dishes, the ones that are unlikely to be provided for and accepted by non-Chinese consumers, were presented and consumed only in the more private domain of kitchen by cultural insiders, while the more widely accepted North American style Chinese food was usually consumed in the public space by customers. This supports Erving Goffman's distinction between the back region and the front region of a restaurant (Goffman 1959) and MacCannell's argument that the back region of a restaurant equates with authenticity while the front region offers a staged authenticity to fulfill the diners' expectations (MacCannell 2013). However, in the case of the "real" Chinese food we are discussing now, the distinction between the front region and the back region of a restaurant can be seen as an embodiment of the differentiation between the public sphere and the private sphere. The private space offers a setting for "real" Chinese food, while in contrast the "fake" Chinese food, including mainly the North American style Chinese food, as well as the

² A kind of Chinese food made from soybeans, also known as fu chuk, yuba, tofu skin, etc. It was made by boiling soy milk in an open shallow pan. In the process, a film or skin will form on the liquid surface. Collected and dried into yellowish sheets, the films become a common ingredient in Chinese food known as tofu skin.

“traditional” Chinese dishes, is generally served in public and to the public.

If, as Molz and Bendix argue, authenticity is not a fixed objective quality (Bendix 1997; Molz 2004), what is considered as “real” Chinese food will change in different contexts according to different people’s opinions. Additionally, labelling some Chinese food as “fake” and claiming some other Chinese food as “real” is problematic. The North American style Chinese food, which is most often seen as “fake” Chinese food, may be very real for some people. For example, the view of David Adams and Barbara Adams that the Chinese food they regularly have from buffets in St. John’s is much better than the Chinese food they have eaten in Toronto or Florida, exists in spite of other people’s claims that the Chinese food in those places is generally much more “genuine” than that in Newfoundland (Adams and Adams 2017).

Therefore, the list of dishes that fall into the category of “real” Chinese food is dynamic and constantly changing. What is considered to be “real” Chinese food now may not be considered as “real” in future. It is a possibility that someday steamed fish, if it begins to appear on the menus of many Chinese restaurants, will no longer be considered as “real” Chinese food. Then other dishes will be labeled as authentic instead. This suggests that factors such as taste or cooking method do not matter that much when it comes to the judgment of whether a dish is “real” Chinese food. Instead, it is the fact that it is out of common customers’ reach that makes it seemingly so special and authentic. When previously “real” Chinese dishes lose their exotic aura and become regularly available items in Chinese restaurants, other dishes will surely replace them. It is likely that there will always be some “real” Chinese food reserved for private domains

and that the distinction between “real” and “fake” Chinese food will be maintained. Therefore, trying to figure out what type of food qualifies as “real” Chinese food may be less meaningful than thinking about who maintains the distinction, and why and how they do that.

Authentication of Chinese Food: Declaration of Identity and Negotiation of Power Relations

David Adams and Barbara Adams shared with me a piece of interesting information when we talked about their opinions of Chinese food in St. John’s. It may help to answer some questions, especially about who makes the judgment on what constitutes “real” Chinese food:

TY: I noticed that you used the term “Canadian Chinese food.” How do you think of Canadian Chinese food? What is Canadian Chinese food in your mind?

DA: Well basically what we have here, you know, what’s on our menus, that they are basic. I’m sure that there are Chinese food that you can get here but we just don’t know where.

BA: And there’s many things like if you look at, you know, all the items for instance inside the menu, like this one [showing me a menu from a Chinese take-out], look at all, I mean, you know, we tend to stick to having the same things most of the time. We don’t very often, go often try different things.

TY: Like something that you are not familiar with?

BA: These lots of things here. Someday we may too try some of the other things but we know what we like and we tend to have similar things every time we go.

TY: So do you mean you feel like the Chinese food here is kind of Canadian one?

BA: Well we were told it is. We were told. We were told that now it is not exactly what the Chinese people eat, as we were told, that this is the Canadian version of what the Chinese people eat. That’s, so that’s what we were told by Chinese, I guess.

TY: That’s interesting. So it’s kind of people letting you feel that it’s not real Chinese food.

BA: Yeah. We are sort of thinking we are not really, really eating exactly like the Chinese eat. We know that fortune cookies are not eaten in China (Adams and Adams 2017).

As implied in this excerpt, the couple is satisfied with the Chinese food they can get from

local Chinese restaurants because they know what they like and tend to stick to those familiar dishes. As I mentioned above, the Chinese food regularly provided for customers in Chinese restaurants is very “real” for them. In other words, they are probably not very keen to try, let alone to intentionally seek out, other unfamiliar, more exotic Chinese food that some people may declare as authentic. Therefore, they may not have labeled the Chinese food in Newfoundland and Labrador as “Canadian Chinese food,” had it not been for their Chinese friends telling them so, even though they recognize that there are some differences between what Chinese people eat and what is provided in Chinese restaurants here. This partially answers the question of who declares certain dishes as “real” Chinese food: Chinese cultural insiders.

Why do Chinese people make such a declaration? By referring to the extracts of my interviews with Iris Wong and Shirley Hong quoted above, we may find an answer to this question. A close examination uncovers that there is an ethnic or cultural boundary in play regarding the distinction of “real” and “fake” Chinese food. The “real” dishes were given to Chinese people in both Iris Wong’s and Shirley Hong’s cases. While that does not mean that non-Chinese people have no access to these dishes, it shows that this type of food is more likely shared within a Chinese circle. In Wong’s case, she and her family have access to the “real” Chinese food through her personal connection with a fellow Chinese community member—the owner and chef of the Hong Kong Restaurant. This suggests that access to special dishes seems to be a privilege enjoyed only by insiders of the Chinese community who have connections with the right people—the restaurant owners or employees. In this sense, declaring some dishes to be

“real” Chinese food underpins the creation of a secret circle to which only Chinese people have access. Because of this, eating “real” Chinese food serves as an assertion of one’s Chinese identity and a declaration of belonging to the Chinese community.

For the food producers, cooking “real” Chinese food functions similarly as a declaration of their Chinese identity. That a dish was cooked by a Chinese person is an important contributing factor in determining if it should be seen as “real” Chinese food, and sometimes, this factor alone seems to be sufficient to qualify the Chinese food as “real.” In turn the designation “real” Chinese food often explicitly or implicitly implies that it is cooked by Chinese people, however insubstantial and problematic this perception is.

Paulo (Leiguang) Lee, the owner of Peaceful Loft, was the only restaurant owner among all my interviewees to straightforwardly state that he believes the food served in St. John’s restaurants is “real” Chinese food. He clearly attaches great importance to the fact that the food is cooked by Chinese people:

TY: I’ve heard some restaurant owners saying that their food is not real Chinese food. How do you think about this? Do you think your food to be real Chinese food?

PL: I can’t say it is real or not. I can’t say what food it is. What I can say for sure is that it is 100 percent vegan food. We [my family] are all vegans after all. But because I came from Macao, and Macao is a part of China, we may say it is Macanese vegan food or Chinese vegan food. You know, only after I came here did I start to learn that there are some Chinese dishes here that I had never heard of before, like the chicken ball. When I was in Macao, there was no such thing there. It was probably nonexistent all over China. But they created it here in North America. But can you say it is not Chinese food? No, you can’t say that. It is cooked by Chinese people, so it should be counted as Chinese food. But does it exist in China? Probably not. I would say, it probably depends solely on yourself to judge if it is real Chinese food or not. For me, I think if we are doing a good job, we are serving the customers well, it doesn’t matter that much if it is real

Chinese food. (Lee 2017)

Lee believes that even though some Chinese dishes, such as sweet and sour chicken balls, were created in North America, they should be considered Chinese food because they are cooked by Chinese people. While he hints at the end of this excerpt that the criteria for judging the “realness” or “fakeness” of Chinese food is probably fluid and highly individual, and he does not see much necessity or importance in attaching labels of “real” or “fake” Chinese food to the food served in a Chinese restaurant, the identity of the food producers is still significant. The food producers’ identity as ethnic or cultural insiders seems to endorse the “realness” of their food; identity becomes a marker of authentic ethnic food.

Similarly, Mu Li points out that many food producers see North American style Chinese food as “a part of their own culinary tradition and a reflection of how their life in Newfoundland is an intermingling of Chinese and non-Chinese culture” even though this type of food is often criticized as ‘fake’” (Li 2014a, n. pag.). Chinese food producers use food, be it North American Chinese food or other types of Chinese food, to express their Chineseness. By extension, what they cook is certainly “real” Chinese food. Because of this close connection between the food producers’ identity and the authenticity of the food, to some extent, being able to cook “real” Chinese food serves to confirm one’s belonging to the ethnic and cultural community of Chinese, or at least prove their profound knowledge of the community. In this sense, when Shirley Hong talked about cooking “real” Chinese food for her Chinese

friends and being praised for her cooking skills, she was also declaring her Chineseness. Although she was born a Newfoundlander without Chinese heritage, her marriage to a Chinese man and her life in a relatively traditional Chinese immigrant family for several decades make her a cultural insider.

A very interesting detail in Shirley Hong's account of cooking "real" Chinese food is that the "authentic" dishes such as steamed fish were eaten and praised by Chinese people. If she had offered her culinary creations to non-Chinese friends, it is less likely the food would be praised as "real" Chinese food, even though the cooking methods, ingredients, and tastes are similar, or even the same, as if cooked by a professional Chinese cook. Consequently, the claim of cooking "real" Chinese food would probably be considered less convincing. Only when food is produced by those who are ethnically and culturally Chinese can it be judged to be "real" Chinese food without acknowledgement of Chinese food consumers. It seems that Chinese people hold the ultimate power over whether certain Chinese dishes are seen as "real" or not. This reveals that in terms of the seemingly simple notion of "real" Chinese food, differentiation of some less accessible dishes from the regularly provided North American style Chinese food, and the authentication of those dishes, are not only the Chinese immigrants' declaration of their Chineseness, but also a strategy they use to negotiate power with the mainstream society.

By reserving some dishes from public access and providing them to only a certain group of people, Chinese food producers acquire and maintain the power of judging food consumers'

identities and deciding who is eligible to access the private space reserved only for Chinese people. One of my own experiences helps to further shed light on this power dynamic. The first time I visited the Peaceful Loft with my friend, owner Paulo (Leiguang) Lee recommended a special dish to us after he overheard us chatting in Chinese. It was made from rice noodles and the tender leaves of *Toona sinensis*, a vegetable known in China but not commonly seen or used in Newfoundland and Labrador. The leaves of this plant turn blackish after being fried, potentially making the food seem a little unpleasant for those who are unfamiliar with it. As a result, the dish is not included on the menu given out to the general public. Lee only recommends it to Chinese customers who are more likely to be familiar with the vegetable and able to appreciate the dish. This kind of practice is not unique to the Peaceful Loft. In fact, it seems to be quite common in Chinese restaurants in St. John's as the earlier example of Iris Wong purchasing special dishes from the Hong Kong Restaurant attests.

This is surely an economic strategy in that it helps avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. Lee is preventing customers, who have never tried this kind of foreign vegetable and are perhaps likely to find it distasteful, from ordering the dish and not finding it to their liking. He does not want a negative experience to color a diner's impression of his restaurant. However, there is an underlying power dynamic. By making certain foods unavailable to the regular customers and only offering them to those the owners deem suitable, largely based on their appearance and language, restaurant owners are exercising power. They determine a customer's ethnic and cultural identity and decide if they will be admitted into the private space where the special

“real” Chinese food is served. If customers without Chinese heritage want to be included, they may need to make some effort. They have to build a personal connection with a restaurant owner or know some Chinese friends who can introduce them to the private space and/or they must prove themselves as relatively adventurous diners who enjoy trying unfamiliar food. In this process, the balance of power lies with the restaurant owners and the Chinese community in general.

The power negotiation between members of the Chinese community and non-Chinese customers reflects the majority culture’s appropriation of the minority culture’s tradition, and the minority culture’s resistance. As noted by some scholars, when a culture is in a subordinate state in a society dominated by another culture, their culinary traditions are likely to be appropriated and distorted (Montaño 1997). Ethnic restaurants in postcolonial societies have become places for consumption of the Other (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002). Consuming ethnic food can be interpreted as an act of cultural appropriation and colonialism, even though it appears to show the mainstream’s willingness and democratic efforts to tolerate and appreciate different cultures (Heldke 2008; Johnston and Baumann 2010). When clients from mainstream culture patronize an ethnic restaurant, they often are attracted by the prospect of a novel, exotic, and authentic experience (Heldke 2008). However, by declaring only some dishes as “real” Chinese food, members of the Chinese community announce to cultural outsiders that what they can appropriate by going to regular Chinese restaurants is only a “fake” Chinese culinary tradition. It has been altered to suit the needs of cultural outsiders and is as North American as it is Chinese,

if not more so. In other words, with the claims about “real” Chinese food, the Chinese community is declaring that the mainstream culture’s appropriation of their foodways has not affected their “real” identity because it is not the “real” ethnic identity that has been appropriated. In this way, the Chinese community is able to maintain some power over its cultural colonization and appropriation by mainstream society. They allow access to only those whom Chinese immigrants deem worthy while excluding all the other customers from the private sphere. In this sense, what is “real” Chinese food does not matter so much. Rather, what really counts is that there should always be some “real” Chinese food reserved in the private domain so that the Chinese community can always claim there is a piece of “real” Chinese culinary tradition that the cultural and ethnic outsiders cannot appropriate. For ethnic and cultural insiders, eating or cooking “real” Chinese food is a way to demonstrate that they belong to a private domain of Chinese people; it is a way to declare their Chineseness. Designating some Chinese food “real” is also a strategy to exercise power and it enables the Chinese community to resist mainstream cultural appropriation.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored questions about what is “real” Chinese food. When I was conducting the fieldwork research for this thesis, discussion about whether the Chinese food regularly served in Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland and Labrador is “real” Chinese food or not often constituted a significant part of my interviews. Interestingly, most of the restaurant

owners and customers I interviewed clearly asserted that they felt the food was not authentic and several of them gave examples of what they believe to be “real” Chinese dishes, such as steamed fish. Since authenticity is a “negotiable, emergent, and socially constructed” notion (Molz 2004, 62), the answers to what constitutes “real” Chinese food will vary depending on who is answering the question and in what contexts the food is being evaluated. Although dishes that embody simplicity and exoticism are more likely to be regarded as authentic, labeling a few dishes as “real” Chinese food is less about the inherent qualities of the food and more of an attempt to intentionally differentiate some less commonly served dishes from other Chinese food and reserve them for more private spaces. By claiming some dishes as “real” and making them available only to Chinese people, Chinese community members are able to declare their Chineseness. They link themselves to “real” Chinese foods and thereby exercise their power to decide who they are and where group boundaries should be drawn. It is an articulation of power relations vis-à-vis mainstream society. Negotiating an ethnic group’s relationship with the larger culture includes more than the ethnic group’s reactive response to the wider community’s appropriation, however. The next chapter explores other ways Chinese restaurants in St. John’s attempt to articulate their roles and to shape their interactions with the rest of the city. It considers two aspects: restaurant décor and corporate support of community events.

Chapter Four

Chinese Restaurants and More: Negotiating Independent Group Identity and Integration into the Larger Community

In the second chapter, I discussed the Chinese food that is regularly served in Chinese restaurants in St. John's, in addition to changes that have taken place in Chinese restaurants and in the Chinese community over time. Chapter Three explored questions about what is “real” Chinese food, as well as how Chinese people use the designation of “real” Chinese food to declare their Chinese identity and negotiate their relationship with the mainstream society. In addition to food, Chinese restaurants also present other cultural elements. Turgeon and Pastinelli argue that ethnic restaurants are “microspaces of intercultural encounter and exchange, places where people can see, touch, and consume the cuisine of the ‘other,’” and “‘ethnosites’ in which the foreign is made familiar and the global miniature” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 247). Food may be a major agent in intercultural encounter and exchange, but ethnic restaurants as ethnosites provide spaces for local food consumers to become familiar with the foreign not only through food, but through their experience of the décors and other factors as well. Robin Clair et al. argue that ethnic restaurants create an aura of authenticity that attracts restaurant goers with not only food, food format, and décor, but also invisible “cultural expressions and ethnic essence” such as the relationship between the restaurant owners and clientele (Clair et al 2016). This chapter investigates elements other than food that Chinese restaurateurs use to mediate intercultural communication and negotiation.

Décor is more than merely the context in which ethnic food is produced, presented, and consumed; it is itself a reification of exoticism and an object of consumption for patrons during their culinary visit to the ethnic restaurant. Community events that Chinese restaurants are involved in, which show how the owners and customers of those establishments interact with each other in and beyond the spaces of the restaurants, are also worth considering in order to gain some insight into the relationship between the Chinese community and the host community. Therefore, this chapter will focus on both aspects: the décor of Chinese restaurants in St. John's, and the Chinese restaurants' and/or their owners and customers' support for community events. My goal is to shed light on the formation of the Chinese community's independent group identity as well as their integration into the larger community.

Décor: Chinese Restaurants' Preferences and the Larger Community's Expectations

When I was conducting fieldwork, I observed the exterior and interior appearance of different Chinese restaurants in St. John's. A few in particular attracted my attention. An establishment with relatively unique features is the Kenmount Restaurant, one of the city's oldest Chinese restaurants. While the current owner did not wish to be interviewed, he generously allowed me to take photos. The exterior of the building, which dates to the 1960s, resembles a pagoda in style and is decorated with a very typical Chinese color combination: black roof, red columns, and red and gold front wall (see Figure 1). Even the outdoor billboard of the restaurant is built in a pagoda style (see Figure 2). Inside, the dining area is separated into three sections.

Wallace Hong, a former co-owner, explained that only the middle section retains the original decoration, the left and right sections having been redecorated (W. Hong 2017). Therefore, in order to gain some sense of the old decorative style of Chinese restaurants, I focused on the middle section of the restaurant when I was observing its interior décor. After entering the front door of the restaurant, one sees a screen wall right ahead with a large carved dragon and phoenix. This marks the entrance to the middle section (see Figure 3). The carved dragon and phoenix are painted gold with green, red, and blue cloud patterns around them. Everything is framed at the center of the screen wall with traditional red window-latticework embracing them on either side. The ceiling of the middle section is covered with green tiles featuring embossed dragons (see Figure 4). According to Wallace Hong, there should be some Chinese-style lanterns hanging in the dining area, but I did not see them when I visited there. However, even without the lanterns, if you stand in the middle section and look at the tiles and screen wall, you will see that the section is covered with Chinese motifs (see Figure 5). Especially noticeable is the heavy symbolic use of dragons. According to Wallace Hong, the first restaurant owners intentionally designed the décor to emphasize a Chinese theme. Almost all the materials were ordered from Taiwan or Hong Kong by Wallace's nephew because Chinese-themed decorative materials were not available in Newfoundland and Labrador at that time (W. Hong 2017).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

The décor of the Kenmount Restaurant exemplifies a decorative style that was once prevalent among the older Chinese restaurants in St. John's. It is a style that incorporates an abundance of Chinese motifs, particularly the most familiar, now almost clichéd, symbols, and features typical traditional Chinese color combinations of bright, contrasting colors such as red,

green, and gold. The Kenmount Restaurant was among the first to adopt this decorative style and, according to Wallace, it was an immediate success; some customers even asked where they could buy the lanterns or tiles (W. Hong 2017). As Mu Li explains, this “traditional Chinese style,” was fashionable across North America at the time (Li 2016, 69). Following the Kenmount Restaurant’s lead, a few other Chinese restaurants, such as the Jade Garden Restaurant, adopted a similar décor. Although some, mostly larger, establishments adopted the style, not all Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland followed suit. Primarily this was due to concerns about the financial burden that comes with renovation (Li 2016, 54).



Figure 6



Figure 8



Figure 7

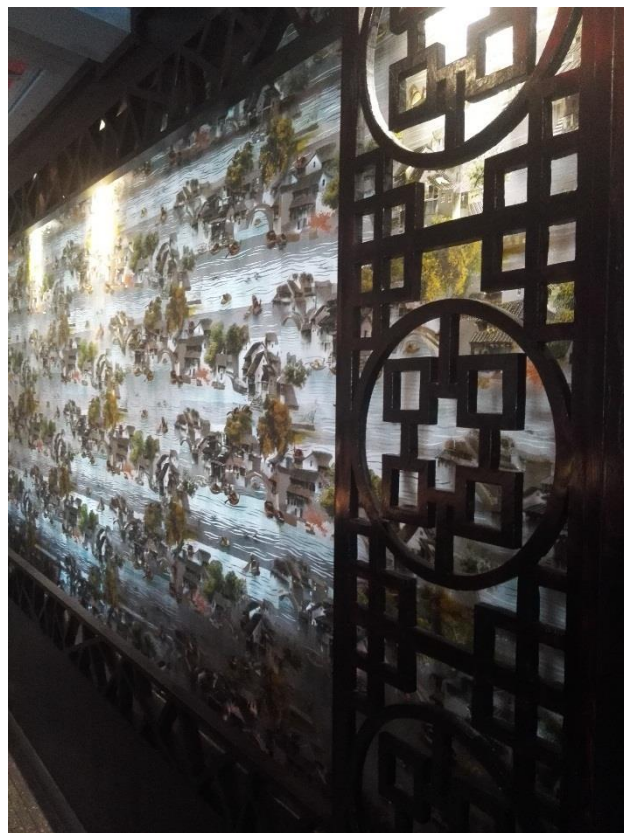


Figure 9

In the newer restaurants in St. John's, Chinese motifs are much less used in interior

decorating, although they still retain some Chinese elements. A good example is City Light which was opened in 2008. When I visited the restaurant during my fieldwork, I was impressed by its decorative style. On the front desk sit two stone lions (see Figure 6). Above the gate to the dining area there is a plaque with Chinese characters 榕城 (the name of Yuwen Zhang's hometown, see Figure 7), which, as founder and one of the owners Yuwen Zhang explained, was written by an outstanding calligrapher back in his hometown upon Zhang's request (Zhang and Zhang 2017). In the dining area, there are few Chinese motifs, except on the ceiling, which is covered with patterns of a window-type latticework (see Figure 8). In the area where the buffet tables are placed, there is a wall of patterns of traditional Chinese paintings (see Figure 9). Despite the existence of these Chinese motifs, the restaurant does not have an overwhelmingly Chinese ambience. When I talked with owners Yuwen Zhang and Tao Zhang, Yuwen explained that when he decided to open a business in St. John's and was starting to think about how the restaurant should look, he took into consideration many other factors apart from making it "Chinese" in appearance:

TY: You just mentioned that a reason that City Light attracts customers is its "slightly different decoration." When you started to decorate the place, could you please tell me whether you have some solid ideas of how the restaurant should be like and what features it should have after the decoration?

YZ: Of course. The decoration is key to the success of a restaurant, because the customers will immediately have an impression of the eating environment. My idea is that the restaurant must be decorated to be inviting, warm and comfortable. So after I rented the building I did a thorough renovation. The whole building, including the bathrooms, were all re-decorated in the same style.

TY: Did you design it yourself or outsource the work?

YZ: Myself.

TZ: You see all those designs, including the counter, and the ceiling, were all done by him [Yuwen Zhang].

TY: Why did you adopt this design?

YZ: The space looks better with the ceiling. Without that it will still work, but it won't have the same Chinese feature.

TY: The pattern looks like window-latticework.

YZ: Yes.

TZ: This is an Asian element. An element from ancient Chinese culture.

YZ: Chinese feature.

TY: Does it mean that when you were doing the decoration you consciously added some Chinese elements?

YZ: Yeah. To make the customers feel the "Chineseness". My idea of the décor of this restaurant is that it should be quite Chinese, but it should not be overwhelmingly Chinese, not the very old-fashioned Chinese. I want the decoration to be "fashionably Chinese".

TY: So that it has Chinese elements but can be easily accepted by Westerners?

YZ/TZ: Right.

YZ: Fashionable. Right? That's what you feel when you come in. If you go to some old restaurants in some Chinatown, you can see their décors are very Chinese but not fashionable.

TZ: Too Chinese even.

YZ: Yeah, too Chinese.

TY: Do you mean the Westerners may not be able to accept it?

YZ: Not really. It is acceptable, but not comfortable. My restaurant is different. For example, do you see the wall? It is covered with veneers. They are very plain, but I added some carved lines to the surface, they immediately look more fashionable, much less monotonous.

TY: Do you think that Chinese restaurants had better adopt some Chinese elements in their decoration?

YZ: It depends. Can't say that for certain.

(Zhang and Zhang 2017).

This excerpt shows that the owners of City Light stressed Chinese details in their decoration as well, just like the owners of Kenmount Restaurant. However, they wanted to avoid making the style overwhelmingly Chinese. To some extent, the "traditional Chinese style" décor represented by Kenmount Restaurant is timeless in its use of ancient Chinese motifs, even though Kenmount Restaurant itself is now dated. City Light's decorative style does share some similarity with the "traditional Chinese style" in this sense, but what distinguishes them is that the newer restaurant

is making a concerted effort to be fashionable and with the times, as Yuwen Zhang stressed repeatedly during the interview. While they strove to create an authentic atmosphere in the space by using some materials that suggest Chinese culture, such as a window-latticework style ceiling, plaque with Chinese characters, and stone lions on the counter at the entrance, they highlight fashion as a principle of their design. Their goal was to make the interior of their restaurant comfortable, inviting, and fashionable or up-to-date. In comparison to the older decorative style that seems to flood the restaurant with all sorts of symbols signifying Chinese culture, the newer one is subtler and gives consideration to aesthetics and customer experience as well as cultural significance.

Sometimes owners of newer restaurants do not deem it necessary to place any emphasis whatsoever on Chineseness in their décor. For example, Paulo (Leiguang) Lee, the owner of Peaceful Loft, clearly stated that he did not think it important to use Chinese motifs in Chinese restaurant decoration, even though there are a few visible Chinese cultural symbols in his restaurant's interior décor:

TY: When you decided to open the restaurant, did you think about intentionally adding some Chinese characteristics to the décor, so as to let the customers know that this is a Chinese restaurant at the first sight?

LL: I have never thought in that way. Because, I think, if you have to rely on décor to let the customers know how you are like, it is meaningless. I believe that giving them substantial benefits are more important for the customers. Of course we need décor. You can see the two stone lions over there. They represent Guangdong Province and are Chinese cultural symbols so I simply placed them here. There are also some lanterns and so on, but all very simple stuff. In fact, I don't think décors are that important. I believe that giving the customers substantial benefits are much more important.
(Lee 2017)

Differences among the decorative styles of the Kenmount Restaurant and the City Light and Peaceful Loft are significant because they reflect more general changes in the decorative styles of Chinese restaurants over time. The older restaurants in St. John's tend to load their spaces with all sorts of symbols of Chinese culture and tradition, but the newer ones, while usually still maintaining a connection with the cultural origin of the ethnic food, are distancing themselves from the overwhelmingly Chinese decorative style, or the "traditional Chinese style" decoration represented by the Kenmount Restaurant. Other scholars have also noticed this trend. Mu Li, after conducting research on Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland and Labrador, argues that an important reason behind this tendency is the Westernization of Chinese residents, especially members of the younger generation who were born or grew up in Newfoundland (Li 2016, 63-64). The "traditional Chinese style" decoration that was fashionable in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1960s and 1970s, and was adopted by older Chinese restaurants, is now seen as outdated and old-fashioned by a younger generation of restaurant owners (Li 2016, 63-64).

However, a close examination of the trend shows that although the younger generation's lack of identification with Chinese culture and tradition is certainly a reason behind their unwillingness to adopt too many Chinese-themed decorative materials in their restaurants, it cannot completely explain the phenomenon. The decline in popularity of the older, overwhelmingly "traditional Chinese style" is not unique to Newfoundland, but is common in other cities across North America. The change cannot be attributed solely to the younger generation's move from being ethnic Chinese to cultural Newfoundlanders.

Another important cause of the trend is probably the influx of new immigrants who, coming from various places, identify themselves as Chinese, but not with the older generation of Chinese immigrants who were almost exclusively from Guangdong (Canton) Province. As the Chinese community became more heterogeneous, the old Chinese-themed decorative style became insufficient to express the newer generation's image(s) of Chineseness. As Johnston and Baumann argue, "culinary exoticism can work to essentialize and stereotype ethnic cultures that are expected to present and preserve their cultural heritage for consumption by the dominant culture" (Johnston and Baumann 2010, 102). The "traditional Chinese style" décor that features the extensive use of Chinese symbols, particularly ones such as dragons, can be seen as a stereotypical portrayal of Chinese culture that was created and reinforced by the early Chinese diaspora. Because of this, the "traditional Chinese style" décor sometimes serves as a signifier that reminds people of the early Chinese immigrants. The newer arrivals, with better educational and more diverse cultural and occupational backgrounds, may not identify with the older immigrants' use of such stereotypical representations of Chineseness. They are aware that the extensive use of traditional Chinese motifs such as the dragon and phoenix in the interior décor of Chinese restaurants is a way to reinforce a stereotypical image of Chinese culture existing in Western societies. The newer Chinese restaurants therefore seek more diverse ways to decorate. This can be understood as an expression of heterogeneous Chinese identity on the part of the restaurant owners and newer Chinese immigrants more generally. This explains why, despite the general trend of Chinese restaurants adopting fewer Chinese motifs in their décor, some owners

still insist on adding Chinese elements. That Chinese restaurant décor is a means by which the owners express their heterogeneous Chineseness also explains why newer Chinese restaurants draw on widely varied Chinese motifs.

An even more significant reason behind decorative trends may be local people's expectations for Chinese restaurants. As Lucy Long points out, the owners of ethnic restaurants have to "be aware of their potential customers' tastes, pocketbooks, and prior exposure to different foodways systems" in order to achieve commercial success. This makes ethnic restaurants "a particularly valuable arena for observation" of the strategies of negotiation between the restaurant owners and their customers (Long 2004b, 37). Chinese restaurants are essentially businesses aiming for commercial success, so changes in decorative style will not come merely from the owners' personal preferences. When making decorative decisions, they surely take into consideration the expectations of their customers, who are mostly local non-Chinese people. Therefore, it is possible that the changes in decorative style are at least partly in response to local customers' expectations.

Seeking exoticism and novelty is a major drive behind people's growing acceptance of the culinary Other (Heldke 2008; Johnston and Baumann 2010) and consequently the increasing popularity of ethnic restaurants. In the past, when Chinese restaurants were new to the larger community, the exoticism and novelty that local customers expected from them were presented in an overt way. By covering their restaurants with Chinese motifs, Chinese restaurant owners created spaces for culinary tourists to engage in the "intentional, exploratory participation in the

foodways of an Other—participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered to belong to a culinary system not one's own” (Long 2004a, 21). However, the situation has changed and the “traditional Chinese style” décor that was once popular has lost its exoticism and novelty for local customers. It now has the potential of turning into a stereotypical portrayal of Chinese culture not only in the eyes of a younger generation of Chinese residents, but among the non-Chinese people in the larger community as well.

In Chapter Two I explored the rise of “traditional” Chinese food in St. John’s over the last couple of decades. If we compare changes in food to changes in décor, we find that although the two seem to be heading in opposite directions—the food is embracing “tradition” while in general the décor consists of fewer traditional motifs—they are essentially functioning similarly. The new styles of both food and décor provide the exoticism and novelty that customers are seeking in ways that avoid a dependence on items that are becoming stereotypical. The North American style Chinese food, which for several decades was the only Chinese food available in Chinese restaurants in St. John’s, is losing its attraction for at least some local non-Chinese customers, as my interview with Robert Cahill attests. He recounted how his parents never went to ethnic restaurants except for Chinese ones, especially those they had patronized frequently, because they knew for sure what they were going to get from those establishments (Cahill 2017). His comment suggests that Canadian Chinese food has become so familiar that it is now a conventional food choice for more conservative diners. Conversely, his own search for the novel

leads him to international cuisines other than Chinese, such as Afghan (Cahill 2017). After so many decades of its presence in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Chinese food has lost the exoticism that is an essential component in the success of ethnic restaurants. In order to attract new food adventurers, Chinese restaurants have to provide something different so as to restore the exoticness and novelty. Advertising “traditional” Chinese food is a strategy to continue offering “safe exoticism” to diners. While the less common “traditional” dishes create a sense of exoticness for the clientele’s consumption, they are not too exotic to be accepted by local diners; the tastes of these dishes have been modified and/or ingredients replaced according to local culinary tradition.

The interior décor of Chinese restaurants is similar. The “traditional Chinese style” decoration with extensive use of the most well-known Chinese motifs may seem to be exotic, but after decades of use, it has turned into an outdated stereotype of Chinese culture. Local customers expect Chinese restaurants to present a new image of the Other, one without the overuse of Chinese cultural symbols. Authenticity is expressed through a new aesthetic that combines a subtler use of Chinese cultural symbols with a more Westernized tone. This aesthetic balances the clientele’s expectations for exoticism and authenticity, contemporary “fashion” (Zhang and Zhang 2017), and the restaurant owners’ own expressions of their identity. To some extent, the décor of Chinese restaurants can be seen as an embodiment of what MacCannell (2013) terms “staged authenticity”; the restaurant owners balance several factors to create spaces that they feel work to their advantage.

Chinese restaurant décor is a negotiation between the Chinese community's self-expression and the larger community's expectation of the Other. This negotiation is not only reflected in décor, but evidenced in other aspects of the business as well—including Chinese restaurant owners' involvement in community events.

Community Events: Maintaining and Blurring the Chinese Community's Boundary

When I was conducting fieldwork I asked my interviewees what they thought about the Chinese restaurants' role in the larger community. Barbara Adams and David Adams shared their opinions:

I think if they have the finances, you know, position to financially, they could support different teams, maybe, maybe not hockey, maybe things that are more Chinese, soccer, or baseball, or whatever...Same as any other restaurant who's in the position to perhaps sponsor. It's almost like, well, Chinese restaurants are different, but it's so included in our society that it's not like anything different, you know...It's not, you know, they're not kind of looked at as being different than all these other organizations (Adams and Adams 2017).

The ambiguity of the Chinese community's position can be seen clearly in the Adams' words. Chinese restaurants are expected to be integrated into mainstream society and to function similarly to other organizations, as demonstrated, for example, by sponsoring sport teams. At the same time, however, Chinese restaurants are also expected to be a little different, or more specifically to be "more Chinese." When talking about the sports that they think Chinese restaurants should sponsor, Barbara Adams and David Adams suggested that the restaurants might sponsor "things that are more Chinese" instead of Canadian-identified sports such as hockey. It seems that members of the wider community sometimes expect members of an ethnic

group to hold a dual identity: they should maintain their own cultural heritage while becoming a part of the larger society at the same time. In other words, the larger community's expectations for Chinese restaurant owners, and perhaps for the Chinese community in general, is similar to their expectations for the food and interior décor of Chinese restaurants: to present a limited, "safe exoticism." In response to such expectations, members of the Chinese community hold onto their ethnicity by maintaining a community boundary while also attempting to integrate themselves into the larger community by blurring this boundary. This delicate dance can be seen clearly in the community events that Chinese restaurants are involved in.

A good example of how the Chinese community, represented by restaurant owners, use community events to maintain a boundary between themselves and the larger community is the Chinese restaurants' donations to people impacted by natural disasters. As mentioned earlier, Rennies So, former owner of the Magic Wok, initiated fundraising campaigns to raise donations for victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China (So 2017). He personally contacted Chinese business owners all over Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly operators of Chinese restaurants, and proposed that everyone donate one day's gross income. He managed to get forty to fifty Chinese businesspeople to take part in each campaign and the owners of both City Light and the Golden Phoenix shared with me their memories of participating in these events during their interviews (Zhang and Zhang 2017; Yu 2017).

These fundraising efforts helped to unite the Chinese community and build intragroup

solidarity by calling exclusively on Chinese community members. Significantly, Rennies So contacted only Chinese businesspeople on this island so although the fundraising may not have been meant to intentionally differentiate Chinese people from the larger community, it certainly recognized the boundary of Chinese people as an ethnic group. The line between “us” and “them” is also indicated by Rennies’s words: “after these two events, the local people’s impression of us has improved. [In their eyes], we are no longer only making money, making money, making money” (So 2017). This joint effort on the part of Chinese businesspeople to relieve those impacted by natural disasters shows that they can make a difference by working together. It thus helps to remind members of the Chinese community of their shared identity and to foster a sense of belonging. Even though the original intention was not to strengthen intracommunity connections, these fundraising events highlight the distinction between the Chinese community and the larger community and help maintain the boundary between the two.

Apart from helping the Chinese community to strengthen intragroup connections by bringing community members together to work for a common cause, Chinese restaurants also support social organizations and events that help to integrate Chinese residents into the larger community. On August 2017, in the cozy living room of his home, Rennies So told me about the many decades of his life that were tightly bound to his restaurant. He was enthusiastic when talking about the community groups and events he participated in, either personally or on behalf of the restaurant:

I joined the diving club. I learnt dancing and music in the community clubs. I sponsored a basketball team, a volleyball team, and regatta, that we have sponsored for many, many years. We have also sponsored the annual Dragon Boat

Festival. This year it will take place in a few days. This Dragon Boat is especially important. The festival was launched to support the breast cancer survivors. One of the initiators knows me quite well. He runs a business as well. At that time, he came to me for suggestions on how to do that, so he and I donated the first dragon boat together, and the name of his business and Magic Wok were painted on the boat, one on each side. The first time they came to me I immediately said “yes” because if it had been another event, it might have been ok if I had said no, but dragon boat is from China. If the local people organize a dragon boat festival but no Chinese person participate in it at all, it seems awkward to me...In the past I only sponsored a dragon boat team, but last year and this year, some of my friends formed a team, so I joined the team myself...I sponsor those events not for advertising. I think you need to have connections with local community. We can’t leave them an impression that we seem to care nothing about the community, right? The local people, actually, they like to see us immigrants to get involved in their events (So 2017).

While not all the Chinese restaurant owners are as involved in community groups and events as Rennie’s is, many are similarly supportive. Almost all the restaurant owners I interviewed shared with me their experiences of supporting some community causes. For example, Shirley Hong told me that Rice Bowl was about to work with the Children’s Wish Foundation at the time I interviewed her in July 2017, and she had personally served as the president of a missing children organization for ten years (S. Hong 2017). City Light donated one day’s gross income to help the people impacted by the Fort McMurray fire and was one of the first restaurants in St. John’s to reach out to help people with disaster relief (Zhang and Zhang 2017). Yongtao Yu, the owner of the Golden Phoenix, said that “the local people often come to us for donations. They probably know that Chinese restaurants are making quite a little of money. If they come to me, I always agree to donate something. If it is a bigger event, I will donate a little more, and if the event is not that big, I will donate a little less. But more or less, I will always donate something” (Yu 2017). By sponsoring community events and donating to

support people in need, Chinese restaurants and their owners build connections between the Chinese community and the larger community in St. John's, revealing the Chinese group's readiness to become an integrated part of the mainstream society.

Not only fundraising and sponsorship events can simultaneously strengthen intragroup connections and facilitate intergroup integration. Events that are hosted by the Chinese community for its own members under the name of celebrating shared cultural heritage and ethnic traditions often bring similar results as well, even if they also often respond to the larger community's ambiguous expectations. These include three annual events: the Chinese New Year celebration, the annual flower service, and the seniors' dinner, an event usually sponsored by the Hong Kong Restaurant where senior Chinese residents are provided with a free meal and social occasion. Among these events, the seniors' dinner, reserved almost exclusively for Chinese senior citizens, is the effort most directed at building solidarity among members of the Chinese community. The other two are much more inclusive. The flower service is held every summer in cemeteries throughout the city where Chinese ancestors' graves are located, in memory of the early Chinese settlers in Newfoundland. While it might be expected that such an activity would be for Chinese residents only, non-Chinese people attend as well and the event usually includes a barbeque party after the ceremony where families and friends of Chinese people are all welcomed.

The most inclusive event that members of the Chinese community regularly host is a Chinese New Year celebration. In February 2017, I attended CANL's Chinese New Year

celebration in the CLB Armoury in St. John's. As the president of CANL announced, there were about three hundred guests attending the event, with about half of them being local non-Chinese people. I sat at a table with a mix of young Chinese and non-Chinese. On the table there were already some fortune cookies and soon some cold dishes were served to each table, including spring rolls and chicken wings. Later guests were asked to help themselves to a buffet dinner provided, where the food included some typical North American Chinese dishes such as sweet and sour pork and chow mein, which were prepared by the Hong Kong Restaurant and City Light. After the buffet dinner, several different types of cakes were provided as dessert. During the celebration, a few guests were invited to give speeches. Some speakers were Chinese community members, such as the president of CANL, but others were non-Chinese, primarily invited politicians. Entertainment was also a cultural blend and included both young men performing the traditional Chinese lion dance and Indian women performing traditional Indian dance.

The diverse mix of cultural symbols implies that while these events celebrate Chinese traditions and are aimed primarily at the Chinese community members, they often also become arenas where Chinese culture is presented to outsiders and where different groups interact with each other. Celebrating a shared tradition is a means for members of an ethnic group to unite because it emphasizes a shared cultural heritage and common identity. Celebrating a tradition that is unique to the ethnic group highlights their differences from the mainstream society, thus creating or maintaining the boundary between the ethnic community and the wider community.

However, when such a celebration is open to both cultural insiders and outsiders, and when the customary ways of celebration are altered by adding elements from the mainstream and/or other ethnic cultures, the differences between the ethnic group and the larger community are minimized at the same time as they are underlined. In other words, similar to Chinese restaurant food and décor, and like the fundraising and sponsorship, these events establish a boundary between the Chinese community and the wider community at the same time they blur it.

At the beginning of this section I argued that the Chinese community's simultaneous maintaining and blurring of boundaries is a response to the larger community's expectations for a contained "safe exoticism" that communicates difference and integration at the same time. However, this response is also a proactive strategy that the Chinese community adopts to their advantage, as is reflected in Rennie So's comment that after the Chinese restaurants donated to victims of natural disasters, he felt that local people's impressions of Chinese businesses improved. He felt that the restaurant owners were no longer seen as a group focusing solely on making money but were regarded as people who cared about the community (So 2017). As indicated in his words, these events are means to create a better image of the Chinese business community in particular, and the wider Chinese community in general. That does not mean that the donations are made only out of self-interest but it does demonstrate that the Chinese community is able to successfully find ways to balance their own interests with the larger community's expectations of them.

Chapter Summary: A Conscious Choice for Somewhere In-Between

The décor of Chinese restaurants and the community events that Chinese restaurant owners are involved in both reflect that Chinese people, as an ethnic minority in Newfoundland, are striving to negotiate their self-expression and self-interest with the wider community's ambiguous expectations for them of both exoticness and similarity, separateness and integration. On one hand, Chinese restaurant owners emphasize their ethnicity and show their difference from the mainstream society by displaying Chinese cultural symbols in interior decoration or by calling upon other Chinese business operators to participate in joint fundraising efforts. On the other hand, they strive to strengthen intergroup connections and highlight their integration into the host community by including non-Chinese people and symbols in their establishments and events. Whether they are emphasizing or minimizing the differences, these examples illustrate how Chinese people often try painstakingly to find and stay in a space that is subtly balanced between Self and Other.

The evolution of Chinese restaurant décor also implies changes in the relationship between Chinese community and the wider community. John W. Berry proposes a model of acculturation that includes four strategies immigrants employ: *integration*, where immigrants maintain some of their original culture while participating in the mainstream society as an integral part of the dominant culture; *assimilation*, where the dominated completely give up their original culture and assimilate themselves into the dominant culture; *separation*, where minorities treasure their original culture and completely refuse to engage with/integrate into the dominant culture; and

marginalization, where ethnic groups deny both their original culture and the dominant culture of the hosting society (Berry 2003). The “traditional Chinese style” décor prevalent among Chinese restaurants in the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by an abundant use of Chinese motifs and an almost complete absence of local symbols. Its popularity suggests that Chinese people were either willingly or forced to be separate from the mainstream society at that time. But this is no longer the case. Aedon Young, one of my interviewees, commented on the increased cultural diversity in St. John’s over the last decade and a half she has lived in the city. As she puts it, “the population in St. John’s is really ready for more cultural diversity and more, kind of, multicultural involvement” (Young 2017). As part of changing public attitudes towards multiculturalism, Chinese people are becoming more integrated into the wider community; they are maintaining their own cultural heritage and ethnic identity but they are integrating into the mainstream society as well.

Chinese restaurants can be seen as a “third place” that is neither completely domestic nor utterly foreign for Chinese people. Ray Oldenburg proposes the concept of “third place” to describe “the core settings of informal public life” such as cafés, and argues that these places are essential for creating a sense of belonging to a community (Oldenburg 1997, 16). “Third place” refers to those settings that are not home or workplace; they are somewhere less domestic than home but more relaxing and inviting than a workplace. They are somewhere “inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it” (Oldenburg 1997, 14). Chinese restaurants, with modified Chinese food combining both Chinese and local tastes, mixed

cultural symbols decorating the settings, and people from multiple cultural backgrounds interacting with each other, are neither domestic spaces that belong utterly to Chinese residents where they can feel at home, nor are they a workplace where they go solely for gaining or producing something. Instead, these establishments mediate interactions with different communities and facilitate the creation of a shared sense of community.

Juwen Zhang argues that the culture of the Chinese community in St. John's, just like that of any other diasporic Chinese group, represents a "third culture" (Zhang 2015). Zhang proposes that folklore-in-practice defines individuals' and groups' identities. He argues that the folkloric practices of the diasporic Chinese, which combine different traditions from their original culture, the dominant culture of the wider community, and even some elements from other ethnic cultures, constitute a third culture (Zhang 2015). However, he suggests that the "third culture" is merely a phase of marginalization that the diasporic group, or marginalized group as he terms it, struggles to overcome: "The period of being in the margin is a long process in which the insiders struggle in a dual-transition: a psychological growth of the insiders as a social group; a social growth of the marginalized group with the hope of being demarginalized" (Zhang 2015, 465). In some instances, however, the ethnic group may consciously and intentionally stay in an in-between space, as the intermediate state between being completely assimilated and being completely separated can be beneficial for minorities. By integrating themselves into the larger community, minority group members are able to at least partially avoid the mainstream society's distrust, or even hostility, towards them, premised on the view that they represent the unknown

and thus the dangerous (Appadurai 2006). At the same time, the majority culture's expectations for exoticism can offer minority groups opportunities to maintain their unique culture and tradition for socio-economic gain, as in the case of ethnic restaurants.

From the evolution of Chinese restaurants' interior decoration and the food served and presented therein, to the community events organized or hosted by Chinese people, Chinese restaurants owners and members of the Chinese community more generally are negotiating between their own interests and the larger community's desires. They are carving a niche in between Self and Other that finds expression in the creation of the Chinese restaurant as a third place where they can interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Chinese restaurants are also part of the Chinese community's creation of a third culture that is different from both its cultural origins and the dominant culture of the wider community. In the shaping of third places and a third culture, members of the Chinese community in St. John's take advantage of in-between spaces.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This exploration of Chinese identity and community, and the Chinese residents' interrelationship with the larger community in Newfoundland and Labrador stemmed from my reflections on the cultural differences I have experienced personally. It also was sparked by my curiosity about how other people who shared my experiences, namely, those who are part of the Chinese cultural minority community in St. John's, express their identity and present their culture to the majority society, and how they interact with the larger community. From there, I developed a research plan, trying to answer those questions. I chose Chinese restaurants in St. John's as an entry point to study the Chinese community, as they are sites where intercultural interactions frequently happen. The Chinese group's expressions of their identity through food, décor, and events they organized or participated in, and the larger community's perception of Chinese people's ethnicity, all can be observed in those establishments. By applying the methods of recorded interviews and participant observation, I tried to answer the following questions:

How has the Chinese community in St. John's changed over time? How do members of the Chinese community preserve and perform their ethnicity and identity in the larger community? How do Chinese people negotiate their own interests in light of mainstream society members' dual expectations for difference and integration?

The first chapter of this thesis laid the theoretical and methodological foundation for the research and provided background information on all of my interviewees. The importance of

food in terms of its interrelationship with various facets of culture has been well recognized by many previous scholars. Within this literature, Chinese food that was introduced into Western countries primarily by the Chinese diaspora has received considerable academic attention (see Chen 2014; Cheng 2011; Cho 2010; Coe 2009; Li 2014a; Li 2016; Liu 1991; Tuchman and Levine 1998). These studies uncover many aspects of overseas Chinese people's lives from the perspective of food and food-related activities. However, apart from very few works (see Li 2014a; Li 2016; Liu 1991), the foodways of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador has not been given very much notice. My study builds specifically on Barre Toelken's proposition that food is a way to celebrate ethnicity and group identity; on arguments that eating traditional food can be a way to counteract acculturation (see Bentley 1998; Montano 1997); and on the notion that ethnic restaurants are microspaces and ethnosites for intercultural encounter and exchange (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002). Drawing on these ideas, I argued that Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Chinese food they provide, are ideal vehicles via which one may explore the ethnicity and identity of the Chinese community on the island. In an attempt to fill the gap in academic studies on the foodways of Chinese people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and thus to shed light on how they shape their diasporic identity in a society where they are a minority, I conducted interviews with people from various backgrounds, including both restaurant owners and clients. Their voices, as well as my ethnographic observation conducted at the restaurants and at events organized by Chinese people and groups, formed the basis for most of my analyses and arguments.

In the second chapter I outlined the history of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador. Since its beginnings in the late 19th century, the Chinese community has experienced significant changes. Before Newfoundland joined Canada, due to the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants from 1906, there was only a small Chinese population in the island. The almost exclusively male Chinese immigrants were usually related to each other by kinship or by the geographical proximity of their hometowns in China; the head tax made it very difficult for potential immigrants to enter the island without sponsorship from their families, relatives, or acquaintances already settled in Newfoundland. Most of the immigrants worked in laundries because of a lack of other work opportunities. In short, the Chinese living in Newfoundland and Labrador during the first decades of settlement were generally bachelors of low socio-economic status coming from the same place—Guangdong (Canton) Province of China. After Confederation in 1949, Chinese settlers started to bring over their families from China. Later, a new immigration policy implemented in 1967 allowed all potential immigrants to be evaluated on an equal footing based on their skills and education. This meant that more Chinese professionals with higher socio-economic status started to immigrate to the island from all over China and even from other countries, thus diversifying the once relatively homogenous Chinese community.

Changes in the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador also brought changes in the Chinese restaurants. As early as the 1910s, Chinese people started to run restaurants, but the first Chinese-operated restaurant to serve Chinese food did not appear until the 1950s. The trade

reached a peak in the late 1970s, when there were over seventy Chinese restaurants across the island. Today there are much fewer, with the majority of them—about twenty—being located in the St. John's area. An interesting fact about Chinese restaurants in the capital city is that they are seldom passed down within a family. Based on interviews I conducted with several restaurant owners, it seems that a reason behind this pattern might be changing aspirations. Working in, and preferably owning, a Chinese restaurant was a popular occupational choice for Chinese immigrants before they were given equal employment opportunities. To some extent, such work connotes the low economic and social status of early Chinese immigrants and indicates their inability to obtain other occupational opportunities. As a result, current Chinese restaurant owners often prefer their children to pursue other careers, ideally in the professions, rather than to take over the family restaurant. This can be seen as an effort to improve the next generation's economic and social standing in Canadian society and to more fully integrate them into its mainstream culture.

Food is at the center of my research and a significant topic of my interviews with restaurant owners and clients. Their opinions about whether the food sold in Chinese restaurants in St. John's is "real" Chinese food or not formed the basis for my discussion of this topic in the third chapter. Most of my interviewees believe that the Americanized Chinese food in Chinese restaurants, also called North American style or Canadian Chinese food, is not "real" Chinese food. The culinary traditions of an ethnic group, like any other tradition, are subject to change across space and over time, and so it hardly can be a solid argument that the North American

style Chinese food is “fake.” Rather, it may be better viewed as new or unconventional. In addition, because folklore-in-practice shapes group identity (Zhang 2015), the Americanized Chinese food can be considered very “real” by those whose identity has been shaped by this kind of food. Therefore, claims concerning “real” or “fake” Chinese food are not really about the inherent quality of the food itself. By summarizing the opinions of my interviewees, I argued that what they regard as “real” Chinese food is essentially the food that is kept to the private space, unavailable to cultural or ethnic outsiders unless they have inside connections. Significantly, it is often Chinese community members who judge the Chinese food regularly served in Chinese restaurants to be “fake” in an attempt to show that they have more access to the “real” Chinese food. Because of this, in addition to the close connection drawn between the authenticity of the food and the ethnicity of the food producers, cooking or eating “real” Chinese food is often a declaration of one’s Chinese identity. By claiming that there is some “real” Chinese food that only they have access to, Chinese people resist the dominant culture’s appropriation of their culinary culture. They declare that what is real and essential to their identity has not been affected by the mainstream’s othering. Statements about “real” Chinese food therefore can be used by Chinese community members as a means to negotiate their power relationship with the dominant culture.

In a further exploration of the interrelationship of the Chinese community and the wider community, the fourth chapter extended the analysis from food to the décor of Chinese restaurants and the events that those establishments and/or their owners and customers are

involved in. For approximately two or three decades beginning in the late 1960s, the “traditional Chinese style” of décor was fashionable among Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland. This style, with its abundance of Chinese motifs, was introduced to St. John’s and exemplified in the Kenmount Restaurant. In the past decade or two, restaurant décor has become more Westernized and individualized with fewer Chinese details. Comparing the evolution of restaurant décor to changes in the Chinese food served, I argued that an important cause behind these trends is that Chinese restaurant owners, and by extension the Chinese community, balance their own interests and self-expression with the wider community’s expectations for exoticism and novelty from ethnic groups. The changes reflect both the Chinese community’s lack of identification with the stereotypical image of Chinese culture created and reinforced by early Chinese immigrants, Chinese residents’ Westernization, and most importantly, the larger community’s desire for “safe exoticism.”

Community events fulfil the dual functions of both maintaining the distinctions between communities and blurring the boundaries at the same time. This is also a response to the wider community’s dual expectations for the ethnic group. Some events that exclusively involve Chinese people help them to be more aware of their ethnic identity and unite the group, but other events, which are attended by people from various backgrounds including both Chinese and non-Chinese residents, help to lessen intergroup differences. It is clear that immigrants and other members of the Chinese community living in St. John’s are striving to maintain a balance between integrating themselves into the larger community and independently preserving their

own cultural heritage and ethnic identity. During the process of acculturation, Chinese residents try to find an in-between space that can benefit themselves as well as meet others' expectations. Chinese restaurants as establishments that sponsor, organize, or participate in community events, are often the stages where these negotiations between Self and Other are carried out. Arguably these places represent a third place that initiates such negotiations.

To summarize this thesis, I used the lens of Chinese restaurants in St. John's to explore the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly how members negotiate their diasporic identity in a Western community over time. By using "real" Chinese food as a weapon to ward off the larger community's appropriation of Chinese foodways and to counteract their othering of the Chinese community; by intentionally catering to local people's appetite for "safe exoticism" with a new decorative style; or by simultaneously integrating into and distancing themselves from the mainstream with all kinds of community events, members of the Chinese community are always striving to balance their own self-interest or self-expression with the larger community's expectations. Observation also shows that Chinese identity changes over time, which is logical because identity is shaped by folklore-in-practice (Zhang 2015) and folklore is subject to alteration or modification in accordance with changing spatio-temporal contexts. That Chinese residents seek higher economic and social status by leaving restaurant work, and struggle to better express their ethnicity by discarding the stereotypical Chinese-themed décor, demonstrate the changing dynamics of the Chinese community in St. John's.

I also have argued that even though identity is constantly changing, members of the Chinese

community intentionally maintain an in-between identity that is positioned in between complete assimilation into and complete independence from the mainstream culture. Some scholars contend that this kind of in-between identity represents an intermediate stage of acculturation. For example, Juwen Zhang suggests this when he proposes the concept of a “third culture” (Zhang 2015). This may or may not be true for individual immigrants, but as a group the Chinese community is likely to maintain this in-between status, and probably dedicatedly so, because although belonging neither completely to the larger community or to the original culture may seem like a disadvantage to an ethnic group, it actually can be beneficial. For example, by staying in between, members of the ethnic group are able to provide what is expected from them by both others in their cultural group and those in the wider community.

My goal for this thesis was to fill a gap in the study of Chinese diaspora communities. By examining Chinese restaurants in St. John’s and how they mediate the understanding of the Chinese community and its interrelationship with the larger community, I hoped to contribute to a greater understanding of the ethnicity of Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador. As Mu Li points out, though Chinese people comprise the largest visible minority of the island, they have remained largely “invisible” for most of their history (Li 2014b, 1), due to lack of scholarly and public attention to their voices. Iris Wong, the president of CANL and a participant in this research, expressed her desire that more researchers carry out studies of the Chinese community in Newfoundland. She hopes that more people will hear St. John’s Chinese voices. Ultimately, this research is intended to contribute to intercultural understanding and to help

bridge communications between the Chinese community and the larger community.

Of course, this work is not without limitations. The research focuses on Chinese restaurants in St. John's but does not touch on other ethnic restaurants in the city. Since the cultural and historical backgrounds of each ethnic group are different, it is likely the messages expressed by other groups' foodways and food-centered activities and materials will be different from those of the Chinese community. However, whether the restaurants of other ethnic groups play a similar role in mediating intercultural communication and understanding remains an unexplored question in need of further research. It will be very meaningful to investigate other ethnic cultures through their restaurants and to compare their preservation and performance of their ethnic identity with that of Chinese people. Identifying similarities and differences may help to facilitate mutual understanding between different cultural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, a place that is embracing increasing cultural diversity under the influence of globalization.

Folklore researchers have the privilege of having access to the knowledge of the people with whom we work and I believe it is folklorists' duty to apply that knowledge for the benefit of the people. I hope that this exploration into the St. John's Chinese community through its Chinese restaurants can contribute to intercultural understandings between different groups in this multicultural society.

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