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Ordering tasting in a restaurant : experiencing, socializing, and processing food.

Anna Mann

Abstract:

Sometimes there are moments in which German speakers will state that something *schmeckt gut* [tastes good]. Focusing on a family celebration in a restaurant in Austria, the paper considers how in three *schmeckt gut* moments, participants variously order “tasting” as a process of experiencing, socializing, and processing. It argues that while it is possible to analyse how a person simultaneously experiences sensual qualities inherent in a particular dish, socializes with others, and processes food, these aspects are not equally relevant for the people involved in the “tasting”. Different modes of ordering “tasting” can exist next to each other such that a "tasting together in difference" takes place. Following from this, this paper suggests further investigation into the practical achievement of a "tasting together in difference" and the enabling role of care in this process. By shedding light on how tasting is done in practices of eating out in Western Europe, it contributes to a growing set of ethnomethodologically oriented studies on how tasting and taste are *done in practice*.

Keywords:

Tasting, taste, eating out, experience, practice

What happens when something *schmeckt gut*?

Sometimes there are moments when people in German state that something *schmeckt gut*. Let me introduce an example:

17th June 2011, Gasthaus Nibelungenhof, Traismauer, Austria
The waitress has positioned a bowl in front of Volker, one of the family members gathered around the table. Sitting opposite him, I recognize that the bowl is filled with tomato soup. Two savory puffs float in the red liquid. In the middle, there is a whip of cream. Parsley has been sprinkled on top. Volker bends over the bowl. He takes up his spoon, immerses it into the soup and stirs. He fills the spoon, brings it to his mouth and puts it into his mouth the soup. He swallows, and takes another spoon full of soup. And another one. "Mhmmmm..." I hear him murmur. "Die Suppe schmeckt gut." [The soup tastes good.] I have taken up my spoon as well and swallowed the first bite. I agree with him, "Die schmeckt echt super." [It tastes really great.] He leans back and sighs, and adds, "Rainer, the chef, just makes the best tomato soup in the world!"

This took place during a family celebration in June 2011 in the *Nibelungenhof* restaurant in eastern Austria. At this event people ate food prepared by chefs and caterers, as others had at the Bar Mitzvahs, film shooting locations, receptions, conferences and private dinner parties, catered events and dining out situations that I attended between 2009 and 2013 during my research on sensual engagements with food and drink. These events, in which groups of people hired professionals to provide food, took place in low-budget and high-end internationally ranked restaurants and other venues in Austria, the Netherlands, the UK and other Western European countries. The gastronomic professionals who catered for their diners at these events, and whom I interviewed (in English) and observed before and after the eating events took place, pointed out that they had employed chefs capable of creating surprising flavor combinations, employed attentive service staff, arranged tables and chairs to provide a welcoming feeling, and played classical music -- preferably in a major key. They did this, they explained because "tasting is a multi-sensory experience".

What is going on in the moment described above appears to be obvious. The German word *schmecken* means, in English, *to taste* in the sense of sensing food (not trying or sampling). *Gut* translates into *good*. The exchange, thus, seems to constitute a moment in which something *tastes good*. Yet, while this expression was used by German speakers, during my fieldwork I observed that in eating events in which English was spoken people stated that something *was delicious* (see also Wiggins and Potter 2003, 519) while diners in Dutch exclaimed that something *was lekker* [was tasty/nice] (see also Mol 2014). *To taste* was, in other words, not mobilized in either of these two languages. This made me curious, particularly in the light of what ethnomethodologically oriented sociologists have suggested over the past few years. Rather than taking for granted how tasting happens and what taste is, Geneviève Teil, Antoine Hennion, Jon Manzo, and Dana Bentia have shown that it is possible to turn this into an empirical question and ask: how is "tasting" or "taste" *done in practice*? In order to answer this, the scholars studied how "tasting" is organized in wine

tasting events (Teil 2009) and slow food fairs (Bentia 2014) and how what counts as "having a taste" is negotiated by coffee lovers (Manzo 2010) and music amateurs (Hennion 2001). Pursuing this, they have attended to difference that structures events of eating out and sensual engagements with food and drinks in particular ways. Rather than focusing on differences between people pertaining to varying social classes (Warde, Marten & Olsen 1999; Bourdieu 2010) or diverging ethnic backgrounds (Dorouz & Khoo 2014; Hirose & Pi 2011), they have investigated the kind of difference debated by people who share a passion for wine, coffee or food, themselves. The resulting ethnographies have brought out that, first and foremost, wine lovers, coffee geeks, slow food lovers and other amateurs discuss and organise their sensual engagements in order to perceive differences in their object of passion - wines from distinct varietals (Teil 2009, 212ff.), coffees made with cheap or expensive coffee machines (Manzo 2010, 7), or cheese from two contrasting farms (Bentia 2014, 180).

Following this line of work, this paper investigates the micro-practices that people engage in as they eat out in restaurants and other venues, taking the family event that was introduced above as an exemplary case.ⁱ Zooming in on three moments in which something *schmeckt gut*, it considers how in these moments body parts, food items, drinks, cutlery, tableware, and surrounding bodies are organized, analyzing this process as "ordering".ⁱⁱ Thus, it takes the German expression that something *schmeckt gut* literally, and uses the gap that opens up when translating it into the English "tasting" as an "epistemological space" (Hanks and Severi 2014) to shed light on and to (re-)theorize how "tasting" is done in eating out practices in Western Europe.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ordering "tasting" as experiencing

Let me take you to the *Gasthaus Nibelungenhof* [restaurant Nibelungenhof] and introduce field notes from a second situation that I observed during the celebration:

Field notes, 17th June 2011, Gasthof Nibelungenhof, Traismauer, Matthias' celebration, main course

The waitress has left again after having served Matthias' uncle, a man in his 50s sitting to my left, and me. On the table in front of us are now sitting two plates. Each of them holds a rectangular piece of welsh catfish daubed with red, green, and orange sauces, balanced on top of roasted vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower and, garlic.

Matthias' uncle takes up his cutlery. He cuts into the fish, pushes a piece onto the fork, adds a broccoli flower and puts it into his mouth. He chews and swallows. I take up my fork and start with a piece of the roasted cauliflower. "How is it?" Matthias' father has approached us from behind to check if everything is alright. The uncle and I reassure him, "Excellent!" "Delicious!" The host leaves again. "The fish flesh is very tender," the uncle comments. He chews and swallows. "Only the garlic is a bit too strong." "Ah, I like it!", I disagree with him. The uncle pushes a clove of garlic to the rim of the plate and takes another bite, and so do I.

At the end of the course, the uncle points to the plate in front of him. Except for a couple of leftover garlic cloves, it is now empty revealing its pattern. "Look, black

sprinkles! They resemble the sauces that were on top of the fish! The plate even fits the painting...” I follow his gaze. On the other side of the room on the wall hangs a rectangular canvas. It is painted black with three silver vertical stripes. The uncle concludes, “Also dieser Gang hat sehr gut geschmeckt. [This course has tasted very good.]”

A couple of days before the event, Rainer, who had prepared the fish course in his kitchen, had told me about the considerations that went into creating such a culinary masterpiece. In order to provide an extraordinary richness in taste, he explained and demonstrated, he seasoned dishes with sauces that were extracts of vegetables and fruits, which he called “succos”. I recognized that he was a chef who combined and contrasted flavors and textures.^{iv} Another chef, who is now retired from working in a Michelin-starred restaurant, but who told me about her former work in an interview, called this the creation of an “exciting multi-sensory experience”. The editor of the culinary guide *Michelin Germany*, so Cristel Lane (2014, 178) in her more extensive analysis of the organization of fine dining, explained the expectations regarding ‘taste’ in this realm: “The dish has to taste of the main/basic ingredient; there has to be a *harmonious combination* of the tastes; the contrasts in taste made have to be helpful to the dish... The more tastes are introduced, the more difficult it is to do it successfully, but great chefs can do it.” (emphasis AM)

What I want to point out here is that in the situation of assessing the intensity of garlic a set of particular activities lead into a moment in which something *schmeckt gut*. These included discussing qualities in food, discarding a clove of garlic to improve the side dish, and directing attention towards qualities in food and the environment in which it is consumed. The “tasting” that preceded the moment was ordered and organized as a process of *experiencing* qualities inherent in food and the environment in which it is consumed. In this situation, saying that food *schmeckt gut* expressed a *perceptual experience*.



3



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Image 3 & 4: What makes that something “schmeckt gut”: the sauces’ design fits the style of the painting

This situation of “tasting” resonates with previous findings about multi-sensory metaphors and terms used by people to express their sensations and direct other people’s

attention towards qualities of food (Sutton 2001; Kuipers 1986; Senft 2011). On the Greek island Kalymnos, where David Sutton engaged in fieldwork, islanders encouraged each other with a noisy intake of air through the nose to (in Greek) "listen to that smell" and express the failure to discern an element of a dish by stating in that (in Greek) "it is not being hearable" (2001, 99) during cooking. Based on such observations, David Sutton argues that "taste [is] an actual multi-sensory experience" (2010, 211), so questioning the idea of taste embedded in the Western model of the five senses, that it is a sense separate from other senses. He has drawn attention to a way in which sensual relations between foodstuff, bodies, and their surroundings become organised and lived that is "other" to that which prevails in 'The West' and, thus, has attended to yet another kind of "difference" than those between people from varying social classes, ethnic backgrounds or quality differences as discussed by wine, coffee and food lovers. What I want to draw attention to is that "multi-sensory experience" is an analytical and English term that the anthropologist uses to describe what he sees his informants do and hears them say in Greek to advance an argument in an academic debate about sensual engagements with food and drinks. The situation described above makes it possible to add that "multi-sensory experience" can be, besides an etic category, a term that the analyst brings to his or her field, also an emic one, one that is mobilised by informants themselves. Used by Rainer and other chefs in Austria and Western European countries, it describes the attention to and perceptions of qualities of dishes the gastronomic professionals expect diners to have and which they use, as the examples in the introduction show, to organise the space of their restaurant and its infrastructure.^v

Organizing "tasting" differently: Socializing

Not everybody engaged in a discussion about textures and flavors during the family celebration at the *Gasthaus Nibelungenhof* however. Let me introduce field notes from a third situation that occurred during the event:

Field notes, 17th June 2011, Gasthof Nibelungenhof, Traismauer, Matthias' celebration, dessert

Matthias, sitting at one end of the table, is holding in his hand a glass plate on which a piece of Sachertorte, a chocolate cake, lies next to a small fork.

The cake was a graduation present for Matthias from his aunt. She had told me during the main course how, over the last three days, she had baked the sponge, cut it into layers, added jam between the layers, coated them with chocolate and added the decoration formed out of almond paste on top: two figurines — penguins wearing hats like those worn in American graduation ceremonies —, roses, and a wish written in brown on white. "For my only and most favorite nephew!" the aunt said proudly.

With the ice cream, made by the chef, it formed the dessert course.

Matthias takes up his fork, cuts a piece off the cake and puts it into his mouth. He chews. I am sitting next to Matthias, holding a plate that contains another piece of the Sachertorte and an almond paste rose. I cut off a piece and put it in my mouth.

Matthias swallows. Then, he says, "I hope you don't mind me getting up. Ich sag'

kurz der Tante, wie gut ihre Sachertorte schmeckt. [I will quickly let auntie know how good her cake tastes.]”

Following this example, activities such as offering a cake as a present, taking a bite thereof and getting up to express praise also lead into a moment in which something *schmeckt gut*. In this situation and through the prior activities that something *schmeckt gut* became related to the love that a family member has put into the preparation of a food item. The “tasting” that lead into it and resulted from this moment had been organized this time as a process of *socializing*. In this situation, that the cake *schmeckt gut* was an expression of a social relation one family member entertains with another family member.



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Image 5 & 6: What makes that something “*schmeckt gut*”: the cake is baked with love

The situation of Matthias and the ethnographer having a piece of chocolate cake thus relates to a second set of findings (Holtzman 2009; Howes 2003; Chau 2008; Janeja 2010). The consumption of food items that have been baked or cooked by family members for others, it has been shown in this set of literatures, creates and recreates relations between the people pertaining to a specific group. It crafts their identities, social positions, and relations between them. Sensual relation to food, this literature has brought out, constantly assembles and reassembled, and organizes “the Social”. The situation described above makes possible to contribute to these observations that especially once a bite is taken and a food item sampled by a person, she or he may lay claims, negotiate, and actualized a relation to another person.

Introducing a special issue on taste and other senses, Elisabeth Hsu (2008, 433-434) has recently pointed out that ethnographic research into this topic has reached an understanding of “there being a ‘mutuality’ between social relations and the material world, where mutuality is a concept [we can use] (...) to overcome the historically given separation between anthropological research into the social world and material objects”. While I agree with Hsu that it is more fruitful to bring together different approaches to tasting and taste, for instance by studying perceptual experiences and observing the recreation of social relations through the consumption of food items, based on the two situations I have presented above, in moments in which people sensually engage with food and drinks not all of these aspects are equally relevant to the actors involved in them. In the situation that involved the uncle, it was the garlic cloves which he had deemed “too strong” that became talked about and acted upon.

He never brought up as an issue whether or not the chef had prepared the dish with passion and love. He also never referred to talking about flavors and other qualities inherent in a dish, which implied engaging with a stranger next to him, in terms of creating a social relation that might yield an effect on the dish “tasting good”. In a similar way, in the situation of Matthias and me having a piece of cake, what was brought up as a concern was the aunt and the gratefulness Matthias wanted to express towards her. We never talked about whether Matthias or I found the cake “too dry” or “too moist.” It was not the exciting flavor combination or the surprising design that matched the decoration on the table that had made the cake “tasting good.” The “tasting” that people engaged in also did not have the same effect. Both Matthias and his uncle took a bite of food, but while the uncle discarded garlic that he deemed “too strong” in the dish, Matthias got up to thank his aunt. Thus, while it is possible to analytically combine an approach to tasting and taste that analyses how, as a person takes a bite of food, he or she experiences qualities that are inherent in food *and* socializes with others around him or her at the same time, the two moments in which something *schmeckt gut* exemplify how in practice, in specific situations, for the people involved these moments, there are differences in what is important, what is acted upon and what effects are yielded. In this sense, I would argue that experiencing qualities of food does not automatically include socializing through it. Likewise, socializing through the cake does not necessarily involve experiencing its qualities.

Processing as a third way of ordering “tasting” and the co-existence of difference

Let me introduce field notes of a fourth situation, because during the family celebration at the *Gasthaus Nibelungenhof* there were participants who engaged with the food they ate in yet another way. More specifically, there was the grandmother.

Field notes, 17th June 2011, Gasthof Nibelungenhof, Traismauer, Matthias' celebration, after the dessert
Matthias' grandmother and her daughter, Matthias' aunt, are sitting a couple of seats further down the table from Matthias and me. A walking stick leans against the chair of the older woman. Earlier I had noticed that she had had the fish as a main course. She had been loading her fork with some of the fish and then directing it towards her mouth slowly. Her hand had not been steady and the fish had been about to fall off. Finally it had reached her mouth. She had chewed and swallowed.
Now, she is watching the goings-on around her. I get up and join her. “How are you Mrs. Kainzbauer?” I ask. “So, so...” she answers, then adds, “Guat hot's g'schmeckt, ned? [It tasted good, didn't it?]” I agree with her, “Jo, s'Essa war wirklich spitze!” [Yes, the food was really extraordinary.] Her daughter, having overheard the exchange, adds, “Hod's d'r g'schmeckt, Oma? [Did it taste to you, granny?]” The old woman nods while the younger one lowers her voice and explains to me, “I had ordered the fish for her. Out of the three dishes on the menu it had been the easiest one for her to chew. She is wearing dentures, you see. She would have had problems eating meat.” The daughter pauses and, after a moment, concludes, “Well, it's only human. That's how it goes as one is getting older...”

In this process of eating, a person was faced with the difficulties of getting foodstuffs to and into the body, of biting into it and chewing. More specifically, the physical act of eating required (what in biomedical language is called) shearing the mash and forming a bolus that then could be brought back to the rear of the mouth, swallowed, moved into the pharynx, the esophagus and further into the digestive system. The grandmother, a person wearing dentures, an artificial device, and not being particularly agile anymore, had been ordered food by her daughter that would be the least challenging and dangerous to be exposed to. That the course had *gut geschmeckt* became related to the ability to chew the dish, and included the daughter who had chosen and ordered the food with the issue of chewing in mind.

Neither Rainer, nor any of the other chefs and caterers, food consultants and marketers, restaurant owners and employees, gastronomic critics and food photographers whose work I observed brought up dentures and chewing as an issue for the preparation or consumption of food. Thus I contacted a General Practitioner (GP) after the event. She explained to me that Mrs Kainzbauer and many other elderly people are faced with a series of issues in the, as she called it, “oral processing” of food. Because of muscle loss, dentures often become loose. New ones cost up to 6,000 Euros. The question of whether it is worth it to make this investment is frequently coming up. Ill-fitting dentures make chewing painful, however, and diminish the range of food items that can be eaten by the wearer. As the GP put it, this affects the “quality of life” and can cause depression. Research on these issues, she said, is going on in gerodontology, the branch of medicine that deals with the oral health of elderly people.

In addition to the two sets of activities described in the previous sections, a third one lead into a moment in which something *schmeckt gut* as well. It involved not having to take out the denture in front of everybody else, one person ordering a dish for another one, who wore dentures and was faced with the problems they created while eating. In this situation, that something *schmeckt gut* became related to dentures and the activity of chewing of a dish. The “tasting” that preceded the moment was organized yet again differently, as *processing food*. That something *schmeckt gut* was the expression of the practical achievement of processing edibles.^{vi}



7



8

Image 7 & 8: What makes that something “*schmeckt gut*”: the fish is chewable with dentures

The case of the grandmother and her dentures thus relates to a third body of literature on appreciation and enjoyment of food in health care practices, the challenge that taking up food poses to impaired bodies, and the care that is provided to them by professionals (Mol 2011; Pols & Limburg 2015). Observing such situations, ethnographers have made visible practices of care, analyzed ideals and norms in medicine, and theorized care more broadly. Not only are the appreciation and enjoyment of food cared for by health care professionals in rehabilitation centers or significant others in private homes. The care for food pleasures, this example allows to add, can be folded into the goings-on of eating out in a restaurant as well.

While it is possible to analyze how as the uncle and I had the fish main course, and as Matthias and I took bites of the chocolate cake a processing of food items happened, I would argue that it was only in the situation described above that processing became an issue for the people who were involved in it. Only the grandmother and her daughter articulated that what made a dish "tasting good" was related to the struggle to chew it successfully. The two never raised issues such as whether or not the flavors of the main course had been exciting or the extent to which the dish had been cooked with passion and love. In this sense, I would argue that the situation shows how "tasting" can be ordered as a *processing* that includes neither an experiencing of qualities inherent in food nor a socialising with other family members through them.

The case of the family celebration in the restaurant *Nibelungehof*, thus, allows to extension of the insights on "tasting" provided by ethnomethodologically oriented scholars (Teil 2001; Manzo 2010; Bentia 2014; Hennion 2001) in three ways. First, what matters to people who are engaged in sensual relations to food and drinks are not only differences in the object of their passion, there are also practical relevances tied up with foods, the environment, other people, and bodies. In the case of the family celebration, the specific relevances were the harmonious flavor composition, the recognition of love, and the chewability of an edible. Second, while wine lovers, coffee geeks and producers and consumers of slow food attend to and debate qualities of food and drinks, the case of the family celebration in the *Gasthaus Nibelungehof* allows specification that attending to, and debating about, qualities inherent in food and drinks is one way of organizing and ordering "tasting," which is a highly specific one. Socializing with other participants through food and processing the object that food constitutes are two other ways of organizing and ordering "tasting" that also exist in eating out. Third, as the ethnographies of Geneviève Teil (2001), Jon Manzo (2010), Dana Bentia (2014) and Antoine Hennion (2001) have highlighted, differences in qualities of foods and drinks incite discussions and fierce debates among the people who are involved in sensual engagements with food and drinks. During the family celebration in the *Gasthaus Nibelungehof*, while the uncle discarded the cloves of garlic he deemed too strong, the grandmother struggled to get the piece of fish to her mouth. These differences between modes of ordering "tasting", rather than becoming confronted with each other or leading to a discussion, co-existed, beside each other. The family celebration in the *Gasthaus Nibelungehof* thus exemplifies how a "tasting together in difference" can take place.^{vii}

Inclusion into a “tasting together in difference” through care

This paper has provided an investigation into moments in which German speakers state that something *schmeckt gut*. Based on ethnographic observations of one event, a family celebration that took place in the *Gasthaus Nibelungenhof* in Austria, the paper has analyzed three such moments. The analysis has teased apart the activities and entities to which that a dish *schmeckt gut* became related to and the effects it yielded. I have theorized these as three different modes of ordering “tasting”: experiencing, socializing and processing food. I have argued that while it is possible when studying tasting to bring together different approaches and investigate how, as one takes a bite, a person multi-sensorially experiences the qualities of food items and socializes with others around her, in any moment in which something *schmeckt gut*, not all of these aspects are equally relevant for the people who sensually engage with food and drinks.

From the concerns of my informants, we can learn what the next task might be for our ethnographic investigations into tasting. In the event that this paper has reported about, not everybody — not every body —, it turned out, was equally well equipped for eating and sensually engaging with food, what was at stake was therefore not only people socializing through food with each other and experiencing qualities inherent in food, but a body that had been in need of care provided to it by others. A person who might have been excluded if care had not been provided by the daughter of the person who was in need of it had become included in the event. Note that the care had been provided neither the son nor the son-in-law. At stake, in other words, was a body living on with more or less quality of life for a little longer still. This is not meant metaphorically. Matthias’ grandmother and the person whose dentures I was allowed to photograph (Image 8) have passed away since the event. As we further investigate “tasting together in difference”, “eating together in difference” and other food related ways of “living together in difference”, we should attend not only to the ways in which rhetorics of multiculturalism reproduce exclusion (Duruz & Khoo 2014) or discourses of aesthetically informed “free choices” of food disguise the reproduction of inequalities (Warde, Marten & Olsen 1999; Bourdieu 2010). What we can learn from the family celebration in the *Gasthaus Nibelungenhof* and an ethnomethodologically informed analysis of it is that we also need to attend to, articulate and theorize how inclusions into a “together in difference” are practically achieved, the vital role that care plays in this process, and the disturbing ways in which care itself is also not evenly distributed.

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Endnotes

ⁱ The family event in the restaurant *Nibelungenhof* is a highly specific case in terms of class, geographical location and cuisine. The family members could be described as being part of the eastern Austrian middle class. The restaurant was once a well-running inn. Nowadays it survives by providing cheap menus to builders during the week, a lovely garden to tourists cycling through the region in summer, and a menu including traditional dishes such as *Wienerschnitzel* as well as more exquisite ones for the locals who dine there on weekends. (See Mann [2015] for a critical discussion of contextualising events in which people taste food in terms of class and geography). Except for the chef Rainer, the participants of the family event have been anonymized. I would like to thank them, Rainer and all the other chefs whom I was allowed to interview and observe for providing me with food as well as food to think with.

ⁱⁱ "Ordering" has been developed by John Law (1994) as a way of ethnographically studying what Michel Foucault called "discourses" and defined as "forms of strategic arranging that are intentional but do not necessarily have a subject" (Foucault 1981, 95).

ⁱⁱⁱ The relation between moments in which people sensually engage with food, and the English words "tasting" and "taste" is not straight forward. First, there are situations and sites such as convents in which tasting happens in silence. Secondly, when people do chat while sensually engaging with foodstuff, the expressions that are mobilised in non-English languages do not always fit the ones English native speakers use. Thirdly, lay people might not use the words "tasting" and "taste" in the same way as social scientists do. Finally, among social scientists there is no agreement on how to study, conceptualised and theorise "tasting" and "taste". Social and cultural anthropologists who traditionally have observed in far away places how people sensually relate to food theorised this as a sense of the human. In contrast, sociologists have studied the consumption of particular food items by people belonging to a group within society and conceptualised this as a mechanism of distinction organising the social.

^{iv} Chefs who work in world famous restaurants such as the Noma in Copenhagen and El Bulli in Catalunya, so David Mitchell (2012), have added to their focus on sweet, sour, salty, bitter and umami, also an attention the kind of memories and emotions evoked by a dish. For a detailed analysis of US chefs' repertoires for talking about the aesthetics of a dish, see Fine (1995).

^v Robert Desjarlais (1994) describes how through his fieldwork in a shelter for homeless mentally ill people in Boston, he came to recognise that "experience" is an analytical, philosophical, Western and highly specific notion. His informants described their way of living

as a “struggling along” the included a necessity of holding oneself together and making do with the day-to-day contingencies in the here and now. Desjarlais theorises this as a second and alternative way of being in the world next to “experiencing” it. For a discussion of the specificities, the philosophical concerns, and the impossibility of translation of the English term “experience”, see Cassin (2014), 329-331.

^{vi} For an analysis of the process of digesting that raises questions about agency, see Abrahamsson (2014); and the practical achievement of eating a meal with one's fingers, which shifts the bodily boundaries of where tasting begins and ends, see Mann et al. (2011).

^{vii} “Tasting together in difference” is inspired, on the one hand, by Helen Verran's explorations of possible answers to the question: “how to live” in difference (1999); and, on the other, by Annemarie Mol's investigation into the co-existence of difference in medical practice (2002). It resonates Jean Duruz and Gaik Cheng Khoo's notion of “eating together-in-difference” (2014). “Eating together-in-difference” draws attention to the ways in which, in spaces of interethnic exchange, “food becomes an ensemble of interactions with difference, [produces] cultures of 'mixedness', [and] complex forms of multiculturalism” (4). While “tasting together in difference” focuses equally on differences that come together in eating events in a public space, it highlights the different *practical relevances* that prevail in particular moments, and how they come together and co-exist next to each other within the space and time of eating.