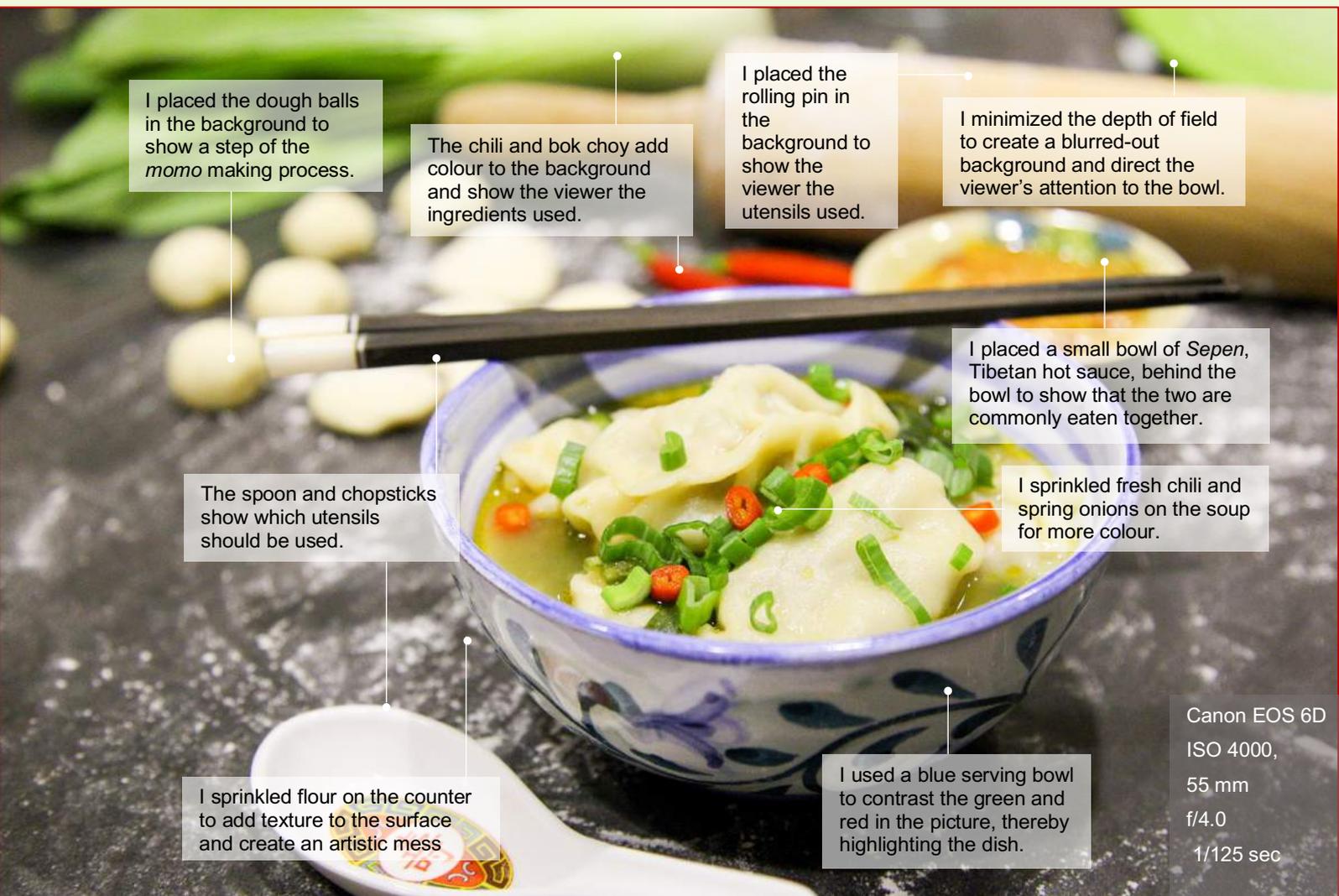


# WHAT WE BROUGHT WITH US

Refugees from Tibet, Afghanistan and Nigeria share mouth-watering recipes from home and tell their remarkable stories



I placed the dough balls in the background to show a step of the *momo* making process.

The chili and bok choy add colour to the background and show the viewer the ingredients used.

I placed the rolling pin in the background to show the viewer the utensils used.

I minimized the depth of field to create a blurred-out background and direct the viewer's attention to the bowl.

I placed a small bowl of *Sepen*, Tibetan hot sauce, behind the bowl to show that the two are commonly eaten together.

The spoon and chopsticks show which utensils should be used.

I sprinkled fresh chili and spring onions on the soup for more colour.

I sprinkled flour on the counter to add texture to the surface and create an artistic mess

I used a blue serving bowl to contrast the green and red in the picture, thereby highlighting the dish.

Canon EOS 6D  
ISO 4000,  
55 mm  
f/4.0  
1/125 sec

Matura Thesis  
Kira Jaeger, 6g  
Kantonsschule Wiedikon  
2019

Supervised by Monika Egli

## Preface

*“While every refugee's story is different and their anguish personal, they all share a common thread of uncommon courage – the courage not only to survive, but to persevere and rebuild their shattered lives”*

– António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

When displaced people are forced to flee from their homes in order to escape war, political and religious persecution or natural disasters, they must leave so much behind, sometimes only carrying with them the clothes on their backs. While they may not have been able to bring suitcases as they crossed deserts, mountains and oceans, they nonetheless carry within them so much: a rich cultural heritage, traditions, stories and culinary masterpieces. Throughout this past year, three families have been generous enough to share a part of this treasure of theirs, namely their favourite recipes as well as the story of their journey to their new homes. It has been my privilege to bring these recipes and stories to life through the photos and text of my book.

Working with Tsering, Kathere, Perpetual and their entire families has been such an enriching and life-changing experience. They each have their own amazing and inspiring story to share; each holds different religious beliefs but shares the same general hopes and dreams for their lives. It is hard to put into words how much the time I have spent with them over the last few months has meant to me. The outcome of this project is so much more than a cookbook. Unforgettable hours have been shared filled with laughter and sometimes tears. The bravery, strength and perseverance of these women and their families has left me awed, as has their generosity. Not only were they generous with their time, after every visit I was sent away with as many boxes and bags of leftovers as my hands could carry, these families always being quick to give without any thought of receiving. As gracious and giving hosts, they even treated me as the guest in my own home!

I have built life-long friendships with extraordinary people who now feel like part of my family. They have given me the gift of their trust and have opened up to me by telling me their stories. My goal in return is to express my admiration and gratitude by honouring them in this book. In sharing their amazing recipes and incredible stories with others, I hope to play a small role in giving refugees a voice and lessening the gap between them and their host countries.

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## 1 Introduction

The product of my Matura Thesis is a book written and illustrated by myself with over 50 original recipes that have never before been written down, contributed by three refugee families. The people featured in the book fled their home countries, Tibet, Afghanistan and Nigeria, due to war, political unrest and religious persecution and undertook a dangerous journey into the unknown. As part of my project, I discussed their past with them, what their life in their home country was like, how and why they came to Switzerland, what life is like for them in this new country, and finally what their hopes and dreams for their future are. Their stories are featured alongside their recipes and the two combined reflect the rich history and heritage these refugees carried with them to their new homes.

I came up with the idea of my project because it combined my love for cooking with my passion for working with refugees, something I have done for the past several years. As with the journey of many refugees, I undertook this project not really knowing where it would lead. Soon I discovered that spending hours together in the kitchen provided a wonderful opportunity not only to share special recipes, but also to build relationships and further mutual understanding. Cooking things from scratch took time. The dough needed to rise, the sauce needed to simmer, and hundreds of dumplings had to be folded. There was ample opportunity to get to know one another in an unhurried way. The friendships, mutual respect and trust that emerged were even more amazing than the delicious and colourful dishes that were laid on the table at the end of each marathon cooking session.

## 2 Procedure

The first step of my project was identifying who to work with. Initially I had planned to cook with more families from a larger number of countries. However, after researching about already existing projects, I decided to make my book special by placing a larger emphasis on the personal stories of the refugees, whereas other books on refugees' cooking only briefly, if at all, talk about the people behind the recipes. This decision forced me to narrow down the amount of people I could work with, as gathering the stories required a deep and trusting relationship. When I began working with Tsering from Tibet, Khatere from Afghanistan and Perpetual from Nigeria, we quickly developed such a good relationship that I decided to work exclusively with these families.

Perpetual I had already known for a few years since my mother, who volunteers at a non-profit organisation called *Solinetz* looking after children while their parents take German lessons, took on an active role in helping her family. After Perpetual found out she was going to be deported to Italy, she and her three young boys lived with my family for over three months before her departure. Not only did we build up a strong relationship during that time, but I also fell in love with her cooking. After she left Switzerland, we continued to visit her in Bari, Italy, and later Essen, Germany.

Tsering and her daughter Dhadon my mother also met through *Solinetz*. They visited our house often and we invited her to come to my birthday party one year and demonstrate to my friends how to make *momos*. When I came up with the idea for my project, I knew she would be a perfect candidate.

My mother also came into contact with Khatere through *Solinetz*. However, I had not met her in person before I knocked on her door to cook with her for the first time. She turned out to be an equally perfect partner in this project, as she has an endless collection of recipes in her head and displays all her meals incredibly beautifully.

This cookbook consists of three main elements: recipes, stories and photographs. In the following pages, the aspects of my book will be further explained, and the methods and challenges of each part shown in more detail.

### 2.1 Recipes

Cooking is a great way to get to know someone, since everyone likes to eat and interest in food is universal. A country's cuisine is heavily linked to its people's deeper cultural background and environmental surroundings and is a good way to understand their heritage. Asking refugees to share their recipes from home provided the perfect opportunity to build up a relationship with them since they proudly enjoy sharing their food and traditions. In the kitchen they felt confident, competent and glad to teach me their expertise. Cooking together came with another bonus: It

helped the refugees improve their German. Further, as I got to know the families and their particular circumstances, I tried to return their kindness by offering support to them wherever I could: for example, providing information about the Gymnasium entrance exam to Khatere and her son, and helping him begin preparing for it.

In total I cooked with Khatere, Perpetual and Tsering over twenty-five times, each dish lasting anywhere between thirty minutes and three hours. As Perpetual lives in Germany and during my project found out she was pregnant with twins, I was only able to visit her in Essen twice, so the number of Nigerian dishes is slightly smaller than for the other countries. Most of the cooking sessions were done at the refugees' homes, some at my house. Sometimes we went shopping together, but often the ingredients had already been purchased when I arrived.

Most of the time I did not know what we would be cooking before the session. I told my partners I wanted to learn how to make the dishes they love, the ones that mean something to them or they simply find delicious. Not all the recipes are from their home countries, some they also picked up elsewhere.

In addition to assisting with food preparation during the cooking sessions, I wrote down the ingredients and cooking process, took photos and made videos. One major challenge was accurately estimating the quantity of each ingredient. Perpetual, Khatere and Tsering do not cook with cookbooks, measuring spoons and scales the way we are used to.



*Figure 1: Noting the quantities of spices by comparing them to tea- and tablespoons brought from home*

They have all their recipes saved in their heads and determine the quantities by eyesight, without measuring millilitres, grams or teaspoons. I had to estimate the quantities and then later recook the recipes myself to test them and compare them to the originals. I also compared some recipes to similar versions I found on food blogs, all of which are mentioned in the bibliography on page 17.

Getting the instructions right was also not easy. For example, describing the steps to fold the Tibetan and Afghan dumplings was very challenging. That is why I asked friends and family to test the recipes to ensure that the instructions could be followed, and that their approximate cooking

times did not show large deviations compared to mine. On my birthday, I even organized a potluck dinner and asked all my guests to test one of the recipes!

I included a short introduction at the beginning of each recipe that was either a personal input from the cook or myself about the dish or something I researched after cooking. At the end of the book one can find a list of all the unusual ingredients and places to purchase these. All external sources are mentions in the reference section on page 17.

Table 1: Cooking sessions listed by date

<b>Date</b>	<b>Dishes</b>	<b>People</b>
21.02.19	Flatbread, Thenthuk, Okra Stir-Fry, Pork Shapta	Tsering, Gyalsten
02.03.19	Kabuli Palaw, Ferni	Khatere
17.03.19	Borani Banjan, Mantu	Khatere
06.04.19	Raclette	Khatere
29.04.19	Egusi, Fufu, Dodo, Dundun	Perpetual
30.04.19	Red Stew, Ji' Akuwo	Pertetual
01.05.19	Jollof and Fried Rice, Ogbono Stew, Omelette	Perpetual
10.05.19	Aubergine and Potato, Ema Dashi, Pa, Tingmo	Tsering
25.05.19	Bolani, Halva, Doogh	Khatere
22.06.19	Pakora, Sabz Chai, Hot Sauce	Khatere
08.07.19	Momos, Sepen	Tsering, Gyalsten
16.08.19	Momos, Tsampa, Butter Tea	Tsering
01.09.19	Chapli Kebab	Khatere
08.09.19	Mothuk	Tsering
14.09.19	Lamb Liver Kebabs, Paneer, Maast, Chakka, Naan	Khatere, Shafiq
23.09.19	Akara	Perpetual
28.09.19	Shor Nakhod, Cardamom Turmeric Pudding, Lemon Spinach Salad	Khatere
01.10.19	Naan	Khatere
05.10.19	Bhatsa Marku	Tsering
05.10.19	Baozi Momos, Pa, Sweet Tea, Bhatsa Marku	Tsering
06.10.19	Kofta Nargisi	Khatere
12.10.19	Tukhum-Bonjan, Sheer Chai	Khatere
12.10.19	Sabzi Palak, Kachalu Borani	Khatere
13.10.19	Mash Palaw, Halva	Khatere
14.10.19	Aushak	Khatere
20.10.19	Momos	Tsering
03.11.19	Falafel	Khatere

## 2.2 Stories

Most cooking sessions were followed by tea and talking. Before I was able to discuss each person's story with them, I had to build up their trust. I met with each family a few times to cook before going in depth into their past. One must keep in mind that the stories in my book are not just stories to these families, they are about their lives. It was not always easy for them to talk about what they have experienced. Our talks were often very emotional and sometimes brought them (and me) to tears. I had to be respectful of their limits. Most of our discussions were recorded for me to be able to write the stories as true to their words as possible, but out of respect to Perpetual, Khatere and Tsering I did not include a transcription of them in this report and will delete the recordings after this project.

Communication was not a big problem, since besides German Tsering and Perpetual both speak fluent English and Khatere's German is very good. However, sometimes it remained hard for them to share their experiences and feelings in a foreign language. I often had the impression they were not able express themselves the way they could have in their mother tongue.

I used my list of questions below as an initial starting point, but each person had their own story-telling style and placed emphasis on different parts of their life story. I tried to follow their lead and reflect their unique voices, leaving the text as true to their original words as possible. I especially wanted to preserve unique phrasings such as "We prayed to God not to let us cross the ocean when the road is hungry" (Perpetual) to make their stories more personal. To bring the reader as close to the subject as possible, I presented the stories in the first person.

The following provides a list of questions used to guide the interviews and discussions:

- *Where did you live in your home country?*
- *What was your life there like?*
- *What are your best childhood memories?*
- *What were your hopes and dreams?*
- *Did you go to school?*
- *What did you work as?*
- *Why did you leave your country?*
- *When and how did you leave?*
- *How old were you?*
- *Who went with you?*
- *Did anyone know you were leaving?*
- *What did you take with you?*
- *Where did you go?*

- *How did you travel?*
- *Did you walk at night or daytime?*
- *Did you have food and water?*
- *How were you treated in other countries?*
- *Where did you live?*
- *How long did you live there?*
- *Were you allowed to work?*
- *Did you receive any support?*
- *Was it dangerous for you to be there?*
- *Why did you decide to come to Europe and later Switzerland?*
- *How did you get there?*
- *How long did the journey last?*
- *Were you scared?*
- *Were you with a smuggler?*
- *What kept you going? What was your motivation?*
- *What were your expectations of Europe?*
- *Were you disappointed when you arrived?*
- *How did you get to Switzerland?*
- *How were you treated upon your arrival in Switzerland?*
- *Where did you live?*
- *Where is the rest of your family?*
- *Were you shocked by the differences between your and our culture?*
- *Were your wishes fulfilled in Switzerland?*
- *What are the challenges you faced when you started living in Switzerland and what challenges do you still face?*
- *Do you miss your home country?*
- *Do you want to return one day? To live there again or just to visit?*
- *What do you do now in Switzerland/Germany?*
- *What are your next steps?*
- *What are your dreams for your future and the future of your children?*

Table 2: Interviews listed by date

<b>Date</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Duration</b>
15.04.19	1. Interview	Tsering	50min
01.05.19	1. Interview	Perpetual	25min
22.06.19	1. Interview	Khatere	1h 30min
08.07.19	2. Interview	Tsering, Gyalsten	2h
16.08.19	3. Interview (follow-on discussion of story)	Tsering	45min
01.09.19	2. Interview (follow-on discussion of story)	Khatere, Shafiq	1h 30min
21.09.19	2. Interview	Gregory	1h 20min
22.09.19	3. Interview	Perpetual, Gregory	1h 40min
05.10.19	4. Interview (presentation of story)	Tsering	1h 20min
28.10.19	4. Interview (follow-on discussion of story)	Perpetual	1h 30min
03.11.19	3. Interview (follow-on discussion of story)	Khatere	1h 15min
23.11.19	5. Interview (last questions, presentation of story)	Tsering, Gyalsten	45min
24.11.19	4. Interview (last questions, presentation of story)	Khatere, Shafiq	45min
25.11.19	5. Interview (last questions)	Perpetual	15min

I met with Tsering five times to talk about her story, three of those discussions were filled by me asking my initial questions and follow-on questions that I had after writing her words down. Though I knew Tsering before the start of my project, she had never told me about her past before. She was very open and talkative and ready to answer all my questions. Her husband Gyalsten, on the other hand, was more reserved and talked less, so I integrated his part into Tsering's story. Towards the end of my project he opened up to me more, but unfortunately there was not enough time to include the things he had told me. The last two times I met with Tsering for my project I presented my work to her to insure everything was correct and to get her consent to the story.

I met with Khatere four times to talk about her story, the first three times enabled me to ask questions and follow-on questions that I had after writing her story down. I also talked with her husband, Shafiq, and wrote their story alternating between their perspectives. Khatere's 12-year-old son, Hossein, said he did not want to remember his past and I did not push him on it. Khatere, however, was ready to share her experiences with me and wanted other people to read about what her family had been through. She said she would even write her own contribution in Persian for me to translate and integrate into her story, but sadly she did not finish in time for me to include this in my project. The last time I saw Khatere for my project, I presented my work to her to insure everything was correct and to get her consent to the story. To do this, I had to translate the text into German since she does not speak English.

Despite being very close to Perpetual and having known her for many years, I had never asked her about her past prior to this project. I visited her twice in Essen to ask my initial and follow-on questions. I was also able to talk in detail with her husband Gregory. The last two discussions I had with Perpetual had to be done over video chat. It was not an easy time for her since she was expecting her twins and I have not yet been able to read her the final version of her story.

To gain further insight into the situation in the countries I was writing about, I read many biographies, non-fictional and fictional books portraying past and current conflicts in Tibet, Afghanistan, Nigeria, as well as other countries. This enabled me to understand in more detail the challenges Tsering, Khatere and Perpetual faced in their home countries. The history of these countries fascinated me. Inevitably, the books I read throughout my project influenced the way I wrote down Tsering's, Khatere's and Perpetual's stories. Therefore, they are indicated in the bibliography under the section *Further Reading* on page 18.

### 2.3 Photography



Figure 2: Shot during my photography course practice cooking session

Eating activates all our senses. Before we even taste the food, we see, smell, touch and taste it. However, when looking at a photo we can use only our eyes. It might not be obvious at first sight, but there is a lot of thought behind each photo in my book. I made an effort to display each dish correctly to communicate its aromas, flavours, and textures to the viewer. Food photography is an important aspect of most cookbooks since in many cases the photos are what awakens a reader's

interest in a dish and ultimately persuades him or her to cook it. If the food is not displayed well, this will most likely deter people from making it. Photos can also be used to communicate information, such as what the dish contains and what it should ultimately look like. In addition, they can show individual preparation steps in detail, or which utensils should be used. (Young, 2015)

Since I had no prior knowledge of food photography or any other photography experience, I signed up for a total of six photography lessons with professional photographer Jochen Gsell, in which I learned how to manually set the settings on my camera (Canon EOS 6D) to optimize my photos. I also gained experience in creating interesting compositions. For further guidance I used the book “Food Photography, From Snapshots to Great Shots” by Nicole S. Young.

Table 3: Photography lessons listed by date

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Duration</b>
04.02.19	Introduction, basics	2h
11.02.19	Focus on ISO settings	2h
26.02.19	Focus on aperture settings	2h
08.04.19	Focus on shutter speed settings	2h
14.04.19	Focus on interesting compositions	2h
15.04.19	Test cooking session at home with photos	2h

### 2.3.1 Important Settings: The Exposure Triangle

#### Aperture



Figure 3: Low aperture example: walnuts and tomato (photography lessons)

One of the elements of exposure is the aperture. This is the setting of a lens that allows light to pass through it and into the camera, ultimately reaching the sensor. Setting the aperture to a low number equals a larger opening of the lens, which means more light coming through and consequentially a shallower depth of field, with the background of the image out of focus. For most of my photos, I aimed to shoot at a low aperture setting to create less depth of field, thereby drawing the audience’s attention to the sharp subject of the photo. (Young, 2015)

## Shutter Speed



Figure 4: Slow shutter speed capturing movement  
example: chopping

Another element of exposure is the shutter speed. The shutter speed setting determines how long the shutter of the camera stays open to let in the light. With a fast shutter speed, the sensor will be hit with less light than with a slow shutter speed. The former “freezes” any motion and gives a clear shot while the latter can be used to capture movement in the frame with blur. Whilst photographing chopping or pouring movements I sometimes shot at a slower shutter speed and hoped to show fast chopping movements through the blur of the knife. (Young, 2015)

## ISO

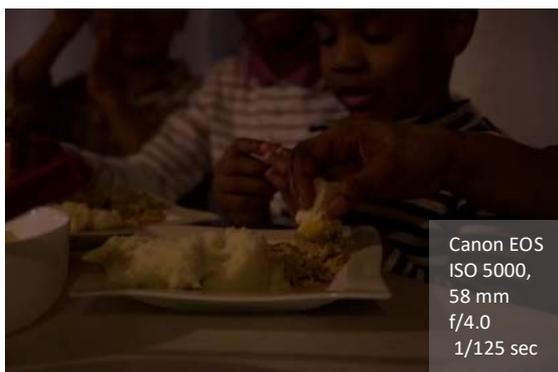


Figure 5: Example use of higher ISO in bad lighting to make subjects visible. This photo required a lot of post-processing.

The last element of the exposure triangle is the ISO (International Organization for Standardization). It describes the sensitivity of the camera’s sensor to light. A low ISO means the sensor is less sensitive to light and therefore more light is required for a bright shot. If there is not much light where the photo is being taken, a higher ISO is required. On the negative side, a high ISO increases the noise, or graininess, of the photograph. For this reason, I tried to shoot at the lowest ISO possible for crisp, noise-free images. However, cooking in the evening when it was getting dark, most natural light was gone and the indoor lighting was poor, made it hard to keep the ISO low. Fortunately, I was still able to brighten up and correct my images in Adobe Lightroom later on. (Young, 2015)

### 2.3.2 Composition



Figure 6: Image of Tsering folding momos



Figure 7: Image of Pa momos



Figure 8: Image of Ema Dashi

The composition of a photo describes the way the subject is displayed, what is visible around the subject and the perspective from which the image is shot. Adding styling props such as cutlery or ingredients and shooting from unusual perspectives are powerful ways to make a photo's composition more interesting. In Figure 6, the over-the-shoulder view makes the photo more interesting and the prepared *momos* in the background add to the composition. In Figure 7, I made the composition more unique by showing the food from the unusual birds-eye perspective. I also sprinkled crumbs around the bowl to enhance the composition by adding a little mess to make the dish look more real and attainable to the viewer. By placing a small upside-down bowl into the serving dish, I was able to float the vegetables on top of the soup to make it look more appealing (Figure 8). Without the plate, they would have sunk to the bottom of the bowl. I also placed *Tingmo* in the background to suggest this possible side dish and make the composition more interesting. (Young, 2015)

### 2.3.3 Editing the Photos and Formatting



Figure 10: Image eating raclette original



Figure 9: Image eating raclette edited

Another important part of the photos was the selecting and editing of the photos. In total I had over 4'000 Images to sort through. For the final product I used only about 100 photos. Next, I undertook slight corrections to the chosen photos such as colouring and lighting. For this I used the software Adobe Lightroom.

Initially, I had planned on using Adobe InDesign for the layout of my book, but I soon realized there was no way for me to import my written recipes from Word into the program while preserving all my previous formatting such as page references and fonts. In addition, InDesign was a completely new program to me, so I concluded I was better off using Word, since I was already familiar with its functions.

### 3 Further Publication

I have discussed with several professional book editors in Germany and Switzerland whether they might have an interest in publishing my work in a full-blown edited book. First discussions were held at the book fair in Frankfurt in October 2019.

I am currently in discussion with the following five editors about possible publication and hope to be able to present my book at the next Frankfurt Book Fair in 2020.

- AT Verlag, Aarau
- Bleicher Verlag, Gerlingen
- EMF Verlag, München
- Hädecke Verlag, Weil der Stadt
- Verlag Freies Geistesleben, Stuttgart

## 4 Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this work. First and foremost, I owe tremendous gratitude to Tsering, Kathere and Perpetual for their amazing recipes and their trust in sharing their past with me. It has been an honour and enormous pleasure working with them. I also want to thank my family, especially my parents, for their support in cooking, providing the food and helping me edit the many pictures and words in my book. I also want to express my thanks to many friends for trying out the recipes, especially Tina Buchmann, Sydney Oester, Helen Schmid, Ruby Thomas, Anna Lindermeier, Lara Schneider, Jana Snyder, Susanne Otto-Bomio, Michele Bomio, Karin Wipfli, Larissa Kalisch and Thelo Marais. Furthermore, I would like to thank Jochen Gsell for teaching me valuable photography skills and the service team at Fotoplast, Zurich, for their help in printing. Last but not least, I would like to thank Mrs. Egli, my adviser, for her great support.

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## 6 Authenticity Declaration

I, Kira Jaeger, hereby attest that I have written the presented thesis independently in my own words, unless where otherwise stated. All elements that were inspired by works other than my own are referenced in the bibliography.

Rüschlikon, December 18, 2019

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Kira Jaeger