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Eating the North: An Analysis of the Cookbook “NOMA: Time & Place in Nordic Cuisine”

L. Sasha Gora

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abstract | *A portmanteau of the Danish words nordisk (Nordic) and mad (food), Noma opened in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2003. Seven years later, it was crowned first in Restaurant Magazine’s Best Restaurant in the World competition. That same year, 2010, the restaurant published its first English cookbook NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine, authored by chef René Redzepi. In this article I analyze this cookbook, focusing on how the visuals, texts, and recipes signify time and place for diverse publics. I begin with a literature review—discussing cookbooks as tools of communication and marketing—and consider the role the visual plays in this process. How does the cookbook represent Nordic food and the region from which it comes? How does the composition of the book as a whole shape not only what is considered Nordic food, but also the Nordic region? I then closely read NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine, demonstrating how the cookbook does not represent a time and place, but instead constructs one.*



NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine

The day after Noma was crowned first in *Restaurant* magazine’s Best Restaurant in the World competition in 2010, the restaurant had 100,000 online requests for reservations.

[1] That same year, the restaurant published its first English language cookbook: *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*. [2] Authored by chef René Redzepi, the contemporary Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson penned the book’s introduction, titled “Milk Skin with Grass.” This introduction sets the tone for the book: poetic and understated. Photographed by Ditte Isager, the images throughout the cookbook depict messy arrangements of delicate food, black and white portraits of the restaurant’s suppliers, blurry shots of the restaurant’s interior, and romantic renderings of the Nordic landscape. If food acts as an expression of cultural identity, how is identity visually expressed? How do text and design support the visual? What does the visual language of this book communicate about, as the title suggests, the restaurant’s time and place in Nordic cuisine?

In a conversation with Charles Harrison in a 1969 issue of *Studio International Magazine*, Seth Siegelaub remarked: “For many years it has been well known that more people are aware of an artist’s work through (1) the printed media or (2) conversation than by direct confrontation with the art itself.” [3] With its month-long waiting list (for a restaurant that seats only forty-four) and the high cost of a multi-course meal (the menu, without wine, is 1.700DK, nearly 230€ or \$245 (US) per person), the same can be said about Noma. [4] More people, the author included, experience Noma through its cookbooks, press coverage, and social media channels than through eating its food. [5] Noma’s cookbooks complement, as well as completely substitute, the restaurant experience. The visual plays an essential role in this process.

Food and eating can be studied as both material and visual culture. One can take an economic, social, or political approach to discuss what people eat and how. Here I focus on how the medium of a cookbook communicates and constructs the food from one of the world’s best restaurants, as well as how this cookbook creates an image of the region in which the restaurant is based. [6] Beyond the physical and visual, food and its composition also channel emotions. I do not discuss how the food tastes or what it does nutritionally; instead, I discuss where it comes from, how it is presented, how it looks in front of the camera and on the printed page, how food is contextualized, the atmosphere this context creates, and what this all suggests about constructing a sense of time and place in Nordic cuisine. As the name indicates, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* is much more than a collection of recipes. The cookbook contextualizes the recipes with stories of people and places that assign them a specific cultural value related to ideas of the North and the Nordic. The recipes tell the stories behind the food, stories that express a sense of cultural identity. This makes cookbooks valuable marketing tools for the restaurant.

So, in what way can a cookbook construct and communicate a sense of time and place? How does *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* represent Nordic food and the region from which it comes? With this question in mind, I analyze the Noma cookbook, focusing on how the visuals, texts, and recipes signify time and place for diverse publics. In this article, I begin by reviewing literature that discusses cookbooks as tools of communication and marketing, and consider the role the visual plays in this process. I then closely read *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, demonstrating how the cookbook does not represent a time and place, but constructs one. I analyze the narratives formed by the visuals. I also examine the way the book is written, structured, and designed, and how this composition of the book as a whole shapes perceptions of not only Nordic food, but also the Nordic region.

The Public and Private Lives of Cookbooks

Cookbooks are about much more than just cooking and they communicate more than recipes. A cookbook is a medium for storytelling. The social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai opened his 1988 article “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India” with a description of what cookbooks do and what studying them reveals:

Cookbooks, which usually belong to the humble literature of complex civilizations, **tell unusual cultural tales**. They combine the sturdy pragmatic virtues of all manuals with the vicarious pleasures of the literature of the senses. They reflect shifts in the boundaries of edibility, the properties of the culinary process, the logic of meals, the exigencies of household budget, the vagaries of the market, and the structure of domestic ideologies.^[7]

According to Appadurai, cookbooks reveal shifting relationships between people, food, and values. This makes them cultural artifacts. Instead of merely demonstrating new ways to cook old ingredients, the Noma cookbook also introduces new ingredients. Noma highlights foraged ingredients and works with a laboratory—the Nordic food lab—that specifically focuses on developing or discovering new ingredients. Noma’s generative efforts reflect a shift in what is considered edible, a perspective specifically relevant to *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*.

How do cookbooks tell the “unusual cultural tales” that Appadurai describes? The range of unusual tales a cookbook can narrate is diverse. Anne L. Bower discusses this spectrum of stories in *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*. Although she writes specifically about community cookbooks that serve to fund-raise as opposed to

generate a profit, her findings can be applied to cookbooks in general, as she writes, “. . . cookbooks tell stories – autobiographical in most cases, historical sometimes, and perhaps fictitious or idealized in other instances.” [8] In the case of the Noma cookbook, it is autobiographical as it tells the story of Redzepi and how he became a chef. It also tells the biography of the restaurant. Furthermore, the cookbook is also historical as it constructs an idealized image of the Nordic region, both past and present, in which Noma holds an important position.

As he explores cooking in the domestic sphere, Appadurai describes only one of the many different types of cookbooks, books that operate in both the public and private spheres. Women author many books about home cooking with the intention that these books will be cooked from, typically for a family, as the standard cookbook often features recipes that serve four people. This type of cookbook follows a formula, as these cookbook authors write and test recipes in their kitchen and then share them in the format of a cookbook: as if from one home kitchen to another. Equipment is often simple and ingredients familiar. Another type of cookbook directly links the public and private spheres of cooking. Written by a chef—or perhaps a ghostwriter whose responsibility it is to shadow the chef and translate their, sometimes chaotic, cooking into standardized measurements and easy-to-follow instructions—this type of cookbook is often developed for the home cook, but with a different intention. In *American Appetite: The Coming of Age of a National Cuisine*, Leslie Brenner writes: “Although there are certainly exceptions, chef cookbooks are notoriously difficult to cook from, since they usually assume that one has elaborately made or hard-to-find ingredients at one’s fingertips.” [9] *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Food* is such a cookbook. But why does someone purchase a cookbook with no intention to cook from it? Brenner continues:

But chef books sell . . . many people don’t actually cook from cookbooks anyway; instead they read them like novels. The professional cookbook lets amateurs dream about elaborate constructions they’ll never have time to make, featuring ingredients they may not be able to find. **These books allow readers to cook vicariously to revel in fantasy meals.**[10]

As Brenner suggests, some people purchase cookbooks without the intention of ever cooking from them. This makes some cookbooks more about inspiration than utility. As she writes, it also frames these cookbooks more like novels: books read for their stories.

These stories can tell us a lot about a place and a time. As Jessamyn Neuhaus puts it in *Manly Meals and Mom’s Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America*: “. . . cookbooks reveal much about the societies that produce them.” [11] However,

assessing the role cookbooks play in society is not straightforward. Cookbooks can demonstrate what people eat as much as what people would like to eat, as Brenner argues. Neuhaus asserts that community cookbooks at least document what real women (and sometimes men) have cooked at least once.[12] The same can be said about restaurant cookbooks, like *NOMA*, as they mostly document dishes the restaurant has served. Yet, as Neuhaus writes, “Commercial cookbooks, on the other hand, function as a fascinating but murky intersection between the public forces of marketing and publishing and the private lives of those who purchase cookbooks.” [13] In other words, cookbooks, especially those penned by chefs like *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, intersect the public and private spheres, revealing the numerous “and sometimes obscure purposes” cookbooks serve.[14] *NOMA* tells stories and “unusual tales” about the restaurant that produced it, as well as the city, country, and region in which it is based.

If cookbooks tell stories, then they can also be understood as a symptom of communication. Roland Barthes suggests such a way of analyzing food as he writes, “For what is food? It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior.” [15] Cast as a system of communication, food can be “read.” Barthes continues: “To eat is a behavior that develops beyond its own ends, replacing, summing up, and signaling other behaviors, and it is precisely for these reasons that is a sign.” [16] According to Barthes, food is a sign and images of food form a visual language.

The Roles of Images in Cookbooks

Images play varying roles within cookbooks. Some cookbooks do not have photographs, as in classics like Julia Child, Louisette Bertholl, and Simone Beck’s *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and Mark Bittman’s *How To Cook Everything*. These cookbooks instead feature illustrations, which serve a more instructive than aesthetic role. These illustrations show how to make a dish, as opposed to how the dish looks or could look, if one obediently follows the instructions. However, with the popularity of glossy images of food, it is no wonder that half of the pages of *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* are full-page photographs. Photography becomes a medium for the restaurant to brand itself, portray a particular perspective, and share an experience. Images of Noma influence how people perceive the restaurant and are thus a tool for the restaurant to use as it constructs its own identity. Images become a way for followers of the restaurant, both on social media and through books, to experience Noma, even from afar.

Given the significant role images play in *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* and in other image-heavy cookbooks like it, *NOMA* can be studied in the context of visual culture. From its title, W.J.T. Mitchell’s essay “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture” approaches the field of visual culture by asking: How do we show seeing? [17] How do we talk about it, describe it, and understand it? The title brings to mind when one tries on someone else’s glasses, trying on their vision, like one would try to on a new winter coat. Mitchell’s text seeks to answer what visual culture is, what seeing is, and how it works. However, he confesses that he does not have categorical answers for defining visual culture. Instead, he offers the reader his personal take on visual culture and visual studies and where the field is heading. He prefers the term visual culture to visual studies as it is less neutral and assumes that vision is constructed, and thus there is a culture of seeing. [18] In describing an exercise he performs with students to “show seeing” he summarizes that “. . . the questions to ask about images are not just ‘what do they mean?’ or ‘what do they do?’ but ‘what is the secret of their vitality?’ and ‘what do they want?’ ” [19] This leads to the question: what do pictures in cookbooks want? What do the pictures in *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* want?



Pictures in the cookbook | NOMA: *Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, page 146-147

Chef cookbooks are more than just sources of inspiration; they are also persuasive marketing tools, which is one possible answer to the question of what pictures in cookbooks want or what they do. Images sell. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright begin their chapter on visual culture and consumption with a reminder: “Images are not free. Visual images play a primary role in the commerce of contemporary societies.” [20] Even beyond advertising images, Sturken and Cartwright’s assertion suggests that visual images in general are entangled and active in commerce. Their primary role is to advertise with the intention to sell. Sturken and Cartwright write: “Such advertising images are central to the construction of cultural ideas about lifestyle, self-image, self-improvement, and glamour . . . Advertising often presents an image of things to be desired, people to be envied, and life as it ‘should’ be.” [21]

If advertising is an abstraction, a means for producing lifestyle-based desire projected into the future, what does this imply for a cookbook with photographs? Photographs work differently than illustrations, and Sturken and Cartwright discuss them specifically, writing, “. . . photographs always carry with them the connotation of photographic truth

yet are also a primary source of fantasy, they provide important dual meanings in many advertisements.” [22] In order for a photograph to function as an advertisement, it needs this sense of fantasy. The image needs to be familiar enough—which is achieved through photography and the notion of photographic truth—that one can imagine oneself in it, but foreign enough that it occupies a temporal space other than the present. Advertising images are about transformation. Ads do not show who one is, but who one can become. This transformative emphasis also introduces an element of fantasy in food photography, especially the images presented in a cookbook. Cookbooks often represent not what one is eating, but what one could eat, as Neuhaus revealed. This is especially true of *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* due to its elaborate instructions and unfamiliar ingredients. In addition to showing how specific dishes should look, these images function as part of the restaurant’s overall visual branding. In depicting particular dishes, they assert a specific style and market the restaurant as a whole.

Before the rise of food-focused blogs and websites, cookbooks were the primary channel through which recipes were shared in written form and circulated. Although not necessary, images help cookbooks to demonstrate recipes, contextualize them, and to tell their larger stories. Images can be especially useful for novice cooks, but also frustrating. Images are useful in the sense that they establish a clear expectation of how the dish should look, but also frustrating when a novice’s attempt looks little like the professional cook or recipe tester’s end result.

Beyond cookbooks, food magazines, and general publications that cover topics related to food, one now finds images of food on social media and across the Internet. Photographing food changes its status. Food on a plate has a use value. It feeds you, relieving hunger, often providing pleasure. Food in an image becomes purely representative, aesthetic. Its use value is to communicate, either to promote a restaurant or recipe, or to personally promote someone’s lifestyle, thus functioning as cultural capital. This also describes the act of an individual photographing and sharing their meal at an exclusive restaurant. In her discussion of what “food porn” is and whether it exists, Anne E. McBride refers to critic Richard Magee’s discussion of food’s performative dimensions: “Food, when removed from the kitchen, becomes divorced from its nutritive or taste qualities and enters a realm where surface appearance is all-important.” [23] McBride’s reference to Magee is significant as it implies that images of food have the potential to render food as something that is purely decorative. Its only function is to be seen. When an image of a dish appears on a social media site, it documents and aestheticizes food. This can be classified as what Roland Barthes describes as “ornamental cookery.” [24] Barthes specifically addressed the glossy

photographs of *Elle* magazine, but his observations are applicable to many photographs of food:

This ornamental cookery is indeed supported by wholly mythical economics. This is an openly dream-like cookery . . . which never show the dishes except from a high angle, as objects at once near and inaccessible, whose consumption can perfectly well be accomplished simply by looking. [25]

Because the dishes are ornamental, they become inaccessible. Their purpose is to be eaten with the eyes and not with the mouth. However, when an image is paired with a recipe, as in cookbooks, it has the purpose of providing an instructive model of how the final dish should look, even though the final dish may still be inaccessible. In the case of *NOMA*, the images provide a blueprint for what following the recipes step-by-step can produce in the end. This implies that no matter how exotic the ingredients or how demanding the recipe steps may be, the images are more than ornamental, even if their instructional purpose may remain inaccessible.

In addition to recipe writers, restaurants, cookbook authors, bloggers, and social media stars, consumers also produce food photography. Photographs of food are incredibly popular. Brendan I. Koerner argues that food photography on social media is so common because:

Among the basic human needs . . . food is the one that’ s most ideal for sharing on social media: It’ s more wholesome than sex, more titillating than shelter, and quite a bit more photogenic than water. Because passion for food is so universal, posting photos of it . . . is a surefire way to establish an emotional connection with followers. [26]

According to Koerner, food provides a common way to connect. More importantly, it serves as a socially accepted way of connecting publicly over a shared physical need (and pleasure). This casts images of food as emotional and personal, something to which nearly everyone can relate. This reveals how images of food connote both consuming and sharing. Signe Rousseau addresses this in *Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet*, as she asks: “What does it mean, similarly, if cooking becomes more geared to producing a perfect picture for a blog post, rather than the anticipation of sharing a good meal with your friends and family? Some bloggers would say that virtual sharing is no less valuable than anything IRL [in real life] . . .” [27] Working to answer the question of why sharing images of food on social media is so popular, Rousseau suggests that it is the sharing that is most important. Food, both in its digital and physical forms, can be a

medium for connecting and sharing. But this also demonstrates the difficulty in separating food from the image of a food. Rousseau also asserts that food has a complicated relationship to status: “For one thing, and unlike most other artifacts, food is made to be consumed. It represents an event, not a thing.” [28] If food represents an event and not a thing, can the same be said about images of food? Similar to debates in contemporary art regarding performance art, this introduces the question of whether the documentation is also the artwork; so in Rousseau’s case, is the description of food also part of the event, or is it merely a representation of the event?[29]



Food and image, art and connection | NOMA: *Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, page 192-193

From still life painting to post-studio practices, there exists a long tradition of art engaging with, representing, and working with food. However, art that uses or depicts food operates differently than the practice of picking up one’s phone and photographing what is on one’s plate. What does this habit of reaching for one’s phone and taking a picture, before even tasting the food, communicate about how we experience and understand food today? With so many cameras around, how a dish looks may become

nearly as important as how it tastes. After all, the saying goes that “we eat with our eyes.” Koerner documents how many non-professional photographers taking pictures of their food affects professional food photography, as he writes:

That amateur deluge has put pressure on elite food photographers to do more with their shots. Now that it’s so easy to make a humble sandwich look like manna from heaven, the best food photographers are taking a turn for the avant-garde, producing pictures that inspire their viewers to meditate as well as salivate. In other words, **food photography is going through the same transition that art forms like painting and music experienced when competence becomes ubiquitous;** the true artists respond by breaking with conventions that have become stifling.[\[30\]](#)

This so called “amateur deluge” suggests that, at a professional level, a photograph of food needs to be more than just a pretty picture since, as Koerner implies, anyone can now take one. Therefore, as Koerner suggests, images of food need to do more than just make the viewer hungry. They need to tell a story or communicate an emotion or simply surprise the viewer. This creates space for photographs of food to be less traditionally appetizing.[\[31\]](#) This applies to *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, as it includes photographs of “raw materials.” This positions the ingredients so that they can tell stories about where they are from, as opposed to simply depicting the end product on a plate. For example, a picture of a raw fish may not be traditionally appetizing, but in the context of *NOMA*, it encourages the reader to think about the waters from which the fish comes, and—because of the photograph’s abstract composition—to visually take in the fish’s texture.

Reading Noma: How It Signifies Time and Place

Considered the protagonist of the reinvention of Nordic food, Noma has banned staple restaurant ingredients such as tomatoes and olive oil in its kitchen.[\[32\]](#) Instead the restaurant only cooks and serves ingredients that are “native” to the region. Noma makes it clear that what the restaurant serves reflects an interpretation of Nordic food rather than “traditional” Nordic food. However, since cuisine, like culture, is often in flux, what are the differences between “invention” and “reinvention” or “interpretation” and “reinterpretation?” What is considered to be Nordic or Scandinavian restaurant cuisine may not always overlap significantly with historic diets in the region. And yet it provides great insight into how Nordic food and its landscape are conceptualized today and which ingredients are allowed to take part.

From its design and first pages, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* seeks to define the Nordic through elements material, visual, and textual. A mammoth of a book, it measures roughly 25.9 x 4.1 x 30 cm and its shipping weight is 2.8 kg. At 368 pages, this is not a book to pack to read on the bus. It is a book that should stay put, a classic coffee table book. The cover is a pale grey and the name of the restaurant appears engraved in capital letters in two rows of two. The letters themselves are marbled shades of grey, resembling the bark of a birch tree. Although birch trees grow in other regions, the book’s graphic design claims them for the Nordic countries. They become a sign of the Nordic. Printed with different types of paper, the book clearly separates the photographs (200 color photographs) from the text. The pages present a spectrum of muted pastels: a peachy nude, a pale yellow, a pale pink, a light blue, a dusty grey, and classic white, which is reserved for the photograph captions alone.

Just before the table of contents rests a foldout map titled, “A Map of the Nordic Region.” One review of the cookbook refers to it as adorable, “like something from a children’s adventure book.” [33] A very basic illustration of a skinny birch tree appears on the first part of the map that folds out, drawing a connection to the birch pattern on the book’s cover. The map has a similar aesthetic, with loose sketches of trees and houses that would not feel out of place in a book illustrated by Quentin Blake (of Roald Dahl fame) or Edward Gorey, both of whom are known for using messy and wispy strokes of ink. Never neat, their illustrations are always illustrative and recognizable. A caption explains the map: “Names show the locations of some of the most important of Noma’s suppliers.” Identifying Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, the map clearly marks which countries belong to the Nordic region, as well as those that do not. Although parts of the Baltic States and Russia appear as dusty landmasses of trees, they are not identified. Even though they might be home to similar, and even the same, ingredients that are associated with Nordic (and new Nordic) cuisine, they are not included in Noma’s geography. They exist outside of the borders that Noma draws.

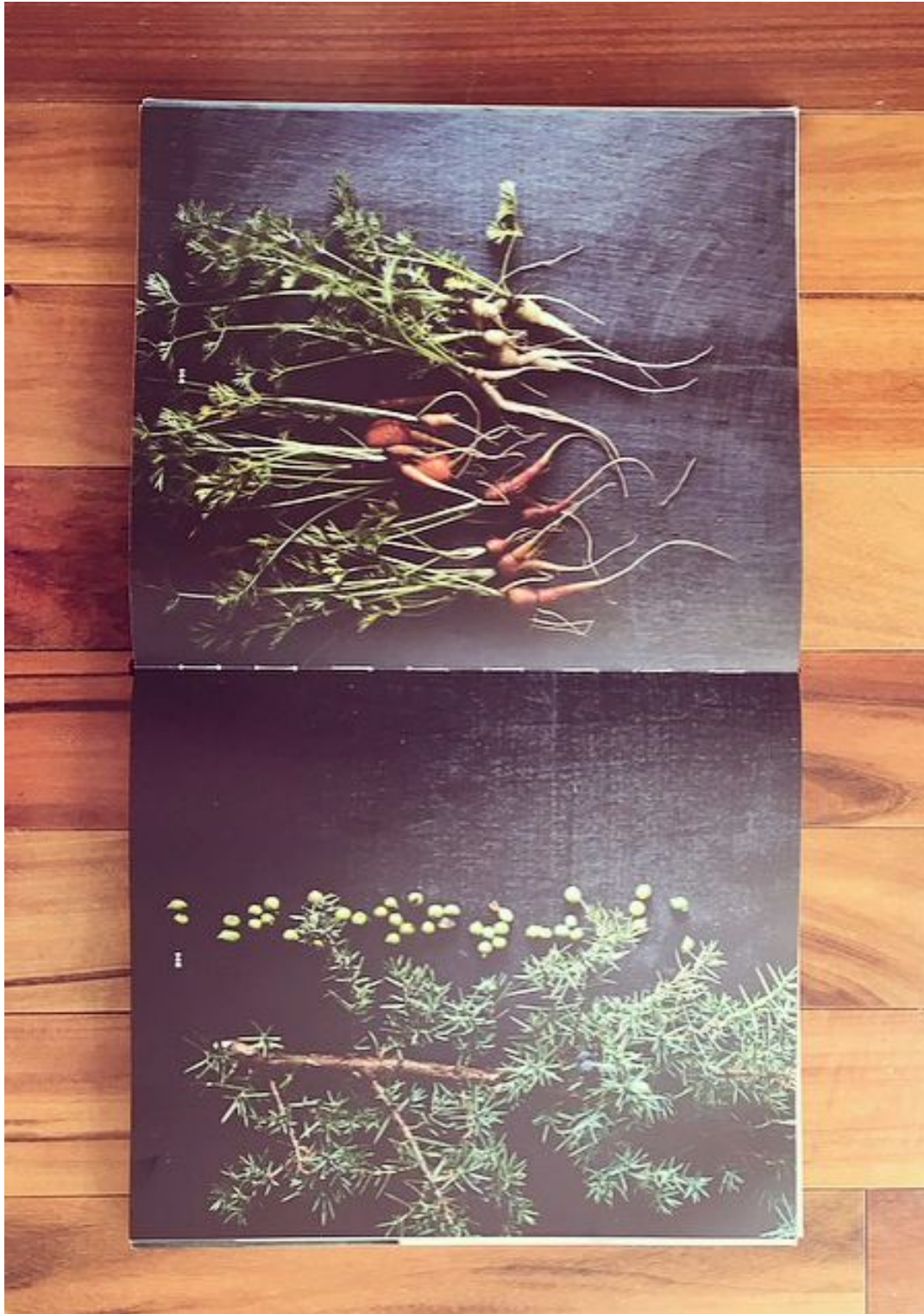
These mapped borders also reveal how regions are constructed. Although geographically Copenhagen is closer to Estonia than it is to Greenland, because of political history, Greenland is mapped as belonging to the same region, while Estonia is not. The map, therefore, visually represents the areas the Nordic region includes, as well as those it excludes, revealing the ambivalent distinction between Scandinavia and the Nordic region. Why is it new Nordic cuisine and not new Scandinavian cuisine? After all, Denmark is one of the three core Scandinavian countries, along with Norway and Sweden. Depending on the context and whom one asks, some of the other Nordic countries may or

may not be considered part of Scandinavia. Considered a cultural region, Scandinavia shares language, history, and government. The Nordic region, however, is considered to be a geographical and cultural region. Therefore, it is the combination of geography and culture that defines how the borders of the Nordic region are imagined.

After the map is the table of contents. It reads poetically with chapter titles such as “The Perfect Storm,” “Time and Place,” “The Weather Recipes,” and “The Raw Materials.” The renowned Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, who in 2016 published his own cookbook, authored the first essay, “Milk Skin with Grass.” [34] Having a contemporary artist set the stage is an unusual strategy for a cookbook. The essay draws parallels between food and art, as it claims: “We do not stop the world when we eat; we go into it a little more deeply.” [35] Eliasson writes just as much about nature as he does about food, which directly addresses the notion of place in the book’s title. Food, like people, he argues are deeply rooted and cannot be understood without these roots. In his words: “. . . the potato cannot be separated from the soil in which it has grown. René knows that.” [36] He then describes a dish he tried: “the ‘Newly-Ploughed Potato Field’ —a dish of brownish-black, knobby, crunchy food. And, just like the tree and the potato, the meal on the plate is part of a bigger system . . . they, like us, are inseparable from the environment.” [37] In both recipes and photographs, Noma repeatedly refers to ecosystems. Actual moss, for example, forms a bed on which to serve snails, a tongue-in-cheek reference to a snail’s natural habitat. This way of plating a meal keeps the environmental origins of an ingredient intact and, most importantly, imaginable for diners. Instead of separating the ingredient from the place from which it comes, the plate represents said place, thus further emphasizing the relationship between food and place at Noma.



Snails and moss | NOMA, page 202



NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine, page 144

Beyond recipes and photographs, the book also includes: two essays about the start of the restaurant and Redzepi's journey as a chef; excerpts from Redzepi's diary as he

traveled around the Nordic region searching for ingredients and suppliers; a description of the restaurant’s main growers, foragers, and suppliers; small Polaroid-style pictures of the staff, who come from across the world; a glossary; and an index. A photograph accompanies each recipe; however, the photographs appear first in a cluster with a list of dishes printed on a separate sheet. Names are printed in loud, bold, capital letters. Throughout the cookbook, all photographs feature captions. Portraits of both people and ingredients are identified by name and place. A photograph of quail eggs is captioned: “Quail Eggs – About 600 quail eggs from the Danish island of Fynen are cooked every week at the restaurant.” [38] This is one way that the cookbook constructs a sense of time and place. The cookbook presents ingredients with a place of origin, a clear context. The cookbook communicates how many quail eggs are cooked per week at the restaurant and, equally important, where the eggs came from.

The cookbook also employs a “Scandinavian” aesthetic: simple and minimal, but with messy details. The aesthetic is clean without being perfect or boring. The palette is muted and natural. The cookbook expresses closeness with nature. For example, instead of using the word “ingredients,” the text tends to use “raw materials.” The cookbook also emphasizes the food and restaurant as “unpretentious.” The second essay— “The Perfect Storm” by Rune Skyum-Nielsen—actually uses the word “unpretentious” four times in its seven pages.



Restaurant interior | NOMA, page 246-247

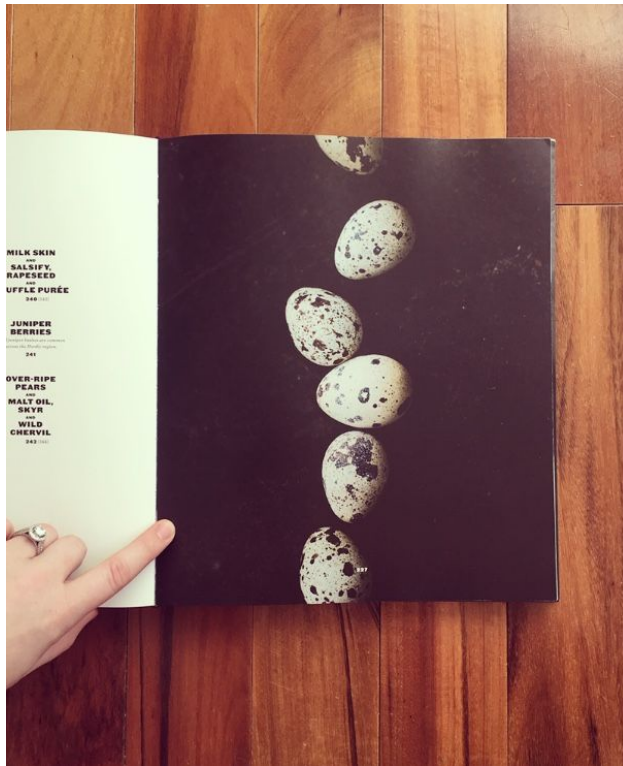


Restaurant interior | NOMA, page 248

Furthermore, the style of the photographs mirrors the style of the restaurant's décor. The last full-page photograph in the book renders a blurry depiction of Noma's interior.

[39] The caption reads: “Noma is on the Copenhagen waterfront and natural light floods in throughout the day. Stone, wood, and iron are the dominant materials.” [40] Sheepskins drape over modern Danish chairs with backs made from wood and seats upholstered in leather. The tables are bare without tablecloths, and the tableware resembles smooth white shells and textured grey rocks. The wooden beams of the building are exposed. The blurred photograph of the restaurant décor further reflects this minimal, yet messy aesthetic. Similar to how the dishes at Noma reflect whole ecosystems, the design of the restaurant interior and its representation through photographs aim to visually connect the restaurant’s interior with the region’s exterior. All of the building materials look recognizable to their raw forms. This constructs a sense that Noma is a part of the Nordic landscape itself, instead of merely a representation of it.

A range of actors and many hands constructed the visual profile of Noma and the Nordic. The *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* photographer Ditte Isager was born and raised in Copenhagen, where she recently relocated after several years in New York. Her website describes her as “shooting interiors, personalities, lifestyle and travel. Working with contrast in materials, light, color, and objects. Inspiration comes from the light in the Danish masters, Hammershøj & Krøyer.” [41] Before photographing Noma, she worked with celebrity chefs, such as Gordon Ramsay on *Cooking for Friends* in 2008 and Padma Lakshmi on *Tangy, Tart, Hot and Sweet: A World of Recipes for Every Day* in 2007. [42] Copenhagen-based Christine Rudolph styled the photos. London-based Studio Frith designed the book, and Hannah Warren, also based in London, illustrated the map. Unlike her cookbooks for Ramsay and Lakshmi, which shine the spotlight on a single chef, Isager’s photography for *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* depicts the region and ecosystems in which the restaurant is based. Styling, photography, the illustrations of the map, and the overall design each construct this effect. The photographs could be fine art prints. Food is lightly styled and plates are never crowded. The images jump back and forth between shots of nature (freshly cut logs of birch wood, the birch tree referenced on both the cover and in the map), portraits of ingredients (such as an extreme close-up of pike-perch that crisply captures the texture of the fish’s scales), and people.



Quail eggs | NOMA: *Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, page 227

As a cookbook, there are also images of plated dishes, such as *turbo skirts and cheeks*, *asparagus and verbena*, or *chicken skin and ryebread*, *smoked cheese and lumpfish roe*.^[43] The recipe names are descriptive, listing exactly what will appear on the plate, as opposed to imaginative. Some pictures capture the before and after, referencing the alchemy of cooking. The quail eggs, featured on one page, transform on another into a dish that looks almost gift-wrapped, as they are served smoked. However, the transformation from raw to cooked does not render the ingredients or “raw materials” unrecognizable. It is Noma’s style to keep the roots of an ingredient or dish intact. Furthermore, although many of the photographs in *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic*

Cuisine are placeless in that they do not have any signs from which to decipher their location—such as close-ups of certain ingredients—the rest of the design elements in the book, such as the map and the captions, firmly root them in the Nordic region.

The publisher, Phaidon Press, also headquartered in London, further shaped the cookbook’s final product. Other famed chefs, such as Ferran Adrià and Magnus Nilsson, have published cookbooks with Phaidon. Specializing in “lifestyle books” that cover fields such as art, design, architecture, fashion, and food, Phaidon’s widely recognized books focus on a global audience. How much did Phaidon’s involvement guide the representation of Noma, new Nordic food, and the Nordic region? How much do the photographs represent Noma’s style, and how much do they represent the overall aesthetic of Phaidon’s cookery collection? The many hands that were involved in creating this book, both in the Nordic region and outside of it, reveal that both insiders and outsiders shaped the construction of Noma’s time and place in Nordic cuisine. With Phaidon’s global reach and London headquarters, the book targets an audience mostly outside of the Nordic region, of outsiders looking in.

In addition to the many stakeholders involved in producing, selling, and consuming *NOMA*, exotic ingredients shape the experience of economy and act as status symbols. The cookbook celebrates what is edible, yet not often eaten. Meat does not steal the show, but when it does appear it is often cooked sous-vide, which is typical of fine dining. What does steal the show are the unusual and exotic ingredients, many made into vinegars and pickles. Jane Kramer, in an article for *the New Yorker* examines the relationship between ingredients and social status at Noma, writing:

He [Redzepi] says that the point of Noma isn't to feed the rich—that in his best-possible-world Noma would be free, because ‘there is nothing worse than charging people for conviviality.’ **The point is to demonstrate how good cooking with regional food, anywhere in the world, can be.** His mission is to spread the word . . . The restaurant is a showcase, a virtuoso reminder that only a small fraction of the planet's bounty gets to anyone's dinner table, and that most of it is just as good as what does get there—even better, if it's **cooked with patience, imagination, and a little hot-cold chemistry.** [44]

One is left wondering if it is possible to demonstrate these values—that we can eat many more ingredients than the ones we routinely pick up at the market, that we need to cook with more knowledge and creativity and time—in a more accessible form than a gourmet restaurant. The cookbook plays a greater role in this mission than the restaurant can.

With such intense focus upon the exotic, it is significant that many of the ingredients Noma uses are not familiar to people outside of the Nordic region, or perhaps within it either. Therefore text plays a vital role, even though it is kept separate from the photographs in the book. Roland Barthes relays how text functions in this context, arguing: “Show a plateful of something (in an *Amieux* advertisement), I may hesitate in identifying the forms and masses; the caption (‘*rice and tuna fish with mushrooms*’) helps me to choose *the correct level of perception*, permits me to focus not simply my gaze but also my understanding” (original italics). [45] The correct level of perception suggests that there is a way that the image is intended to be read, which introduces an element of control. Barthes continues:

The text is indeed the creator's (and hence society's) right of inspection over the image; anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility – in the face of the projective power of pictures – for the use of the message. With respect to the liberty of the signifieds of the image, the text thus has a *repressive* value and **we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested** (original italics). [46]

NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Food takes a different approach, perhaps a less authoritative one. Because photographs are kept separate from text, one encounters the image of an unfamiliar ingredient before its description. One often has to flip through many more photographs before landing on the page with the captions. This leaves room for readers to ponder and daydream about what they might be looking at, engaging in the fantasy inherent in this type of cookbook.

Although the photographs leave room for the mind to wander, the recipes do not. Measurements are in grams and painstakingly precise. Unlike the photographs and essays, directions are clear, impersonal, minimal, and without poetic language. This may be because the cookbook is not necessarily meant for cooking instruction. As Tejal Rao writes in *The Atlantic*:

Since Redzepi’s ingredients are collected from another time and place than your own, it will be difficult in some cases . . . if you’re looking to actually replicate dishes from the restaurant . . . **A book this personal, this generous, isn’t for duplicating. It’s for inspiring.** For playing. An armchair chef might dreamily flip through the photos and read the essays, absorbing the instructions from the recipes, imagining the flavor combinations. An adventurous cook might apply that sea lettuce technique—pickled, protected with baking paper and heated until translucent—to the greens he can find.[\[47\]](#)

Rao suggests that readers can use this cookbook as a lens through which to see the ingredients of one’s own time and place. Returning to Seth Siegelau, the cookbook is about experiencing the restaurant, its vision, style, and story, from afar. For those reading the cookbook outside of the Nordic region, it is just as much about an imagined journey to the Nordic countries as it is about fantastical food.

Defining Noma and the Nordic

Although Noma was founded and is based in Copenhagen, travel has been a part of the restaurant’s evolution. In the winter of 2015, Noma temporarily relocated to Tokyo, a move much different than a restaurant simply opening another location elsewhere. In order to relocate to Tokyo, Noma in Copenhagen took a hiatus. Furthermore, what was on the menu in Tokyo cannot be considered “Nordic” food. Instead, the concept was to take the Noma approach and apply it to Japanese ingredients. In 2016, the restaurant did the same in Sydney, Australia, this time applying the Noma approach to Australian ingredients, and traveled to Mexico in 2017.[\[48\]](#)

What does this say about Noma’s relationship to the Nordic region? When located in Copenhagen, what Noma serves can be described as Nordic cuisine, or more accurately new Nordic cuisine. However, the fact that the restaurant has set up shop elsewhere suggests that Noma’s approach coheres to an overarching philosophy which is just as important as its ingredients. Although Appadurai specifically addresses the creation of a national cuisine in India and the interplay that takes place in cookbooks in India between “regional inflection and national standardization,” some of Appadurai’s arguments can be applied to analyzing the cuisines produced in very different cultural contexts.

[49] Regarding cookbooks with a regional focus, Appadurai writes:

These regional and ethnic cookbooks do two things: Like tourist art, they begin to provide people from one region or place a systematic glimpse of the culinary traditions of another; and they also represent a growing body of food-based characterizations of the ethnic Other. **These two functions are distinct but intimately connected.**[50]

Diners at Noma in Copenhagen therefore expect a “Nordic” experience. Diners at Noma in Tokyo might then expect a high-dining experience with a “Nordic” approach to their own regions and ingredients. In this way, they see their own landscapes, fauna and flora, and food through the eyes of someone else. Rao suggested the cookbook could achieve this for faraway readers. *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* can be considered both a chef’s cookbook and a cookbook of regional cuisine. It was written before Noma started to migrate elsewhere for the winter season, which feels fittingly Nordic. *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* represents fine dining, but a version of it that is deeply rooted in a specific region, as opposed to a version of placeless haute cuisine, in which fresh raspberries are served no matter the season.

To talk about local food is to talk about land—the land from which the food comes and the stories told about it. This brings up the French notion of *terroir*, which Amy Trubek discusses in *The Taste of Place: A Culinary Journey Into Terroir*. She writes:

In France, food and drink from a certain place are thought to possess unique tastes. Thus, more than words, ***terroir* and *goût du terroir* are categories that frame perceptions and practices – a worldview, or should we say a foodview?** The agrarian roots of *terroir* best explain the origins and persistence of this foodview. *Terroir* and *goût du terroir* are categories for framing and explaining people’s relationships to the land, be it sensual, practical, or habitual. This connection is considered essential, as timeless as the earth itself.[51]

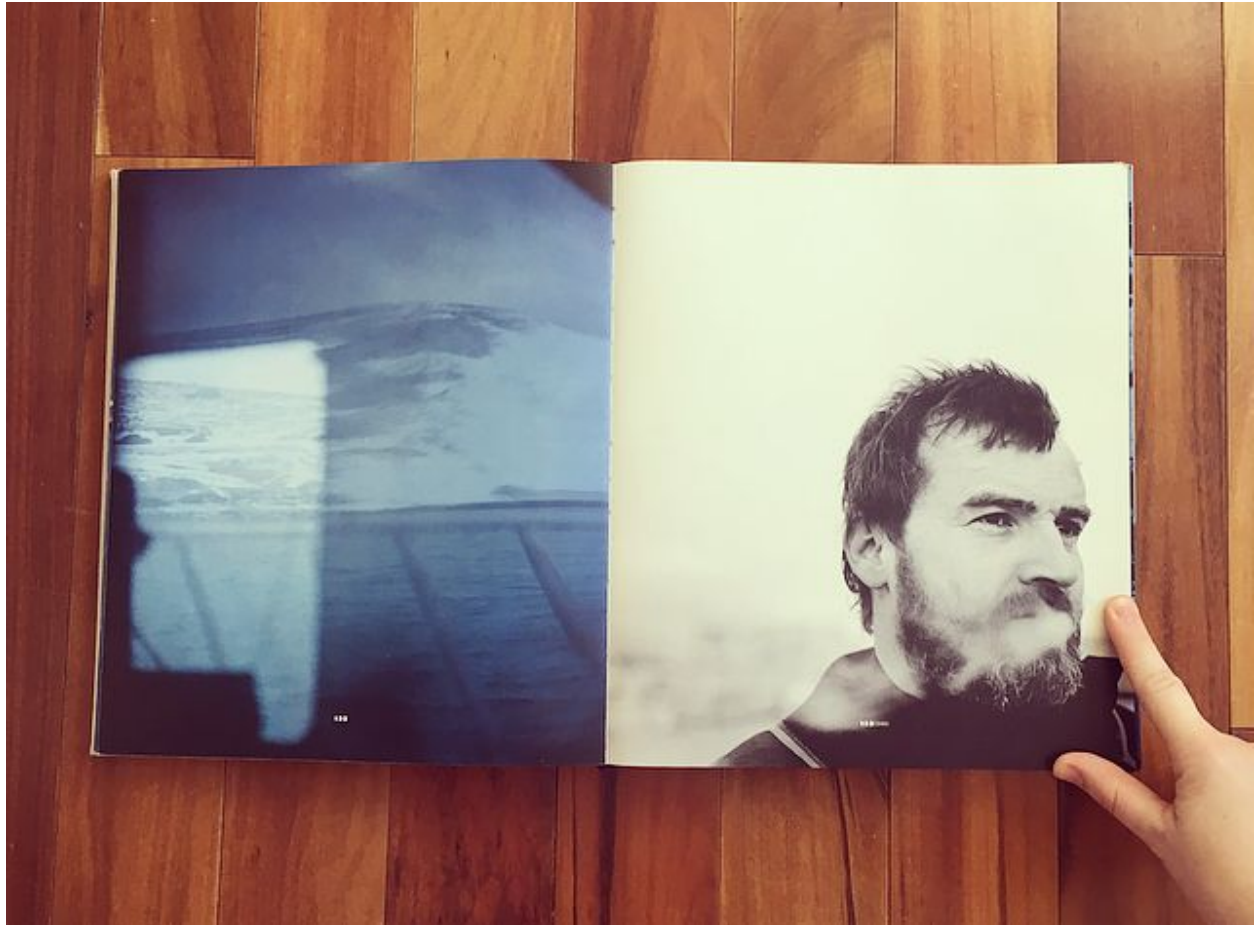
By describing *terroir* as a category rather than a word, Trubek demonstrates how the concept has been naturalized into a way of classifying foods and their connection to land. However, *terroir* and *goût du terroir* do not describe the relationship between food and land; they only describe how people perceive the relationship between food and land.

However, regions overlap, as do flavors. Regarding the food itself, food writer Mark Bittman introduces the possibility of places as opposed to the singular place: “Much of the food *is* actually Nordic, though not exclusively so: the pan-seared langoustine with oyster-parsley purée, for example, could be claimed just as legitimately by New Orleans.” [52] This is a good reminder not to go too far down the route of believing that one dish is only specific to one region. Noma’s focus on its direct locality also relates to how David Inglis and Debra Gimlin discuss the relationship between food, place, and the global in *The Globalization of Food*. They write: “Far from destroying more local and specific senses of belonging, identity and affiliation, globalization processes may actually help reinvigorate, if not in fact *create*, these.” [53] The global demand for regional identity helps to create it.

Barthes’ s reading of how a Panzani advertisement for pasta and sauce suggests “Italianicity” provides a roadmap for interpreting the connection between food and place, which can be applied to *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*. Barthes writes:

To express these semes of connotation would therefore require a special metalanguage and we are left with barbarisms of the *Italianicity* kind as best being able to account for the signifieds of connotation, the suffix *-icity* deriving an abstract noun from the adjective: ***Italianicity is not Italy, it is the condensed essence of everything that could be Italian, from spaghetti to painting*** (original italics). [54]

Barthes clarifies that “Italianicity” is something other than Italy. By referring to it as the condensed essence, he alludes to what this term does not include. It refers to fragments of a culture rather than a whole. Applying this to *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, do the cookbook images suggest a “Nordicity?”



Norwegian fjord and Roderick Sloan, sea urchin supplier | *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, page 132-133

Some of the pictures in the cookbook create an atmosphere that visualizes what one has come to expect to find in the Nordic region, such as an image of a blue-tinted landscape, reflected through the windows of a boat.^[55] The window suggests that inside and outside are separated, but the image blurs this distinction, as one cropped area is clearer than the rest, presenting a view one would expect to not be filtered through a window. The photograph has three vertical layers: the top is a muted blue sky, the center a snow-capped hill, and the bottom water that appears to be more turquoise than blue. The caption reveals that this is a Norwegian fjord: “A beautiful fjord in Arctic Norway, shot from the window of a small fishing boat.”^[56] To its right is a black and white portrait of a man, who the caption reveals to be Roderick Sloan from Bodø, who supplies Noma with sea urchins.^[57] Although the background is blurred, it looks icy, freezing, emphasized by the man’s breath, which is clearly captured. Together the images suggest a rugged yet refined image of the Nordic region. To borrow the words of Barthes, “Nordicity” is then the “condensed essence of everything that could be Nordic.” The cookbook images

construct a universal Nordic that blurs the distinction between inside and outside, emphasizing a closeness with nature. Noma imagines Nordic nature as blue, icy, and rugged, but also, like Isager’s style of photography, refined, simple, and beautiful.

In “The Food at Our Feet. Why is Foraging all the Rage?,” Jane Kramer further hints at what can be considered “Nordicity:”

A Nordic cuisine, for Redzepi, begins with harvesting the vast resources of a particular north—running west from Finland through Scandinavia and across the North Atlantic to the Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland—and using them to evoke and, in the end, re-imagine and refine **a common culture of rye grains, fish, fermentation, salt, and smoke, inherited from farmers and fishermen with hardscrabble lives and a dour Protestant certainty that those lives wouldn’t be getting easier.** [58]

Here the Nordic countries are tied together with types of foods (rye grains and fish), modes of preparation (fermentation, salt, and smoke), lifestyle (origins in “hardscrabble” outdoor professions), and religion (Protestant). Kramer depicts Redzepi’s imagining of this region as one with “vast resources.” However, by referring to Redzepi’s imagining of a “particular” north, Kramer reveals that this is only one of other possible norths. This is the north that Noma chooses to champion.

In his study of food advertising, Barthes provides additional tools for making sense of Noma’s time and place in Nordic cuisine, as he writes:

The first of these assigns to food a function that is . . . commemorative: food permits a person . . . to partake each day of the national past . . . this historical quality is obviously linked to food techniques (preparation and cooking). These have long roots . . . They are, we are told, the repository of a whole experience, of the accumulated wisdom of our ancestors . . . The historical theme, which was so often sounded in our advertising, mobilizes two different values: on the one hand, it implies an aristocratic tradition . . . on the other hand, food frequently carries notions of representing the flavorful survival of an old, rural society that is itself highly idealized. In this manner, **food brings the memory of the soil into our very contemporary life** . . . [59]

Barthes implies that connecting food to history increases its value. Food provides a way of remembering and performing the past. This notion of food’s commemorative function also fits with Kramer’s description of what can be considered a common Nordic past.

Food connects the table to the soil, and the soil is where notions of place and regional identities take root. Kramer’s mention of farmers and fishermen also exemplifies Barthes’ notion of valuing a historical, rural society’s survival. In the context of food and Noma, soil is emphasized, not blood.^[60]

Various actors designed *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* to trigger a sense of shared soil and a common past. As Coleen Cotter discusses, cookbooks play a role in constructing the communities and audiences they aim to reach. In approaching recipes as a form of narrative that can be studied both formally and structurally, she stresses the importance of word choice, as she writes, “There are, of course, broader implications in looking at the language of recipes, particularly the way in which language constructs community, establishes personal identity, and tells us who belongs and who is the outsider.” ^[61] This relates to the map in *NOMA*, and how the restaurant determines the boundaries of Nordic cuisine. A shared language makes it easier to imagine a shared past. Published in English, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* targets an international audience. Furthermore, it constructs an image of the Nordic region and its food in the English language, as opposed to Danish. The same can be said about a shared geography. By mapping the Nordic region within its pages, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* draws boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Because of proximity, Danes, Scandinavians, and inhabitants of other parts of the Nordic region are much more likely to have the chance to visit the restaurant than people who do not live there. However, they are not the restaurant’s target audience, nor the cookbook’s. As exemplified by its pop-ups in other parts of the world, Noma seeks to engage an international elite. The difficulty in securing a reservation and the high price makes Noma much more likely to be a one-off experience for diners as opposed to a restaurant one visits again and again. Because the restaurant targets an international clientele, the cookbook takes on a further role as a marketing device. For those who can afford the trip and the meal, the cookbook does not just inspire readers, but also attracts potential dinners. This begins to describe Noma’s setting, an element that Bower includes when analyzing cookbooks. She first begins with the setting, which she asserts “includes historical time and social milieu . . .” ^[62] The physical setting for Noma ranges between the outdoors—where “raw materials” are foraged and harvested, hunted and caught—and a professional kitchen where ingredients are artistically prepared. And the social milieu is not a local restaurant occupied by regulars, but an international destination for fine-dining clientele.

Expressing an identity through food to people elsewhere, to outsiders, is a part of expressing an identity in one's region to insiders. Even when Noma cooks outside of the Nordic region with another locale's ingredients, there is this sense that distance does not weaken the connection between the restaurant's home base of Copenhagen and the Nordic region. Although the championing of local ingredients is a global trend, definitions of local are rooted in a particular place and how locality is imagined through food. Local is enacted by both local actors—ranging from chefs like René Redzepi, restaurants like Noma, organizations like the Nordic Food Lab, and publically funded institutions such as Nordic Co-operation—and international ones—such as food writers and stylists, photographers, and cookbook publishers, which each shape the perception of the local. An international audience then experiences this local through the work of these actors: in cookbooks and restaurant reviews, in photographs and recipes. In these ways, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* does not represent a time and place, but constructs one for global consumption by various and diverse publics.

Conclusion: The Construction of Time and Place

In what way can a cookbook—through photography, text, and recipes—communicate a sense of time and place? The experience of time and place varies depending upon who is experiencing it. For an international audience, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* offers the reader a journey to the North, or a North, as well as an experience of the Nordic region through a story of a single restaurant, its recipes, and the ingredients, places, and people behind them. For such an audience, the cookbook also doubles as an alternative to dining at the restaurant. It allows for an experience of the restaurant without boarding a plane to Copenhagen. As Seth Siegelaub remarked, it creates an awareness of the restaurant without an experience of it. For an international audience, the cookbook also communicates what is part of the Nordic region, and what is not. It draws borders that include and exclude. For a local audience, the cookbook takes on a documentary role by constructing, and then preserving, the present time and place of Noma, Nordic food, and even the Nordic region. Diners who are able to secure a reservation and afford a meal at Noma also engage in this documentary role. For those who have experienced the food at Noma as “the event,” as opposed to only its documentation, the cookbook becomes a souvenir of sorts, a book that complements, as opposed to completely substitutes, the dining experience. It zooms in on the activity in the kitchen and the processes behind the final dishes presented on plates. It reveals a “behind-the-scenes” experience of the restaurant and further connects the experience within Noma to a certain image of the region outside, creating a sense of closeness

between the restaurant and Nordic nature. It offers background stories for the ingredients and gives actual faces to their producers.

Through a close reading of *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, this essay demonstrates the role that such a cookbook plays in constructing a sense of place and the narratives associated with it. A cookbook constructs place through the stories it selects, visually and with text; the narrative techniques it employs; and, most importantly for *NOMA*, through how specific ingredients are connected to specific people, producers, and sites. I have argued that *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* is located at the intersection of the public and private spheres of cooking. Although actually cooking from it can be a challenge—because of its demanding techniques, precise instructions, and hard-to-find ingredients—it still targets the home cook, though it takes on more of an inspirational and aspirational role in the kitchen, than it does a utilitarian one. Furthermore, because *NOMA* lies at the crossroads of cooking’s public and private spheres it can be read as a marketing tool, an advertisement for the restaurant. In addition to potentially attracting new customers, it further seeks to expand the cultural influence of the restaurant even for those who will never be able to eat there.

The visual plays a crucial role in marketing the restaurant. Since more than half of the pages of the cookbook are full-page photographs, and the photographs always appear without text, I have approached the cookbook as both visual culture and as a textual document. The photographs focus almost equally on ingredients in their raw states and the landscapes from which they are harvested, as it does on the finished dishes served at the restaurant. This connection to the Nordic landscape matters. *Noma* deeply roots itself in the Nordic region, a region it interprets in a specific and strategic way, even when *Noma* cooks in Japan, Australia or Mexico. Place making involves both ingredients and a culinary approach. The “time” that *NOMA*’s title refers to reflects the culinary heritage of the Nordic region, while fantasizing about what its culinary future could taste like by showcasing all that is edible.

Biography

L. Sasha Gora studied art history and museum studies in Montreal, Copenhagen, and Gothenburg, and is a doctoral candidate at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich, Germany. Her research focuses on cuisine’s role in identity formation and culture. Her dissertation is about the new Nordic food movement, contemporary Canadian cuisine, and reimaginings of Indigenous food cultures. She writes about food for publications such as *Gather*, *Chickpea*, and *MUNCHIES: Food by VICE*.

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2. René Redzepi had previously published a cookbook in 2006 in Danish: *Noma, Nordisk Mad*, which was never translated into English, is difficult to find, and now out of print. ↵
3. Seth Siegelau, "On Exhibitions and the World at Large: Seth Siegelau in Conversation with Charles," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 199. ↵
4. Currency converted on December 7, 2016.

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5. It was announced in September 2015 that Noma would close at the end of 2016 and reopen as an urban farm. The new location will also have a restaurant, but one that can be seen as a second life, a version that will dramatically transform its menu and tableware with each season. It is not clear where the price range of this new version will lie. Nonetheless dining in Copenhagen is generally expensive for those who live there, not to mention the cost of getting there for those who do not; Jeff Gordinier, "René Redzepi Plans to Close Noma, Reopen It as an Urban Farm." *New York Times*, September 14, 2015, accessed September 14, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/16/dining/noma-rene-redzepi-urban-farm.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=photo-spot-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0. ↵
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21. *Ibid.*, 189. [↵](#)
22. *Ibid.*, 209. [↵](#)
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24. Roland Barthes, “Ornamental Cookery,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, 78-80 (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972). [↵](#)
25. *Ibid.*, 79. [↵](#)
26. Brendan I. Koerner, “How the Weird Art of Food Photography Went Mainstream,” *Wired*, July 22, 2014, accessed June 24, 2015, <http://www.wired.com/2014/07/food-photography-2/>. [↵](#)
27. Signe Rousseau, *Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2012), xiii. [↵](#)
28. *Ibid.*, 18. [↵](#)
29. For more about this debate in contemporary art, see the following chapter: Boris Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation” in *Art Power*, 53-66 (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008). [↵](#)
30. Koerner, “How the Weird Art of Food Photography Went Mainstream,” *Wired*. [↵](#)
31. For example, Jürgen Teller, a photographer who is known for his less-conventional commercial work, photographed the 2013 cookbook *Eating at Hotel Il Pellicano*. The images are kitschy, odd, and original, all making them appealing. The colors are saturated, typical of his signature style. The food styling is based more on fantasy than on the reality of what one would find in an average family’s kitchen. [↵](#)
32. Although tomatoes are essentially banned at Noma, potatoes are not. Since neither originate in Europe, the fact that the potato has been adopted as Nordic, or Danish, is fascinating, as it is an example of when an ingredient native in one region “goes native” in another. [↵](#)
33. Tejal Rao, “The Inspiring New Cookbook From the ‘World’s Best Chef,’” *The Atlantic*, September 17, 2010, accessed September 3,

2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2010/09/the-inspiring-new-cookbook-from-the-worlds-best-chef/63033/>. ↵

34. Following the success of *Noma*, René Redzepi published *A Work in Progress: Journal, Recipes and Snapshots* in 2013. If the former was a glimpse into the restaurant, then the latter is a glimpse into Redzepi's mind. A collection of three books in three different shades in green, one is a personal journal by Redzepi, one a cookbook organized by calendar year with new recipes from the restaurant, and the last a small book of snapshots from behind the scenes, taken by staff. Instead of having an artist pen the introduction, this time Lars Ulrich of Metallica fame, who was born in Denmark, introduces the book. ↵

35. René Redzepi, *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* (New York: Phaidon, 2010), 7. ↵

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52. Mark Bittman, "Prince of Denmark," *New York Times Magazine*, November 3, 2011, accessed September 3, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/06/magazine/rene-redzepi-the-prince-of-denmark.html>. [↵](#)
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54. Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 281. [↵](#)
55. Redzepi, *NOMA*, 132. [↵](#)
56. Ibid., 129. [↵](#)
57. Ibid., 133. [↵](#)
58. Jane Kramer, "The Food at Our Feet. Why is foraging all the rage?" *The New Yorker*. [↵](#)
59. Barthes, "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," 32. [↵](#)
60. Redzepi's mother is Danish and his father is Macedonian. He was born and raised in Copenhagen, and spent his summers in Macedonia. An emphasis on soil rather than blood is a more flexible and open concept of belonging. Although it too can be problematic, it suggests that anyone who connects and sews roots in the soil then belongs to the land. [↵](#)
61. Colleen Cotter, "Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines Community," in *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, ed. Anne L. Bower (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 52. [↵](#)

62. Anne L. Bower, “Cooking Up Stories: Narrative Elements in Community Cookbooks,” in *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, ed. Anne L. Bower. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 33. [↵](#)