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Food and Memory as Portrayed in *Crying in H Mart* Memoir by Michelle Zauner

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Abstract

Crying in H Mart, a memoir by Michelle Zauner, describes how Michelle, as the main character, recalls her memories through Korean food. After her mother died, she tried to keep connected with her mother through the activity that they did together related to Korean food. Some activities included cooking, eating, visiting restaurants, preparing food, etc. While reconnecting to her memory, Michelle also tried to keep connected with the heritage that her mother had given to her, which is a Korean identity. This study aims to show the connection between food, memory, and culture in the Crying in H Mart memoir. The writers use a descriptive qualitative method with a close reading of the memoir. Abarca's concept of Holistic Culinary is needed to analyze the connection between food, memory, and culture portrayed in the memoir. The result shows that the connection of food, memory, and culture enabled Michelle to reconnect to her experience with her family, especially her mother. From reconnecting to her past, Michelle's emotions were triggered. The way Michelle reconnected to her past makes her keep connected with her mother's heritage and explore the Korean culture more through interacting with Korean people, doing self-cultural exploration, and promoting Korean culture.

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Introduction

Culture is a form of identity that shapes an individual or a community in how they see and communicate with people around them. Culture can be seen through people's beliefs, traditions, arts, and values. Language can also be the way people show their culture to other people. Some people can speak more than one language due to multiculturalism (Menadue & Cheer, 2017). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) stated that multiculturalism is the existence of many diverse cultures (Sitepu, 2017). Culture also has its own rules that can guide its members. It is used to guide people on how they should act and behave. All people who apply a specific culture should follow and respect all the rules. They also should respect other cultures' rules to avoid conflict between

cultures. If people already follow the rules and values of their culture and respect other cultures' rules and values, it will positively impact them and others (Kheryadi, Zuriyati, & Ninuk, 2021).

Food is also one of the important aspects of a culture. It is a lens into a culture and its deeper meaning. The taste and smell of food are the main factors that connect food with a culture. The taste and smell can trigger or remind people of what is related to the food. In literature, food is seen as a cultural identity that can be used in a cultural event. For example, food with a positive meaning can be served at a wedding. Besides that, food can also be used at religious events. It can increase people's connection with their religion (Ravindran & Gayathri, 2022). Furthermore, food can also be a representation of someone's memory. It happens if an individual has a memory related to the food.

Food that usually has a memory for someone is cultural. For instance, one of the most prominent cultural foods is Korean food. The uniqueness of Korean food was developed because of the ancient isolation from the neighboring countries. Food also became a powerful legacy of the early Korean people. It was because of how early Korean people produced food for an urban population, and its unique flavor and texture never disappeared (Oh, Park, Daily III, & Lee, 2014). Many Korean foods have the values that their ancestors gave them. These foods have been developed with a spirit and wisdom. Banchan is one of the Korean foods that has value. Korean people always eat their food with banchan. Eating with banchan is important because Korean people believe it can be a means of maintaining a balanced and harmonious life. Banchan can help people gain balanced nutrition through their food (Kwon, Hee, Chung, Daily, & Park, 2023). Every food gives a different feeling or emotion with different intensity based on the experience or memory the individual had in the past (Sthapit, Björk, & Coudounaris, 2017).

Memory is a system in the human brain that keeps information about something that has happened in the past. Every person has a memory they may still remember or have forgotten (Bridge & Voss, 2014). Memory is mostly influenced by where the event occurred, including things related to it, such as location, people, etc. These things will help people to easily remember their memories. Remembering memories is an activity that brings back what was in the past to the conscious mind in the present (Hoven, 2014). Memory is significant because it bonds relationships and forms decisions for the future. It can happen because an individual's life history reflects the main aspect of self-identity (Scoboria, et al., 2016).

Culture, food, and memory have a unique way of being connected. Food as a cultural heritage will bring strong memories related to its specific and unique tastes, ingredients, smells, experiences, etc. Food is a basic need for people, which makes it an important cultural aspect because it can increase people's self-identity. Food can be a way for those longing for an old taste from their childhood memories (Almerico, 2014). Culture has its specific foods that also contain a specific cultural recipe. The recipe usually has a rich history and meaning identical to the culture. It can also help people feel that they are present in society by cooking food, which is part of a cultural activity (Varghese & Parui, 2019). The connection of cultural food with people is something that is not certain. Because it will keep growing, evolving, and changing, the food practices that an individual does will help to remember and create the food traditions with the individual (Abarca & Colby, 2016). Cultural food is connected with memory because of people's emotions and how they enjoy it. This phenomenon also explains the connection between culture, food, and memory. As Saragih (2021) explained in her study, Harlem can be felt as an organic place or described as home. Cultural food can also be used to help people feel at home. The taste of home can be found in its organic and unique taste that can be found only at home. She also explained that Harlem, as a home, can give someone a memory. Through food, someone can feel a reconnection to past experiences or memories. It happens because if the food they eat was made in a specific place or by a specific person, then the food becomes a vessel for them to reconnect to their memories related to the place or the person and the food (Saragih, 2021).

This study builds upon and engages with existing research that explores the complex relationships between memoir, trauma, memory, food, and cultural identity. Notably, Mohamed (2022) provides an analysis of Crying in H Mart through the lens of Trauma Theory. Mohamed's study, employing a quantitative method, aimed to understand how the act of writing the memoir functions as a means of processing and "containing" traumatic experiences, ultimately enabling the author to derive new meaning and potentially overcome the trauma. While Mohamed (2022) offers valuable insights into the memoir as a vehicle for processing trauma, our research diverges by focusing specifically on the role of food-related memories within this process of trauma and healing in Crying in H Mart.

Binu (2023) also examines Crying in H Mart, utilizing Food Studies and Memory Studies theories to investigate the connection between food and memory in the preservation of cultural identity. Binu's (2023) qualitative analysis reveals how Zauner's cooking of Korean food, reminiscent of her heritage, reinforces cultural memory and reflects cultural customs. Although Binu (2023) effectively establishes this link between food and cultural memory within the memoir, our study expands upon this by delving more deeply into the emotional dimensions of this connection, exploring the specific range of emotions (joy, love, sadness) triggered by food-related memories and their significance in Zauner's experience of grief and cultural negotiation.

Other studies provide relevant perspectives on food and memory in different contexts. Ravindran & Gayathri (2022) analyzed Esther David's Book of Rachel with the objective of exploring the relationship between literature and food. Their study, employing an analytical and descriptive methodology, highlights the presence of recipes and the intertwining of memories and food ingredients in the novel. A key finding was that food functions as a tool for a character to maintain her Jewish ethnic identity, with food preparation serving as a central theme for family and community. While Ravindran & Gayathri (2022) demonstrate the power of food in preserving ethnic identity, our research differs by focusing on the Korean-American diasporic experience in Crying in H Mart, where food navigates a bicultural identity and loss.

Similarly, Ambarwati et al. (2023) investigated Leila S. Chudori's Pulang, aiming to discuss how Indonesian culinary heritage contributes to the protagonist's connection to his homeland. Using a descriptive analysis method, their study found that Indonesian food acts as a vessel for collective memory, enabling the protagonist to maintain his bond with his national identity. While Ambarwati et al. (2023) illuminate the role of food in connecting individuals to their national identity, our study again distinguishes itself by examining the complex interplay of food, memory, and cultural identity within the specific context of a Korean-American diasporic experience and the added dimension of intergenerational trauma and healing.

In summary, while existing scholarship provides valuable insights into the individual connections between memoir and trauma, food and memory, and food and cultural identity, a gap remains in the comprehensive analysis of their intricate interplay within Crying in H Mart. To the best of our knowledge, no prior study has specifically investigated how food simultaneously functions as a trigger for a complex range of emotions rooted in personal and cultural memories, a vehicle for navigating diasporic identity in the face of loss, and a potential site for processing intergenerational experiences within Zauner's memoir. Our research addresses this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis of Crying in H Mart, utilizing Abarca Calls' concept of Holistic Culinary to understand the multifaceted role of food in memory, culture, and emotion within this unique narrative. Our research offers a novel contribution by specifically examining the emotional landscape evoked by food-related memories in the context of grief and diasporic identity, and by considering the potential for culinary practices to challenge static notions of cultural authenticity.

Methodology

This study employs a narrative qualitative method to analyze the portrayal of cultural adaptation and identity exploration in Michelle Zauner's Crying in H Mart. The narrative qualitative method, in this context, involves a systematic interpretation of data. This is achieved through the gathering of information from both primary and theoretical sources, followed by an analysis using textual and contextual lenses. Specifically, this research examines the ways in which Korean food functions within the memoir as a vehicle for memory, cultural connection, and emotional healing. The primary source of data for this research is the memoir Crying in H Mart by Michelle Zauner.

To support the analysis, several theoretical frameworks are applied. These include the concept of "Characters" as defined by René Wellek and Austin Warren, which is used to examine character traits and their significance, and Albertine Minderop's theory of "Characterization," which explores character development and emotional expression. Additionally, Abarca Calls' concept of "Holistic Culinary" emphasizes food's role as a cultural and emotional connector. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how Zauner's character navigates grief and reconnects with her Korean heritage through food.

The research process begins with a close reading of the memoir. This initial reading aims to identify key excerpts that highlight the themes of food, memory, and cultural identity. Passages are selected that depict Zauner's emotional journey, her relationship with her late mother, and her experiences with Korean cuisine as a means of preserving cultural ties. These chosen excerpts are then analyzed through the lens of the theoretical frameworks mentioned earlier. Wellek and Warren's concept of characters is employed to examine Zauner's personal growth and the significance of her experiences, while Minderop's theory of characterization helps to illustrate the emotional complexity of Zauner's character. Abarca Calls' holistic culinary approach is used to reveal the symbolic and cultural significance of Korean food in the memoir.

The analysis focuses on establishing connections between the memoir and the applied theories. The researchers examine how food functions as a mnemonic device, evoking memories of Zauner's mother and her Korean heritage. Furthermore, Korean food is explored as a bridge that aids Zauner in navigating her bicultural identity, providing both comfort and a sense of belonging. Through the analysis of these excerpts, the study aims to highlight how food becomes a powerful symbol of cultural preservation, familial love, and personal healing. Finally, the researchers synthesize the findings by interpreting the selected excerpts and explaining their relevance to the research objectives, demonstrating how Crying in H Mart portrays food as a profound medium for cultural adaptation and self-discovery. This analytical approach offers a deeper understanding of Michelle Zauner's emotional journey and the significance of Korean cuisine in shaping her identity.

Results and Discussion

The writers would like to examine the discussion of how the connection between Korean food and memory is portrayed in Crying in H Mart by Michelle Zauner. Through the memoir, Michelle told the story of how important the role of food is in her life. Michelle used food to connect herself with Korean culture, which she tried to explore and develop. However, it was mostly used to connect her back to her mother after she passed away. Korean food can remind her of her past experiences and emotions. Michelle got emotional during her cooking or eating activities. It reminded her of her experience with her mother or other family members. Food was a strong aspect for Michelle to connect with Korean culture because her mother always provided her with Korean food her whole life. Michelle's connection with food will keep growing due to her memories and the food activities she does every day. However, most importantly, food gave Michelle the feeling of home.

1. Reconnect to Michelle's Experience

Food can remind Michelle of her experience. She was raised with lots of Korean

food by her mother. Food has always been connected with culture. Hence, Korean food brought Michelle back to the activity she had in the past. It brought her to past experiences she did herself or with her other family members. The experience related to food is seen as the relation between food and memory.

Michelle Zauner's memoir frequently portrays Korean food as a powerful catalyst for memory, particularly about her relationship with her mother. The excerpt, "*Or in the freezer section, holding a stack of dumpling skins, thinking of all the hours that Mom and I spent at the kitchen table folding minced pork and chives into the thin dough*" (Zauner, 2021, p. 1), illustrates this connection. Holding the dumpling skins in H Mart, a space associated with Korean ingredients and culinary practices, triggers a vivid recollection of shared activities with her mother. The phrase "*thinking of all the hours that Mom and I spent at the kitchen table*" emphasizes the significant role of food preparation in their shared culture, encompassing not only cooking but also broader moments of interaction and connection. This suggests that Korean food functions as a potent mnemonic device, transporting Michelle back to specific moments and emotions associated with her mother. Furthermore, the cultural significance of dumplings as a symbol of family bonding is evident. The shared activity of making dumplings highlights how Korean cuisine fosters social relationships, a point supported by Abarca Calls' (2016) concept of Holistic Culinary, which posits that food is deeply intertwined with cultural identity and social interaction. In this context, food becomes a medium through which Michelle both maintains and relives her relationship with her mother.

After her mother died, she recalled her mother through those activities. Seeing *dumplings* can trigger Michelle's memory of her mother. This relates to Holistic Culinary, that memory can be recalled physically and emotionally through food.

> *I'm collecting the evidence that the Korean half of my identity didn't die when they did. H Mart is the bridge that guides me away from the memories that haunt me, of chemo head and skeletal bodies and logging milligrams of hydrocodone. It reminds me of who they were before, beautiful and full of life, wiggling Chang Gu honey-cracker rings on all ten of their fingers, showing me how to suck a Korean grape from its skin and spit out the seeds.* (Zauner, 2021, p.7).

The place where Michelle gets Korean food and Korean ingredients can also reconnect her with her past. It can remind Michelle of her activity when she was taught to eat Korean fruit correctly. The excerpt above shows how her family members ate a honey-cracker, which they put in all of theiruner fingers while showing Michelle how to eat a Korean grape. The writers saw that it is not just the Korean food that can bring her to reconnect with her experience. However, the place where she could get the food and ingredients could also bring her back to her experience. Michelle was helped by Korean food to find her memories. In the Holistic Culinary concept, food is one of the aspects that can make a strong connection between the individual and a culture. The writers see that Michelle loves to eat Korean food and making it or learning how to eat it, which makes her strongly connect with her culture. The excerpt above also shows that Michelle's connection with Korean culture is strong, and keeps getting stronger when she recalls the memories she has. The things that happened to Michelle relate to Abarca's Holistic culinary approach, which can be seen in that Michelle uses Korean food as a vessel of memory and identity. After losing her mother, food gives her a strong emotion as she keeps remembering her past with her mother.

> *At home, I was scolded if I got caught poking around the pantry past eight, but in Seoul, my mom was like a kid again, leading the campaign. Standing at the counter, we'd open every Tupperware container full of homemade banchan, and snack together in the blue dark of the humid kitchen. Sweet braised black soybeans, crisp yellow sprouts with scallion and sesame oil, and tart, juicy cucumber kimchi were shoveled into our mouths behind spoonfuls of warm, lavender kong bap straight from the open rice cooker.*

> *We'd giggle and shush each other as we ate ganjang gejang with our fingers, sucking salty, rich, custardy raw crab from its shell, prodding the meat from its crevices with our tongues, licking our soy sauce–stained fingers. Between chews of a wilted perilla leaf, my mother would say, "This is how I know you're a true Korean."* (Zauner, 2021, p. 20-21).

Cultural food is not just about reminding an individual about their self-identity, but also about the values shared by their family or community. Her mother, who mainly introduced her to Korean food, always brought Michelle to the kitchen counter and snacked on some Korean food that was available in the kitchen. The excerpt above shows how Michelle reconnected with the activity that she used to do with her mother. It also explains that they liked to eat *banchan* that they made at night. The eating activity also strengthened their bond as they laughed at how they ate it. Michelle even remembered what other ingredients they used to eat with *banchan*. *Banchan* shows how diverse Korean culture is and also its depth. Also, from how Michelle knew how to eat Korean food, her mother knew that Michelle was not Korean, just because her mother was Korean. However, she is a true Korean who knows how to eat like a Korean. The Holistic Culinary concept helps an individual find any historical connections. If the individual has not been coming home in a long time, they can feel at home again through cultural food. The writers see that through Korean food, Michelle can find memorable events related to Korean food, especially with her mother, who taught her about it. The way her mother sees Michelle as a true Korean by her culinary practices shows that it relates to Holistic Culinary. Abarca Calls explains that food can be an identity through the practices, not just language and heritage.

> *When I was nine, Sunrise Market relocated to a larger store. My mom pored giddily over the new imports that came with the expansion: pollack roe frozen in little wooden boxes; packages of Chapagetti instant black-bean noodles; bungeo-ppang, fish-shaped pastry filled with ice cream and sweet red-bean paste, each new item reviving bygone memories of her childhood, conjuring new recipes to capture old tastes.* (Zauner, 2021, p.62).

Michelle and her mother loved to make Korean food at their home. Her mother even loved teaching Michelle how to make it so that she would learn and not just eat it. The excerpt above shows Michelle remembered that when she was nine, the market where she used to buy Korean ingredients with her mother was being relocated. The writers saw that Korean food does not reconnect Michelle to the food, but to every aspect, such as the place related to Korean food. The place reminded Michelle of the activity she did with her mother there. Her mother always bought things that just came into the store. Those things can also reconnect her to her mother's past, which reminds her of the old tastes. The place can also help Michelle keep connected to her family roots. Holistic Culinary can help an individual interact with a food product. The interaction means connecting with the category, placement, market, etc. The writers see that the place where Michelle and her mother used to get Korean products can also reconnect her to her experience. It also reflects Holistic Culinary because Michelle can see her memory and cultural history through food.

> *The next morning, Kye was in the kitchen cooking jatjuk, a pine nut porridge my mother used to make for me when I was sick. I remembered her telling me that families make jatjuk for the ill because it's easy to digest and full of nutrients, and that it was a rare treat because pine nuts were so expensive. I recalled its thick, creamy texture and comforting, nutty flavor as I watched the porridge thicken in the pot. Kye stirred slowly with a wooden spoon.* (Zauner, 2021, p.77).

The food that could reconnect Michelle to her experience was not only the food that Michelle consumed herself, but also when she saw a particular food, it could reconnect her to her experience. The excerpt above explains that the food given to her mother can also remind Michelle of how Kye told her that *Jatjuk* is usually given to a sick person because it can be easily digested and has lots of nutrition. It also reminded Michelle of how she loves *jatjuk* because of its texture and spicy taste. How

Michelle sees only one specific food can also reconnect her to her experience. Korean food can help Michelle grow through the memories it brings. *Jatjuk* is seen as a traditional Korean food that has the meaning of health and wellness. It is already widely known for its nutrition. That was why *Jatjuk* reminded Michelle of when her mother told her that *Jatjuk* is served for a sick person. Abarca's concept explains that if an individual learns a cultural food and its ingredients, they will learn the culture that they may not have learned or known before. From the excerpt above, the writer sees that Michelle just saw Korean food, which reminded her of how the food is usually eaten. She even remembered the texture and flavour of the food. It also relates to Holistic Culinary's core meaning: understanding food is an emotional and cultural practice that connects with memory, identity, and heritage.

> *The market was opening just as I arrived. I bought the vegetables I needed and a block of firm tofu. I decided to skip the seafood and picked up some marinated short rib instead, remembering that my mother used beef for her recipe.* (Zauner, 2021, p.129-130).

When Michelle went to the market, she used to go, which could reconnect her with her experience just by seeing the ingredients she saw at the market. The excerpt above shows that when Michelle went to the market and saw the short ribs, she was reminded that her mother used beef for her recipe. It is not just the food she saw that can reconnect her to her experience, but also how she saw one specific ingredient that can reconnect her. The Holistic Culinary concept shows the relation between food and people, which will keep changing. When Michelle saw seafood, she chose to change it to short ribs. The writers see that because she missed her mother, she decided to buy things that her mother liked. It shows how the relationship between food and people is uncertain. Abarca Calls saw food practices as a deep connection with memory, cultural identity, emotional experience, and knowledge.

> *Metal containers full of jeotgal, salt-fermented seafood banchan, affectionately known as rice thieves... The pungent aroma reminded me of trips with my mother and her sisters to a high-end grocery on the basement floor of a department store in Myeong-dong. An ajumma in a cloth hair wrap and matching apron would call out "Eoseo oseyo" and extend a toothpick skewered with different types of jeotgal to try. The sisters would sample each and discuss, then have the winner wrapped in fifty layers of plastic until it was the size of a football for us to haul home. Sometimes Mom would buy an extra suitcase just to bring it back to Eugene, and every time she served the roe with a side of rice at home, a tiny pool of sesame oil dribbled over the top, I would close my eyes and hear my aunts in careful deliberation.* (Zauner, 2021, p.163).

Food always relates to aroma. People will get tempted by food just by smelling the aroma of the food. However, through aroma, people can also be reminded of something in the past. The aroma from food, as mentioned above, reconnected Michelle with her trip to Myeong-dong with her mother and her mother's sisters. It does not just remind her of her activity, but also things that happened there in Myeong-dong, such as how the ajumma would call the visitor. It also reminded Michelle that her mother used to bring an extra suitcase, which would be used to bring the food or ingredients she bought in Korea. Michelle can build a relationship with her memory with the help of anything related to Korean food. Abarca Calls explains that the memory of food is not just from the taste, but also from the smell. The excerpt above shows how, by just smelling the food, Michelle was recalling her experience. It reminded Michelle not just of the food but also of the situation that had happened then. It shows how strong the connection between a food and a person is. Abarca Calls also explains that food is not just a source of nutrition, but also a relation between people. This can be seen in how it reconnected Michelle with the people she went to Meyong-dong with.

2. Trigger Michelle's Emotion

Besides reconnecting to her experience, Korean food can trigger Michelle's emotions. This is common because individuals may have

experiences or memories that influence or trigger their emotions. Emotion consumption due to the individual's memory or experience is a response to food consumption. The individual has a variety of emotions: happy, joy, angry, sad, surprised, fearful, etc. The emotion can also be an indescribable feeling that only the individual who knows how the feeling is when eating the food knows. The emotion that Michelle got can be a positive emotion or a negative emotion. It can be seen that Michelle felt happy when she ate Korean food because of its taste, or when she felt sad because Korean food can remind her of her mother, especially after her mother passed away. In the memoir, Michelle shows three emotions: happy, love, and sad.

> *For three days my father hardly left his room. Part of me wondered if he had run himself off the road on purpose, which only made me more upset. I made little effort to check in on him. I wanted to be selfish. I didn't want to take care of anyone anymore. Instead, I began to cook. Mostly the kind of food you could crawl into and that required sleeping off. The kind you'd order on death row. I made chicken pot pie from scratch, rolling out buttery, homemade dough, filling it to the brim with thick, rich stock and roasted chicken, peas, and carrots, blanketing it in its flaky top crust.* (Zauner, 2021, p.147).

Food always brings happiness to someone, especially when it tastes good. Michelle used to make food to lower her emotions and feel happy. The excerpt above shows how Michelle was angry with her father because he did not leave the room for three days. So, she reduced her angry emotions by cooking food. The writers saw her cooking food as a way of making herself happy. Eating her favorite food, chicken pot pie, can make her feel happy after the destructive emotions that she has experienced. Michelle's practices can build a tradition that she will do for herself. Through Holistic Culinary, Abarca Calls explains that several food aspects are connected with emotion. The excerpt above shows how Michelle felt happy emotions through her food. Abarca Calls also explains that food connects deeply with human emotion, as it is a response from the food to a person.

> *I cut chonggak kimchi into small disks and ladled some of the brine over the radish pieces. The soup was creamy and nutty, and felt soft and soothing as I swallowed. I ate a few more spoonfuls before crunching into some kimchi to break up the rich flavor with something spicy and tart. That wasn't so hard, I thought to myself, happy to have conquered the dish Kye had mystified.* (Zauner, 2021, p.151).

After her mother's death, Michelle had to figure out how to make Korean food for herself. She was always taught how to make Korean food, not just by her mother, but also by her other family members. The excerpt above shows how Michelle tried to make Korean food. She was happy because she could cook Korean food that Kye, as a full Korean, was mystified about how to make. Michelle was happy because of the Korean food she made. Chonggak kimchi is seen as one of the traditional Korean foods in its preservation method, because of how complex the preservation method is. It is also seen as a symbol of Korean identity. Michelle was happy to be able to cook chonggak kimchi, which means that she had made her Korean identity stronger. Abarca Calls explains that Holistic Culinary is the connection between cultural food and many aspects, and emotion is one of the aspects. It is central to understand how food functions as a profoundly human experience. This can be seen from how Michelle felt happy because she had already experienced Korean food. Emotion aligns with Abarca Calls' Holistic Culinary, especially regarding how food can give emotional empowerment.

> *"I was paying a hundred-dollar copay per session, and I began to think it would be much more fulfilling to just take myself out for a fifty-dollar lunch twice a week. I canceled the rest of my sessions and committed myself to exploring alternative forms of self-care. I decided to turn to a familiar friend—Maangchi, the YouTube vlogger who had taught me how to cook doenjang jjigae and jatjuk in my time of need."* (Zauner, 2021, p.169).

Michelle's decision to prioritize Korean food over therapy highlights the powerful role of food as a source of emotional comfort and self-care. This resonates with Abarca Calls' (2016) concept of Holistic Culinary, which emphasizes the emotional dimensions of food practices. However, our analysis extends this concept by demonstrating how food can directly substitute traditional therapeutic interventions in managing grief. While Sthapit et al. (2017) explore the general link between food consumption and elicited emotions, our study specifies that, for Michelle, the act of cooking and consuming Korean food becomes a deliberate strategy for coping with loss and finding solace, suggesting a more active and agentive role for food in emotional regulation than previously acknowledged. Besides, the way she said that she opened Maangchi's channel to see how to make Korean food when she needs it means that Korean food for Michelle is a need, which makes her happy, not a want. The word "need" has a bigger meaning than "want," as if it is something that she cannot live without. Also, Korean food has the value of making someone happy. It is because many people find comfort in Korean food. The emotion when someone eats Korean food can be given because it always ties with memories that can give a sense of belonging. Like Abarca Calls explained in the Holistic Culinary concept, cultural food carries emotional weight. They are connected with memories. Abarca Calls also explains that food can be a form of self-care and healing. Same as what Michelle did with how she used Korean food to make her feel happy.

The activity of eating Korean food can trigger Michelle's emotions. *"I could always feel her affection radiating from the lunches she packed and the meals she prepared for me just the way I liked them.*" (Zauner, 2021, p.2). The excerpt above explains that Michelle is always being prepared a lunchbox by her mother. Preparing Korean food her mother had done for her triggered Michelle's emotions. Besides, the fact that she loves Korean food added to the love she felt toward her mother. Abarca Calls explains that emotion is made through food, such as when making and sharing food. That makes Michelle feel her mother's love through the food she made. Food is a way to express love, care, and connection. Abarca Calls sees food as a form of communication, where every food brings affection and emotion.

The preparation and sharing of Korean food are consistently portrayed as acts of maintaining a vital connection to Korean identity and "home." Michelle recalls, "*I remembered how after our scrubs, my mother suggested we stock up on groceries at H Mart, so that she could marinate some short rib at my house and I could have a taste of home after she left.*" (Zauner, 2021, p.36). This desire to "have a taste of home" while living in the United States aligns with Almerico's (2014) discussion of food as a means of expressing and preserving cultural identity. However, in Crying in H Mart, this longing for "home" is further complicated by Michelle's specific experience as a Korean-American navigating a bicultural identity and grieving the loss of her primary link to that heritage. Unlike studies focusing solely on food's role in maintaining a singular cultural identity, our analysis reveals how Michelle utilizes food to negotiate a complex sense of belonging, seeking to recreate home both geographically, emotionally, and ancestrally. This adds depth to the existing literature on food and cultural identity, particularly in the context of diasporic communities. The excerpt above shows that Michelle and her mother were stocking groceries of Korean ingredients. It was done to make Michelle feel the taste of home. The writers saw how Michelle wanted to have the taste of home because she loves being Korean. She lived in the United States, which made her want to feel like she was in Korea by cooking and eating Korean food. Her love for Korean food can make her feel like she is home in Korea. Also, how Michelle can taste the taste of home through Korean food means that she successfully connected food with her feelings. Cultural food helps an individual to grow emotional values and cultural identity, as Abarca Calls explains in the Holistic Culinary concept. The writers see that Korean food helps Michelle grow her love for her identity as a Korean. Emotion connects with Abarca Calls' Holistic Culinary by seeing how food becomes a cultural identity, and Michelle is pleased every time she gets to eat Korean food.

As explained, Korean food always brings Michelle the taste of her true home. *"... while*

my mother grilled the galbi I would always associate with the taste of home." (Zauner, 2021, p.54). Michelle always wanted to feel like she was at home with Korean food. It transferred the love from her mother and where they came from, Korea. Food taste has a powerful effect on Michelle until she can feel at home with it. It connected Michelle to her home and her mother, who introduced her to Korea. The writers saw that Michelle gained a feeling of love from the taste of Korean food. Galbi is a grilled Korean food; this element gives it a lively experience with everyone involved. Michelle can associate with her home from the taste of the food. Abarca Calls' explanation of how Korean food helps Michelle love her identity as a Korean can also be found in the excerpt above. Michelle feels at home whenever she eats the galbi her mother grilled. Food becomes a vessel for family connection. The writers can see that Michelle loves to be in Korea from the food.

Besides the feeling of happiness and love, Korean food can also bring Michelle sadness. The main reason that she felt sad about Korean food was because of her mother's death. She felt sad after reminiscing about every activity related to cooking and eating she did with her mother. "*Instead, you'll likely find me crying by the banchan refrigerators, remembering the taste of my mom's soy-sauce eggs and cold radish soup*." (Zauner, 2021, p.1). Michelle Zauner's emotional response to H Mart underscores Abarca Calls' (2016) assertion that food can be a medium of sad memory. While previous research has acknowledged the link between food and memory, this passage poignantly illustrates how specific food items (soy-sauce eggs, cold radish soup) act as powerful triggers for grief, connecting Michelle to her mother and their shared culinary history. This finding extends the work of Lee (2022), who explores how food can evoke intangible cultural heritage, by demonstrating how this evocation is deeply intertwined with personal loss and mourning in Crying in H Mart. After a long time of not going to Korea, Michelle's feelings were triggered by the Korean food she ate. Korean food can sometimes connect with memories. Through soy-sauce eggs and cold radish soup, Michelle can connect with her memories, which are those that are related to her mother. This could evoke a sense of loss and longing, leading to sadness. Abarca Calls explains that food becomes a medium of sad memory. This is the same as what Michelle experienced, as seen in the excerpt above. Also, Michelle's grief and deep connection with the food gave her a bigger emotional response to the pain she felt.

After her mother passed away, everything related to Korean food always triggered her emotions because it reminded her of her mother. *"I'll cry when I see a Korean grandmother eating seafood noodles in the food court, discarding shrimp heads and mussel shells onto the lid of her daughter's tin rice bowl."* (Zauner, 2021, p.3). The excerpt shows how Michelle felt sad when she saw a Korean grandmother eating Korean food with her daughter. The feeling of not getting what she wanted to do with her mother, like what she saw other people do, made her feel sad. Abarca Calls explains that grief can be felt through food. From what Michelle experienced, she felt the grief from the food activity that other people did. She found a similar food connection or family interaction through the people around her. It highlights the universality of the human experience around food. Abarca Calls food is used to bring people together emotionally.

> *These were the places my mother had wanted to visit before she died, the places she'd wanted to take me to before our last trip to Korea was quarantined to a hospital ward. The last memories my mother had wanted to share with me, the source of the things she raised me to love. The tastes she wanted me to remember. The feelings she wanted me to never forget.* (Zauner, 2021, p.128).

Before Michelle's mother died, she planned to take Michelle to some places and markets. She wanted Michelle to explore what she had raised Michelle with: Korean food. The excerpt above shows Michelle's sadness because she cannot make her mother's wish come true. She went where her mother wanted to take her, but it saddened her that she went without the person who wanted to take her there. Through exploring Korean food at its original place, her mother hoped Michelle would not forget about the Korean culture.

Abarca Calls explains that activities related to food can bring back emotions. From the excerpt above, Michelle felt emotion through the activity she had not done. However, it still can give her a sad emotion because the activity was something she should have done with her mother. Michelle's mother's desire to give her daughter the taste and the feeling of Korean food shows the link between sensory experiences and emotions. Taste, smell, texture, and the atmosphere connect with an emotional food experience and its impact on memory.

Conclusion

The memoir Crying in H Mart by Michelle Zauner talks about how Michelle, as the main character, explores her Korean culture through the activities she did in her daily life. She explored a lot through food, which was the most cultural heritage her mother taught her. The writers discussed the connection between Korean food and memory portrayed in the memoir.

The writers found that Korean food can reconnect Michelle to her experience and trigger her emotions. Michelle used food to reconnect with her experience of doing things herself or with her mother. When Michelle went to H Mart to buy ingredients, she remembered that she always bought the same ingredients with her mother. While reconnecting to her past experiences, Michelle always felt some emotions. That was why Korean food and memory can trigger Michelle's emotions. The writers found that Michelle felt three emotions: happy, love, and sad. This study demonstrates that food in Crying in H Mart is not merely a trigger for nostalgic memory, but a dynamic tool for negotiating a complex and sometimes conflicting Korean-American identity.

Zauner's culinary practices reveal a process of honoring and re-shaping Korean food traditions, contributing to a broader understanding of how diasporic communities engage with heritage in fluid and innovative ways. Further research could explore the role of online food communities in shaping diasporic culinary identities. When someone has many memories related to food with their friend or family, any activity, such as eating, buying, cooking, or visiting, can remind them of those people, especially when the food is cultural. Besides, they can reconnect to their memory and learn the culture where the food comes from. The desire to learn the culture can make them find their own identity. Someone who does not appreciate the culture that they come from can also increase their awareness of the culture. When someone misses their home, they can feel at home because of the taste of the food. The memory of cultural food will always keep growing for someone, which allows someone to learn new things through it every day in their daily life.

Crying in H Mart, a memoir by Michelle Zauner, is a fascinating memoir to discuss because it shows the main character's life, in which she faced many difficulties and challenges. As the writers discussed the main character, they suggested that those who read the memoir discuss how food can relate to a person's life. Through this memoir, Michelle shows how her relationship with her mother was. The connection between Michelle and her mother was also very strong. So that the connection between a mother and daughter can be analyzed for the next study. Many literary works talk about the connection between food and memory. The strong relationship between food and memory makes it interesting for the next researcher to discuss the connection between food and memory in other literary works. For the next researcher, the writers' study can be used for reference or developed for future researcher who wants to analyze this memoir.

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