
Domestic cooking in Marrakech's Medina: Negotiating proper food in everyday food consumption and preparation

Katharina Graf*¹

¹School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS) – Thornhaugh St, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, Royaume-Uni

Résumé

For most domestic cooks in the medina of Marrakech with whom I currently work, the halalness of food products is taken for granted and embodied in daily practice rather than questioned and explicit. For these cooks, who are predominantly women preparing daily meals for their families, religion frames their everyday practices of food preparation, and as such demands respect for all edible produce. However, in light of ongoing changes of cooking practices related to shifting aspirations of younger generations, halal/haram distinctions are interpreted flexibly. Examples are new recipes that involve the use of vinegar or wine. Furthermore, in contrast to most transnational supermarkets (both in European cities and in Marrakech), the food markets of Marrakech's medina are largely marked by the absence of labels, processed foods, packaging and general information about products. Nevertheless, local concepts of provenance that distinguish between *beldi* and *rumi* (broadly referring to local/home-grown as opposed to foreign/industrial) products and a tactical engagement with medina food markets, especially through establishing relations of trust with shopkeepers, allow cooks as consumers to identify what they consider proper food. Beyond that, the medina markets seem to necessitate a cook's bodily engagement with food commodities, for instance through touching grains or smelling spices, in order to evaluate the qualitative or religious properties of food.

In this contribution, I seek to explore the complex linkages and ongoing changes between embodiment, consumption and the religious dimensions of food production and preparation in Marrakech's medina – embedded in a larger economy of food. It is my aim to show how, apart from a rather taken for granted yet changing halal/haram distinction, the local concept of a *beldi* or *rumi* provenance of commodities is equally important to a cook's negotiation of food properties and determines to a large extent their tactics of consumption.

Mots-Clés: food preparation, embodiment, food provenance, markets, Marrakech

*Intervenant