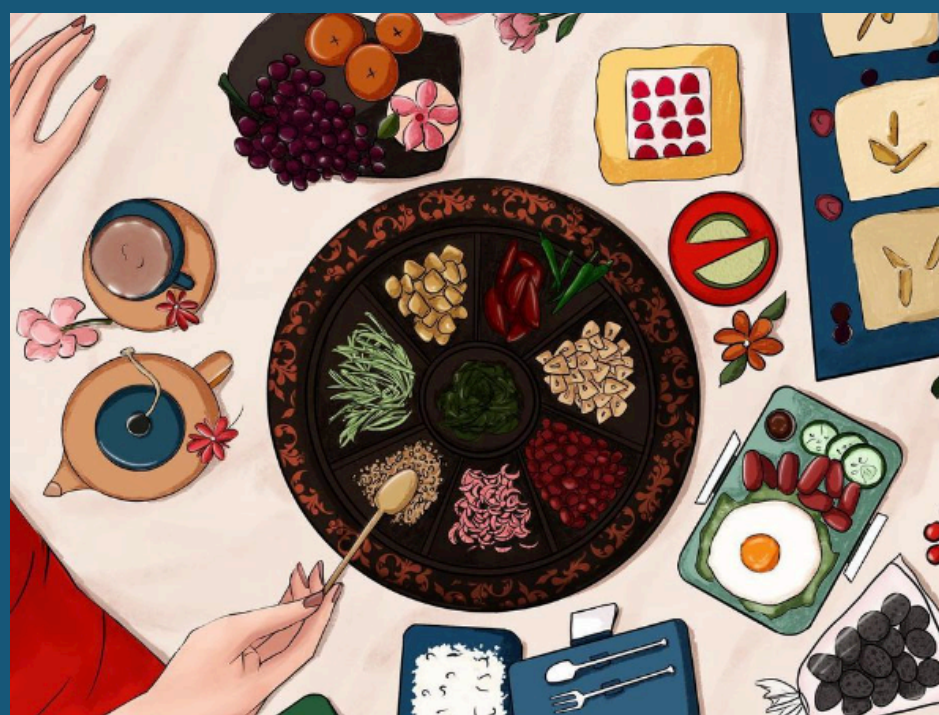


THE GRAPEVINE

Teachers College, Columbia University



Pickled Tea Leaf Salad, Laphpet Thoke, art by [the Burmese artist, Ei](#)

“A taste of bravery: what is Burmese food to you?”

By: Thu Thu May Oo

After a decade of living in the United States, with half my time spent in Seattle and the other in New York, I have become accustomed to constantly facing an ocean full of blank stares. This has often happened after my mention of my country of origin, Myanmar. It has become second nature for me to give a long answer to the simple question of where I’m from. I would typically say, “I am originally from Myanmar, also known as Burma, a country in Southeast Asia that is located next to China, India, Bangladesh, and

Thailand.” Burma was given by the British colonizers, named after the dominant Burman ethnic group. It was then changed to Myanmar in 1989 by the military junta, a year after the infamous 8888 pro-democracy uprising and brutal massacre of many students and political activists.

From sharing a long history of oppression due to colonialism and authoritarianism to the current political upheaval it faces, everything about Myanmar is political.¹

¹ In my personal narrative, I will be using both terms—Burma and Myanmar—interchangeably with no preference for one or the other.

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Fresh off the Vine: Events & Announcements

The Grapevine Staff

HealthNuts Update: Thanks to everyone who attended our new student welcome event!

Please join us for our upcoming events this fall:



Photo Courtesy of Columbia Athletics

October

Columbia vs. Penn Football Game
(10/14/23 @1:30pm)

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Pumpkin Carving for Halloween
(Date TBD)



December

Movie Night
(Date TBD)



Stay tuned for more details to come in our weekly Program in Nutrition Newsletter!

Join the Grapevine!

We are looking for contributing authors for the Grapevine. Whether you are an avid writer or new to writing, this is a great opportunity to experiment, learn, and get involved. Let us know what you are interested in and we'll help you to turn your idea into a story.

Email us at grapevinetceditor@gmail.com to get involved!



Follow us on Instagram @tc_columbia_nutrition



Letter From the Editors

Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni and Staff,

Welcome to the Grapevine's 2023 Summer Issue! We hope you are relishing the beginning of autumn as we embrace the changing season and all the beauty that comes with it.

In this issue, you will find an amalgam of creative and vibrant exploration of cultural identity and ways to build meaningful connections and communities through our dedication to our well-being and food justice. In her essay, *A taste of bravery: what is Burmese food to you?*, Thu Thu illustrates the ongoing civil unrest in her home country, Myanmar, while expressing her grief and hope for restorative justice for her community through her love for writing and what's more, Burmese food.

Likewise, we hope you are inspired by Alison's dedication to community-centered work at the Columbia Greenmarket and Wency's intriguing interview about nutrition and early childhood carries on various ways our students and alums are sharing nutrition knowledge, tools, and resources to promote impactful behavioral interventions to children and families.

We also hope you take time to savor and nourish yourself with a diverse array of cuisines in our vibrant neighborhood, including Ethiopian and Eritrean food in the heart of Harlem. If you have not been to Masswa, we are sure you will after you read the delightful review by Jay!

As this is the final semester for Thu Thu as the co-editor, this issue of the Grapevine is more personal than the others, and we would like to center *community* as our theme to bring together all the beautiful stories and pieces we have woven over the past years. We are truly grateful for the connections we have made through our shared experiences at the Grapevine, and are incredibly excited to welcome our incoming editor, Jay Gendron!

Thank you for your shared knowledge and continued support to the Grapevine. We look forward to crafting many more beautiful and exciting stories with you.



Thu Thu May Oo



Co-Editor



Alison Garbarini



Co-Editor

A taste of bravery: what is Burmese food to you?: *Continued*

However, there remains an even more complicated question that I still have no complete answer to: “What is Burmese food like and how does it taste?” This is when my heart begins to palpitate even faster. I still do not have a comprehensive answer to this simple yet complex question. Is it enough if I say Burmese food comprises historical, cultural, and geographical influences from India and China as well as neighboring Southeast Asian countries? But does such an answer diminish the uniqueness of Burmese cuisine? Is it enough to say we take pride in having an amalgam of diverse flavors in our aromatic coconut noodle soup, *Ohn No Khauk Swe*, or uniquely enchanting, pickled tea leaf salad, *Laphpet Thoke*? What about the various takes on noodle soup and dishes that change depending on the region you visit in Myanmar?

Speaking of various regional foods, how can I talk about various ethnic cuisines in Myanmar without neglecting the civil conflicts, extreme poverty, and cultural and political oppressions its ethnic communities have endured for more than 70 years? The oppressions that linger from the legacies of colonization past and present, years of authoritarianism, and now, the February 2021 military coup? So, my answer to this simple question is embedded in the intricate layers of chaos and clashes of geopolitics and cultures in Myanmar, all lying beneath the gastronomically delightful diversity of Burmese food.

To me, food is more than something I eat to nourish myself. Food forms the basis of the relationships and connections I build with a place, people, and a moment in time.

Burmese food sounds like my favorite vendor bellowing, “Hot steamed yellow peas, everyone” as the sun rises over my hometown, Mawlamyine, a small town in the southeastern region of Myanmar. I turn the yellow peas into a quick salad with chopped shallots and a drizzle of peanut oil and savor it with freshly baked naan for breakfast. Burmese food also feels like coming home to the savory aroma of my mama’s simple home-cooked meals: sautéed water spinach (*Ong Choy*) with garlic and spicy masala crab. I still remember vividly how my siblings and I would fight over who got to eat the savory leaves or the crunchy stalks of this leafy vegetable, which sometimes grew in our backyard. Burmese food also defines indelible moments like sitting in a bustling tea

shop in downtown Yangon, watching passers-by while having conversations with friends over Burmese aromatic and rich milk tea with malai on top. It is making *Mobinga*, a noodle soup with fish broth, alongside my friends from the Burmese diaspora. Furthermore, it defines the communal care and love with which we prepare and enjoy Burmese food when we miss home. More importantly, to me, Burmese food is a haven where my friends and I seek collective healing and grieving in times of constant political and humanitarian crises.



Warm Chickpea Tofu Noodle, Tofu Nway (left) & Burmese Fried Rice with Yellow Peas, Papyoke Htamin Kyaw (right) by the Burmese artist, Ei

A taste of bravery: what is Burmese food to you?: *Continued*

Since the military coup took place in February 2021, instead of the clanks of metal spoons at sidewalk mohinga stands, the streets have been filled with chants of peaceful pro-democracy protesters turning to the sound of gunshots. Once vibrant and bustling tea shops have now either been burned down by the military junta or deserted due to political unrest. The laughter I shared with my friends has now become the echo of a collective grief and pain, including the grief-stricken moment when we heard about the extrajudicial executions of four pro-democracy political activists in July 2022.² The continuous, atrocious destruction of livelihoods and massacres by the military junta has forcibly increased political and security instability and the displacement of communities, especially in conflict-ridden regions across the nation.

Silence roams deteriorated villages and homes; meanwhile, bodies pile up in cemeteries across the country.

Behind all these statistical reports are families and loved ones, including my own, and the collective echo of rage and despair for those who have lost their lives at the hands of state violence. I lost my stepfather as he was brutally and tragically shot in the head by Myanmar's military and police forces in October 2021. I grieved with heartache and pain as my mother offered a warm plate of dosa and dal, my late stepfather's favorite dish, to the Buddha stupa on the morning of his birthday.

With no sense of accountability, the military and police forces have continued to commit unimaginable violence. Unfortunately, the tragedy my family has suffered is merely one of a gruesome array of violent atrocities that many families in Myanmar endure every single day.

With a few empty seats at the dinner table, these families display resilience and strength. Instead of celebrating religious or cultural occasions with festive music and dances, we grieve with a mother who lost her son, a father whose daughter passed in his arms, children who have lost their hopes for the future, and families whose dinner tables will never again be complete. Instead of performances, their pain and anger have resounded loudly along our prayers and our hopes. We contend for an end to these violent atrocities and to bring justice to our country and our people.

As I reflect on these questions and possibilities, to me, Burmese food continues to be filled with the courage of the martyrs, the love and humility that bring all of us together, and the joy that nourishes us to continue living. It is also filled with the blood and tears of Burmese people inside and outside of the country who are fighting relentlessly for our basic human rights and democracy.

So, if you would like to know how Burmese food tastes, please listen to the hope and dream of the youths in Myanmar who fight for what the country can become in this Spring Revolution – that is a taste of the unsullied bravery and faith that is still being passed down from one generation to the next.



Coconut Noodle Soup, Obn No Khauk Swe (left) & Naan and Dal (right) by [the Burmese artist, Ei](#)

² Richard C. Paddock, "Myanmar Executes Four Pro-Democracy Activists, Defying Foreign Leaders", New York Times, July 25, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/asia/myanmar-executions.html>.

The original piece was published in 'Translation', the inaugural issue of the Southeast Asian Movement at Yale's journal.

Community Highlight: Columbia Greenmarket, Featuring Q/A with TC Program in Nutrition Alumna Emma Gangbar

By: Alison Garbarini



Nolasco Farms Tent at Columbia Green Market

This past spring, I chose to complete some of my service hours for Community Nutrition through an organization called [GrowNYC](#). This group has a multitude of initiatives aimed at reducing food insecurity and improving sustainability throughout New York City, and utilizes volunteers to help work towards these goals. I volunteered at my local Greenmarket, a farmer's market operated by GrowNYC, which accepts [SNAP and other nutrition benefits](#) as payment for purchases made at the market.

I have always enjoyed going to farmer's markets, but never had the opportunity to volunteer at a market before. I was happy to discover that volunteering at the Greenmarket was even more fun than I had anticipated. Although I was volunteering on one of the rainiest, chilliest days last Spring, everyone at the market seemed to be in high spirits. My fellow GrowNYC volunteers introduced me to the many friendly market vendors, and trained me on the basics of my role for that day. My main responsibilities were answering patrons' questions, directing people through the market, and converting EBT into wooden Greenmarket tokens (which act as cash at the market). Despite the bleak weather, the turnout was higher than expected, and I had a positive experience volunteering in my local community. On sunnier days, I have returned to my local Greenmarket and watched cooking demonstrations by GrowNYC volunteers (resulting

in delicious free samples), and musicians performing for market-goers.

When I found out there was a Greenmarket on Columbia's campus, I knew I had to check it out! The Columbia Greenmarket is open every [Thursday](#) and [Sunday](#), year-round, from 8am-4pm. I recommend arriving at the market on the earlier side, as during my visit I noticed that several of the stands had closed by 2:30pm.

The Columbia Greenmarket has something for everyone. Some of its diverse offerings include: organic meats, fresh eggs, a variety of dairy products, beautiful bouquets, and of course, a bounty of fresh produce. As I walked through the market, I was particularly interested in a stand with unique flower arrangements and large baskets of tomatoes (my favorite vegetable).



Wildflower bouquets at Columbia Green Market

While several vendors had packed up, this vendor seemed committed to serving patrons until the end of the market. When I walked up to the stand, I was greeted by a familiar face: TC Alumna Emma Gangbar! She provided The Grapevine with a unique view into her experience working for a vendor at the Columbia Greenmarket.

Community Highlight: Columbia Greenmarket: *Continued*



TC Alumna Emma Gangbar (Photo Courtesy of Emma Gangbar)

Can you tell us a little about the vendor you work with at the Greenmarket?

Emma: In Summer 2023, I worked for the vendor [Nolasco Farms](#), which is based in Andover, New Jersey. This family-owned farm plants and harvests pesticide-free fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and more! The Nolasco family uses organic practices while also highlighting their Mexican roots. They work extremely hard to bring their produce to New York farmers markets every week, including markets in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx!

How did you first get involved with Nolasco Farms?

Emma: I really wanted a summer part-time job that aligned with my passions for local food, supporting small businesses, and community-driven work, so I simply went to various local farmers markets every weekend asking vendors if they needed an extra hand! It turns out that Nolasco Farms (and a few others) did, so I was quickly trained onsite. I also joined a Facebook group called, [NYC Greenmarket Employee Resource](#), to stay up-to-date on employment opportunities.

What is your favorite part about being involved at Nolasco Farms and the Columbia Greenmarket?

Emma: It is so difficult to choose my absolute favorite part, but I would have to say it is bringing farm-fresh

food to the community. In particular, I really appreciate how Nolasco Farms accepts various forms of payment, such as Health Bucks, Greenmarket Bucks, SNAP/EBT, and FMNP coupons. This makes fruits and vegetables more accessible for all. I also really enjoyed learning more about local products that I was less familiar with (such as squash blossoms, tomatillos, rue, and more) and then sharing this information with customers.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Emma: Not many people know that SNAP/EBT can be exchanged for up to \$10 a day in Health Bucks! I want this to be more widely known so that more people feel welcome and included in farmers market spaces. Also, if you wish to bring your learning beyond the confines of a classroom and have some time on your hands, I would encourage you to work at a farmers market! There is no better way to learn about the local food movement, community nutrition, and how to expand the awareness and use of farmers markets for all.

You can support Nolasco Farms, as well as all other vendors, every Thursday and Sunday at the Columbia Greenmarket!



Nolasco Farms Produce (Photo Courtesy of Emma Gangbar)



Root vegetables from Down Home Acres

Interview with Nadia Mowszowski, Stephanie Lim & Xinyi Xu: Nutrition and Early Childhood Caries

By Wency Xiang

The following interview has been edited and condensed.

Dental caries in children under age six is a major public health issue, with 21.4% of these children in the US being affected, and the disease is disproportionately common in minority and socially disadvantaged populations. In addition to causing negative health impacts on the child and family, early childhood caries (ECC) can promote the risk of getting more dental issues as they age. Thus, preventive methods are encouraged to reduce ECC along with the current treatments, such as surgical repair and pharmacologic suppression.¹

Drs. Charles Basch, Pam Koch, and Randi Wolf, the Department of Health and Behavior Studies at Teachers College, collaborated with the faculty at Columbia University College of Dental Medicine to study and implement various methods of preventative behavioral interventions through diet management and nutrition education to mitigate ECC, including MySmileBuddy project.

We had the privilege to invite three of our students from our Program in Nutrition, Nadia Mowszowski, Stephanie Lim, and Xinyi Xu, who have been involved with the research project on ECC, to talk about their experiences and involvement in this field. The project, which Nadia, Stephanie, and Xinyi have assisted, involves the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) in partnership with Columbia University to study how members currently treat early childhood caries (ECC).

The purpose of this project is to understand the current practices of pediatric dentists. Specifically, the project aims to gather information about dentists' approaches to different severity, the communication methods dentists use with parents and families, and the oral hygiene and dietary suggestions dentists provide.

¹ Lumsden, C.L., Edelstein, B.L., Basch, C.E. *et al.* Protocol for a family-centered behavioral intervention to reduce early childhood caries: the MySmileBuddy program efficacy trial. *BMC Oral Health* 21, 246 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/>

Can you describe the training in preparing for this position and how you balance it with your responsibilities as a student?

We underwent extensive training, including a comprehensive 15-hour training covering interview techniques, communication skills, and the study's context before officially starting our tasks. Subsequently, we conducted mock interviews with dental students and practice sessions with other research assistants and interviewers. Once the project manager and each of us were confident in our readiness, we proceeded to the official start of the project. The specific working hours depended on each of our schedules. They requested a 24-hour weekly commitment. Due to our rotations and other school work, our working hours are typically weekday evenings and weekends.

Engaging in 3 to 4 hours of daily conversations with dentists after completing rotations and other academic obligations is no small feat. However, a sense of accomplishment emerges when you witness the substantial number of dentists you've successfully interviewed.

What made you interested in getting involved with this project?



Xinyi: I was drawn to this project due to a memorable class experience where one of our professors shared a lively illustration. It highlighted how dietitians and dentists might provide divergent recommendations within the same context, using the example of candy consumption. Dietitians might advise, "It's acceptable to indulge moderately, perhaps once a day, but not in excessive amounts." In contrast, dentists might propose markedly dissimilar counsel, suggesting, "Feel free to indulge to your heart's content on this particular day, but subsequently abstain." This distinction stems from their focus on limiting exposure to sugary substances to preserve dental health. This engaging example significantly piqued my interest, propelling me to explore effective communication strategies with other healthcare professionals.

Nutrition and Early Childhood Caries: *Continued*

I am keen on understanding their distinct viewpoints on diet and lifestyle, which may differ from our perspectives.



Stephanie: My primary interest was initially fueled by a strong desire to engage in research. However, the intriguing connection between nutrition and dental caries also played a significant role. This topic is not frequently addressed in conversations. While we briefly

touched upon it in our program, it's clear that nutrition and dental health are closely intertwined. The impact of dietary choices, particularly in pediatrics, is profound. Dentists often emphasize the preventive nature of their work, which can leave a lasting impact throughout an individual's life. This aspect is particularly captivating to me.



Nadia: I became interested in this project because I really love research and wanted to explore a type of research I had not been involved in before. This particular study looks at the connection between nutrition and oral health, specifically in ECC. ECC is a huge and preventable problem in

children under six. I had not learned much about ECC and the role of oral health in nutrition, so I was eager and curious about an appropriate and attainable solution for families. Many dentists discussed how children would sometimes come back with recurrent caries even after treatment. In addition, they said multiple siblings from the same family would sometimes end up with caries—despite the continual education and treatment measures taken by the dentist and their offices. It was also interesting to note how restoration was not always the answer. There is a need for oral health and diet education for these families.

In addition to dentists, do you engage with any other professionals involved in the practice?

The individuals we primarily engage with are dentists, but we gather insights from them about the involvement of other professionals during ECC counseling, particularly hygienists and assistants. Before the patient interacts with the dentist, the hygienist takes the lead by discussing topics such as

brushing techniques and dietary choices. Subsequently, when the child meets with the dentist, a more personalized and comprehensive discussion about their caries and the corresponding approach occurs. These hygienists and assistants also play a role in follow-up visits.

What have you learned about the connections between the diet and ECC?

Stephanie: I feel that I've gained a significant amount of knowledge on the topic. It was somewhat surprising, as I was aware of the connection, but seeing how deeply dentists delve into the nutritional impact was truly intriguing. Notably, certain significant aspects stood out, such as the frequency at which patients consume snacks, including starchy carbohydrates alongside sweet and sugary snacks. For those who engage in frequent grazing, these substances can become lodged in their teeth if they eat every half-hour. Consequently, a key takeaway for me has been recognizing the significance of the frequency at which individuals consume carbohydrate-rich foods and beverages.

Nadia: Diet and ECC are interconnected many dentists revealed the major role diet plays in ECC. Frequent snacking (often known as grazing) is common among many children. This causes food to be left on the teeth for many hours, not a short duration, which can lead to tooth decay. Other behaviors that lead to ECC include frequent juice consumption, eating sticky or chewy candy or multivitamins, on-demand breastfeeding without wiping the teeth afterward and consuming carbohydrate-rich snacks such as Goldfish crackers and chips. Interestingly, many parents don't view carbohydrate-rich snacks to be detrimental to children's oral health, and primarily consider the consumption of sugars in candies and chocolates to be harmful. However, carbohydrates like Goldfish crackers will break down into sugars and can cause cavities if consumed frequently. This study also emphasized the importance of consuming a diet with less cariogenic foods, such as apples, yogurt, nuts, and cheese. However, many families struggle to afford these food items. Families also may not have time in their busy schedules to always cook meals and may opt for a convenient fast-food option.

Nutrition and Early Childhood Caries: *Continued*

How has your experience with this project influenced your work during your site placements/rotations?

Xinyi: After conducting the dental interviews, Nadia and I were also involved in another research project at WIC, which also revolved around dental health. However, this research had a specific focus on pregnant women and their children. Our intention was to underscore the connection between these two projects, as we have witnessed the substantial impact of diet on dental health. It's crucial to acknowledge the presence of cariogenic foods such as sugary drinks and crackers. Furthermore, we investigated certain behaviors, including sipping from cups, bottle feeding, and even prolonged breastfeeding, as they can contribute to ECC and subsequently influence children's oral health in the long run.

Many children have a preference for consuming juice. We engaged in phone conversations with children or their families to inquire about their dietary habits. One of the questions I consistently posed was, "Do they consume any juice?" Our intention is not to impose a complete restriction on juice consumption, as we recognize that advocating against such enjoyable foods might prove overly-challenging for children. Instead, we aim to encourage moderation in juice intake. We also provide recommendations, such as prioritizing whole fruits over processed alternatives. In cases where juice is consumed, we advise dilution with water. Additionally, we advise against prolonged sipping, as this can extend the exposure of teeth to sugars. Ensuring teeth brushing after consuming milk or juice is essential, and it's particularly crucial to avoid drinking these beverages before bedtime.

Nadia: I learned a lot during my rotation at WIC, where I counseled and educated mothers on nutrition topics such as fruit, vegetable, protein, and dairy consumption for them and their children. In relation to this study, I stressed the importance of oral health and the need for children to see a pediatric dentist at an early age. I discussed the benefits of good oral hygiene and important oral health behaviors and provided referrals to see a dentist. Regarding diet, I encouraged them to limit juice to 4-6oz per the AAPD guidelines, and if there is a need to give juice, to dilute it with water. If it were not for this study, I would not have placed such high emphasis on the importance and need for good oral hygiene behaviors. These practices, if ingrained

early on, can be a foundation for lifelong good oral health behaviors. They can prevent expensive restorations and painful tooth decay in the future.

Is it hard for kids to follow these dietary instructions?

Xinyi: The more I engaged in discussions with the dentists, the more evident it became that this task was far more complex than I had initially envisioned. While some might regard these instructions as merely a few steps, the reality is that altering one's diet is a challenging endeavor. Moreover, diet is a highly sensitive topic for most individuals. Maintaining such changes in dietary habits also proves to be a formidable challenge, particularly when competing with various other priorities.

For instance, a patient's household might comprise multiple children or the family's schedule might be tightly packed. In addition, the demands of school life might prevent constant supervision, making it difficult to consistently caution the children about limiting or avoiding certain foods.

Q: Would you recommend our future nutrition students be involved in this research project?

Nadia: Yes! This research project provided invaluable skills in interviewing, collecting, and analyzing data. It also offered first-hand knowledge on nutrition, how it related to oral health and its role in the disease process for ECC. Research like this enhanced my experience as a nutrition student at TC because it provided more understanding, exposure, and learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Stephanie: Indeed, it's a highly intriguing field. Furthermore, it might pave the way for dietitians to explore. As the connection between nutrition and pediatric dental caries gains more prominence and recognition. One of the questions in the questionnaire pertains to whether dentists believe it's appropriate to refer patients to dietitians to enhance their dietary management skills. Looking ahead, it's possible that this field will provide a platform for dietitians to expand into. The alignment between promoting healthy eating habits and maintaining healthy teeth is evident. It's noteworthy that the dietary patterns recommended by dentists closely resemble Ellyn Satter's suggestions in terms of scheduled meals, food choices, and so forth.

Considering these overlaps, especially for individuals interested in pediatrics and aiding children's well-being, I strongly recommend exploring this area.

Xinyi: Interviewing dentists and conversing with them presents a valuable opportunity to enhance our counseling and communication skills. Reflecting back, I was nervous when interacting with people before undertaking this project. Sometimes, I wasn't sure how to guide the conversation effectively without becoming overly direct or gathering adequate information beforehand. Participating in projects involving conversing with individuals provides an excellent platform for refining these skills.

How will this experience influence your future career as a dietitian? Has it inspired you to approach anything differently?

Nadia: This has influenced my future career as a dietitian by viewing the importance of oral health and its connection to nutrition in kids and adults. I am definitely inspired to continue research into ECC and learn more about this common childhood chronic disease that is easily preventable. I hope to be involved in more research in the future!

Stephanie: I remain intrigued by research, and this experience has given me a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of a research project. In this sense, it has contributed to shaping my perspective.

Xinyi: In addition to the communication and counseling skills I've acquired, this experience has also expanded my perspective regarding the diverse roles dietitians can play in nutrition. It's not limited to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or cancer. In reality, food can significantly influence various aspects of health. This realization has been truly enlightening for me.

Photo of Xinyi courtesy of Xinyi Xu.

Photo of Nadia courtesy of Nadia Morwzowski.

Photo of Stephanie courtesy of Stephanie Lim.

Interested in getting involved in research?

The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy is currently looking to hire Research Assistants for two different projects:

• NYC Chefs in the Schools

"Chefs in the Schools proposes to increase the number of plant-based, scratch-cooked, culturally inclusive meals in New York City Schools through providing training to kitchen staff. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the best practices of providing kitchen staff training, nutrition education to students, as well as perceptions and participation among families, educators and school food staff and administration."

Learn more [here](#).

• NYS Healthy School Meals Policy Change

This study works to "understand the impact of de-implementing or maintaining Healthy School Meals for All (HFSA) since fall 2022 across New York State... [and] aims to provide valuable insights into the impacts of the policy change on school meal programs, as well as perceptions and participation among families."

Learn more [here](#).

Check out the weekly Program in Nutrition Newsletter for other upcoming opportunities!



Photo Courtesy of Program in Nutrition Weekly Update



Savoring Ethiopian and Eritrean Traditions in the Heart of Harlem

By Jay Gendron

Located just around the corner from Teachers College, Massawa is a neighborhood staple restaurant that has thrived in Morningside heights since 1988. Massawa offers a tailored selection of Ethiopian and Eritrean foods served family style, so it's best enjoyed with friends and family! For my trip, I brought two friends from undergrad and used the meal as an opportunity to catch up.

Massawa specializes in vegan and vegetarian foods, and offers a wide variety of delicious vegan dishes. They also offer meat-based dishes, but the vegan options are truly the star of the show here!

My friends and I got two sampler plates to try: one made up of several meat dishes and one made up of vegan dishes. Everything comes on one large platter if you order at the same time, so keep that in mind if you'd rather have your vegan food served separately.

The meat dishes in the protein sampler were Spicy Beef Tebsi, Spiced Chicken Tebsi, and Mild Lamb Stew. The dish Massawa calls 'Tebsi' is also called 'Tibs' on other menus, but the terms mean about the same thing: a fragrant, deceptively simple dish somewhere between a stir fry and a stew. Both Tebsi dishes were excellent, but the Lamb Stew was the table favorite. Flavored with turmeric, onions, and other aromatics, this dish has a richer flavor than the others, so it stood out in the best way.

The vegan dishes were Shiro, Alitcha, Timtimo, and Tsebhi Hamli. Shiro is a smooth, savory chickpea puree, and we couldn't get enough of it! We had it both as a side on the protein sampler and on its own in the vegan sampler. Next, Alitcha is a mixture of stewed carrots, potatoes, and greens. It was probably the least exciting dish on the plate, and the only dish left over, since it wasn't flavored as well as the other dishes. Timtimo is a red lentil stew, and probably our second-favorite dish at the restaurant! Lastly, Tsebhi Hamli is a dish made of collard greens which have been cooked until they are tender. Collard greens are a personal favorite of mine, so I loved it, but if you're not a fan of collards, this is not the dish for you, since it has the distinctive bitter greens taste.



Massawa's "vegan sampler plate" (Photo courtesy of Jay Gendron)

Last, but certainly not least, all of the dishes were served on a generous helping of Injera. If you've never had Injera, imagine a whole-wheat sourdough crepe, but better, and you'll be roughly in the right ballpark. Injera is a spongy, fermented flatbread traditionally made from Teff flour, but which can be made from many different flours. It is the primary utensil used to eat Ethiopian and Eritrean food, since you use a small portion of the Injera to scoop up the various dishes. You may run out of Injera, so feel free to ask the wait staff to bring you some more. The bread is mildly sour, and perfectly balances the flavors of the other dishes on the plate.

Despite being a bit costly (average \$25 per plate) Massawa offered a great meal and a pleasant atmosphere. The vegan dishes were especially good, so if you struggle to find good vegan options in restaurants, this is a great place to try! One final note, bring friends, and order more than you think you will need. We were only three people, but we ordered two sampler plates (meant for 2 people) and had only a little bit leftover!).

[Massawa](#) is located at 1239 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY 10027.



Vegan Chinese Turnip Cake (Lo Bak Go)

By *Wency Xiang*



2-3 servings



1 h 30 min

INGREDIENTS

- 400 g daikon*, chopped/grated
- 1 3/4 cups fine rice flour
- 6 shiitake mushrooms, diced
- 2 tbsp scallions, minced
- Half clove garlic, minced
- Canola oil, dash
- Salt and white pepper to taste

APPLIANCES

- Food steamer
- Pudding cups
- Pot
- Pan/wok
- Spatula



LO BAK GO & ME



Lo Bak Go (蘿蔔糕) is a popular Cantonese dim sum dish that you can have in almost any dim sum restaurant, and I bet no one can say no to this tasty dish!

I remember back to my middle school days when I used to grab some Lo Bak Go from the school cafeteria when I was almost late for class. After the first morning class ended, my friends who didn't have time to have breakfast would come to me and ask for one piece of Lo Bak Go. Gradually, the aroma of the cakes filled the entire classroom.

Typically, Cantonese-style sausages and dried shrimps are used to make Lo Bak Go, but the vegetarian version is also worth trying. In addition, I simplified the traditional recipe to make it easier to prepare at home.



DIRECTIONS

1. Put chopped/grated daikon into a pot and add just enough water to barely cover the daikon. Place the pot over high heat to boil the daikon until it becomes tender.
2. Prepare the fillings by stir-frying the mushrooms, scallions, garlic, and salt with oil.
3. Drain the daikon but reserve the liquid. Add the reserved liquid to the rice flour and stir until all the flour has just dissolved. Its texture is somewhat like sticky rice porridge. You may find that you do not use all the liquid, but don't worry, it's okay!
4. Add the fillings and white pepper or other seasonings that you like to the mixture.
5. Add the mixture to a pan and cook it until the mixture thickens.**
6. Grease a heat-proof container (like a 4-oz pudding custard cup) and place it in a steaming basket. Transfer the mixture to the container and use a spoon to compact it.
7. Steam the container over high heat for one hour. Check for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the cake. When it comes out clean, the cake is done.
8. Chill the cake before frying. Slice the cake and then fry until the surface turns yellow.

NOTES

**We use daikon, a Japanese radish, for this recipe. If you can't find daikon, substitute it with a white turnip (not a Western turnip) or jicama, a Chinese turnip.*

***When adding the mixture, be careful during this step because it's easy to overcook! Make sure you stir the mixture consistently. Even if you overcook it (for example, the mixture has very little moisture left, or the bottom side of the cake has turned golden brown), it's okay (I did it, too!). You can simply add the leftover daikon soup into the mixture to make all the ingredients dissolve again.*

Photo credit: Wency, www.canva.com



Summer Zucchini Noodles

*with vegan pesto sauce,
corn, & grape tomatoes*

By Sheba Bergman-Golden

INGREDIENTS

For the Vegan Pesto Sauce *:

- 3-4 cups of packed basil leaves, stems removed
- 1/3 cup of either pine nuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds
- 2-4 tbsp nutritional yeast (such as Bragg's)
- 2-4 cloves of garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ cup olive oil

For the Zucchini Noodles:

- 2 medium zucchinis, skin on, edges removed
- Juice from 1-2 lemons
- 1 pint of grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1 can (16 oz) of whole kernel sweet corn, drained and washed**
- Salt and pepper to taste





DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the vegan pesto sauce: Place all ingredients in a blender*** or food processor and pulse until a paste is obtained. This can be kept in the fridge for up to 4 days or alternatively frozen in an ice cube tray and kept in the freezer for up to 2 months.
2. Spiralize**** both zucchinis into noodles, then place them in a bowl.
3. Add the lemon juice and 2-4 tablespoons of the pesto sauce (depending on how much flavor you like) to the bowl of zucchini noodles.
4. Add the tomatoes and corn to the bowl, then season with salt and pepper to taste.

NOTES

**Depending on how strong you like your pesto, you can use more or less garlic and nutritional yeast, so feel free to experiment! If you are allergic to nuts, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds (my personal favorite) both work well as substitutes.*

*** If you can get fresh ears of corn in their husks (and it is not too hot to use the oven) simply place them in the oven (husks intact!) at 400°F for 30 min. Let them cool for 15 min in their husks before removing them and then cut off the kernels with a sharp knife.*

**** Don't have a blender for making vegan pesto? You can finely chop the basil, then use a mortar and pestle to crush it with olive oil, minced garlic, spices and nut/seed of choice (see below).*

***** Don't have a spiralizer for the zucchini noodles? You can use a carrot peeler to shave the zucchini into thin and flat fettuccine-looking strips*