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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE MNEMONIC CONVERSION: FROM COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY TO CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE CULINARY MEMOIRS OF OLIA HERCULES

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Abstract

This article examines the two culinary memoirs of Olia Hercules, namely *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* (2020) and *Strong Roots* (2025), to look at the transformation of everyday domestic practices from the fragile realm of communicative memory to the durable realm of cultural memory. Using the theoretical distinction between the interpersonal and institutionalized forms of remembering proposed by Jan Assman, the study demonstrates that the two select texts stabilize ephemeral and orally transmitted knowledge through embodied practice, affective intensity, and material codification. *Summer Kitchen* evokes a sensory-rich archive of domestic life. It foregrounds the Ukrainian culinary traditions as inherited, practiced, and socially situated forms of remembering. *Strong Roots* adds to this further by amplifying the whole process, especially during displacement and geopolitical rupture. Both the select memoirs of Hercules function as a counter-archive by converting the lived, domestic experiences into published cultural artifacts. The article also situates these select memoirs of Olia Hercules in a space where food narratives can materialize cultural continuity, hence operating as an important archive of national belonging.

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Introduction:-

Culinary memoirs, according to Barbara Frey Waxman, link “food with cultural identity, ethnic community, family, and cross-cultural experiences”, writers act as “cultural tenders” who preserve the communal values and rituals across generations; they occupy a unique stand in safeguarding identity, memory, and cultural continuity (364). Food narratives are the intimate archives, embedded with autobiographical and familial reflections, often exposing the lived experiences that connect the sensory language of cooking to both the personal and the collective memories. The domestic kitchen attributes culinary memoirs a distinctive space, as it becomes a site where emotions, histories, and cultural practices are activated, recorded, and sustained. It is also a space where the text materializes memory through the detailed evocation of gestures, tastes, and techniques that might otherwise remain ephemeral. The fusion

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of sensory experiences with these narratives gives space for embodied recollection. Culinary memoirs also enable their writers to negotiate identities, and they become a medium where the distance is bridged and the heritage is sustained. Theorist Roland Barthes argues that the act of cooking and eating becomes a practice where food “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, and a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior” (21).

Culinary memoirs act as an important mnemonic text by preserving the community’s lived experience in the forms that are emotionally resonant and transmissible across generations. It also acts as a space where social memories are produced and transmitted. Culinary memoirs are different from traditional cookbooks, which are replete with instructions, techniques, and ways about cooking. Cookbooks “reflect shifts in the boundaries of edibility, the properties of the culinary process, the logic of meals, the exigencies of the household budget, the vagaries of the market, and the structure of the domestic ideologies” (Appadurai 3). Culinary memoirs, on the other hand, not only encode instructions, techniques, and tastes but also the domestic structures, rituals, and survival strategies employed by communities. These texts document the histories that often escape from the traditional records, like that of women, diasporic communities, and even families navigating displacements.

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs developed the concept of Collective Memory. He believed memory is never individually contained but always arises within the social frameworks that structure daily life. Halbwachs argued that “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (43) and that it is “in the consciousness of various members of the domestic group” (54) that family memories take shape. Thus, memory is not purely an individual faculty but fundamentally a social one. Building and refining the concept of Collective Memory, German Egyptologist and cultural theorist Jan Assmann reshaped the field of memory studies. He distinguishes between two forms of collective memory: communicative memory and cultural memory. These two forms of memory together form the theoretical background for this study. According to Jan Assmann:

Communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations. (111)

The move to cultural memory is a deliberate and necessary process, a process that anchors the fading and personal recollections into a durable and externalized form, which ensures persistence. According to Halbwachs, collective memory is situated within social frameworks: “a person remembers only by situating himself within the viewpoint of one or several groups and one or several currents of collective thought” (33). When domestic customs and traditions are transcribed and published, they are expelled from the context of the regional kitchen. Here, the lived experience is institutionalised for the storage of a reconstructed past. The lived experiences thus get transformed into a stable cultural heritage (128-29). The term “Cultural Memory” was first coined by Assmann in his seminal essay “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” (1995). He states that:

The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity. (132)

This study is centred on the notion that culinary memoirs generate a structured transformation. Olia Hercules, through her two select memoirs, gives a potential case study to analyse this process of memory conversion. The intergenerational transmission of memory in these works is a result of a crucial shift necessitated by the movement of memory from the fragile nature of communicative memory to the durable nature of cultural memory. The act of writing down enables the preservation of a community’s knowledge into a permanent cultural artefact. This act of preserving memory becomes the foundational mechanism which enriches the process of exploring memory conversion, especially within a culturally rich landscape such as Ukraine. It is in this context that the works of Olia Hercules gain traction.

Olia Hercules is a Ukrainian-born chef and writer who is instrumental in documenting and internationalising the Ukrainian culinary traditions. The works of Hercules use professional techniques that are often presented in the form of dialogues with the intimate and inherited knowledge. The two culinary memoirs of Hercules, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* (2020) and *Strong Roots* (2025), evidently portray how domestic practices and sensory recollections can perform the role of cultural testimonies. The culinary practice transfers and preserves rituals and gestures within the family across generations, which later forms durable cultural evidence. Through the two texts examined, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* and *Strong Roots*, Hercules demonstrates the exclusive ways in which memory is formed, circulated, and endured. The theories of embodied, affective, and material memory are used to analyse the transience and stabilisation of these memories. The act of remembering here is analysed as diversely distributed through body, emotions, and objects. Embodied memory here is “an implicit ‘body memory’ that underlies our habits and skills, connecting body and environment through cycles of perception and action” (Fuchs, 215). Similarly, affective memory is found to occur when “emotions ... generate a strong impact upon memory,” producing “more vivid autobiographical memories [that] tend to be emotional events ... remembered more frequently, more clearly, and in greater detail” (Cardoso et al. 81). Material memory, however, treats objects as mnemonic agents: “things are full-fledged memories, since they accumulate and bring forth how we have materially engaged with them over different timescales” (Prezioso and Alessandrini 1).

Olia Hercules’ culinary memoir, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* (2020), presents a literary sphere of personal recollection, regional foodways, and architecture of memory within Ukraine. The texts begin with Hercules revisiting the eponymous “summer kitchens,” a small outbuilding adjacent to vegetable plots or orchards, where generations of Ukrainians cooked, preserved, and shared seasonal labour of garden and harvest. In the *Summer Kitchen*, Hercules writes, “I owe some of my earliest and fondest memories to the ‘summer kitchens’ of my parents, grandparents, neighbours and friends in Ukraine.” *Summer Kitchens* is also an intermedial text featuring vibrant photographs, lyrical essays, and recipes that bring the Ukrainian domestic spaces alive. From themes of “preserving and pickling, breakfast and bites, broths and soups, bread and dumplings, field and forest vegetables, meat and fish, and desserts along with recipes such as borscht with duck and smoked pears, burnt aubergine butter on tomato toast, poppy-seed babka, nettle and wild garlic soup” (Hercules, *Summer Kitchens*), all serve dual purposes; they instruct the home cook and preserve a cultural landscape of food memory. In addition to being a work about cooking, this text also presents a vast canvas of cultural endurance. Here modernity, migration, and changing lifestyles threaten the practices she records. She notes that although summer kitchens are “dwindling these days,” there remains much to learn about making the most of vibrant produce throughout the year (Hercules). Through the lens of food, labour, memory, and landscape, *Summer Kitchens* documents how domestic experiences encode cultural identity. Here, cooking and preserving become forms of remembering and gestures of continuity in times of change.

A genre-bending blend, *Strong Roots* (2025), is Hercules’ yet another culinary memoir. It spans nearly a century of Ukrainian history through the lens of four generations of Hercules’ own family. The text begins with eras of Russification and Soviet repression. It moves through her grandmother’s deportation, her aunt’s youthful protest, and her parents’ flight when their village fell during the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The memoir offers recipes as entry points into wider cultural and historical retrospection. The text also maps memory into food, at the same time restoring the Ukrainian culinary practices as the most important archive of national identity.

In reading the narratives of Hercules, it is evident that the stories she narrates are living practices and not formal archives. These are techniques and gestures she imbibed through proximity. At this juncture the Hercules’ texts mirror Halbwach’s foundational belief that memory is created within social frameworks. Here structures such as family are sites for recollection. All the recipes and ideas presented in the memoirs exhibit the sediments of interaction. A tacit understanding is built in kitchens where hands rather than texts teach the next generation. Central to Hercules’ portrayal of communicative memory is the primacy of embodied observation, where knowledge is conveyed without explicit instruction. In *Summer Kitchen*, Hercules writes, “Adding a splash of hot water to the batter is a trick I learned from my mum” (86). She also recalls “watching [grandma] make butter: [grandma would] take a three-quart jar full of cream and keep shaking it until butter was formed.” (321). In *Strong Roots*, she notes that she “grew up among incredible cooks, but in Ukraine you don’t – or at least we didn’t – cook at your mother’s side. The adults were busy, you were not to get in the way, but I must have absorbed a lot of it by osmosis”. Children internalized knowledge from the periphery through observation rather than learning through direct instruction and participation. These levels of marginal apprenticeship are expanded during extended family gatherings. These gatherings for Hercules were moments of good fortune: “A large chunk of extended family was

present, including Mum's sister Valia, her brother Slava and his wife Liuda, and the eldest of Mum's five siblings, my Uncle Viktor, who we call "the walking encyclopedia" (Strong Roots). These family gatherings act as the nodal sites where the stories, techniques, and gestures converge to form intergenerational memory flow that persists without ever being formally written down, where even the minute procedural details tend to carry memory. The instance in which Hercules remembers sitting "on stumpy wooden stools and pick out the bruised and blemished" with children carefully selecting fruit so that "only the best, undamaged specimens were to make it into the preserving jars" (Summer Kitchen 13) carries insights that further emphasise Halbwach's notion that memory is transmitted by participation in the shared rhythm of work.

The interpersonal memories often demonstrate an inherent ephemerality, and Hercules often frames her recollections in terms that highlight their precariousness. The repetition of gestures, techniques, and tones leads to memory preservation. However, lack of permanence is considered as a feature of communicative memory. Communicative memory is known to thrive on intimacy, which allows it to be vulnerable to disruption. Migration, political suppression, and generational loss are some of the reasons for such disruption. Hercules thus positions communicative memory not as a nostalgic residue of the past but as a living knowledge, a foundation upon which her broader idea of culinary remembrance rests. In both texts memory is not a static content but a living interpersonal archive, which forms the raw material for the subsequent stages of memory transmission.

The process of memory transmission involves a series of stabilizing practices that give intimacy to domestic interaction. These mnemonic practices, embodied, affective, and material, do not replace the oral recollection but fortify it, thereby ensuring the transformation of the experimental world of kitchens, landscapes, and family rituals into a more permanent cultural repertoire. It is at this stage that memory begins to acquire a more transmissible structure. As British anthropologist Paul Connerton notes, "We may preserve the past deliberately without explicitly re-representing it in words and images. Our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions . . ." (72). Embodied memory is the central mechanism of stabilization, where the techniques are repeated until they become instinctive patterns of movement. Embodied memory contextualizes memory by fundamentally rooting it in the human body and its sensorimotor systems. The process of remembering is activated through bodily and sensory experiences, which is originally linked to an event. The body here becomes the medium for the operation of memory (Iani). This gets clearer in Strong Roots when Hercules describes the meditative quality of kneading dough: "The soft dough under the cushion of my palm, its stickiness, its comforting sweet-sour aroma, the repetitive movements...the ultimate act of mindfulness." These gestures here are not simply learned but inhabited, and the stability fostered arises from the repetition of the practice, not its origin alone. Embodied memory is a form of knowing even without verbal knowledge; muscles, postures and the rhythms of everyday labour are the mnemonic repository. Preserving, fermenting, and tending seasonal produce are all repetitive tasks that showcase the stabilising dimensions of embodied memory. Fermenting foods "elate me, they trigger memories, and they inspire me to cook creatively" (Summer Kitchen 25), writes Hercules. Fermenting is an embodied act that becomes iterative, each season repeating the last, that keeps memory in action and not in narration. These practices highlight the transformation of the bodily repetition from fragile recollection into cultural patterns that are resilient because they get reenacted continually.

Embodied memory ensures continuity through practice, while affective memory ensures continuity through emotional intensity. "Affective memories are inscribed in everyday artefacts, making it possible to get in touch with positive memories of past events, with memories of people who are no longer present, and with feelings of belonging to a group and identity claims, among other possibilities (Cardoso et al. 87)." Affective memory often acts as the emotional-intuitive layer wherein the sensory experience shapes, amplifies, and preserves cultural recollection. In Olia Hercules' culinary memoirs, taste, smell, sound, and texture become more than descriptive embellishments. They are the mechanisms through which memory acquires intensity and durability. Hercules' texts continually look at how sensory stimuli, particularly smell and taste, connect the personal past to the cultural identity. Allowing what might otherwise disappear into the fragility of communicative memory to persist through the emotional force of sensory recall.

In Summer Kitchens, smell is often framed as the earliest and most enduring portal into memory. Smell plays a crucial role; it is the seasonal pulse and, at the same time, a sensory ritual denoting family intimacy, time, and cultural continuity. Hercules looks back at her childhood Easters, for her Easter days began with the smell of yeasty dough resulting from the makoviyrulet placed in the oven (302). Hercules says, "clean tripe smells like fresh milk"

(142), which also shows how memory induces sensory precision in both imagination and body. In a similar manner, Hercules' first impression of Kyiv arrives in an olfactory landscape: "the whole place smells of borsch" (115). Smell facilitates national belonging, like in Proust's insights, where sensory impressions unlock an "entire structures of the past" held completely dormant in the consciousness (67).

Affective memory acts as a stabilising force in *Strong Roots*. There are instances in the text where Hercules talks about cooking as a process that renewed her sense of orientation: "The familiar smells, the sounds of chopping and stirring ... made the addiction to cooking stronger and stronger" (*Strong Roots*). The sensory familiarity here produces emotional grounding. The kitchen is a site where repeated emotions accumulate, which in turn generates a sense of belonging. This idea is further extended when Hercules describes her parents' return to the Ukrainian household filled with "familiar smells: fried onions and grated carrots, beetroot, chicken fat, freshly cut dill..." (*Strong Roots*). Smell is thus considered a reservoir of memory that leads to cultural continuity. Taste is yet another affective trigger capable of traversing the temporal distance. On tasting a Christmas bun, Hercules writes, "When I tasted them, I nearly fell off my chair" (*Strong Roots*). This memory is both tactile and immediate, which is the essence of embodied recognition. Hercules presents instances in the text where flavour is itself a form of cultural continuity; in *Strong Roots* she discusses the process of salivating just at the thought of a dish, which in turn is representative of the taste of her homeland. Similarly, the scent of walnut is "so familiar, but not familiar like the walnuts of [her] childhood... [her] brain buzzes from such a niche connection" (Hercules, *Strong Roots*). These are instances of affective recall, an involuntary surge of memory connecting the past with the present. Sound also takes the centre stage by becoming an affective modality in the text. Hercules believes that if one wants to be a good cook, one must be able to see, smell, taste, and hear, and there is no better way to feel alive (*Strong Roots*). Both select texts are replete with sonic imprints of domestic life: the sizzle of vegetables and the rhythmic repetition of chopping. This reinforces the notion that affect follows a circular path, shaping the everyday encounters that influence how bodies inhabit spaces.

Cultural remembrance is the defining feature of Hercules' memoirs, which are anchored in affective memory. In addition to narration, emotional discharge of sensory experiences helps in the transmission of cultural remembrance. Affective memory is the emotional adhesive of Hercules' mnemonic system, selecting that which is preserved, intensifying that which is inherited, and at the same time ensuring that memory is both recollected and felt profoundly. The emotional resonance further stabilises communicative memory and prepares it for the transformation into the durable realm of cultural memory.

The material anchor is the final stabilising mechanism that externalises memory into objects, texts, and symbolic motifs that can endure even in the absence of their original carriers. In *Summer Kitchen*, Hercules foregrounds the importance of such anchors, noting that "I still have grandmother's handwritten recipe books" (323). A handwritten recipe is both an artifact and an archive. It transforms the embodied knowledge into a repeatable, preservable, and transportable document. Material anchors extend beyond the textual. Domestic textiles such as "Hand-embroidered – and often hand-woven linen or hemp cloths called *rushnyky* would adorn the walls, often draped over icons or, later, photographs" serve as visual and tactile repositories of familial and cultural lineage in *Strong Roots*. Cultural identity persists even when verbal transmission is interrupted and memory gets broken down into fabrics, colours, and threads. The texts also emphasise symbolic anchors by merging the personal memory with the collective imagery. Domestic objects are the carriers of culturally resonant symbols. The grapevine of her childhood is one such symbol for Hercules, and she believes it resembles the tree of life (*Strong Roots*). Cherry trees, on the other hand, become a growing mnemonic marker of family belonging. She recollects the existence of two cherry trees at the front of her house, one for her and one for her brother (*Strong Roots*). The memory recollected here is rooted in materiality; such symbols acquire form here, and their significance resonates even beyond the immediate setting. These symbols carry forward memories of a domestic world, its taste, gestures, and emotions, to a future world. Memories associated with objects, recipes, and symbols are spared from the vulnerabilities of loss or displacement; this is then transferred from the private recollection to the cultural archive, a movement allowing persistence even without emotional intensity and embodied practises.

Mnemonic conversion happens when communicative memory creates space for cultural memory, which is capable of facilitating the transition from the interpersonal into the collective archive. This shift is evident in Hercules' memoirs, and this transition is not just an authorial choice for her but is in itself an act of preservation shaped by historical pressure. The need to record and document memories is necessitated by cultural erasure, migration, war, and even modernisation. This documented memory can thus become part of a larger national inheritance.

Documenting is thus an act of safeguarding; publication is a gesture that has the ability to transform kitchen affairs into materials of national importance that are stored, taught and collectively remembered. In *Summer Kitchen* a story is embedded in the ordinary rhythms of domestic life and the need for inscription increases with the direct response to geopolitical trauma in *Strong Roots*. This shift directly points at what Jan Assmann identifies as the defining characteristic of cultural memory: "Cultural memory is a kind of institution. It is exteriorised, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent" (111). Written pages act as a preservation force: domestic knowledge becomes a cultural artefact, and these artefacts no longer rely on the contingencies of family transmission. Hercules' treatment of the iconic dishes of Ukraine also reveals this shift, where certain food items carry ritualistic stature, as they carry certain layers of meanings that are beyond the personal realm. Hercules points out how ordinary dishes develop and acquire symbolic force within the Ukrainian cultural sphere. Borscht, a national dish of Ukraine, is given the status of national treasure and acute pride in *Summer Kitchen* (113) and is also capable of triggering deep-seated memories and feelings of kingship (120). In *Strong Roots* she mentions the ability of borscht to function as the part of DNA. Similarly, varenyky is a dish "known and loved by everybody in Ukraine" (*Summer Kitchen* 174). It is considered the dumpling of all seasons and all regions of Ukraine (*Summer Kitchen* 83). This exceeds mere sustenance, becoming a marker of belonging, and also carries an affective weight resulting from familial transmission. The labour involved in the preparation of it is "nothing less than a manifestation of love" (*Summer Kitchen* 83). This asserts the importance of a dish in carrying memory. It's not the repetition in its making alone, but the repetition is collectively passed on from one generation to the next. Preparation and consumption carry equal status, making it the performative link connecting the past and the present.

It is important to note that cooking is one such process capable of connecting people to their origins, even when physical return is impossible. Diaspora is thus involved here, and Hercules cooks so that it lets her connect to her homeland on a deeper level. Culinary practices are both an emotional and mnemonic bridge across distance. When territorial belongings are lost or suspended, cooking even takes up the role of compensation. In *Strong Roots* we see Hercules cooking traditional dishes for her fleeing parents, making a familiar space, engulfed in familiar smells, which, in turn, sends signals of safety and hope. Being able to have some borscht and smell familiar flowers signals not the end but hope, a hope she is trying to cultivate. This is demonstrative of how food rituals stand in for a threatened homeland. These are the acts that carry the cultural weight of a portable homeland, a sustaining identity when the place and the belongings are jeopardised. Here culinary traditions are offering a belonging that endures even across the oceans and the boundaries. Even though they also carry the emotional weight marked by the "bittersweet longing that Ukrainians call tuga" (*Strong Roots*). Thus, the select culinary memoirs, in addition to describing diasporic memory, also sustain it and provide both textual and sensory frameworks which allow the diasporic communities to reaffirm cultural identity.

Suppressions and the threat of cultural erasure are two aspects that gain significance in the memoirs of Hercules. At times of political pressures, there is an increasing tendency to standardise or even weaken the regional distinctiveness. Hercules states that "further from the eastern border were more able to preserve their dialects, rituals, and embroidery and other crafts, as well as their cuisine" (*Summer Kitchen* 21). The kitchen takes up the status of a counter archive, an embodied repository to preserve the cultural knowledge even when institutional memory fails. Culinary practices are a form of resistance for the writer which in many ways might give these dreamy kitchens, the food traditions followed, and the cherished recipes the attention they very much deserve (*Summer Kitchen* 11) The sensory and embodied transmission aids this endurance further; she writes, our maternal grandmother "taught us to listen to our cooking" (*Strong Roots*). Memory is also in practice; in *Strong Roots*, Hercules uses the method of symbolic preservation when she paints Ukrainian motifs on the door of her London kitchen. These practices are representative of how foodways and domestic rituals lead to cultural continuity, which might contribute to the survival of memories outside the official histories.

The memoirs discussed confront the history of cultural erasure, especially through the embodied memories of those who lived under the weight of it. Hercules recalls the historical violence when "Russification was in full swing in Ukraine when [her] parents were children," a policy that sought to turn "the fifteen Soviet republics... into a single homogenised Russified whole, with one history, one future and one language: Russian." (*Strong Roots*). The destruction of "toponyms" and the systematic clearing of Crimea so that it was "largely cleared... for Russians" (*Strong Roots*) are the instances that form the backdrop against which Hercules' writings become resistance and not just testimonial. The "half-whispers" are thus a learned behaviour from the older generation, who survived by being silent, and this becomes a "muscle memory" passed on to their children (Hercules, *Strong Roots*). Writing takes a

prudent role by disrupting this silence that is passed on, and she declares that “I am writing this story to help myself heal and to make you understand. I am writing the story of my ancestors, as well as my own story, which is a microcosm of the story of Ukraine” (Strong Roots). Here private recollection is transformed into collective inheritance, and she also laments the loss of cultural and ecological landmarks during destruction; what has been restored “has now, in turn, been destroyed”, compelling her to “sew a small stitch in the vast, rich and colourful embroidery of all Ukrainian lives” (Strong Roots). Here the past is both an inheritance and an obligation. She writes of “a million cloaked ghosts, standing at our shoulder” (Strong Roots), these are the figures who embody the ethical weight of remembering when others tried to erase Ukrainian presence altogether. Through this work, domestic memory becomes cultural resistance. A counter-archive that reclaims what authoritarian regimes attempted to grind into sawdust.

In conclusion, the two select culinary memoirs of Olia Hercules, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* and *Strong Roots*, demonstrate their stature as far more than a record of recipes and domestic routine. It is a site where memory is formed, transmitted, and stabilised against displacement and erasure. These narratives trace the movement of memory from the fragile and embodied exchanges of everyday life into a durable symbolic form of the cultural archive. Memories originating from and within the space of the kitchen are lifted out of the fragile world of communicative memory into a more durable and secure world of cultural memory through the act of writing. What is particular about these memoirs is their insistence that the stabilisation process is also a result of bodily involvement. The embodied, affective, and material registers of memory are constitutive and not incidental. They are the definitive medium through which the Ukrainian foodways survive migration, political rupture, and historical suppression. Hercules locates a form of cultural resilience in these sedimented gestures, in the longing that attaches itself to taste and smell, and in the mnemonic weight of the recurring objects. Ultimately Hercules’ memoirs affirm the notion that cultural memory is not entirely a property of the official histories, national monuments, or institutional archives. It lives equally and more tenaciously in the domestic and familial rituals that are passed down from one generation to the next. The different theoretical frameworks of memory used in this article have sought to demonstrate that culinary memoir occupies a pivotal place in the field of memory studies and Hercules’ writings endure not despite their intimacy but because of it, and it is in that intimacy that their cultural work is most powerfully done.

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