Everyone Speaks Food: An Exploration of the Universality of Diana Abu-Jaber's The Language of Baklava and Annia Ciezadlo's Day of Honey: A Memoir of Food, Love, and War

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Abstract
This thesis explores writing about food as a creative way to communicate ideas. Perhaps more than any other genre, food writing memoir with recipes is a genre that addresses both vast and specific interrelationships between people and places. These memoirs highlight thoughts and feelings regarding cultural differences, cultural similarities, politics, personal experiences (both from childhood and adult life), family relationships, romantic relationships, caretaking, definitions of home, personal identity, and how that identity fits in with humanity as a whole. There are two parts to this thesis. The first part situates the project into a broader survey of food's role in the writing world. A narrative of food's presence in writing leads into an introduction to the well-known food writer M.F.K. Fisher, a brief history of the recipe, then discussion of how best to define food writing. Theorized using ideas from Roland Barthes's "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," the section will move into theorizing food as language, looking at how, as Lynn Z. Bloom posits, food writing uses the language of food to welcome readers into whatever story is being told. Part One will conclude with a warning regarding the way writing about diverse foods could contribute to cultural appropriation. Part Two begins with an introduction that briefly mentions an array of food writing memoir with recipes and introduces the two memoirs I will focus on: Annia Ciezadlo’s Day of Honey and Diana Abu-Jaber’s The Language of Baklava. The rest of Part Two is broken into two sections, the first discussing Day of Honey and the second discussing The Language of Baklava. The Day of Honey section draws attention to connections made between food and love, and food and war. The Language of Baklava section highlights food's role in relationships and cultural identity. Both sections explore the effect the recipes have on the narration, how they serve as objective story anchors and as ways for the authors to communicate directly with their readers. Together the two parts of this thesis show that, because food is connected to living, it influences all aspects of life. Furthermore, just as food can bring people together, food writing memoir with recipes has the potential to connect people by sharing life experiences through the rhetoric of food.

Keywords
food writing, recipes, cookbook, food language, M.F.K. Fisher

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Diana Abu-Jaber’s new book is a memoir told through food. It explores the lessons food can bring about cultural identity, faith and love. Following are a few recipes from The Language of Baklava:

**Subsistence Tabbouleh.** For when everything is falling apart and there’s no time to cook.
- 1 cup cracked wheat (bulgur, fine-grain).
- 2 small bunches flat-leaf parsley, minced.
- 2 medium cucumbers, peeled and chopped.
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped.
- Juice of 1 small lemon.

Day of Honey is her memoir of the hunger for food and friendship—a communion that feeds us as much as the body in times of war. Reporting from occupied Baghdad, Ciezadlo longs for normal married life. She finds it in Beirut, her husband’s hometown, a city slowly recovering from civil war. But just as the young couple settles into a new home, the bloodshed they escaped in Iraq spreads to Lebanon and reawakens the terrible specter of sectarian violence. In lucid, finely intelligent prose, Ciezadlo uses food and the rituals of eating to illuminate a vibrant Middle East that most

