



CFP: Food and Memory: Practices, Narratives, and Afterlives of the Past

International Conference

University of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollenzo, Italy

September 17-18, 2026

Keynotes: Marianne Hirsch (Columbia University) and Alessandro Portelli (University of Rome La Sapienza)

Food is one of the most powerful, yet underexplored, sites of memory. Practices such as cooking, eating, and commensality often act as embodied archives of lived experience, cultural knowledge, and intergenerational transmission. From Proust's madeleine to Benjamin's reflections on memory, materiality, and everyday life, food has long been recognized as a trigger of recollection. Situated at the intersection of the historical, the cultural, the social, the political, the sensory, and the material, food offers a particularly fruitful lens through which to explore memory and is a privileged space for negotiating identity, loss, displacement, and historical trauma across space and time.

Despite a growing literature on food in relation to identity and mobility, the explicit dialogue between food studies and memory studies remains limited. Anthropological scholarship has shown how meals and ritual food practices embed the past in everyday life and social relations (Sutton 2001). More recent work in the field of oral history has emphasized the multisensorial nature of remembering, showing how memory is evoked through taste, smell, and touch (Proglia 2025). Giuseppe Di Porto's recollection of hunger in Auschwitz, in dialogue with Alessandro Portelli (2025), explores the loss and recovery of humanity, and offers a reflection on the methods and practices of oral history, on the distinction between "testimony" and "narrative," and on the processes of memory. Drawing on theories of memory studies, in particular postmemory (Hirsch 1997, 2012), this conference seeks to address this gap by bringing together scholars who critically examine the intersections of food, memory, and the past from a cultural, historical, and social perspective.

We invite contributions that explore how food practices, narratives, and afterlives shape both individual and collective memories, and how they participate in the construction, negotiation, or contestation of histories, especially in contexts marked by historical and cultural trauma. Particular attention is given to postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, to the gendered and embodied dimensions of food memory, and to the processes of adaptation and hybridization through which memories are transformed rather than simply preserved.

Possible themes include, but are not limited, to:

- Food and forms of memory: cultural, social, embodied, sensorial, postmemory, multidirectional, counter-memory, transnational
- Food and memory in contexts of migration, diaspora, and "subcultures"
- Food, historical trauma, and the afterlives of war, genocide, displacement, exile, colonialism, and imperialism
- Food, nostalgia, and constructions of home, tradition, and heritage
- Oral history, food, memorial processes and methodological approaches
- Postcolonial, decolonial, feminist, and intersectional approaches to food and memory
- Gendered food practices, domestic spaces, and the transmission of memory
- Queer, nonbinary, racial, and racialized identities articulated through food
- Hybridization, adaptation, and culinary pluralism



- Everyday food practices as archives
- Silence, absence, and loss expressed through food
- Food in film, literature, visual media, and oral history
- Methodological reflections on studying food and memory

We particularly welcome interdisciplinary approaches drawing from food studies, memory studies, cultural history, anthropology, sociology, trauma studies, migration studies, literature, film and media studies, and related fields.

Submission guidelines: Please submit an abstract of 300 words, along with a short biographical note (100 words), to g.proglio@unisg.it and c.sbuttoni@unisg.it by May 31, 2026.

The conference will be held in person at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, with the possibility of limited online participation (to be confirmed).

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