

YOUR GUIDE TO OERS

Cultural Traditions in Food Education

An Open Educational Resource exploring how food traditions shape identity, belonging, and inclusion.

www.foodincludes.eu



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How to use this resource

This OER is part of the FOOD INCLUDES series and follows the methodology set out in the Didactic Guide. Use it flexibly — run the full module, lift activities, or adapt to your group.



Read end-to-end

Use the deck as a complete facilitator guide before delivering the module with a group of learners.



Cherry-pick activities

Lift individual sections — the two activities, the case study, the reflection prompts — into your own programme.



Adapt to context

Translate, localise, or rework the materials for your community. Acknowledge the source when sharing.



Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, learners will be able to do the following — mapped to the European LifeComp, EntreComp and DigComp frameworks.



Recognise heritage

LifeComp · Personal

Identify how food traditions carry cultural identity, memory and belonging.



Tell food stories

LifeComp · Social

Share and listen to personal food narratives with empathy and respect.



Engage interculturally

LifeComp · Social

Hold space for diverse traditions and recognise difference as a strength.



Apply literacy skills

LifeComp · Learning

Write recipes, narrate stories and translate between food traditions.



Value heritage as resource

EntreComp · Ideas

See cultural food knowledge as a base for learning, work and enterprise.



Reflect & adapt

LifeComp · Learning

Notice how traditions evolve through migration and global exchange.

EU competence frameworks

Four European Joint Research Centre frameworks describe the competences this module helps to build. Each is openly licensed and freely available — click through to the source.

<h2>LifeComp</h2> <p>Personal, Social & Learning to Learn</p> <p>HOW WE USE IT</p> <p><i>Used here for: telling food stories, holding intercultural space, reflecting on heritage.</i></p> <p>publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu</p>	<h2>EntreComp</h2> <p>Entrepreneurship Competence</p> <p>HOW WE USE IT</p> <p><i>Used here for: valuing cultural food knowledge as a resource for enterprise and community work.</i></p> <p>joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu</p>	<h2>DigComp</h2> <p>Digital Competence for Citizens</p> <p>HOW WE USE IT</p> <p><i>Used here for: recording recipes, sharing stories digitally, building online food archives.</i></p> <p>joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu</p>	<h2>GreenComp</h2> <p>Sustainability Competence</p> <p>HOW WE USE IT</p> <p><i>Used here for: traditions of seasonal cooking, local sourcing and food waste reduction.</i></p> <p>publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu</p>
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UN Sustainable Development Goals

This OER contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals — directly through what it teaches about culture, food and inclusion, and indirectly through the FOOD INCLUDES partnership's wider commitments.

PRIMARY ALIGNMENT

4	Quality Education Inclusive adult education that uses food traditions as a route into literacy, identity and heritage.	10	Reduced Inequalities Designed for migrants, refugees and diverse communities — celebrating cultural difference.	11	Sustainable Cities & Communities Community-rooted, intercultural food work that builds local belonging.
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ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO

16	Peace & Justice Intercultural dialogue across borders, building empathy through shared food traditions.	17	Partnerships for the Goals Built across an EU partnership; shared openly as an OER for adaptation and reuse.
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Audience & prerequisites

WHO IS THIS FOR?

- **Adult educators** exploring food as a route into literacy, history and identity.
- **Community workers** supporting migrants, refugees and diaspora communities.
- **Heritage practitioners** documenting and teaching local and migrant foodways.
- **Intercultural mediators** working across language and cultural difference.
- **NGO / charity staff** running food-based community engagement programmes.

PREREQUISITES

For facilitators:

- Comfort facilitating discussions about culture, identity and migration.
- Awareness of safeguarding for groups that may include refugees or survivors of displacement.
- Optional: access to a kitchen or food-safe space.

For learners:

- No prior qualifications needed — designed to be inclusive.
- Conversational language helpful; visuals and storytelling reduce language barrier.
- Willingness to share or listen to food memories.

01



SECTION

Overview of the Module

Module Description

This module examines how food traditions shape cultural identity, heritage, and social inclusion. Participants explore how traditional practices, rituals, and recipes are passed down, adapted through migration, and influenced by globalisation.

It equips educators and community leaders with practical tools to bring cultural food traditions into learning — through storytelling, intercultural events, and shared cooking. Case studies and interactive exercises show how food fosters community connection, cross-cultural understanding, and sustainable practice.



Module Objective

This module explores the role of food traditions in shaping cultural identity, social inclusion, and education — and how food can serve as a pedagogical bridge for intercultural exchange.

By the end of the module, learners will:



Recognise

the significance of food in cultural heritage and social cohesion.



Analyse

how food traditions adapt and evolve across generations and geographies.



Develop

strategies to use food as an educational and social tool in community settings.

Module Scope



This module covers

- Cultural, historical and social dimensions of food traditions
- Food's role in identity, heritage and social inclusion
- Impact of migration and globalisation on traditional practices
- Sustainable and ethical food traditions across cultures
- Strategies for using food as a tool in adult learning

This module does not cover

- Technical aspects of food production and nutrition (except where culturally relevant)
- Detailed culinary techniques outside cultural and educational contexts
- A comprehensive study of all global cuisines — focus is on selected traditions and their relevance to education

02



SECTION

Development

Cultural traditions & identity

Cultural traditions are the practices, customs and shared habits passed from one generation to the next. Among them, food traditions hold particular significance — they are both deeply personal and highly social. Cooking, eating and sharing meals not only sustain the body but communicate values, beliefs and histories.

Anthropologists describe food practices as “edible markers” of who we are — visible, tangible links to heritage. For migrants and displaced groups, familiar tastes can rebuild a sense of stability and belonging. Preparing food from home becomes a deliberate act of cultural continuity.



Food practices are edible markers of who we are — visible, tangible links to heritage.

Food studies research

Adapted from ScienceDirect (2019) & Taylor & Francis (2025)

How rituals preserve identity across borders

Food rituals — special dishes for festivals, communal meals at religious celebrations, or meals from “back home” — act as anchors of cultural continuity. They preserve identity by offering familiarity and structure in contexts that might otherwise feel uncertain.

In migrant families these rituals transmit not only cooking technique but the stories, meanings and values tied to each dish. Researchers describe these as “culturally embodied experiences” that strengthen ties within and between generations, even far from the original homeland.

01

FAMILIARITY

Recreating meals from home re-establishes “home” in a new setting.

02

TRANSMISSION

Recipes carry stories, meanings and intergenerational memory.

03

BELONGING

Food traditions sustain cultural identity across time and space.

Women as custodians of food knowledge

Across many cultures, women play a central role in preserving and transmitting food traditions. They are often the keepers of recipes, the organisers of festive meals and the daily decision-makers about cooking and eating — cultural custodians ensuring that ingredients, techniques and meanings survive across generations.

Pride & resilience

Research on immigrant Muslim women shows that preparing traditional foods is a source of pride and resilience — both an expression of identity and a tool of survival in new environments.

Cultural bridges

Historian Donna Gabaccia shows how migrant women adapted recipes with local ingredients while holding the essence of their traditions — bridging past and present, home and host culture.

Dynamic knowledge

Women's food knowledge is not merely preserved — it is actively negotiated. This adaptive role is creative, not nostalgic.

Teachable skills

Recognising women's culinary expertise elevates undervalued knowledge to teachable competences: entrepreneurship, teamwork and digital literacy.

How does immigrant food shape identity?

VIDEO RESOURCE

The video explores how food brought by immigrants becomes more than sustenance — it becomes a way to say “this is who I am and where I come from.” It highlights how dishes travel with people, how they adapt in new countries, and how the fusion of old and new reflects identity, culture and belonging.

Key question · When people move, how does what they cook change — and what does that say about them?



Food, heritage and going viral



PODCAST EPISODE

Asylum Speakers · Episode 47

with Jaz O'Hara — Stories of Migration & Displacement

Filmmaker Nadir Nahdi — of Indonesian, Kenyan, Pakistani and Yemeni heritage — talks about how food has been a thread running through his multicultural upbringing, and how it helps him explore identity, displacement and the power of stories that travel. He reflects on how culture can move, shift and be shared via food, using cuisine as a portal into belonging, heritage and connection.



Heritage · Mobility · Belonging

“Cuisine as a portal into belonging.”

Why food traditions work as a teaching tool

Food is a powerful entry point for adult education because it is universal — but when tied to cultural traditions, its pedagogical value deepens. Preparing a traditional dish becomes an act of remembering, honouring and sharing identity, transforming food into a medium for storytelling, reflection and dialogue.



Learners as teachers

When learners share cultural food knowledge, they teach as well as learn — challenging hierarchies and validating knowledge undervalued in formal education.



Pride & participation

Migrant learners feel pride when invited to demonstrate a dish from their homeland, creating equal exchange with peers and building trust.



Relevant learning

Connecting education to heritage makes learning more meaningful, especially for excluded groups (UNESCO, 2021).

Competences linked to cultural food activities



Literacy & language

Writing recipes, narrating food stories and translating instructions supports both literacy and bilingual development.



Numeracy & budgeting

Scaling a recipe, costing ingredients and converting measurements applies practical maths in real-life contexts.



Digital competence

Recording a video of a cooking demonstration or building a shared online recipe book develops digital fluency.



Entrepreneurship

Heritage cuisine, community catering and food storytelling open routes into micro-enterprise and creative work.



Civic & social skills

Sharing food traditions fosters intercultural dialogue and connects across cultural difference.



Sustainability awareness

Traditional foodways often emphasise local sourcing, seasonality and zero-waste cooking practices.

Benefits for underrepresented groups

Embedding cultural traditions in food pedagogy creates dignity, recognition and pride. Through tradition, educators position learners as knowledge-holders rather than passive recipients.



Migrants & refugees

Cooking traditional dishes lets them maintain identity while building bridges with host communities. The dual role — preservation and sharing — reduces isolation and strengthens belonging.



Women

As custodians of food knowledge, women gain recognition for skills otherwise invisible. This can empower them to take on leadership or pursue entrepreneurship linked to cultural food.



Communities

Intercultural food activities bring diverse groups together, challenging stereotypes and creating spaces for dialogue — what researchers call “everyday peacebuilding” (Björkdahl, 2020).

Food is Culture — Slow Food

The Food is Culture project by Slow Food shows how food traditions become active tools for learning, cultural preservation and social inclusion. Its multimedia approach — combining storytelling, art and community voices — turns the pedagogical ideas of this module into real practice. Participants explore their heritage through the foods they grow, cook and share, positioning them as knowledge-holders rather than passive learners.

Through documenting traditional foodways across Europe, the project also illustrates the competences that arise from such engagement: digital skills, literacy, numeracy and civic competence — modelling food as both a tangible learning tool and a bridge between communities.

CASE STUDY

Food is Culture

By **Slow Food**

Approach

Storytelling · art · community voices

Outcomes

Confidence · inclusion · intercultural dialogue

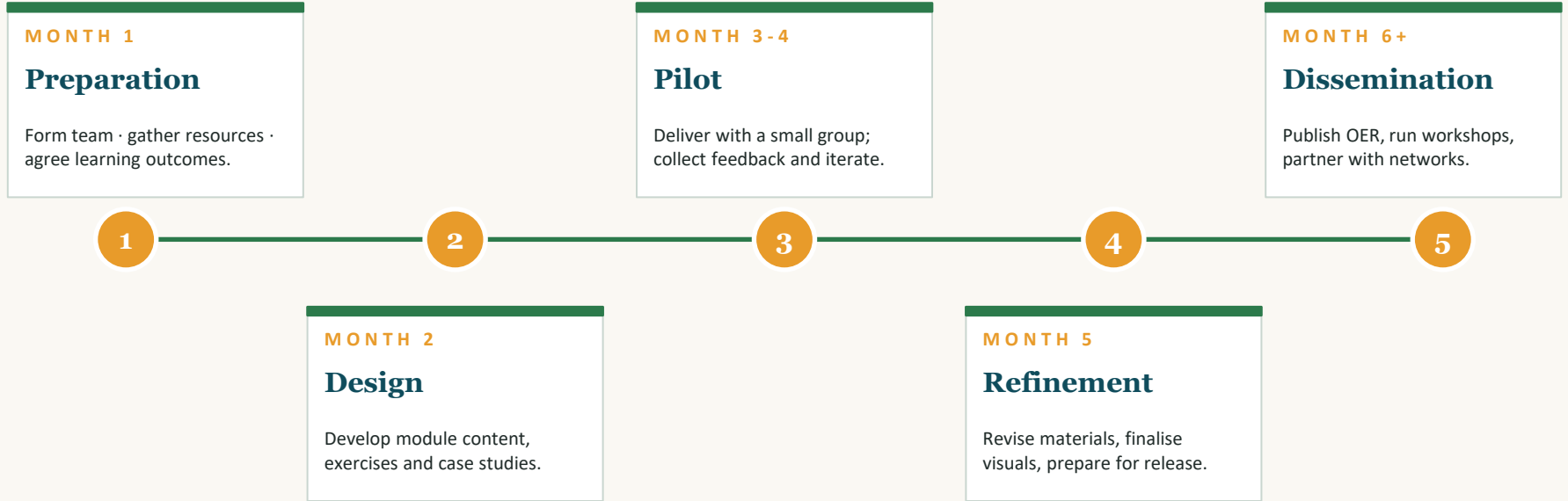
03



SECTION

Timeline

Implementation phases



04



SECTION

Required Resources

What you'll need to deliver this module



Facilitator(s)

An educator or community leader comfortable with discussion-based learning.



Module materials

This OER deck, the activity sheets and the supporting case-study readings.



Kitchen access

A teaching kitchen, community kitchen, or simple cooking station — optional but recommended.



Group space

A room arranged for circle discussion, with seating for 8–20 learners.



AV equipment

Projector or screen for video resources, plus speakers for the podcast episode.



Ingredients fund

Small budget for learners to bring or prepare a dish from their tradition.

Pre-session checklist

Use this two-week countdown to prepare a food-and-heritage session that's safe, inclusive and well-paced. Print or share digitally with co-facilitators.

TWO WEEKS OUT

- Confirm participant list and any access needs
- Choose activities and adapt to group profile
- Identify cultural and language considerations
- Brief any co-facilitators or interpreters

ONE WEEK OUT

- Print prompt cards and reflection sheets
- Test video and audio resources beforehand
- Check kitchen access and food safety if cooking
- Send reminder and prompt to learners

DAY OF SESSION

- Arrive early and arrange seating in a circle
- Lay out materials, props and any food
- Open with grounding and shared agreements
- Have water, tissues and a quiet corner ready

Roles & responsibilities

Whether you deliver solo or as a team, every session benefits from these functions. In a small team, one person can carry two roles.



Lead facilitator

Holds the session, manages timing and energy, makes decisions when things shift.



Storyteller / scribe

Captures the food stories shared — by writing, recording (with consent) or sketching.



Pastoral support

Watches for emotional weight. Steps in quietly if a learner becomes upset by memories.



Translator / cultural bridge

Helps when language varies. Bridges between traditions without flattening difference.



Food-safety lead

If food is prepared, oversees allergies, hygiene, dietary requirements and storage.



Photographer

Documents the session — with consent. Captures process, not faces, unless agreed.

Accessibility & inclusion

Cultural food work is itself an act of inclusion. Apply the same standard to how you run the session so every learner can participate fully.



Physical access

Step-free venue. Seated and standing tasks. Quiet corner for breaks. Accessible toilets within easy reach.



Language access

Plain-language prompt cards. Visual storytelling instead of text-heavy worksheets. Pair speakers with translators when needed.



Emotional safety

Set ground rules together. Make sharing optional. Signal that food memories can be tender — and that pass is always allowed.



Participation equity

Honour quiet contributors. Vary modes — speaking, drawing, cooking, listening. Validate behind-the-scenes work.

Risk & safeguarding

Food and memory work can surface strong feelings. Review these risks with your team before each session and adapt to your group.

EMOTIONAL WEIGHT	Food memories can carry grief, displacement or trauma. Make sharing optional, model self-disclosure carefully, signpost support if needed.
FOOD ALLERGIES	Collect allergy and dietary information in advance. Label every dish brought into the room. Have an allergen-free option available.
FOOD SAFETY	If preparing food on-site, follow basic hygiene standards. Manage temperature for perishables. Brief learners on safe handling.
CONSENT & PHOTOS	Ask before recording or photographing. Offer a no-photo lanyard or sticker. Never publish images of minors without parental consent.
CULTURAL HARM	Don't ask anyone to be a "spokesperson" for their culture. Hold space for diversity within traditions, not just between them.

05



SECTION

Learning Activities

Exploring cultural traditions through food

OBJECTIVES

- Understand how food traditions shape identity, belonging and community.
- Recognise the role of women and families in transmitting cultural food knowledge.
- Share personal or community examples of cultural food practices.

DURATION · 80 MINUTES

Group size: 8–20 learners. Materials: paper, pens, optional dish or photo.

Competences practised

Literacy

Reading, writing and structuring food stories.

Oral communication

Listening, retelling and summarising peers' stories.

Intercultural awareness

Recognising difference as a strength, not a barrier.

Empathy

Holding space for stories tied to memory and migration.

Session plan — exploring cultural traditions

15 min

01 Food memory circle

Each learner shares a memory of a meal or food tradition — a celebration, family recipe, or childhood dish. Emphasis on storytelling, not detail.

20 min

02 Mini lecture & discussion

Educator introduces food as cultural identity, the role of rituals, and women as custodians. Learners connect ideas to their own experience.

30 min

03 Recipe story exchange

Pairs each describe a family or cultural recipe and the story behind it. Partners retell each other's story to the group, building listening and confidence.

15 min

04 Reflection

Whole-group discussion: What can food traditions teach us about culture and identity? How do they help us connect across differences?

Food as pedagogy — learning through traditions

OBJECTIVES

- Recognise how food traditions can teach literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Experience food-based learning as an inclusive and practical method.
- Reflect on how everyday practices link to formal education outcomes.

DURATION · 80 MINUTES

Group size: 8–16 learners. Materials: recipes, paper, calculator or phone.

Competences practised

Literacy

Writing recipes with clarity, structure and logical sequence.

Numeracy

Scaling ingredient amounts; calculating cost and portions.

Organisation

Sequencing steps; planning a complete cooking process.

Teamwork

Co-operating in small groups around a shared task.

Session plan — food as pedagogy

10 min

01 Hidden skills in cooking

Educator asks: what skills do we use when cooking or sharing food? Answers go on the board — reading, maths, organisation, teamwork.

25 min

02 Cooking maths

Small groups work with a simple recipe (educator-provided or learner-supplied). They calculate how to scale it for different group sizes or budgets.

30 min

03 Recipe writing workshop

Learners write instructions for a cultural dish, focusing on clarity and sequence. For lower-literacy groups, this can be oral storytelling with visual prompts.

15 min

04 Link to competences

Educator guides learners to identify the competences practised — literacy, numeracy, organisation — and reflect on how food can support learning goals.

06



SECTION

Objective Key Results

Aim & measurable outcomes



AIM

Develop an engaging, accessible resource that enhances understanding of cultural food traditions and promotes social inclusion in education.

60+

downloads

Engagement & Reach

Achieve at least 60 downloads within the first 6 months.

90%

learner uplift

Impact on Learning

of learners report increased understanding of cultural food traditions.

20

testimonials

Sustainability & Adoption

user testimonials gathered on the OER's effectiveness.

07



SECTION

Communication Plan

How the team stays aligned



MONTHLY

In-person

Key project team meets to review progress, address challenges and confirm alignment with objectives.



BI-WEEKLY

Virtual

Video check-ins to track content development and implementation progress between in-person meetings.

TOOLS WE USE

Email

WhatsApp

Google Drive

Video conferencing

08



SECTION

Expected Impact

Short-term outcomes & long-term change



SHORT-TERM

Raise awareness

of cultural food traditions among learners and educators.

Encourage exchange

through food-based intercultural learning activities.

Equip educators

with practical tools for inclusive teaching.

Strengthen connections

through shared food experiences in learning.

LONG-TERM

Cultural appreciation

and inclusion in education and communities.

Sustainable traditions

supported by local and traditional food practices.

Community cohesion

enhanced through ongoing cultural food events.

Lasting resource

adapted and expanded for wider educational use.

09



SECTION

Lessons Learned

What we'll carry into future work

This section captures what worked, what didn't, and how those insights will shape future iterations of the module and related projects.



Lessons learned

- Personal food stories engage learners faster than abstract discussion of culture.
- Hands-on cooking, when feasible, accelerates trust-building in mixed groups.
- Honouring women's expertise reframes whose knowledge counts in the classroom.
- Light-touch facilitation works better than rigid lesson plans for memory-based work.



Suggestions for improvement

- Add multilingual prompt cards so lower-literacy learners can join recipe writing.
- Pair the OER with short video tutorials demonstrating each activity in practice.
- Build a shared online recipe archive that learners can contribute to over time.
- Expand case studies to include underrepresented regions and diasporas.

Evidence of learning

Aligned to the FOOD INCLUDES Didactic Guide's 8-competence ESCO framework, with a 4-level rubric (Excellent / Good / Satisfactory / Needs Improvement). Choose two or three indicators that suit your group.

ESCO COMPETENCE	WHAT LEARNERS DO	HOW TO CAPTURE IT
T4.1 Communication	Share a personal or family food story; listen and retell another tradition.	<i>Recorded retelling or facilitator notes.</i>
T4.3 Teamwork	Work with others to plan a cultural food activity or shared meal.	<i>Co-facilitator observation + group artefact.</i>
S1.9 Solving problems	Adapt a recipe across dietary, cultural or language differences.	<i>Saved adapted recipe + rationale.</i>
T6.3 Civic competence	Engage respectfully with diverse traditions; recognise difference as strength.	<i>Reflective journal entry or short discussion.</i>
L1 Languages	Write or narrate a recipe; translate a food term between traditions.	<i>Saved recipe + reflection on the process.</i>

Full 8-competence rubric is in the FOOD INCLUDES Didactic Guide (the methodological parent of this OER).

Facilitator reflection prompts

After the session, take 20 minutes alone or with a co-facilitator. The point isn't a perfect debrief — it's to surface what to adjust next time.



What worked

- Which moment felt like the strongest learning?
- Whose story landed hardest in the room?
- What part of the plan did you not need to touch?



What I'd change

- Where did I rush past an emotional moment?
- Did anyone hold back — and could I have made space?
- What single change would most improve next time?



About the group

- Did the room feel safe for the quieter learners?
- Were any traditions or voices flattened or generalised?
- Who do I want to follow up with this week?

10



SECTION

Continuous Development

Keeping the module alive

Once the module is in use, ongoing development is essential. The cycle below ensures the resource stays relevant, efficient and responsive to those it serves.

01



Continuous evaluation

Review the project's progress on a regular cycle and adjust the plan as needed to ensure success.

02



Resource optimisation

Identify opportunities to improve efficiency in how time, materials and people are deployed.

03



Strategy updating

Adjust the approach based on stakeholder feedback and shifts in the wider project environment.

Glossary of key terms

Shared vocabulary for facilitators and learners. Translate or adapt for your local context.

Cultural tradition

A practice, custom or shared habit passed from one generation to the next within a community.

Foodways

The whole system of how a culture grows, prepares, eats and talks about food.

Intercultural exchange

Communication and mutual learning between people of different cultural backgrounds.

OER

Open Educational Resource — teaching material openly licensed for reuse, adaptation and sharing.

Food heritage

The collection of recipes, techniques and food rituals that a community recognises as part of its identity.

Cultural custodian

A person who carries and transmits cultural knowledge — often through everyday practice.

Diaspora

A community living outside its place of origin, often retaining cultural ties to it.

Experiential learning

Learning by doing and reflecting on that experience — the model articulated by David Kolb.

Further reading & sources

Background reading and the sources cited in this OER. All links and references were live at time of publication.

FOOD INCLUDES Didactic Guide.

Inclusive Methodology for Educators — the methodological parent of this OER.

Asylum Speakers podcast.

Episode 47: Food, heritage and identity with Nadir Nahdi & Jaz O'Hara. [↗](#)

Kolb, D.A. (1984).

Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development. Prentice-Hall.

European Commission · JRC.

LifeComp, EntreComp, DigComp & GreenComp competence frameworks. [↗](#)

Slow Food.

Food is Culture — multimedia project documenting traditional European foodways. [↗](#)

Al Jazeera · The Stream.

How does immigrant food shape identity? (video resource).

UNESCO (2021).

Reports on cultural heritage and adult learning. [↗](#)

UN SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals — global framework this OER contributes to. [↗](#)