



FOOD CULTURE FIELD GUIDE

For designing the Protein Transition

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This field guide and card deck have been created by Maaïke Dijkstra for the graduation thesis *Field Notes for Food Cultures: Developing a Culture Sensitive Design Guide for the Protein Transition*, as part of the Master of Science in Strategic Product Design at the Delft University of Technology.

For the complete thesis, please visit <https://repository.tudelft.nl/>



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Icons used on the category cards are from The Noun Project: *Ginger, Health eating, Paint, Butchery, Confused Thoughts* by Olena Panasovska.

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HI THERE

HI THERE,

If you are reading this, you are interested in designing for the Protein Transition. That makes me very happy!

This field guide is a result of my graduation project, *Field Notes for Food Cultures: Developing a Culture Sensitive Design Guide for the Protein Transition*. While working on this project, I became aware of the impact of food cultures on the course of the Protein Transition. Consumption of animal products is deeply entrenched in food cultures, which can influence the adaption of more plant-based proteins. This can make it challenging to design for the Protein Transition. Cultural traditions, especially delicious ones, can be hard to let go of.

As a designer, it is essential to be aware of the existence of food culture and its impact on the Protein Transition. Designing for the Protein Transition with a culturally sensitive lens can be challenging, as the field of transition design is relatively new, and there are currently little tools available to help you with that. Time to do something about it!

One way to achieve this is through this field guide. Its goal is to help you, the designer, with your culture sensitive design process for the Protein Transition. The field guide consists of two things: the guidebook (which you are holding right now), and the card deck.

FIELD GUIDE



GUIDEBOOK



CARD DECK

HOW TO USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

The “**you should know**” section of the guidebook retains general information about the Protein Transition and Food Cultures, which is valuable to know about before you start your design process. The “**get to work**” section will instruct you on the design process and the card deck. The **encyclopedia** can be used as a reference guide during the entire design process. It has information and data you need all in one place, which saves you the time of having to look everything up by yourself. In the last section, “**what's next**”, we reflect on the process and look forward to other transitions. A list of further reading materials is also included. You can use the **card deck** and the contents of the guidebook at any moment in your design process. On page 23 you will find a suggestion, but you are free to experiment however you like!

YOU SHOULD KNOW...

In this section, you will be introduced to the subjects of the Protein Transition and food cultures. It will provide you with the basic knowledge and information that you will need to use this field guide successfully and most optimally.

WHAT IS THE PROTEIN TRANSITION?

The Protein Transition is a societal transition that aims to lower the overall consumption of meat and dairy, and increase the intake of plant-based proteins. The information in this field guide is catered to the Protein Transition in the Netherlands. The goal is to encourage all layers of this society, from consumers to companies to governments, to consume and produce fewer animal proteins and more plant-based proteins.

Why do we need the Protein Transition?

The most common reasons for people in the Netherlands to eat fewer animal proteins, and more plant-based proteins, are:

Animal welfare. In 2022, 1000 animals were slaughtered every minute for their meat, milk or eggs.^a These animals often live in harsh conditions, in tiny spaces, without the chance to go outside. The ethics of this are a personal choice, but more and more people realise that factory farming causes unnecessary pain to animals and that they do not want to contribute to this any longer.

Climate Change. Animal agriculture is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions: 26% of the total amount.^b It also uses 70% of the global freshwater

supply.^c Switching to a diet with more plant-based proteins can greatly impact reducing our carbon footprint.

Human health. Eating a plant-based diet can have positive effects on our health. It reduces the risk of conditions like cancer, diabetes and some heart diseases.^d Next to that, big factory farms can be a breeding ground for zoonotic diseases, which are diseases that jump from animals to humans.^e A well-known example of a zoonotic disease is the COVID-19 virus.

Agricultural economics. There is a constant price war among large retailers for meat products. This results in very low meat, dairy and egg prices, harming both farmers and animals. It also causes small-scale farms to disappear at a high-speed rate which can be harmful to equality in economics worldwide.^f

Some numbers

On average, a Dutch person consumes 97 kgs of dairy and eggs and 78 kgs of meat per year, spread over the following categories: ^{g+h}

Milk	35,5 kg	Pork	36,7 kg
Cheese	17,1 kg	Poultry	22,9 kg
Yoghurt	15,9 kg	Beef	16,9 kg
Eggs	10,1 kg	Sheep or goat	1,2 kg
Other	18,4 kg	Horse	0,1 kg

What is an animal protein?

Animal proteins are protein sources derived from animals or for which animals are used to produce these products. The most common ones consumed in The Netherlands are:

Direct:

- Beef
- Pork
- Poultry
- Fish and shellfish
- Lamb, goat, other meats

Indirect:

- Milk
- Cheese
- Yoghurt
- Eggs
- Other dairy products

What is a plant-based protein?

Plant-based proteins are protein sources that are derived solely from plants, and no animals have been used to produce these protein sources. The most common ones consumed in The Netherlands are:

- Whole grains, such as oats and quinoa
- Legumes such as beans, peas or lentils
- Vegetables
- Whole sources of soy, such as tofu, tempeh and edamame
- Ready-made meat substitutes
- Nuts and seeds

Who's transitioning?

The amount of people that are vegetarian or vegan in the Netherlands has been stable for a lot of years: around 5% are vegetarian, and around 2% are vegan. But these are not the only people who are part of the Protein Transition: many people still need to decrease their intake of animal proteins. People can be in various stages of the Protein Transition. The most common diets are, ranging from eating the most to the least animal proteins:

Omnivorous: everything

Flexitarian: no meat, fish, or animal products occasionally

Pescetarian: no meat

Vegetarian: no meat and fish.

Vegan: no meat, fish, dairy, eggs, honey and all other animal products.

Consumer research from 2021 has shown that, at that moment, 52% of Dutch citizens declared that they consciously choose not to eat animal products at some moment.ⁱ The occurrence of different diets in the Netherlands in 2023 is:

48% omnivore
42% flexitarian
3% pescetarian
5% vegetarian
2% vegan

EXERCISE: YOUR PERSONAL PROTEIN TRANSITION

When talking about a transition, such as the Protein Transition, we usually refer to large-scale transitions, that happen on macro level (society as a whole). But these large-scale transitions are the result of transitions that happen at the micro level (actions of individuals): your own eating habits. We all consume proteins in some form, whether from animals or plants, and which ones exactly, can change over time.

Please take a moment to think about your protein-eating habits and how they have changed through the years. How did they change over time, and what caused them to change (or not)? Do you think you've undergone a transition? Why, or why not?

Get some pen and paper or laptop, and answer the questions from the next page. You can discuss the answers with your teammates. How do your eating habits differ from each other? Why do you think that is?

Upbringing

Growing up, how often did you eat animal proteins? Was this a (prominent) part of your food culture, or not that much? Was this different from the way your parents ate? Did they influence your eating habits in some way? Did you have a say in what you would eat for breakfast, lunch or dinner?

Ten years ago

How has your diet changed in the meantime? Was this a deliberate choice? Did certain things happen at some point that influenced how you eat? In what way?

Five years ago

How has your diet changed since ten years ago? Do you view certain food products in a different way than before? What has influenced this change? Or did not much change at all?

Now

How often do you eat animal proteins at this moment? Do you eat all of them, some of them (which one?), or none?

Future

Are you content with the number of animal proteins you eat? Do you plan on changing this in the (near) future? In what way and why?

ABOUT FOOD CULTURE

What is culture?

Culture can be defined as *“the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.”*^j Culture includes many aspects of life. It can be divided into intangible culture and material culture. Intangible cultura includes things like mythology, philosophy, literature and science. Material culture includes things like technology, architecture, design and art.^k

What is food culture?

Food culture is the part of a culture that relates to the food production, preparation and consumption. For a long time, our food habits were mainly shaped by our immediate environment and the local conditions we lived in.^k Food was a basic human need necessary to survive.

But over time, this has changed. When living conditions improved, food became a source of nourishment *and* something else: a way to give meaning to life and to express yourself. For many people, the food decisions they make are influenced by more than just their personal preferences (taste) and basic human needs (nourishment). Our culture influences what we eat, and people have all kinds of values and beliefs associated with them.

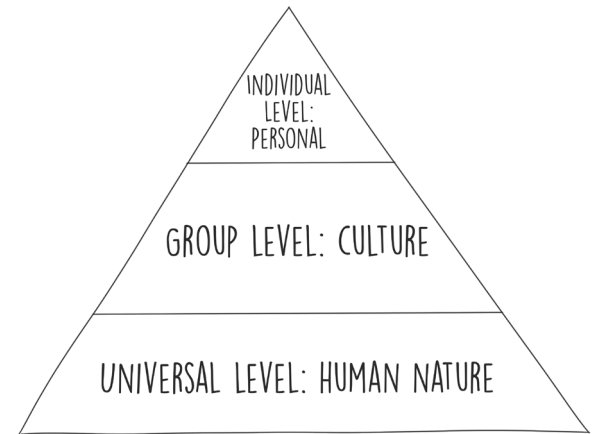
Levels of food culture

A simplified way to categorise food practices is by dividing them into three levels: universal, group and individual (see figure below).ⁿ This can be demonstrated with the example of cheese:

Universal level: consumption of proteins because you need them to survive. It's human nature.

Group level: consumption of Gouda cheese because it is part of Dutch food culture

Individual level: consumption of Milner Young, 48+ Gouda cheese, because this brand is your personal preference.



THE ROLE OF FOOD CULTURE IN THE PROTEIN TRANSITION



A diagram of some of the many functions and meanings of food.¹

Eating meat and other animal products like fish, dairy, and eggs play a large role in many food cultures. People associate it with traditional practices and rituals or view it as a status symbol. But most of all, many people simply enjoy eating meat.

This is also the case in the Netherlands. If you were to ask a random person what they think Dutch food culture is, there's a big chance their answer will include some animal protein. The Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage reflects it well: their database contains 34 Dutch food traditions, and 25 of them require animal products like meat, dairy and eggs.

The role of animal proteins in Dutch food culture is so large because of a series of events in the past five centuries. It did not just happen overnight. Meat and dairy are regarded as a symbol of wealth and prosperity and are a great source of income for the country. People also have a certain feeling of entitlement to meat and dairy. This is especially the case since World War 1 & 2 and the large-scale agricultural reformations that followed this period. During the world wars, meat was very scarce, leading to hunger for many people. After that, people decided they never wanted to endure this again and that meat should be available to anyone at any time.

HOW TO USE THE CARD DECK

Before you begin designing, take a moment and think about what you want to achieve during a design session or team meeting. You can use the cards in an individual setting or together with your teammates.

Food for Thought: use this category as a sensitiser to think about (your) food cultures and discuss the subject with your teammates.

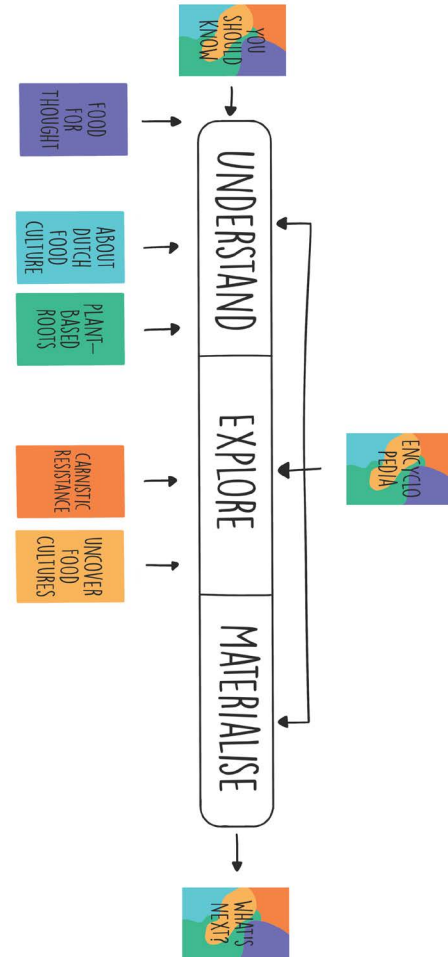
Uncover Food Cultures: use this category for activities and design methods that can help you uncover food cultures.

Carnistic Resistance: use this category for insights into why people eat animal proteins.

Plant-based Roots: use this category if you want to learn about the fundamentals of plant-based eating.

About Dutch Food Culture: use this category to learn more about Dutch food culture(s).

You can use the cards at any moment during the design process. On the next page, you will find a suggestion. But most of all, I suggest you to take a moment to go through all the categories to see what you can find there, how they are structured and which ones speak to you.



THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF CULTURE—SENSITIVE DESIGN FOR THE PROTEIN TRANSITION

1. HISTORY. HOW DID WE GET HERE?
2. CONSIDER THE WHOLE SYSTEM
(MACRO, MESO, MICRO)
3. SCOPING. FOOD CULTURES ARE
HUGE: YOU CANNOT STUDY THEM
ALL

4. EMBRACE DIVERSITY.
ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVES AND CONFLICTS

5. BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN BIASES
AND EXPERIENCES

6. KEEP YOUR SHORT—TERM AND
LONG—TERM GOALS IN MIND

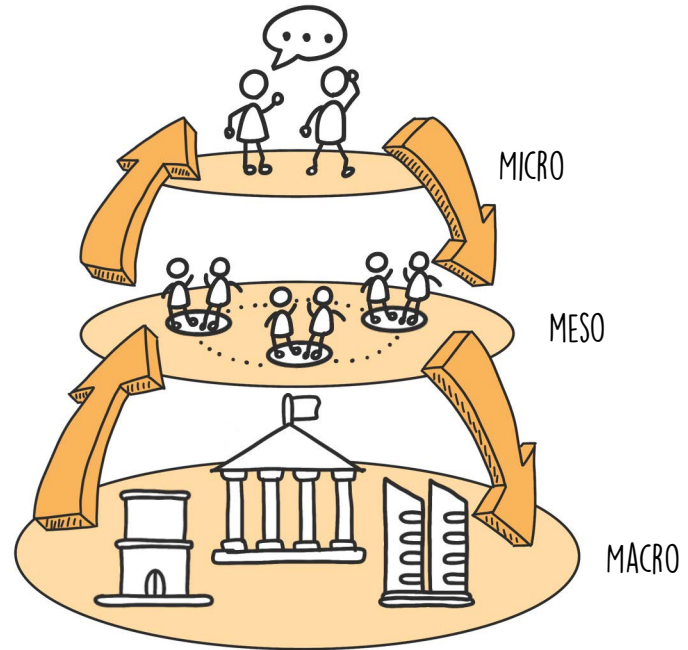
7. DEVELOPING CULTURAL
SENSITIVITY IS A LIFELONG PROCESS

I. HISTORY

As a designer, you usually design products or services for the present or the (near) future. But before you start your design process, it can be helpful to look back. How did we get to this point? We now know that animal proteins play a major role in Dutch food culture, but that did not happen overnight. It is the result of years of events and developments. By looking at the history of a food culture, you can better understand how it has formed and how it became the way it is today. You can look into national food cultures or start small by studying the history of a specific eating practice.

2. CONSIDER THE WHOLE SYSTEM

When studying society, sociologists often break their study down into three levels: micro, meso, and macro.^m As a designer, you should consider these different levels when creating products and services. Your design might focus on a specific level, but it will also affect the other levels. Products you design for the interaction level (micro) can significantly impact society as a whole (macro level). You need to be aware of this when designing for a societal transition. Take the entire system into account during the design process, and constantly zoom in and out to see what is happening on the different levels.



Micro: actions of individuals, intimate interactions

Meso: parts of society, groups and organizations

Macro: society as a whole, including political, economic and social factors

3. SCOPING

The Netherlands might be small, but its food culture is not. During your design project, it will help you to delineate yourself by choosing a scope. This scope can be a specific eating practice or food culture. Food cultures can be big or small, but keep in mind how much time you have for your project. National food cultures, for example, are big, so you might focus on a specific eating practice characterising this culture.

Some guidelines that can help you with selecting a food culture or eating practice:

1. The culture or practice occurs in the national or regional culture of the design context.
2. The culture or practice can be defined by specific boundaries (time, place, activities).
3. It is feasible to study this culture of practice because it is a (relatively) widespread phenomenon. It is not linked to a specific region or time of year.
4. The consumption of animal proteins plays a (distinct) role in this culture or eating practice.

It is also essential to think about which actors of the system you want to address with your design. Consumers, producers, retailers, the government... They are all part of the system and will interact with design interventions one way or another, but it helps to choose one to focus on.

Example: borrel culture

This field guide will use *borrel* culture as an example to explain how you can study food culture or eating practices. The *borrel* is an example of a specific eating practice of Dutch food culture. A *borrel* is an informal social gathering with drinks and snacks, sometimes with a theme. “*Borrel*” is a Dutch word that does not really have an English translation. Interestingly enough, these untranslatable words often tell you a lot about a country’s cultural practices. *Borrel* culture has its customs, rituals and objects that characterise it. It is an eating practice throughout the country, though the customs can differ between regions and social groups.

4. EMBRACE DIVERSITY

When designing for the Protein Transition, you will encounter people with diverse opinions and standpoints on food. These people can be consumers, but also other actors of the system. This is not necessarily bad; embracing diversity can lead to more inclusive and effective designs. It is essential to keep these different perspectives in mind. Acknowledge conflicts that may arise, and remember that there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution.

Food plays a role in everyone’s daily life, and because of that, it can be a sensitive topic. Approach the subject with sensitivity and empathy, and consider how you can create design interventions that connect to it. You should

design an intervention that accommodates a variety of food cultures and diets. Still, it could also be the contrary, where you create something that accommodates a specific food culture or eating practice. Work closely with people from the food cultures involved throughout your design process, seek their input and incorporate this in your design.

5. BE AWARE OF YOUR BIASES

As a designer, you will always take your own experiences with you. This is especially the case with food cultures: everyone has to eat and identifies with one or more food cultures.

These experiences shape how you perceive things and may lead to prejudices. This is called bias. It is essential to be aware of how your biases can influence your design process. Biases are formed unconsciously; having them is not bad, but you do need to be mindful of them. A butcher and a vegetarian will have wholly different perspectives on design interventions.

Consider how your biases could affect your designs and how you will deal with them. Acknowledge your biases and think about how your perspective might differ from the perspectives of others. It will help you create more inclusive designs that better reflect all the perspectives you'll want to include.

6. KEEP YOUR GOAL IN MIND

After scoping your project and focusing on a specific food culture or eating practice, you will sometimes find yourself completely immersed in this culture or practice. It is easy to get caught up in the details, so it is vital to keep the bigger picture in mind. For example, your design goal might be to create an intervention that allows people at a borrel to enjoy more plant-based snacks. This is what you will work towards during your design project. But at the same time, your ultimate goal could be to accelerate the Protein Transition in the Netherlands. It is essential to consider whether your design intervention will address both goals. You can keep zooming in on a specific food culture or eating practice to help you understand it, but keeping your end goal in sight is crucial.

7. A LIFELONG PROCESS

After finishing your design project that this field guide guided you through, you will have a grasp of how culture can influence a design process for the Protein Transition. But keep in mind that this is only the beginning. Developing cultural sensitivity for design is an ongoing course of action, and societal transitions are dynamic processes. A design intervention for one part of the system will likely influence another part, which could lead to new challenges. And a design that solves a certain problem today, may not do so anymore tomorrow. Always keep experimenting and learning. It is a lifelong process.

DESIGN EXAMPLES

The purpose of this field guide is to guide you through your design process and help you develop more culturally sensitive design interventions. In this section, you will find examples of interventions designed by fellow Industrial Design students. With each design intervention, there is a list of the cards that relate to this design. This will help you position the cards in the context of a design process.

Example 1: Life is like a Box of Bitterballen.

Society level: micro

Context: borrel

Cards related to this design:

- B** FOOD GOALS
- C** HEROES AND VILLAINS
- E** FOOD AS CULTURAL HERITAGE
- F** OPENNESS TO PLANT-BASED PROTEINS
- B** SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA
- C** PERSONAL CHOICE
- E** REPUTATION OF SUBSTITUTES
- C** UNPEEL THE ONION

Bitterballen are little fried balls of a filling covered in bread-crumbs. Traditionally they are made with meat, but there is a whole variety of plant-based versions nowadays. Bitterballen do not necessarily have to contain meat, but it is often the first association people have with these little snack balls. This design contains a mixture of bitterballen with vegan, vegetarian and meat fillings, all with a unique flavour. The design encourages people to experience vegetarian or vegan bitterballen without comparing them to their meat counterparts. Every bitterbal is different and can be experienced in their own, unique way.



Example 2: the Perfect Match.

Society level: micro

Context: borrel

In borrel culture, a lot of people have specific drink-food associations. For example, most people pair a glass of wine with a piece of French cheese and bitterballen are being associated with beer. With this design, people are being encouraged to try new snacks by creating new associations. The design consists of multiple versions, some of which vegetarian and some not. The product is specifically not labelled as vegetarian or vegan because that might scare off some people. This way, new associations in the context of borrel snacks are created.

Cards related to this design:

- E "DUTCH FOOD CULTURE DOES NOT EXIST"
- D FOOD AND DRINKS, OR FOOD THEN DRINKS?
- A BETTER TOGETHER
- C CHANGING NARRATIVE
- B SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA
- C PERSONAL CHOICE
- B THE MATERIAL WORLD
- E MULTI-LEVEL FOOD CULTURE DESIGN



Example 3: the Safe Space Burger Cooperation.

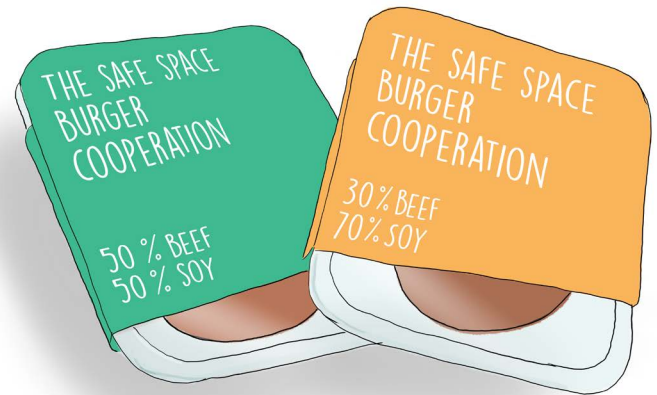
Society level: meso, macro

Context: supermarket

Some people might want to wait to try 100% plant-based products, but are still interested in consuming less meat overall. This design provides a safe space for people to explore meat substitutes. The products are a mixture of plant-based proteins (soy) and animal proteins (beef) and the ratio varies per product. In this way, consumers can try plant-based protein sources without committing fully to vegetarian or vegan products. It will lower the overall production of animal proteins while still giving people a chance to consume meat if they want to.

Cards related to this design:

- D** IMMERSE YOURSELF
- F** OPENNESS TO PLANT-BASED PROTEINS
- B** SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA
- E** REPUTATION OF SUBSTITUTES
- E** MULTI-LEVEL FOOD CULTURE DESIGN
- F** SAME PERSON, DIFFERENT FOOD CULTURES



Example 4: Help! I need some guidance.

Society level: meso/macro

Context: campaign for awareness and information

An increasing amount of Dutch citizens are aware of the need to consume less meat and dairy, and would not really mind to lower their consumption. The problem is, they need to learn how. This design will take people by the hand and guide them on how to do it. The poster campaign leads to a website which informs people about why it's good to consume more plant-based foods, where to buy products, and how to still honour the practices, rituals and behaviours that are part of their food culture.

Cards related to this design:

- B FOOD GOALS
- D IMMERSE YOURSELF
- A DIVERSITY OF DUTCH EATING PATTERN
- A BETTER TOGETHER
- F OPENNESS TO PLANT-BASED PROTEINS
- B SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA
- D PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE MECHANISMS
- E MULTI-LEVEL FOOD CULTURE DESIGN

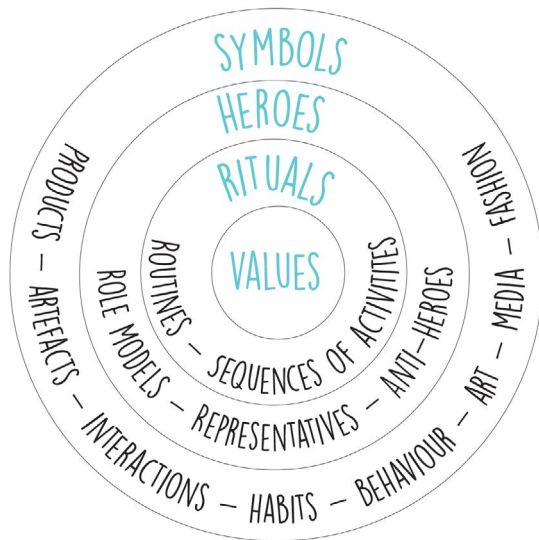


ENCYCLOPEDIA

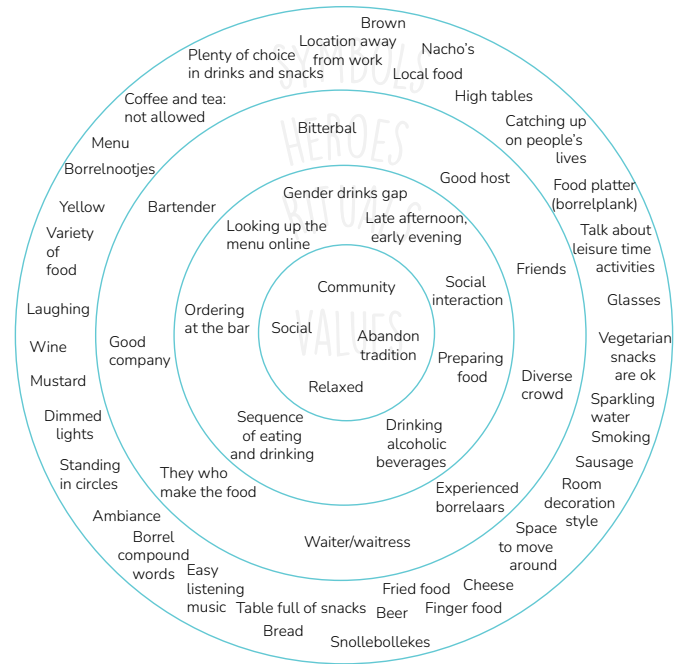
This section contains information you might find yourself looking for during the design process. Some of it is mentioned in the card deck. A lot of information is available in books and online articles, but going through it takes time. In this part, you will find some basic information relevant to designing for the Protein Transition. Of course, this is not all that there is to know about the subject, but it is a good way to get started.

ONION MODEL OF CULTURE

The onion modelⁿ is a simplified display of culture. In the core, you can find the values of a culture, which manifest in daily life in the form of rituals, symbols and heroes. You can use this model to uncover what values lie in the core of the food culture you focus on in your design project. Which ones can you find, and how are they represented in daily life? Do you see possibilities for design interventions that nurture these values or even attempt to change the current values? ^k



Example: borrel culture



Above, borrel culture is mapped on the onion model. You are invited to push the boundaries of the layers of the onion. “Heroes” will usually refer to people, but an object may also be a hero. A bitterbal might be a product and thus traditionally fall into the ‘symbol’ category, but with its cult status in borrel culture, it might just as well be a hero.

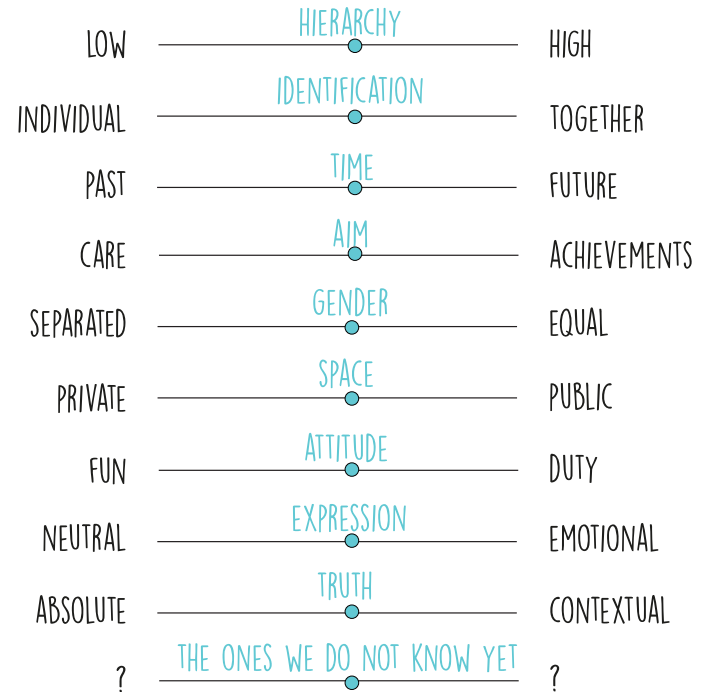
SOCIO—CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

You can use socio-cultural dimensions to uncover the specific social values of a cultural group.^o There are nine known dimensions, which are shown on the right. The dimensions can be regarded as sliders. The social values of a food culture or eating practice will likely not be at one of the extremes but somewhere in the middle. The socio-cultural dimensions can be used during different moments of the design process.

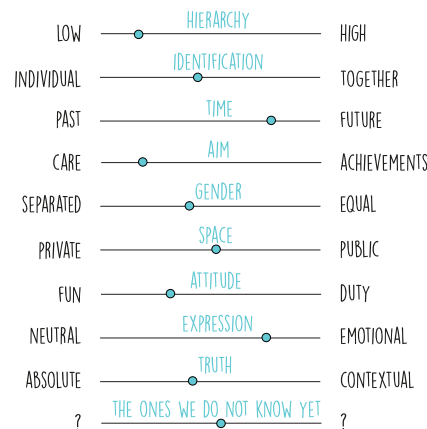
In the beginning, you can use it to examine the food culture you chose to design for. Use the dimensions to ask questions about the food culture or eating practice you are designing for, and uncover the social values characteristic of this specific cultural group. What values do people in this food culture have? How can you take these into account during the design process? How are they represented in design?

Later on, you could use them to generate ideas. How can you represent these values in your design? Are you going to focus on a specific one? Once you have a design, you can use the dimensions to reflect and assess.

On the website <https://designandculture.info/> you can find an extensive explanation of the theory behind the dimensions. On the next page, you will find an example.



Example: borrel culture



Hierarchy. Borrels do not have an obvious hierarchy reflected in design or behaviour. However, when you look closely, you can identify some. In some contexts, those who drink the most beer might be regarded as someone to look up to, pack's leader.

Identification. Most people agree that the borrel is a social activity: something you should do with others. The practice may be centered around food and drinks, but in the end, it is about social contact above all.

Time. The word borrel is at least 400 years old, but this does not mean it is a practice focused on the past. The practice and products linked to it are constantly evolving, and a lot of people are happy to abandon traditional foods

(bitterballen, cubes of cheese, slices of sausage) in favour of new snacks, like air-fried cauliflower bites.

Aim. A borrel has a clear aim: to socialize, relax and have fun. Sometimes there is a form of achievement involved, like networking or a competition to drink the most beer. But generally, borrels do not have a clear aim for achievement.

Gender. Borrelen is mostly an ungendered practice. There are however aspects of the culture that are heavily gendered. Alcohol, for example: beer is seen as masculine while wine is considered feminine.

Space. Borrels can take place in the privacy of your own home with just one companion or at a public bar with 500 strangers. There seems to be no general preference, which is why the slider is in the middle of the dimension.

Attitude. A borrel is a social activity that gives people a certain freedom: they can choose what they want to eat, drink, and do.

Expression. The borrel is regarded as a social practice where sharing experiences and emotions are common. The extent to which this happens is dependent on the context and group members. Showing emotions is more accepted at a borrel with close friends, than at a networking borrel with employees from different corporates.

Truth. Borrels can be shaped to the will and ideas of the user to a large extent, but still, there are certain unspoken rules that most people agree to. For example, borrels usually occur between the late afternoon and early evening, and it is common to serve alcoholic drinks and savoury snacks. Coffee and cake have no business there.

INTENTION—ACTION GAP

Most people have good intentions regarding their eating habits but do not act upon them. This is especially the case with intentions for sustainable eating. This phenomenon is called the **intention-action gap**.⁹

A recent study¹ concluded that almost 75% of consumers in the Netherlands think we should eat more plant-based proteins and fewer animal proteins. Yet, the amount of vegetarians and vegans in the Netherlands remains relatively low: around 5% and 1.5% of the population, respectively. This difference shows that there is a gap between people's intention to eat more plant-based proteins and their actual behaviour. They want to, but they do not do it.

It is important to be mindful of this when designing for the Protein Transition. What do you want to achieve with your design: do you want to change people's intentions, and convince them of the need to eat more plant-based foods? Or do you want people to change their behaviour, regardless of their ideas and intentions? You may want your design intervention to achieve both: how can you make this happen? The end goal might be the same, but the design process and design intervention to accomplish this could be very different from each other.

THE FOUR N'S OF JUSTIFICATION

There are various contributors to the intention-action gap. They will likely vary from person to person, but for many people, it comes down to the four N's of justification: normal, natural, necessary and nice.^{s+t}

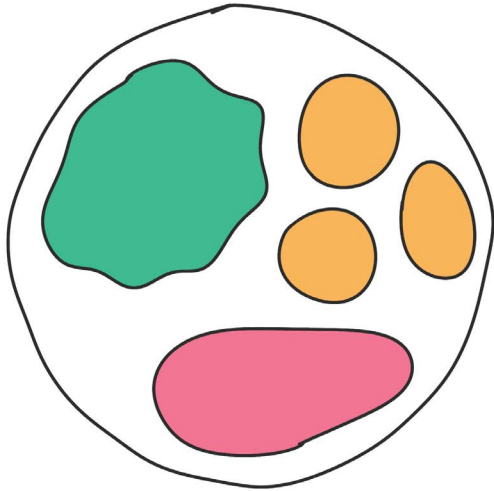
Normal. You can buy animal products in almost every restaurant, supermarket or food stall. Animal products are a part of daily life for most people, and they play a role in many traditional and modern food practices. Eating animal products is considered as normal.

Natural. People have eaten meat for millions of years, and it has significantly contributed to the development of the human race. Next to that, many (wild) animals kill and eat other animals, and that's why most people view eating meat as simply human nature.

Necessary. A good amount of people believe that they should eat meat or other animal products to stay healthy. Even though much research has proven otherwise, most people believe animal products are a necessary source of protein, vitamins and minerals.

Nice. A lot of people eat animal proteins simply because they like it. Flavour, texture, smell... It's just too nice to let go of.

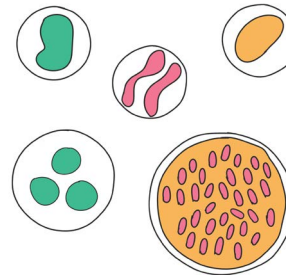
STRUCTURE OF DUTCH MEALS



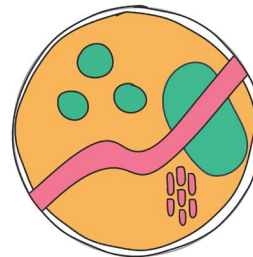
The traditional structure of a Dutch meal is one source of carbohydrates, one source of protein, and one source of vegetables. They are served on one plate at the same time, but preferably separated. For a long time, the primary source of carbohydrates was potatoes, the primary source of protein was beef, pork or chicken, and the vegetables were cooked. Nowadays, it is more common to use other forms such as pasta, vegetarian meat substitutes and roasted marinated vegetables. In the countryside and with older people, the preference for potatoes, meat and cooked vegetables remains, however.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES

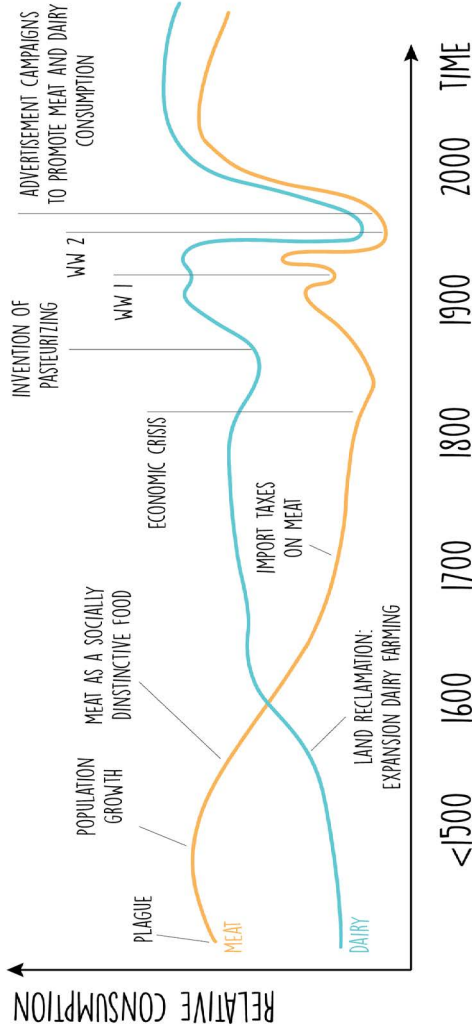
Nowadays, Dutch food culture is characterized by a lot of foreign influences. Usually, these dishes are served in different ways however. They are adapted to fit the Dutch meal structure, so people will better understand what is in front of them and will be more inclined to try something new.^P



The structure of traditional Italian meals: separated dishes with several sources or carbohydrates, protein and vegetables. Some dishes are served at the same time, and some at different moments.



A dish inspired on the Italian meal structure, but adapted to Dutch standards. The dish contains different sources of carbohydrates, proteins and vegetables. It is still all served together on one plate, but not separated anymore.



52

Historical overview of meat and dairy consumption in the Netherlands. Key influential events are marked.

The meaning and significance meat has had to people throughout the years.

People will consume any source of protein that is available, depending on the season and circumstances,	Meat is an important source of nutrients. Most people eat it regularly, it is relatively available.	Meat is mainly being eaten by the rich upper class. It is a sign of wealth and prosperity. It's barely available for the working class.	Most people will eat meat occasionally: once a week (usually on Sunday), and on holidays and other special occasions.	Meat is considered as an important part of the meal for all, but because of the two World Wars in this period, it is very scarce.	Meat is seen as something everyone is entitled to: it is a basic human right. The majority of the people eats meat every day.
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53

BCE–1200 1300–1500 1500–1800 1800–1900 1900–1950 1950–NOW

WHAT'S NEXT?

BEYOND THE PROTEIN TRANSITION

As you know, this field guide is catered towards designing for the Protein Transition. But there are other societal transitions that designers are putting effort into.

Transition Design is an approach that addresses a collection of complicated problems that modern societies deal with: climate change, political and social polarization, pandemics, housing crises, forced migration, depletion of natural resources, healthcare crises, and many others. These problems are connected and often relate to each other in many (in)visible ways. The field of Transition Design aims to solve these problems with a strategy that equips societies with the tools to work towards more sustainable and desirable futures.

This field guide is my contribution to the Protein Transition. But this does not mean that its contents only apply to the Protein Transition. Some of it is specifically catered towards Dutch food culture and the consumption of animal proteins, but other parts are based on mechanisms that can also be applied when designing for other societal transitions. I invite you to broaden the horizon and experiment how this field guide could help you design for other societal transitions. Who knows what will come of it?

HI, AGAIN

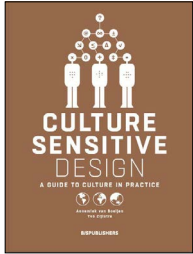
Congratulations, you made it through the guidebook! Hopefully, while using the field guide, you picked up some skills and knowledge you can use during your design project. It will help you on your journey to becoming a more culturally sensitive designer for the Protein Transition.

But remember, that the work is always ongoing. Keep developing yourself and continue to practice cultural sensitivity in your design processes. Use the card deck during your design sessions, and refer back to the guidebook whenever you need time for a refresher.

Thanks for sticking through all the way to the end, and until next time!

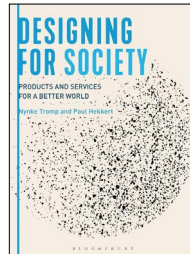
FURTHER READING

You are now equipped with the basics, but this is only the beginning. If you want to learn more about culture-sensitive design for the Protein Transition, these books are a great place to start. They were a great source of knowledge and inspiration for creating this field guide.



van Boeijen, A. C. G., & Zijlstra, Y. (2020). *Culture sensitive design: A guide to culture in practice*. BIS Publishers.

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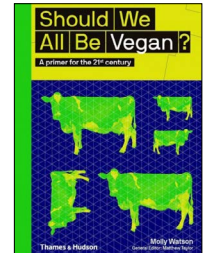


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DISCLAIMER

On some of the cards, you will find quotes. These quotes are collected during research on food cultures done by the author and are direct citations from interviews with various participants about their food culture. The quotes on the cards are straightforward and could be blunt or generalizing. The quotes are kept as-is to ensure truthfulness, even though another choice of words might be more considerate towards this culture. For example, in a quote, a participant might talk about “in Turkey”, which could make it seem like this statement applies to all of Turkey, even though this is most likely only the case for certain parts of the culture, or in specific contexts. Keep this in mind when using the card deck.

PLANT—BASED ROOTS

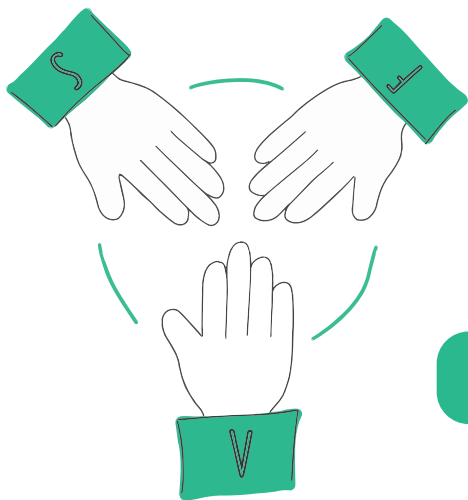


Use this category if you want to learn about the fundamentals of plant-based eating.

PLANT—BASED ROOTS

- A BETTER TOGETHER
- B VEGETARIAN HISTORY
- C CHANGING NARRATIVE
- D PLANT—BASED BY LAW
- E WHY PEOPLE EAT PLANT—BASED PROTEINS
- F OPENNESS TO PLANT—BASED PROTEINS
- G GENDER GAP

BETTER TOGETHER



A

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

BETTER TOGETHER

The Dutch vegetarian movement found its origin around 1880. The people who were part of this movement often also participated in other social movements of the time, like feminism, socialism, and antimilitarism.¹⁵ Connected by their search for equality for all, they found that the values of their movements actually weren't that different.

This phenomenon called intersectionality is often highlighted with the phrase “*all oppression is connected.*”

A

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

VEGETARIAN HISTORY



B

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

VEGETARIAN HISTORY

The first mention of the Vegetarian Movement in The Netherlands was in 1880 in Dutch newspaper De Amsterdammer. It was not very encouraging, as the newspaper wrote:¹⁵

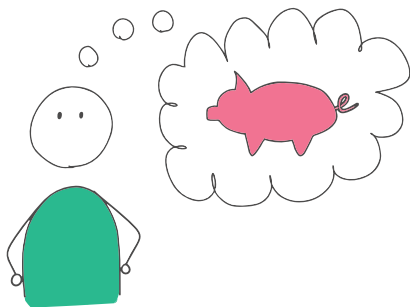
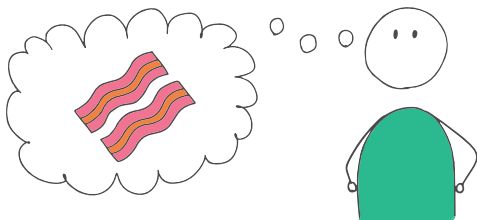
“We think this trend will soon blow over, and then we’ll see those vegetarians succumb from hunger. They will revert to meat and prosperity again soon.”

The newspaper turned out to be wrong: the Dutch Union for Vegetarians was found in 1894 and still exists as of 2023.

B

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

CHANGING NARRATIVE



PLANT-BASED ROOTS

CHANGING NARRATIVE

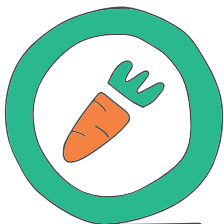
Friend or food? What you see when you look at a pig varies from person to person. Over the years, the general narrative has changed a lot. This is also the case with meat: in the past, meat was mainly seen as a luxury product that you ate at most once a week. World War II was a period of food shortages and hunger. In the years thereafter, the meat industry exponentially grew and in the 1960's, meat was seen as something everything was entitled to.¹⁵ From the 1970s, there has also been a collective dissent: more and more people think that we should see treat animals as living beings, and not as food.

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

PLANT-BASED BY LAW



PROHIBITED



ALLOWED

D

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

PLANT-BASED BY LAW

In some places, the consumption of animal products is regulated by law.

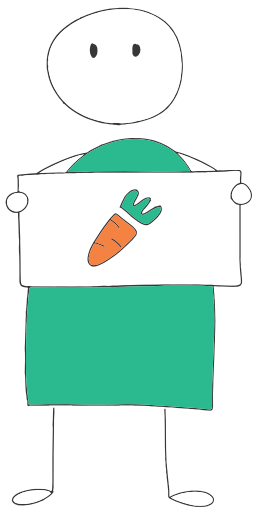
One example is the Indian province Gujarat.¹⁶ In this province, it is illegal to kill animals for meat consumption. It is also not allowed to sell or display meat within 100 metres from schools and religious places.

It can be interesting to image what such regulations would look like in The Netherlands. Could this ever be implemented? What would the reaction of the general public be?

D

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

WHY DO PEOPLE EAT PLANT-BASED PROTEINS?



E

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

WHY DO PEOPLE EAT PLANT-BASED PROTEINS?

The most common reasons for Dutch people to eat (more) plant-based proteins are:⁵

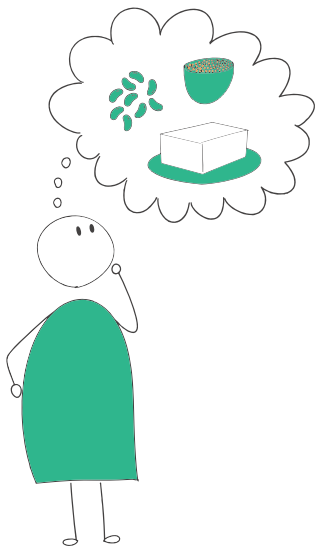
- Animal Welfare
- Climate Change
- Agricultural Economics
- Public Health

Page 10 of the guidebook contains a brief explanation of these four reasons.

E

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

OPENNESS TO PLANT-BASED PROTEINS



F

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

OPENNESS TO PLANT—BASED PROTEINS

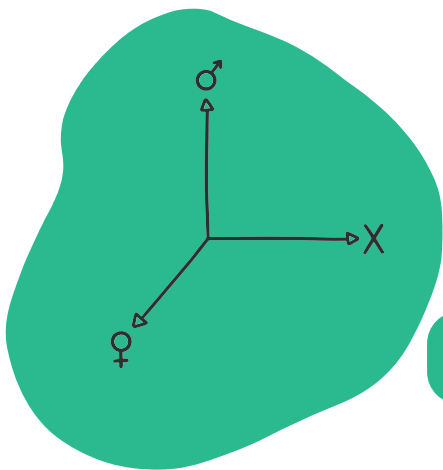
The majority of people still like to eat animal proteins, occasionally or often.

A series of interviews conducted by the author of this field guide, has shown shown that the same time, all 23 participants declared to be fine with eating plant-based foods occassionally. This shows that there is a group of people who do not identify with vegetarian or vegan food cultures, but are still a possible target group for consuming plant-based proteins.

F

PLANT—BASED ROOTS

GENDER GAP



6

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

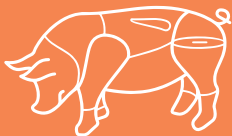
GENDER GAP

Between genders, there are differences in how and how often people decide to eat less animal proteins. In general, women are more likely to eat less animal products than men. Next to that, the reason people decide to do so, differs in between genders. One study showed that for men, the biggest predictor for becoming vegetarian themselves are friends who are also vegetarian. For women, this correlation was much weaker.¹⁵ Animal products can also be gendered in the way they are imaged in media. For example, meat is often regarded a symbol of masculinity.¹⁸

G

PLANT-BASED ROOTS

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

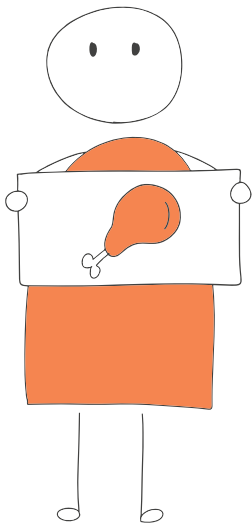


Use this category for insights
on why people eat animal
proteins.

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

- A WHY PEOPLE EAT ANIMAL PROTEINS
- B SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA
- C PERSONAL CHOICE OR NOT
- D PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENSE MECHANISMS
- E REPUTATION OF SUBSTITUTES

WHY PEOPLE (STILL) EAT ANIMAL PROTEINS



A

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

WHY PEOPLE (STILL) EAT ANIMAL PROTEINS

There are four main reasons why people eat animal products, even when those same people might have the intention to lower their consumption. These can be summarized with the four N's for justification,¹⁷⁺ which explain how people justify their meat consumption:

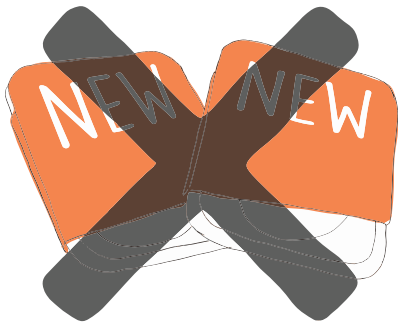
- Eating animal products is *normal*
- Eating animal products is *natural*
- Eating animal products is *necessary*
- Eating animal products is *nice*

A

More information on intention and behaviour regarding the consumption of animal products, can be found on pages 48 and 49 of the guidebook.

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA



B

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

SUSTAINABLE FOOD NEOPHOBIA

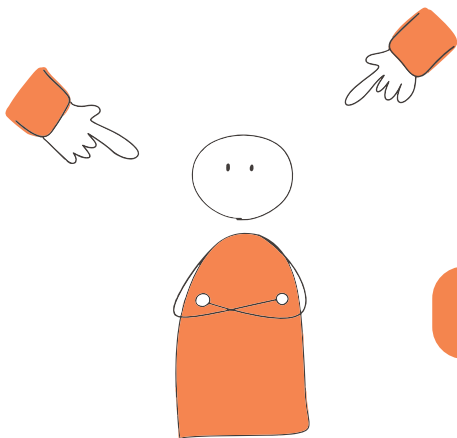
Sustainable Food Neophobia is the fear or aversion of trying sustainable food products that are new to you. Research¹² has shown that when people's food choices are highly influenced by their (food) cultures, chances are higher they show signs of sustainable food neophobia.

B

In other words: the influence of food culture can prevent someone from trying new sustainable foods. Do you know to what extent this is the case for your target group? It can be helpful to think about how this might impact the adaption of your design.

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

PERSONAL CHOICE, OR NOT?



"I THINK THAT AT THE MOMENT, BEING VEGETARIAN IS STILL A PERSONAL CHOICE. MEAT HAS BEEN IMPOSED ON VEGETARIANS FOR YEARS, I DON'T THINK THAT VEGETARIAN FOOD SHOULD BE IMPOSED ON MEAT EATERS."

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

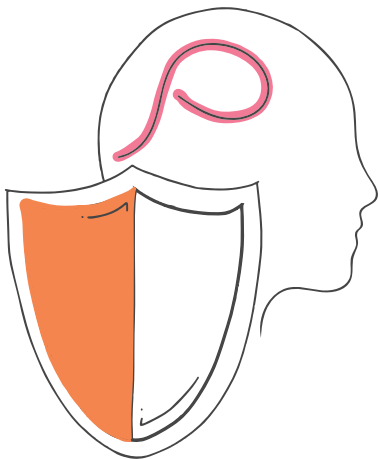
PERSONAL CHOICE, OR NOT?

Some people feel that if they were only presented vegetarian options at a restaurant or supermarket, that the choice of what they eat is being imposed upon them. They prefer for it to be completely their choice.

On the other hand, some people would not mind it and might not even notice. It could be a way to make people try new things. Be mindful of this and try to find out how your target group might respond to this.

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENSE MECHANISMS



D

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENSE MECHANISMS

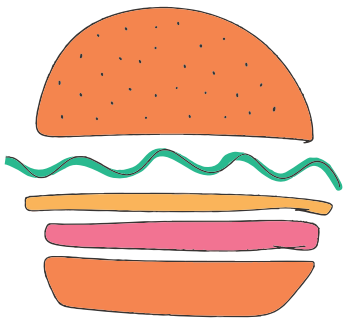
Informing people directly about the negative consequences of meat consumption, could trigger psychological defense mechanisms. This means that people can get emotional or defensive because they feel they are being personally attacked. This can be the case even when the same people are open to the idea of lowering their meat consumption.¹¹

D

This is something to keep in mind when designing: will your design solution have the desired effect? Or could it be the exact opposite?

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

OPINIONS ON SUBSTITUTES



E

"YOU EITHER GO FOR REAL CHEESE, OR YOU DON'T. I WOULDN'T GO FOR FAKE CHEESE MYSELF. WELL, I'VE NEVER TRIED IT, BUT IT JUST DOESN'T APPEAL TO ME."

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

OPINIONS ON SUBSTITUTES

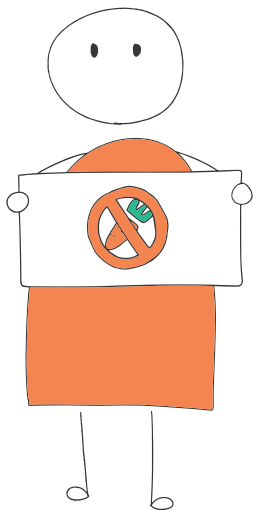
Meat and dairy substitutes have existed for a very long time. Traces of them has been found as early as 1560, when people avoided meat and dairy during religious periods of fasting.¹³ Their reputation is a somewhat controversial topic. Some people see it as a great alternative for their animal counterparts.

E

Others expect or find the substitutes to not taste as good as “the real deal.” Consider how these opinions can be reflected in, and influence your design.

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

REJECTION OF SUBSTITUTES



F

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

REJECTION OF SUBSTITUTES

Meat and dairy substitutes: some love them, some do not. The most common reasons for Dutch people to *not* buy meat or dairy substitutes are:⁶

- Low availability
- (Perception of) taste
- Price level
- Lack of information on nutrition, availability and how to use the products
- Expected difficulty during social interactions

F

CARNISTIC RESISTANCE

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES



Use this category for activities
and design methods to
uncover food cultures.

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

- A SCOPING
- B THE MATERIAL WORLD
- C UNPEEL THE ONION
- D SOCIO—CULTURAL DIMENSIONS
- E MULTI—LEVEL FOOD CULTURE DESIGN
- F SAME PERSON, DIFFERENT FOOD CULTURES

SCOPING



A

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

SCOPING

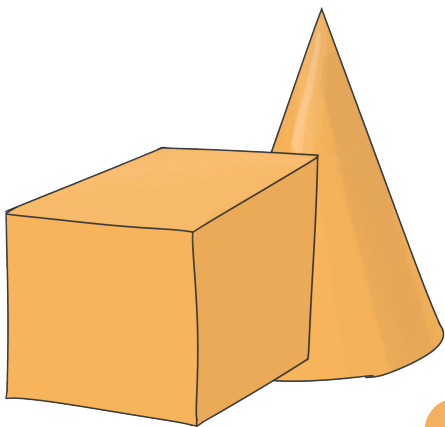
As much as you might want to, you cannot design a solution suited for everyone. It will help you to scope: choose a specific food culture and centre your design process around this. Food cultures can be large and extensive, like national food cultures. They can also be smaller and specific, for example, the food culture of your family dinners.

On page 28 of the guidebook, you will find some additional information on how to scope effectively. In the field guide, the example of borrel culture is used to explain what designing for a specific food culture can look like.

A

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

THE MATERIAL WORLD



B

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

THE MATERIAL WORLD

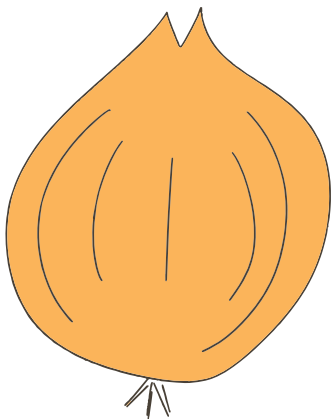
Tangible objects can tell you a lot about a culture. An example is the way different people eat their food: with cutlery, chopsticks or their hands. Eating utensils can symbolise a food culture and might influence how people experience their food.

Are there specific tangible objects that play a role in your chosen context or food culture? What are they and what are their roles? Put together a collection of these objects. This can be a collage of photos, taken by yourself or collected online. Analyse the objects: what do they tell you about this food culture? ³

B

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

UNPEEL THE ONION



C

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

UNPEEL THE ONION

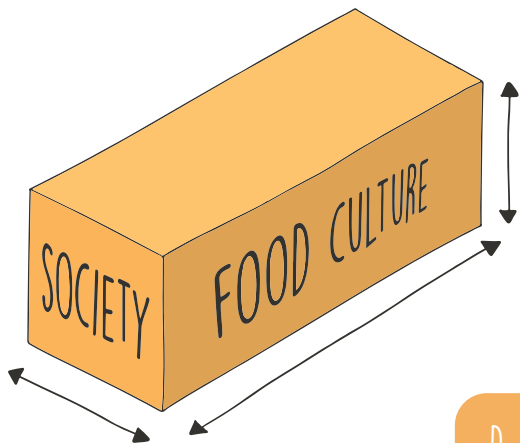
The onion model¹⁹ is a method to map the characteristics of a culture. It can help you to uncover the food culture you're focusing on and see what values people of this group have.

On page 42 of the guidebook, the theory is explained and demonstrated with an example. After reading the theory, you can map an onion model with the symbols, heroes, rituals and values that represent your chosen food culture.

C

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

SOCIO—CULTURAL DIMENSIONS



D

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

SOCIO—CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

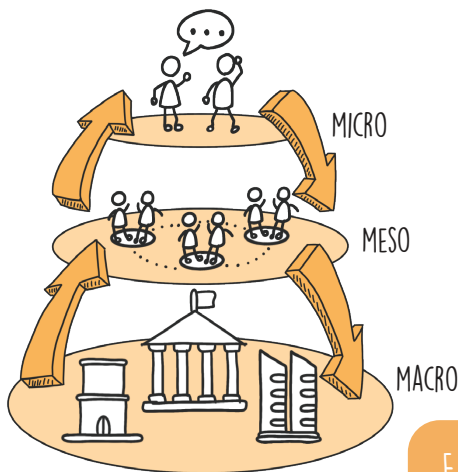
Socio-cultural dimensions are a way to uncover the social values for a specific cultural group.³ You can use the dimensions to ask questions about the food culture you are designing for. Relevant questions are: what values do people in this food culture have? How can you take them into account during the design process? How are they represented in design?

Explanation about the dimensions can be found on pages 44 to 47 of the guidebook. There, you can also find an example on how to use them.

D

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

MULTI-LEVEL FOOD CULTURE DESIGN



E

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

MULTI-LEVEL FOOD CULTURE DESIGN

Design solutions can exist in different levels of society. Usually, these three levels can be distinguished:

- Macro level (society)
- Meso level (groups)
- Micro level (individual)

Sometimes the design solutions relate to each other, or exist in different levels at the same time. Identify existing solutions for the Protein Transition and map them on these three levels. Look for connections: how do they relate to each other?

Page 27 of the guidebook explains what the three levels are.

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

SAME PERSON, DIFFERENT FOOD CULTURES



F

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

SAME PERSON, DIFFERENT FOOD CULTURES

People do not have just one food culture. They can be part of different cultures that all have their own tradition and customs. In the bar watching a football match you probably have different food customs than when you are on vacation, or at university studying for a test.

Imagine someone from your target group. Compile a list of the food cultures they could be part of. Include the customs, how they differ and relate. How does this influence your design intervention?

F

UNCOVER FOOD CULTURES

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Use this category as a sensitiser,
to think about and discuss the
concept of food cultures.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- A FOOD GOALS
- B YOUR FOOD CULTURE
- C HEROES AND VILLAINS
- D IMMERSE YOURSELF
- E CONTROVERSIAL FOOD CULTURES

YOUR FOOD CULTURE



A

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

YOUR FOOD CULTURE

Everyone has a food culture, because everyone eats. This can influence the way you design for a food transition, so it can be useful to think about this for a moment. What is your food culture? Relevant aspects to answer this questions are: practices, attitudes, beliefs. You can use the exercises in the **Uncover Food Cultures** category to help you get an idea of what aspects are part of food culture. More explanation on food culture can be found on page 16 of the guidebook.

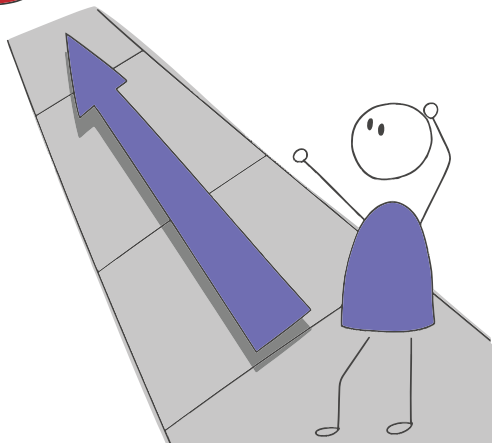
If you are working in a team:
how does it differ from your team members?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

FOOD GOALS



B



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

FOOD GOALS

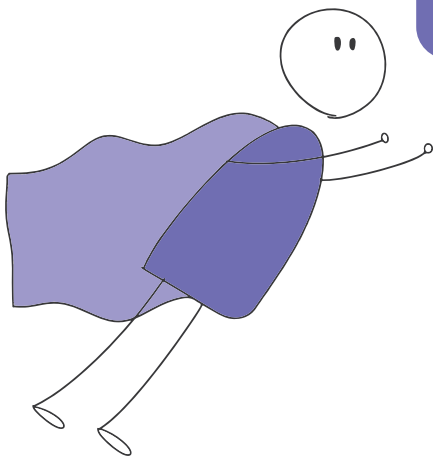
B

Food can have different purposes. Nutrition, energy, community, joy and carrying out your ideals are only a few examples. What long-term and what short-term goals do people have in mind when they are making food choices? Are these goals different in another context? For example, in the supermarket versus in a restaurant.

What goals do you have in mind when you are making food choices?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

HEROES AND VILLAINS




C

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

HEROES AND VILLAINS

In every food culture, you can distinguish heroes and villains.⁴

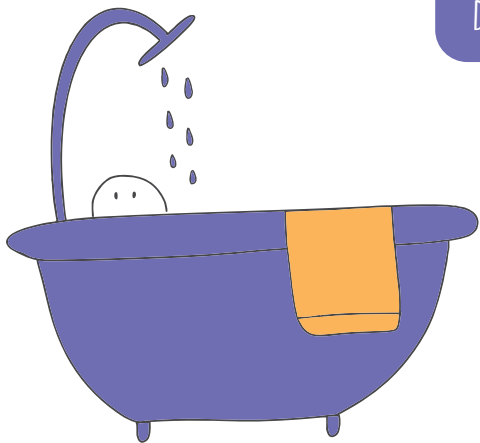
They can be people, but also objects, services, systems...

whichever you see fit! Who or what are the heroes of Dutch food culture, or of your chosen food culture? Why is this the case? Make a list, or do this exercise as part of the onion model from card .

Example: in the food culture of borrels (informal social gatherings with a drink and snack), a hero could be the bitterbal or the bartender.

IMMERSE YOURSELF

D



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IMMERSE YOURSELF

As a designer, you always take your own perspective with you. This makes sense because it is the only perspective you've ever lived with. In the context of The Protein Transition, there are various stakeholders with different stakes and perspectives.

D

Immerse yourself in the perspectives of other stakeholders. What if you were... a vegan? A meat producer? A pig in the slaughterhouse? What would you want? What are your experiences and values? What is your stake in The Protein Transition?

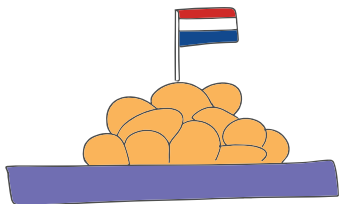
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"DUTCH FOOD CULTURE DOES NOT EXIST"

YES!

E

NO!



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"DUTCH FOOD CULTURE DOES NOT EXIST"

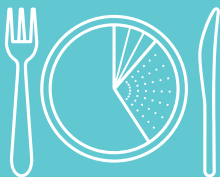
E

Dutch food culture is a rather controversial topic. Some boldly say that "Dutch food culture does not exist."¹ Other people state that it is unique and want it to be internationally recognized as gastronomy.²

Where do you think this controversy comes from? And what do you think?
What is Dutch food culture?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE



Use this category to learn
more about Dutch food
culture(s).

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

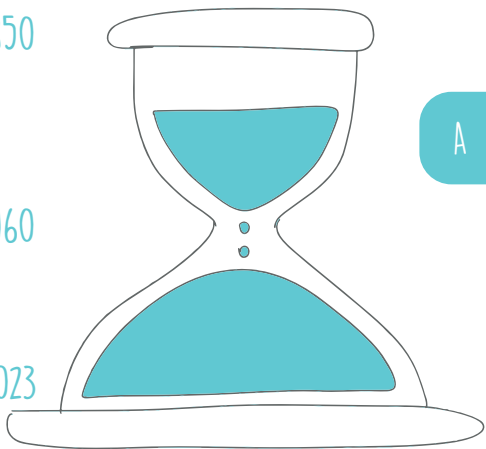
- A DIVERSITY OF EATING PATTERN
- B TRADITIONAL DUTCH FOODS
- C FOREIGN INFLUENCES
- D FOOD AND/THEN DRINKS
- E FOOD AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

DIVERSITY OF DUTCH EATING PATTERN

1850

1960

2023



ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

DIVERSITY OF DUTCH EATING PATTERN

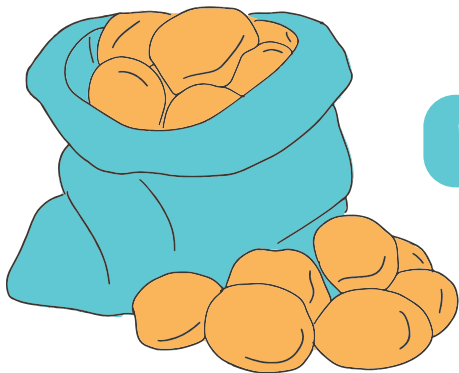
The diversity of the average Dutch eating pattern has varied greatly throughout the years. Between the years 1850 and 1960, uniformity slowly became the goal, leading to standardised meal structure. Later, this changed and more foods were introduced in Dutch households. As of 2023, the Dutch eating pattern is more diverse than ever before.

A

The trend of diversity can be visualised as an hourglass shape, where the bottom half is wider than the top half.¹⁴

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

TRADITIONAL DUTCH FOODS



B

"I WAS RAISED VERY TRADITIONALLY WITH
MEAT, POTATOES AND VEGETABLES. MY
PARENTS STILL EAT THIS DAILY"

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

TRADITIONAL DUTCH FOODS

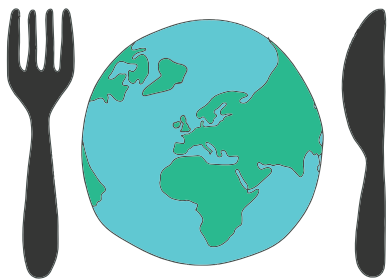
Between the years 1700 and 1970, a meal with potatoes and vegetables was the standard Dutch dinner you would find in almost every house during dinner. After large-scale agrarian reformations in the 1950s, meat was added to that standard daily meal.^{13 + 14}

B

Nowadays, the dish is less common, because there are a lot more types of food available. A dinner of potatoes, vegetables and meat still remains popular on the countryside and with elderly adults.

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON DUTCH EATING PATTERN



C

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON DUTCH EATING PATTERN

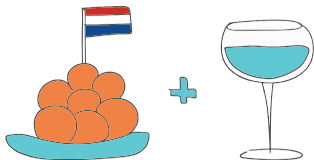
The modern Dutch eating pattern has been influenced by multiple other food cultures. The most influential ones were from Southern-Europe (France, Spain, Italy) and East-Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, China).

C

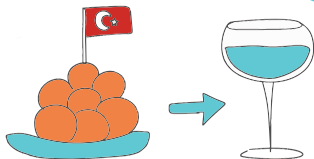
East-Asian influences were the result of globalism, kolonialism and the large scale migration from Indonesia to The Netherlands that happened in the 1950's. Influences by European countries were caused by prosperity and car travel: more people went on holiday abroad, taking recipes and inspiration from other food cultures with them.¹⁰

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

FOOD AND DRINKS, OR FOOD THEN DRINKS



D



"IN TURKEY WE EAT A MEAL, AND THEN
HAVE DRINKS. BUT IN THE NETHERLANDS IT'S
A MEAL AND DRINKS AT THE SAME TIME."

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

FOOD AND DRINKS, OR FOOD THEN DRINKS

The way people enjoy their food and drinks can vary between food cultures.

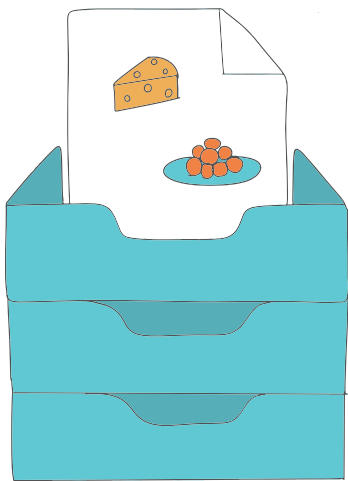
For example, in (some) Turkish food cultures, it's common to separate your consumption of alcohol and food. In (some) food cultures in The Netherlands, people prefer to drink beer and eat snacks at the same time.

D

Practices like these can influence the way your design will be received or among people with different food cultures.

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

FOOD AS CULTURAL HERITAGE



ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE

FOOD AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Did you know food can be cultural heritage? The Dutch centre for intangible cultural heritage inventory contains 34 food traditions.⁹ Of those food traditions, 25 require the use of animal proteins such as meat, fish, dairy and eggs. A good example of how animal proteins are embedded into Dutch food culture.

E

Well-known examples are eating bitterballen while drinking beer and the Alkmaar Cheese Carriers Guild.

ABOUT DUTCH FOOD CULTURE