



Pantry Memories: Storing Food and Feelings in Swedish Homes

Abstract

In recent years, references to “old-fashioned pantries” and “classic root cellars” have regularly popped up in real estate ads across Sweden as a potential selling point for people seeking new homes. The use of the words “classic” and “old-fashioned” indicates a shift in the thinking about traditional food storage spaces. In this article, we explore the recontextualisation and emotionalisation of traditional food storage spaces in Swedish society. We base our analysis on an open-ended questionnaire on food storage, preservation, and household preparedness directed to Swedish households. We investigate how our respondents have recounted and shaped embodied memories in the act of writing about past food storage: the different spaces, times, people, practices, emotions, and objects. Viewing these acts of remembering and writing about past food storage as emotional practices has led to an understanding of how emotional experience in the past is reinterpreted in the present. Seeing these acts as emotional practices illustrates the relational nature of emotions, where longing for past food storage spaces is one way to reflexively deal with contemporary issues by managing everyday life. Finally, we argue that reflexive nostalgia helps to create and interpret emotions – making past and present food storage meaningful.

Keywords: Food storage, emotional practices, reflexive nostalgia, pantry, root cellar, Sweden

Introduction

In recent years, references to an “old-fashioned pantry” and a “classic root cellar” have regularly popped up in real estate ads across Sweden as a potential selling point for people seeking new homes.¹ The use of the words “classic” and “old-fashioned” indicates a shift in the thinking about past food storage spaces in Swedish households. In the real estate ads, these food storage spaces are not only marketed as practical but are also visually portrayed as aesthetic components of the modern home, especially the pantry as part of the kitchen interior (Enevold 2021).

Like the pantry, the root cellar has also had its advocates. For example, the national resource center for food craft, Eldrimner, in a report on the history, use, and repair of the root cellar, emphasizes the cellar as a culinary resource (Melin et al. 2010). The building and restoration of root cellars has featured on popular Swedish television programs about homes, such as *Äntligen hemma* and *Sommartorpet*. Furthermore, some restaurants have made use of root cellars as part of their storage practices and gastronomic profile (Carrillo Ocampo et al. 2021).

Social media platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube are now filled with images and stylistic advice regarding well-organized pantries. These pantries are organized around specific aesthetic ideals and material culture, including glass jars, wooden crates and woven baskets. The emphasis is thus on making the pantries visually pleasing through organisation and specific materiality that refers to food preservation in the past. What stands in contrast to past pantries is how store bought food, often prepackaged in plastic or paper, is put into glass jars, wooden crates and woven baskets at home, displaying the raw materials, the food itself, as an aesthetic component of the pantry. Such re-packaging and display of store bought food evokes notions of historical continuity, naturalness and simplicity, materialized in the food and the “old-fashioned” containers. The social media pantries showcase a mixture of aesthetics and emotional control: to control space and time in a way that both pleases the eye and has a calming effect against the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

The historian of ideas Kerstin Thörn (2018, 82) has suggested that the pantry, through its nostalgia and implied orderliness, can help to make modern life more understandable. Writing about the decline and resurrection of pan-

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Figure 1 and Figure 2: A newly built walk-in pantry in a countryside house. Photographs submitted by a woman born in 1972 (DFU 41182:85).

tries in American households, the historian Catherine Seiberling Pond (2007) notes how pantries can invoke pleasantness through, for example, memories of taste and smell, visual delights, and even feelings of security and comfort. Pantries, she says, “harbor a nostalgic whiff of our domestic past” (Pond 2007, 11).

Following this nostalgic line of thought, we wish to pay attention to how emotions as practice are manifested through written accounts of past food storage. To this end, we deploy the concept of *emotional practices* (Scheer 2012) to explore how food storage spaces such as pantries and root cellars are recontextualized and emotionalized through written memories in response to a qualitative questionnaire. Memories connect emotions, senses, objects, spaces, and people, creating an understanding of past practices through the needs of the present. What role do emotions play in defining and narrating the meaning of past food storage practices and spaces in the present? How are emotions and material culture woven together in narratives of past and present food storage? With a view to answering these questions, we discuss how people reorient emotions towards specific culinary spaces and objects by narrating personal experiences.

We will begin by navigating previous storage research and theoretical concepts that bind together bodies, (culinary) objects, emotions, and spaces. We will then search for feelings and other methodological delicacies in the empirical material before moving on to describe how past food storage spaces were outcompeted by technological advances. Next, we will focus on childhood memories and emotional storage spaces to illustrate the holistic and relational nature of emotional experience in everyday life, and how this experience

connects the past and the present. We will conclude by discussing how past food storage is made meaningful in the present through reflexive nostalgia and emotional practices.

Storing stuff, storing emotions

Storage can be understood as a way of ordering everyday life and the world, thus “ordering things in space and time” (Cwerner & Metcalfe 2003, 229). By investigating storage spaces and their uses in everyday life, storage highlights what can be considered as invisible processes of consumption, items that are often hidden from sight, but are still a part of daily routines and social relations. Furthermore, the storage itself, such as closets and cupboards, materialize certain ideal practices and aesthetics that are time-contingent (see Cwerner & Metcalfe 2003; Löfgren 2017). This includes how the storage space should look like, how it should be organized, as well as what it should contain. Storage practices have therefore been framed as ways of gaining control over one’s life through organizing one’s possessions (Cwerner & Metcalfe 2003, 232). Storing food, as well as other objects, is related to consumption and possession, which in turn is connected to the creation of identity and the formation of social relations. However, notable differences exist between storing food and storing other objects, especially in connection to temporality and purpose. Most food, for example, deteriorates or rots if not preserved, prompting different types of practices, thought, and organisation, compared to other types of material objects.

The materiality around food, such as utensils and appliances, has proven useful for ethnologists to explore how societal ideas move into the home and shape everyday life (see, e.g., Jönsson 2019; Bardone & Kannike 2017). In line with this, many sociocultural studies on food have focused on how technological development regarding food storage has changed food consumption, domestic life, and society (Watkins 2008; Freidberg 2009; Hand & Shove 2007; Shove & Southerton 2000). Other studies have emphasized how these technological advances in the domestic sphere relate to changing ideas of gender, family, and the home (Scheire 2015; Nickles 2002; Pérez 2012). In a Swedish context, a handful of studies have investigated food storage and how it relates to societal changes and food consumption (Thörn 2018; Sandgren 2018; Marshall 2018; 2021). However, previous studies of food storage have rarely focused on the relationship between materiality, memories, space, and emotions.

In her discussion of emotional practices, Monique Scheer suggests that viewing emotions as practices means “understanding them as emerging from bodily dispositions conditioned by a social context, which always has cultur-

al and historical specificity” (Scheer 2012, 193). The concept of “emotional practices” is useful in illustrating how emotions are something that people do, rather than something that people just “have” (Solomon 2007). Emotions can therefore be understood as a practical form of engagement with the world, where “emotional practices” are about doing emotions in concrete, everyday situations. “Doing emotions” is dependent on both cognitive reflection and bodily movements in everyday social situations. In her definition of emotion as practice, Scheer includes actions such as “speaking, gesturing, remembering, manipulating objects, and perceiving sounds, smells, and spaces” (Scheer 2012, 209). We find Scheer’s concept of emotional practices useful to explore how food storing practices have changed in the latter half of the twentieth century and twenty-first century, and how emotions are part of reinterpreting and recontextualizing past food storage practices and spaces in the light of the present.

The concept has been widely used in various disciplines, such as ethnology/folklore, history, and anthropology, over the past few years and has been used to explore, among other things, the creation of intimate relationships between food producers and consumers (Pétursson 2018; 2021), virtual violence in video games and taking selfies at a Holocaust memorial (Bareither 2017; 2019), and voluntary work with refugees (Sutter 2017). Here, we might also add Scheer’s historical analyses of the relationship between religion and emotions in modern German Protestantism (Scheer 2020). The concept has therefore been used to explore both past and present emotions in different empirical material.

Scheer mainly bases her formulation of emotional practices on Pierre Bourdieu’s practice theories. According to Scheer, Bourdieu’s definition of practice is relevant for studying emotion because it “elaborates most thoroughly the infusion of the physical body with social structure, both of which participate in the production of emotional experience” (Scheer 2012, 199). The concept of emotional practices goes beyond dualistic models of affect as bodily sensations, and of emotions as the cultural expressions of bodily sensations. Instead, emotions are bodily practices that are shaped through the practical sense (embodied knowledge) of those performing them. The body is not only the site of dispositions and behavioral routines of practice; it is also “the ‘stuff’ with and on which practices work” (Scheer 2012, 200). This understanding of “emotional practices” emphasizes that emotions are always embodied through bodily acts of experience and expression within a specific social context (Scheer 2012).

That the body in a sense becomes knowing is what the anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987) refer to as “the mindful

body.” But how is the mindful body connected to material culture? Blackman and Venn (2010) have noted that bodies are entangled processes, defined by their possibilities to affect and be affected. Engaging with material culture is therefore always an embodied practice which mutually shapes people, and objects, and their surroundings (Frykman & Frykman 2016). In this article, we thus investigate how our respondents recounted and shaped embodied memories in the act of writing about past food storage: the different spaces, times, people, practices, emotions, and objects.

Searching for feelings

We base our analysis on an open-ended questionnaire on food storage, preservation, and household preparedness, directed to Swedish households. The questionnaire was designed and distributed in collaboration with the Institute for Language and Folklore in Uppsala, Sweden, for a research project on storage practices and ideas of sustainability.² The questionnaire generated 139 replies from respondents living across Sweden, born between 1929 and 1999, mainly women. In an ethnological fashion, we were interested in exploring historical changes and continuity regarding food storage practices through personal memories. The questionnaire was not originally intended to explore emotions, but it became apparent that many of the narratives were based on emotional encounters in the past that influenced present thoughts and actions. After that realisation, we went back to the empirical material to investigate new aspects that could help us to understand the deeper meaning of food storage. In this article, we therefore focus on the narratives which reflect or tell about past food storage spaces and practices.

The folklorist Lena Marander-Eklund (2009) has presented a methodological approach for analyzing emotions in archival material, exploring the possibilities and challenges to “trace” emotions in questionnaires. In so doing, she focuses on figures of speech such as emotional words, metaphors, and words with emotive character in order to analyze both positive and negative emotions. However, one of the methodological challenges she encounters in her close reading of the material is to analyze emotions where the respondents have not expressed themselves in emotional terms. Despite this lack of direct emotional expression, Marander-Eklund points out that even neutral

2 The questionnaire was disseminated as a traditional questionnaire (archived as DAG 37 at the Institute’s branch in Gothenburg) and as a digital equivalent (archived as DFU 299 at the Institute’s Uppsala branch). The digital questionnaire was open from September 2019 until September 2020. It should be noted that most replies were submitted before the corona pandemic affected Sweden and the material does not allow an analysis of emotional practices in relation to an ongoing societal crisis.

descriptions can evoke emotional impressions by painting a specific picture of events in the past (2009, 25–26).

Our respondents often used emotional words to describe food storage space in the past. *Love*, *wonderful*, and even *creepy*, are just a few of the words they used when narrating about food pantries and cellars. Some respondents, however, did not use emotional expressions when recounting childhood memories of food storage. At a first glance, their narratives seem to be completely devoid of any emotional experience. However, we offer another interpretation in the hope of gaining insight into the meaning of food storage. We argue, in line with Monique Scheer (2012), that remembering and narrating food practices in the past can be defined as specific emotional practices. Writing is to reflect on and structure one's memories. Through the act of writing, questionnaire respondents analytically engage with their memories by bringing fragments of sensory experience back to life. Writing down memories creates and shapes feelings and thoughts as the past is re-interpreted in the light of the present.

The stories of food storage included childhood memories, gendered spaces, and intergenerational relations that were manifested through the material culture of food. In contrast to interviews, where the researcher can steer the conversation in certain directions, with questionnaires the respondent may interpret and choose which questions to reply to, and how to respond to them. It is likely that the narratives in the questionnaire are both carefully selected and filtered (Marander-Eklund 2012). The narratives in the questionnaire therefore include what *matters* to the respondents, which here includes the impressions and emotions connected to food storage in the past and the present. Likewise, the questionnaire itself could be understood as part of, or reinforcing, the nostalgia of certain food storage spaces. The webpage of the digital questionnaire even contained images of contemporary and past storage and preservation practices to trigger interest in participating and evoke memories, experiences and daily practices of food storage. This is, of course, related to how the questions we ask are connected to the *Zeitgeist* and society. This relationship demonstrates how the disciplines of ethnology and folklore influence contemporary trends and currents, as well as being influenced by them (see Hafstein 2018). The way in which the questions in a questionnaire are formulated will therefore influence the answers. In this sense, we became the co-creators of the memories and emotions through the questions we asked and the visual stimulation in the questionnaire.

As the respondents were aware that their narratives would be documented, not only for a current research project, but also for future research, their choice of narrative may have had an additional purpose: The narratives could

also contain information about what the respondents deemed important to be remembered for the future, thus perhaps stressing the perceived differences between past and present society and everyday life. Hence, the narratives could be understood as interactions between the past, the present, and the future (see Marander-Eklund 2009).

Changes in kitchen and storage organisation

To understand today's longing, in Sweden, for pantries and root cellars, we need first to explore why they disappeared. We will commence by giving a brief historical overview and looking at narratives that include memories of refrigerators and freezers entering the home. These narratives offer analytical breakpoints which are useful to highlight and contrast what is taken for granted and what is disrupted, and how new meanings and practices emerge and shed light on past as well as new routines in everyday life (see, e.g., Löfgren & Ehn 2010; Hörnfeldt 2014). The entrance of refrigerators or freezers in Swedish households tells about a "before" and an "after," a moment of change regarding household practices and materiality.

In a Nordic context with a limited harvest season, food storage in pre-industrial times mainly revolved around the organisation of food to ensure that it would last for at least a year, until the next harvest season. This is often referred to as a storage economy, a rationale that influenced food storage (see, e.g., Olsson 1958; Amilien 2012). Hence, this ordering of time and space through food was essential for people's survival. Before refrigerated appliances, pantries and root cellars were needed for stockpiling and preserving food. These storage spaces had primarily a functional role, although their order, and ordering, imply certain aesthetic values.

Kerstin Thörn (2018), in her historical account of Swedish pantries, notes that living conditions and food storage facilities for many people in both the countryside and in urban areas in the early 1900s were poor. The spaces for storing food tended to be more generous in rural producer households and one-family houses, than in urban apartments. Indeed, the imagined past pantry as a separate room was generally for the affluent, while the ventilated cupboard (see Figure 3) was a result of the modernisation of (apartment) housing in the first half of the century. Eventually, the pantry became obsolete due to the rationalisation of household work as well as various technological advances.

The first domestic refrigerators emerged in the 1920s but were primarily reserved for urban households with the necessary financial resources. The freezer made its stage entrance later, in the 1940s. In contrast to many other technological devices, as soon as freezers became cheaper, they were speedily accepted by households in the countryside as a breakthrough in facilitating

food preservation (Boalt & Neymark 1983). When electric refrigerators became accessible to the majority of the Swedish population in the 1950s and 1960s, kitchens were designed in new ways. For example, the ventilated pantry, which had previously been placed near an external wall to harness the outside cold, was removed. Building guidelines from that time suggest that, when adding a larger refrigerator, the pantry could be replaced by cupboards, allowing the kitchen to be placed in a certain direction and letting in natural sunlight to brighten up the room. Moreover, the disadvantages of ventilated pantries were emphasized, such as fluctuating temperatures as well as dust and insects from the outside (Berg, Boalt & Holm 1960; see also



Figure 3: A ventilated pantry with a vent built against an external wall in an apartment (likely built around 1950–1960s). Photograph submitted by a woman born in 1957 (DFU 41182:90).

Thörn 2018). The pantry and the root cellar were slowly rendered redundant through expanding ownership of refrigerators and freezers, new kitchen designs, fewer producer households, and increased dependency on supermarkets rather than reliance on, for example, cultivating one’s own vegetables in the garden or on the allotment. Today, Swedish households rely more on refrigerated space and non-ventilated cupboards, and less on home preservation. However, among Swedes there is still a desire for ample storage space – even more storage space than the conditions of contemporary life strictly necessitate – and this is related to a wider emphasis on “preparedness” in everyday life (Marshall 2021).

In the questionnaire, several female respondents born between 1930 and 1960 associated the arrival of the freezer into the home with the change that their mother no longer had to preserve everything. Preserving and storing food was mainly women’s work, and many of the respondents recalled how they as children had assisted with food preservation and how the freezer had eased the household work for them and their mother. Many female respondents also recounted, contrasting their childhood experience with their own household later on, how having fridges and freezers in the kitchen was more comforta-

ble than having to collect food from a food cellar or an external freezer locker building. In this context, refrigeration technology was also framed as a “luxury” and a “revolution” (DFU 41182:23; 41182:74; DAGF 2093).

The fridge and freezer allowed new food habits, enabling consumption of food that was previously restricted by seasons, linked either to harvest time or to the limits of storage. Furthermore, the purchase of delicate food products could be done less frequently and in larger quantities. One woman recalled her family’s first refrigerator in 1951 when moving to a newly built apartment. It was a relief not to have to purchase milk every second day and they “could have liver paste [leverpastej] in summer!!” (Woman born in 1936, DAGF 2160). Other examples include how the freezer made it possible to store luxury items such as ice cream and baked goods.

While the freezer eventually changed the way most Swedes conserve and handle food, it did not completely eliminate older ways of preserving food. Different preservation methods were used in parallel. Meat and vegetables, for example, seem to have been more readily adapted to the freezer whereas traditional preservation of berries and fruit remained important. The questionnaire responses indicate the continuous practice of picking berries and making jam across generations although some of the older respondents had either stopped making jam or made smaller batches than before.

When studying the breakpoint of pre-refrigeration versus refrigerated storage, the narratives not only reveal a change in storage materiality. The introduction of fridges and freezers in the domestic sphere reorganized everyday life in many respects. For example, it enabled new food practices and food habits, and freed up time formerly allocated for shopping and food preservation. The new appliances, however, required financial resources and learning new skills to take advantage of the new technology. With time, the skills became embodied as tacit knowledge while new ideas of freshness emerged, as did a reevaluation of food preservation. In a parallel development, during the second half of the 20th century, kitchens changed to accommodate standardized and larger appliances. The once common storage practices and spaces became outdated and rare, at least in new housing, as novel storage appliances became integrated into everyday life (see also Shove & Southerton 2000). This also coincided with societal and economic changes in Sweden that affected food culture, including the availability of more fresh vegetables and meat, a global food provisioning chain and other international influences, and more men cooking food (Jönsson 2020). However, pantries and food preservation have gained new meanings and relevance in the 21st century, as expressed in the childhood memories of our respondents. We now turn our attention to these food storage memories.

Childhood memories of food storage

The respondents often recounted the formative years of childhood in a positive light, a time when everything was exciting – a time of strong impressions. These memories convey emotions, predominantly linked to special occasions and to certain people as well as specific foods. Some of these childhood experiences involved smells, emotions, and practices that had led to attempts to recreate them today through preserving food and using food cellars and pantries. One example is a woman born in 1963 who remembered her grandparents' place with fondness:

Since I was a child I have loved well-stocked storage spaces. My grandparents made jam and a lot of squashed juice, and had big, well-stocked pantries and food cellars. Not in the countryside but in a suburb in Stockholm. The smell of apples in crates and the feeling of fetching a jar of jam has made a huge impression that I have taken with me and practiced myself. I think pantries are fantastic and wish they made a comeback in new houses. (Woman born in 1963, DFU 41182:93)³

The quote aptly demonstrates how emotional experience incorporates the senses, objects, space, and people in the course of everyday life. The woman's account of how she perceived the scent of apples and how fetching a jar of jam from the pantry made her feel also illustrates the performative nature of emotions. Sara Ahmed (2004a; 2004b; 2010) argues against distinguishing sensory experience and emotions as separate categories and suggests instead the concept of "impression." The smell of apples and the feelings experienced when fetching a jar of jam had made such "impressions" on the respondent that she had tried to relive these childhood memories at other times in her life. The respondent and her husband had renovated their kitchen in their 1920s house and decided to re-open a vent to create a cold pantry space, which had been taken away by a previous owner in the 1970s. In the questionnaire, she narrated the memories of these sensual encounters that had left such an emotional mark on her. Remembering and writing down memories of food and food storage are emotional practices that made the experience both emotional and meaningful for the respondent.

As many scholars have noted, emotions are located both in bodies and spaces (Ahmed 2004a; Frykman & Frykman 2016; Reckwitz 2012; Scheer 2012). Emotions therefore take place within and around the body as it moves through specific spaces, interacting with other bodies, as well as with objects. Following the logic of emotions being embodied states, emotions can only be

3 All quotes have been translated from Swedish to English by the authors. Quotes are followed by the archive's accession number.

made sense of in the context of particular spaces. Mediated by the body and the senses, different spaces are connected to different emotions. However, this relationship between different spaces and different emotions is not fixed (Pernau 2014). The connection between an emotion and a particular space, such as the fondness for the pantry, can, and often does, change over time in relation to society and culture. As could be seen in many of the responses to the questionnaire, similar spaces can be connected to divergent emotions in different people. Memories of food cellars, for example, can be associated with positive feelings, such as love for specific foods, and smells, and people. But different types of cellars were also connected to negative feelings, such as fear, and several respondents described dark and damp root cellars from their childhood as “creepy”:

I was born in 1956 and I was raised in the countryside, on a farm. From my childhood, I recall how the root cellar was filled every autumn with potatoes and root vegetables. You had to put on your boots and tread to the cellar to collect what was needed. The steps were cumbersome, slippery, and you had to walk down uneven steps of stone, and it all was a bit creepy, damp and dark, and probably there were a few rats and spiders. My father, who made up stories which he told me at bedtime, had a favorite one about Prince Bertil who was supposed to collect potatoes in the cellar for dinner. He fell down the steps and got his head stuck in the potato bucket. His mother and father, the king and queen that is, had to help him get unstuck and pull him out of the bucket. I could vividly imagine the fall on the steps and the tin bucket. (Woman born in 1956, DFU 41182:61)

This specific memory includes a story within a story, where the respondent recalled her father’s bedtime story about a root cellar. The bedtime stories from her childhood framed her emotional experience of the family’s root cellar as being a bit scary or creepy – full of rats and spiders. But it is also a story about the relationship she had had with her father, a memory that was evoked through the act of writing about the root cellar. The quotation demonstrates how food storage spaces such as pantries and root cellars are emotionalized and recontextualized in the present by recounting specific memories that highlight relationships between people (father and daughter) and emotional experiences in the past. Pantries and root cellars are therefore at once material, cultural, and emotional spaces that connect people and objects.

The respondents’ narratives normally described the food in detail, which highlights how emotions come into being through the entanglements of objects and people. A woman born in the late 1930s, who grew

up in the city, recalled her summer vacations at her relatives' farm in these words:

When I was a child, I spent many summer vacations with relatives on a farm on Öland [an island]. I remember my aunt's large pantry which you could walk into. There you could find jars of jam, bread, milk, bowls of sour milk, and much more. In the attic, there were large chests filled with flour that you had to sift before using. Preserved meatballs, chops, and other meat were stored in the cellar in glass jars with a rubber ring between the lid and the jar and with a clip on top of the jar. My aunt made juice from berries that we children helped to pick. The bottles of juice were also in the cellar. (Woman born in 1938, DAGF 2145)

The narrative reads like an ethnographic "thick description" with its close attention to detail. It describes the kinds of food that was preserved and the containers in which it was preserved, and it connects the respondent to her aunt whom she helped with the food preservation. This suggests a certain emotional intensity and impressions in childhood, only to be brought forth decades later through the act of writing. The emphasis of the narrative is on the volume of food, indicating how the food storage itself is positively defined as a space of security – filled with plenty of food.

The narrative needs also to be put into historical context. Although this was not mentioned in the response, the respondent grew up with food rationing during World War II. As she lived in a city apartment until the age of 10, the aunt's rural pantry probably stood in stark contrast to her everyday life. The narrative therefore contains additional silent emotional layers, a phenomenon observed by Marander-Eklund (2009).

After giving an account of her memories of past food storage in the quote above, the respondent turned to contrasting her present storage practices in response to the questionnaire questions about preservation and crisis preparedness. She said that even though she and her husband had not specifically prepared for a crisis, their utility room contained plenty of cans and other food items such as pasta. Recounting past food storage provided the respondent with the opportunity to reflect on her own food preservation practices in the present, which were influenced by prospects of the future. Repeated encounters with family members through food preservation had left a strong impression on the respondent, where the attention to detail in the account bears witness to a certain sensual intensity, and to how the experience was heightened through her bodily senses. Although the narrative does not include any direct emotional expressions, we still argue that in remembering and writing down the memory, the respondent is reinterpreting and emotionalizing her past food storage practices in the present.

Emotional (storage) space

I remember the pantry in the countryside when I was a child. It was big and blue and you walked into it; the refrigerator was placed in there and I remember it as a wonderful room. Every now and then I have had the luxury of having a cold pantry in the apartments where I have lived, and I LOVE it! Maybe because the word [pantry] is so beautiful. [...] I often daydream about food and food storage. (Woman born in 1964, DFU 41182:42)

Compared to the quote in the previous section, this respondent, who had a great interest in food and cooking, did not hide her feelings when describing the pantry in her childhood home. Furthermore, living in different apartments with the luxury of ventilated pantries had triggered reminiscences in this respondent about the pantry of her youth.

Commenting on the relationship between food and memory, Jon Holtzman (2006) has drawn special attention to the power of food in sustaining temporal and spatial connections, opening the door for reflective memory of the past while anticipating future events (see also Bardone & Kannike 2017; Meah & Jackson 2016). In his study of how the inhabitants of the Greek island of Kalymnos use meals to remember past meals as well as to plan future meals, the anthropologist David Sutton points out how memory is embedded in sensory experience. The islanders thus give structure to their individual and collective memory while at the same time sustaining and strengthening their identity through food (Sutton 2001). In a later discussion, Korsmeyer and Sutton suggest that “people use their memories to call upon the past to interpret, contextualize, or simply link the present with the comfort of the known past” (2011, 473). Stepping into pantries in different apartments through the years had allowed our respondent to step into another time and revisit her childhood. Every pantry had helped her to remember and emotionally connect to the pantry from her childhood. Spatial and embodied memories therefore play an important role in the respondent’s nostalgic narrative about pantries.

The space-object arrangement of pantries and food cellars evoked a whole spectrum of emotions in our respondents, ranging from joy, satisfaction, and pride, to fear and a sense of “creepiness.” However, most emotions connected to food storage in the past were positive, especially the ones connected to pantries. Compared to root cellars, which some respondents associated with creepiness and fear, pantries were described more affectionately. Pantries were filled with jars of jam and pickled vegetables and meat, crates with different fruit, steel jugs with milk and sour milk, and containers with root vegetables and tubers such as potatoes – all objects that had provided an aesthetic im-

pression and created feelings of security and wellbeing. Well-stocked pantries meant that one did not have to worry about hunger in the future. Today's idealized pantry with labels and glass jars is perhaps aesthetically pleasing as it relates to the past ideal of having a filled pantry. This kind of pantry can of course also be understood as an appealing backdrop for performing identity and as content on social media.

Food storage spaces such as pantries and food cellars can therefore be viewed as "safe spaces" that alleviate fear about the uncertainty of the future while at the same time inciting feelings of calm and bonds between people and objects. Having a well-stocked freezer and cupboards filled with food, as many people today have in their home, are also related to feeling secure and prepared for the unpredictability of everyday life (see Marshall 2018; 2021). However, as freezers and cupboards represent standardized and contemporary food preservation spaces, techniques, and practices, they are not imbued with the same emotions or nostalgic longing as past food storage such as pantries and root cellars.

Other respondents recalled sneaking into, or being sent to, pantries and cellars containing temptations of jars of jam, cakes, and smoked ham stored for future meals. We also find detailed descriptions of food stored for Christmas and social events in Astrid Lindgren's children's books about Emil of Lönneberga and Madicken. These storage spaces are filled not only with food, but also with hope, nostalgic longing, and ideals found in influential popular culture in society. The spaces have thus over time been filled with new meanings and emotions, as the emotional experiences of children opening the pantry in the 1940s to the 1960s are reinterpreted and recontextualized through different temporalities and nostalgia by adults who reminisce about the pantries and food cellars of their youth. This brings us to the nostalgic sentiments and expressions in the narratives.

Nostalgic storage

In their narratives, several respondents expressed a wish for a pantry or root cellar in their current housing. A few had restored or built such storage facilities. However, it is particularly those who lacked them, who expressed strong emotions:

The entire kitchen wall at home is a half-height shelf with pantry items. The dream had been to have a secluded pantry, as in the past, where it was cooler. I think it feels secure to always have proper food at home and not to have to shop so often (max every other week). (Woman born in 1997, DFU 41182:30)

There is no mistaking the nostalgic longing in the quote, where the past compares favorably to the present. Contemporary fears about food insecurity and the constant time crunch create a longing for a well-stocked past and a slower rhythm. Another respondent pointed out that “there is no cold storage in modern houses. Nor are there sensible pantries like there used to be.” (Woman born in 1949, 41182:62).

Literature scholar Svetlana Boym (2001) has pointed out that although nostalgia usually seems to describe a melancholic desire for a specific place, it is more about a longing for a different time, such as the time of our childhood. Nostalgia, according to Boym, is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. However, Boym does not rule out the importance of place and states that nostalgia is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is therefore a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it can also be defined as a romance with one’s own fantasy. Longing for “old-fashioned pantries” and “classic root cellars” is indicative of this longing for both a specific time and a specific space.

Ethnologist Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto (2016) notes that nostalgia gains its rhetorical power by periodizing emotion and separating the past from the present. Nostalgia therefore creates an understanding of the past as idyllic in comparison with the present which is viewed more negatively. It has been suggested that nostalgia is a reaction to change or the fear of change. The sociologist Fred Davis (1979) coined the term “reflexive nostalgia” to describe how people often juxtapose the past and the present in their own reflective analysis. The concept therefore captures the complexity of the present and the nature of change.

One respondent living in a town used the opportunity the questionnaire provided to think through historical changes when it comes to food storage spaces:

It seems to me that the most efficient kitchens were built in the early 20th century, with hallway serving rooms, a pantry, food storage in the cellars, laundry rooms, and also wardrobes and cleaning cabinets.

It was quite ok during the 1980s when people had combined refrigerators, a fridge, and larder cabinet, quite a lot of storage in the kitchen, large wardrobes and plenty of storage, a cleaning cabinet, and space for a vacuum cleaner. Houses with open plan living are very nice and comfortable, but lack storage, cleaning cabinets, food storage, space for sorting garbage, and opportunities for recycling, and there is a lack of food cellars in apartment buildings, etc. (Woman born in 1975, DFU 41182:106)

The narrative describes a nostalgic longing for food storage spaces, as well as storage spaces in general, by lamenting how these spaces have shrunk with time. The respondent was born in 1975; today, as she described it, she “unfortunately” lived in a modern house and “missed a [ventilated] pantry terribly.” Her grandmother had had both a pantry and a hallway serving room and her mother still had a combined refrigerator and larder cabinet. What she was comparing was her personal experience from her youth, in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the present day, where many of the traditional spaces to preserve food had vanished. The respondent then juxtaposed her own experience from the 1980s and onwards with the early part of the twentieth century. In doing so, she gained a perspective where she could reflexively analyze changes in food preservation, but without falling completely for the lure of nostalgia. Her comment illustrates, however, how nostalgia for past food practices and spaces is a consequence of changed food culture and housing design.

Here, we suggest that reflexive nostalgia ties together not only different temporalities but also different emotional practices. The term “reflexive nostalgia” helps to translate and reinterpret past emotional experiences connected to food storage as they are remembered and written down. Reflexive nostalgia thus helps to create and interpret present emotions in the light of past emotional experiences – something that makes past food storage practices meaningful in the present.

Reflexive nostalgia can also take on a more existential reflection that deals with the chaos of contemporary life rather than a historical comparison in terms of food storage spaces:

There is a lot in the pantry, and I am very pleased to have one, as everything between heaven and earth can be found here. [...] I try to keep everything in the pantry tidier, but it is what it is. Since a while back, I have begun storing flour and grains in glass jars, which I think looks nice and old-fashioned. In the back of my mind, I have a “romantic” image of order and aesthetics of how it should look when I open my pantry. Before, these items were in their original paper or plastic packaging they were purchased in. (Woman born in 1960, DAGF 2146)

This respondent, today living in her childhood home in the countryside, was not reminiscing about the pantries of her youth but was describing the pantry she has today. She longed for her pantry to be better organized but was also accepting that it would probably never be like that. Here, it seems that she is also under the influence of contemporary ideas regarding pantries, namely the aesthetics and methods of organizing displayed in various media. By acknowledging that she had a “romantic” picture in her mind

when it came to organisation and aesthetics – preserving flour and grains in “old-fashioned” glass jars being examples of this – she simultaneously opened up for reflexive nostalgia. There is a longing for structure and certain aesthetics in her words, against the perceived chaos of everyday life, but at the same time the respondent was aware of the impossibility of this ever fully materializing. The pantry therefore was a space where she could perform different emotions, accepting the precariousness of life through organizing, labeling, and storing food.

Reflexive nostalgia must thus be understood through the lens of contemporary society, as respondents reflected on the past through the present, re-interpreting their emotional experiences through time. This was expressed by a woman who had moved to Sweden later in life, now living in the capital. Her narrative indicates no explicit interest in preservation practices but notes that she was brought up during the war in the Balkans, when water and electricity were regularly cut. She had grown up with a fridge, freezer, and dry and cold pantry. She also recounted how both her parents and her grandparents had stored and preserved a lot of food. Against this backdrop anchored in her past experiences, she expressed her aversion to the modern kitchen:

I hate all modern flats in Sweden. I hope to buy a flat from the 1950s, where space is used in a smart way. Today's flats are not made for living in; they are made for showing off. I don't know where one is supposed to store either food or, for example, a vacuum cleaner in modern flats. (English in original. Woman born in 1987, DFU 41182:91)

For this woman, a 1950–1960s kitchen would be far better than the one she had. In this case, the positive image of past storage could then also be understood as criticism of contemporary kitchens and society. By juxtaposing the past and the present, this woman was able to express negative emotions that were a part of her own reflexive analysis of contemporary storing spaces. Reflexive nostalgia thus allowed her to engage both critically and emotionally with food storage.

Concluding discussion

Sweden was once a rural society, but today 87% of its inhabitants live in urban areas and about half of all households live in apartment buildings (rented apartments or condominiums) (SCB 2021a; 2021b). While some respondents have built or restored pantries and root cellars, this is not possible for the majority of Swedes. It is notable that these storage facilities, once deemed as less hygienic than refrigerators and freezers and less rational for gendered

food chores, are now desired or at least imagined as something good (see also Marshall 2022). How can this recontextualisation and emotionalisation be understood?

The interpretations and memories of the past expressed in the questionnaire are of course influenced by today's society and culture. In contrast to older types of storage, modern-day refrigerators and freezers, available in practically all homes, do not evoke the same emotions as the rarer pantries and root cellars. Several respondents recalled their family's first fridge or freezer and the change it brought to everyday life, such as the luxury of being able to store ice cream. However, neither past nor present refrigeration appliances were recalled with such great fondness as the pantries. An "old-fashioned" walk-in pantry and build-it-yourself root cellars, once deemed superfluous, have therefore partly regained their status as ideal storage spaces for many Swedes. The longing for past storage spaces, which a century ago were accessible only to parts of the population (Thörn 2018), has now entered mainstream public discourses and is circulating through social media and real estate advertisements. This longing for pantries and root cellars comes precisely at a point in time when the majority of the Swedish population does not have to preserve or bulk up with food to survive. Against the backdrop of the industrial food system – where almost everything is available at any time in the supermarket – the pantry and the root cellar represent a past where seasonality and food preservation played a more important role in everyday life. As access to these storage spaces was restricted in the past, the contemporary emotionalized storage ideal also reflects a nostalgic perception of an idyllic past where neither the procurement and storage of food, nor the living conditions were a problem.

In this article, we have analyzed acts of remembering and writing about past food storage as emotional practices, to gain an understanding of how emotional experience in the past is reinterpreted in the present. The acts of remembering and writing down one's memories demonstrate the performative nature of emotional experience. Seeing these acts as emotional practices illustrates the relational nature of emotions, and how they come into being in different contexts through entanglement of bodies, objects, and spaces. Thinking about remembering and writing down one's memories as emotional practices can also shed light on how emotions come into being and are "translated" from one time to another, from embodied knowledge to reflective interpretation in the form of written memories. As we have demonstrated, the ways in which the questionnaire is formulated has influenced the memories and emotions that are expressed in the narratives. In this sense, the researchers have become co-creators.

The desire for “old-fashioned” food storage is partly driven by nostalgia and childhood memories, connecting several generations as well as past and present food practices. Food storage spaces such as pantries and root cellars can be said to store time in the form of memories and feelings, as expressed in the questionnaire. These storage spaces have created a material framework for entanglements between people, objects, the senses, and emotions. The narratives in the questionnaire verbalized the sensual experience of materiality through smell, taste, touch, and sound.

To be sure, detailed descriptions of the food, the people, and the space itself do not always denote an emotional experience. We have argued, however, that the detailed recounting of past food storage is indicative of emotional intensity in the past. If it were not for this emotional intensity, the experiences would have been forgotten or recounted in less colorful fashion. The respondents engaged with reflexive nostalgia to evaluate past food storage in the light of the present. Reflexive nostalgia is therefore a useful interpretive framework that connects different emotional practices at different times. In the narratives, strong emotions, both positive and negative, were expressed. These emotions came into being as our respondents remembered, narrated, and compared past and present food storage. To think of these acts as emotional practices helps us to understand how past and present food storage spaces are recontextualized and emotionalized through reflexive nostalgia, defining, and negotiating the meaning of these spaces and the part they can play in contemporary society.

So why are we now witnessing this rise in feelings connected to past food storage? Increased attention to pantries and root cellars, through various media, communicates new meanings of these storage features in relation to interior design and food practices that are commonly connected to ideas about sustainable lifestyles (see also Marshall 2022). In this context, nostalgic feelings surrounding past food storage spaces can help to create a sense of control over the present to deal with uncertainty about the future. Perhaps the nostalgic idea of well-filled storage of the past – then a necessity and a result of wise management of resources especially in rural producer households – can be understood as a storage ideal passed down through generations. The well-filled cupboards of today have new meanings. For example, they enable people to shop for food less frequently and provide emotional comfort. Having a large, functional, and well-organized pantry is for most respondents no necessity, instead it functions as an appealing and emotionalized backdrop for expressing specific food values and serves as an emotional space that helps to stave off feelings of insecurity, concerns about fast-paced social transformations and fears for climate change. We also interpret the emotionalized storage

practices described in this article as a reaction against the increasingly standardized kitchen layouts and culinary utensils that, through rationalisation and conformity, have allowed less individualized ways of cooking and storing food (see also Jönsson 2019). The pantry and the root cellars allow people to practice or at least to imagine alternative ways of living with and consuming food. Further research could investigate the reinterpretation and emotionalisation of past storage spaces and practices as emotional relief in contemporary life.

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