TRANSCRIPT:

[TITLE:] A CELEBRATION OF FOOD

[INTRO Narration:] What’s a celebration without food?

Food brings people together and forges our cultural identities.

[Ganesh Festival Narration:] At the Ganesh Temple in Queens, New York, volunteers prepare modhaka for Ganesh Chaturthi — the festival day for the Hindu deity.

[TITLE:] Uma Mysorekar

[Uma Mysorekar:] In Hinduism it is believed that you really don’t get the full grace, or what we call punya from the Lord by just doing the worship unless you have offered food. Because food is a part of your ritual. In a simplistic way, you can’t let the Lord be hungry. Like, for example, you place a plate of food in front of the Lord and say: “Is he eating?” May not be eating, but he’s already taken it. And that is what we call a blessed food. Everybody is interested to get even a small morsel of that blessed food.

Food is a very important part of our daily life, and I think it brings people back.

[TITLE:] Uma Mysorekar

[Uma Mysorekar:] My own niece, who says “I’m looking forward to the temple because I want to eat the food.” I think these festivals were really created to bring the community together. This is one time the entire community comes together, no matter what. Every year, after year, after year.

[Oktoberfest Narration:] A plentiful harvest is always something to celebrate.

In Munich, Germany, the tradition has evolved into Oktoberfest, a 16-day celebration of food and beer. Oktoberfest is celebrated in many parts of the world, but the event in Munich is the original and still the largest. Breweries set up large tents to serve their special mix of music, events, beer and food. Before modern sanitation, beer was safer to drink than water.
Fermentation rids the drink of any harmful bacteria and the process transforms the grain base to a calorie-packed alcohol.

We may not need the extra calories today, but years ago beer was considered an important source of daily nutrition.

[Ramadan Narration:] During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast, doing without food or drink during daylight hours.

[TITLE:] Aissatoa Ndao


This month is a special month for us. We celebrate, we’re going to the mosque, we pray.

Ramadan makes you purify your whole body and makes you someone, like, reborn.

[TITLE:] Ndeyeraba Diakhate

[Ndeyeraba Diakhate:] When you fast, you have that time to reflect, basically being thankful that we have food.

Even if they don’t celebrate Ramadan, there are people in the world who can’t even eat one meal a day.

[Aissatoa Ndao:] Month of Ramadan…they say the hospitality-food in Senegal is *ceebu jen*. It feels like you’re back home.

[Ndeyeraba Diakhate:] It’s one of the dishes that you cook.

Not only that, but *ceebu yapp* and a lot of *ceeb*, which is, like, rice.

It’s good for Ramadan because it helps you to gain weight, so that we don’t lose too much weight like dramatically during Ramadan.

[Aissatoa Ndao:] My mom taught me how to cook and I pass it to my children.

And your children going, and so on and so on, whatever generations coming.

[TITLE:] Aissatoa Ndao

That’s how we learn how to cook, to do better dishes.

But especially the *ceebu jen* in Senegal – it’s the culture of Senegalese.

[Chinese New Year Narration:] Chinese New Year marks the beginning of the lunar year. Families gather and share a reunion dinner with foods that hold symbolic meaning.

[Amy Tjong:] Chinese New Year…it’s a time for renewal, it’s about rejuvenation.
We have a reunion dinner and usually my father cooks. My father is actually – he’s not a chef by trade – but he’s an amazing cook.

He’ll prepare several dishes, some of them are very symbolic.

It’s important to have a whole fish at the dinner table.

The Cantonese word for fish is *yu*. *Yu* in Chinese – it sounds similar to the word for “surplus” or “extra.”

My father will make “longevity noodles” because they are uncut and they were supposed to symbolize long life.

They are a given that we are going to have them during Chinese New Year dinner.

The tangerines are called *gum* in Chinese, which sounds like “gold” and that was to symbolize prosperity and we would eat them but they would also be part of the decoration in the house.

I lived in Confucius Plaza, which is right in the heart of Chinatown.

So walking out and smelling the gunpowder from the firecrackers, it’s the one time that I would get to see all of my relatives, and I would get together with my cousins. And we could probably not get together for Christmas, but we had to be home for Chinese New Year.

Food is a huge part of our identity and it’s probably one of the things that continues to tie me to my culture.

**[American Thanksgiving Narration:]**
Thanksgiving in America has its roots in a 1621 harvest feast. Roasted turkey, cranberries, squash and pumpkin pie are typical New England dishes reinterpreted by family and friends today.

**[TITLE:]** Caleb Silver

**[Caleb Silver:]**
Well there is the American tradition of Thanksgiving and that is about the history of America and that’s something we think about.

But Thanksgiving is also one of those times where food is bringing people together.

We don’t have a lot of family that lives with us in New York City, so every year we try to invite neighbors or friends.

**[Macalister Strong:]**
I want the whole drumstick!

**[Caleb Silver:]**
My wife, who is from South America, brings her own traditions to the Thanksgiving meal now.

**[Ana Luz Porzecanski:]**
I came to the United States about 16 years ago.
And when I left my parents’ home, my grandmother and my mother gave me a wonderful cookbook.

This is the recipe we’re going to make: *papas a la crema de dulcelina*.

That is all handwritten and illustrated by my grandmother and it was a way of bringing the family with me.

This Thanksgiving, they finally tried the squash Turkish style, or as we call it in my family, *Calabaza a la Turca*.

**[TITLE:]** Caleb Silver

**[Caleb Silver:]**

It’s become a family cookbook that has recipes from now my mother, and I’ve even added a couple of steps onto it over time as well.

**[Ana Luz Porzecanski:]**

All of my grandparents had to all leave Europe at different times because of different wars.

**[TITLE:]** Ana Luz Porzecanski

Many times they didn’t get to bring much with them.

But they had their recipes and they had their traditions.

And so, it was a way, I think, of re-creating home in a new place.

**[TITLE:]** What does food mean to you? Whether it’s remembering our family gathered around the dinner table, the weirdest meal we ever had or trips to our favorite food trucks, we love to share stories and pictures about memorable meals and gatherings.

**[TITLE:]** Now you can share! Post your photo on Instagram with hashtag #CelebrateFood and include a brief caption. Be creative! Feel free to embellish your photo with words about what made the food so special.