

NEW YORK TIMES
MESKEREM
212-777-8111
124 Macdougall St.



For maximum enjoyment, Ethiopian restaurants require a group, and while beef, lamb and chicken dishes are plentiful, so are vegetarian selections. A meal works like this: A main course is placed in the center of the table, and diners pass a platter or injera, a spongy rounds of bread made from fermented tef, a rye-like Ethiopian grain. You tear off a piece, collect some stew from the platter and eat. Meskerem's injera is glorious with a light, fresh sourdough aroma rising from the bubbly brown bread. The best vegetarian choices includes yemiser alecha, a mild lentil stew flavored with garlic and ginger, yemiser wat, a heartier lentil stew spiced with fiery berbere sauce, and shiro wat, a spicy chickpea stew flavored with cardamom and turmeric.

M E S K E R E M
ETHIOPIAN CUISINE



WARM DINING ATMOSPHERE
AVAILABLE FOR PARTIES & CATERING
MESKEREM ETHIOPIAN
124 MACDOUGALL STREET NEW YORK, NY 10012

212-777-8111

Other Location
Meske Ethiopian Restaurant
468 W 47 St, New York, NY 10036
212-399-1949

MITMITA IS GROUND CHILI PEPPER, BERBER
PEPPER, AWAZE IS MILD BERBER

Deborah Aderounmu
International Palette:
A Multi-Sensory Experience as a Food Critique

Assignment #1 (worth 150 points)

Due: 5/10/2020

No Late Papers Accepted!

Remember grammar, punctuation, usage, verb tense, APA all count!

1. Visit an authentic ethnic restaurant of predominately of one ethnic taste (i.e. Taco Bell & Olive Garden does NOT count as ethnic restaurants.

The name of the restaurant I visited is called Meskerem Ethiopian Cuisine, located at 124 Macdougall St, New York, NY 10012.

2. Answer the following question in a two-to-four (2-3) page typed report using your **five senses: taste, sound, sight, & smell.**

a. How were you addressed when you entered the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated?

Not needing to make reservations (I had called to make reservations and I was told that it was not needed and I could just walk in). The restaurant was in the lower level of a building, but one could see the doors from far: Walking in, and not having to wait, the place was not crowded, the waiter greeted and directed my partner and me to a table of our choice, asking if we were okay and comfortable. The place felt warm and cozy, considering the weather at the time, it was terribly cold outside. Because the place was small, the sits were very close to each other, it was a little loud with the music and conversations other people were having.

b. What are the cultural differences you notice? Using your five senses of taste, touch, sight, smell, & sound describe some of the cultural differences that you are not accustomed to in comparison to All-American restaurants or restaurant chains. For example, one can describe but not limited to the sights in the restaurant décor, odors from unusual foods, and sounds from music. One should use all five senses in this cultural experience.

I noticed the lights at the restaurants was not very bright, the scent of the place was not peculiar, it did not smell like the food that was being served. A cultural difference I noticed was the art all over the walls and even ceiling. As seen in *figure I*, the art on the wall had a child sitting on his father's shoulder, a baby on his mother's back, and *figure II*: a group of people dancing together.



Figure I: Meskerem, 2020



Figure II: Meskerem, 2020

Figure III: Meskerem, 2020.

The ceiling art I was told is called *covenantal art*, Christians in Ethiopia have long claimed to have the ark of the covenant. According to Paul Raffaele (2007), Ethiopian Christians have claimed that the ark rests in a chapel in the small town of Aksum, in their country's northern highlands. It arrived nearly 3,000 years ago, they say, and has been guarded by a succession of virgin monks who, once anointed, are forbidden to set foot outside the chapel grounds until they die. *Figures IV and V* are closer looks at this covenantal art.



Figure IV: Meskerem, 2020

Figure V: Meskerem, 2020

The music they had playing was not just restricted to Ethiopian music alone, they had songs from all over Africa, and Jamaican songs also playing and I had recognized some of them.

c. Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? List various food items from the menu. What menu items did you order? Is there more than one language used to describe the foods on the menu?



Figure VI: Meskerem, 2020

We were seated on wooden table and chair and given the menu to look at, everything on the menu was unusual for me, in figure VI, the list of their appetizers, entree, poultry, and the vegetarian menu was described and priced, also more than one language was used to describe the foods on the menu. I had avocado for my appetizer (figure VII) the ingredients in this was not just avocado slices, it had avocado, tomatoes, green peppers and onions that were chopped and place in the middle of a platter or injera, spongy round bread made from fermented tef (a rye-like



Ethiopian grain), the bread was placed in a small flat stainless steel tray.

Figure VII: Meskerem, 2020

When the food was served, a big cultural difference I paid attention to was that we use our hands to eat: you tear a piece of the bread and collect whatever it is you want to eat from the platter and eat, also the bread had a very strong sour taste that I was unfamiliar with.

There were other appetizers on the menu which includes:

- **Timatim Fitfit:** Pieces of injera mixed with chopped tomatoes, fresh green peppers, onions, olive oil, and vinegar. Served cold.
- **Timatim Salad:** chopped tomatoes, onions and green peppers mixed with house dressing.
- **2 Piece Sambosa:** chopped prime beef or lentils mixed with hot green pepper, onions, and garlic are stuffed in homemade thin flatbread. Served hot in a triangular shape.
- **Azefa:** chopped onions, green pepper, lentils, fresh lemon juice and vinegar mixed with mustard. Served cold.

I had selected my main dish from the poultry menu: the special chicken tibs (Cubes of boneless chicken seasoned with garlic, onions, and tomatoes finished with awaze sauce, and my partner selected his from the entree: Maskerem Combo (Tibs wat, minchet abish wat, gomen besaega, miser alech, and miser wat). It was all served in a larger platter as seen in *Figure VIII*. I could not tell at first what dish food was what, so I asked, and it tasted amazing, it was rich and had a diversity of flavor, the food was very filling.



Figure VIII: Meskerem, 2020

Other food items on the menu include:

- **Kitfo:** chopped prime beef mixed with butter and mitmita served raw, rare or well done. Like steak tartar.

- **Gored Gored:** the most tender undercut cubes of beef dipped in butter. Served raw, rare or well done.
- **Tibs Wat:** prime beef cooked in a pan, then sauteed with berbere.
- **Minchet Abish Wat:** ground beef cooked with butter, garlic and finished with curry. Mild.
- **Gomen Besaega:** a special cut of prime beef seasoned with garlic, onions, and ginger, then finished with boiled collard greens.
- **Maskerem Combo:** tibs wat, minchet abish wat, gomen besaega, miser alech and miser wat.
- **Yebeg Alecha:** tender pieces of lamb marinated with butter then sauteed with ginger, garlic, and curry. Mild.
- **Kik Wat:** Ethiopian split pea cooked with onions and garlic finished with curry. Mild. Vegetarian.
- **Bucha:** ground chickpeas cooked with onions and minced jalapeno chili pepper. Vegetarian, and so on.

I did not have special instructions with my dishes, but the options were given just in case there was an item in the dish that was not wanted.

I had asked the waiter what the word “*Meskerem*” means, and he said “*the first*”. The month of September is a special one in Ethiopia, It’s also the first one of the year (Ethiopia follows the Coptic calendar), and according to this calendar, Meskerem 1 - or September 11 on the Gregorian calendar - is the first day of the new year. So in all festivities everyone shared a meal together and enjoyed each others company, I believe that is where the idea of the restaurant came from. There is a symbolic importance of taking time out of busy schedules to eat together.

- d. Is a traditional salad offered? If not, describe what is offered. What types of bread are offered (flat, pita, tortilla chips)? What type of desserts (cheesecake, fortune cookie, coffee)? What are they like?

The traditional salad was not offered, but there was round brown bread made from fermented tef (a rye-like Ethiopian grain). Appetizers were on the menu but desserts were not.

- e. What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant?

I asked for water, but they had an alcohol menu, red, white and rose wine. What was not typically offered in an American chain restaurant is the Meskerem special which they called honey wine.

f. How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and economic geography? (i.e. spices are abundant in India which is rich in spices & fish (sushi) is popular in Japan & it is part of the G8). Describe approximately where in the world (continent & location) and from the country, this culture's food is best known.

Ethiopia, a country on the Horn of Africa. The country lies completely within the tropical latitudes and is relatively compact, with similar north-south and east-west dimensions. The capital is Addis Ababa ("New Flower"), located almost at the centre of the country. Ethiopia is the largest and most populated country in the Horn of Africa. With the 1993 secession of Eritrea, its former province along the Red Sea, Ethiopia became landlocked (Donal Crummey, Assefa Mehretu, 2019). Considering the country's history and geography, particularly in situ, it makes sense. Based on Ethiopia's culture geography, the cuisine follows the culture, formed and informed by millennia of trade and exchange with the Middle East, Asia and the Mediterranean (Daniel Noll, 2019). Ethiopia was under Italian military control for a period (1935–46) when Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) was in power (not part of the G8). Except for that time, Ethiopian culture has been influenced very little by other countries. Exotic spices were introduced to Ethiopian cooking by traders traveling the trade routes between Europe and the Far East.

The food is reflective of Ethiopia's economic geography, wars, drought, political unrest, and population pressures of the 1970s and early 1980s have left their mark on the health of Ethiopians. Ethiopia's coffee farmers produce one of the largest coffee crops in Africa; however, food crops are mainly produced by small farmers, known as subsistence farmers, who attempt to grow just enough food to feed their family.

Ethiopia's major crops include a variety of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and coffee. Grains are the most important field crops and the chief element in the diet of most Ethiopians. The principal grains are teff, wheat, barley, corn, sorghum, and millet. This is why the menu is the way it is.

g. Describe the dress? (Dress is inclusive of all five senses – you smell perfume, hear jewelry, see make-up, etc...) What are the employees, such as hostesses or wait staff wearing?

According to this definition, the dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992). The waiters and waitresses at the restaurant dress casually, they did not have distinct outfits or jewelry. They said they are from Ethiopia when I asked, but I did not notice any kind of modification of the body or style of their dress, they simply had on jeans and top.

h. Rate your experience as a food critic (as in the *LA Times* or *Houston Chronicle*). Ratings should be dependent on taste, service, décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality and price and should range from A-F ("A" being the best). Explain why you chose this rating. Be thorough and detailed in your explanations.

As a food critic, I would rate my experience as B due to the following reasons:

- Taste: great place to expand food culture, food was fresh, tasty and delicious
- Service: staff are very friendly and kind
- Decor: Rustic atmosphere, very artistic. Wooden tables and chairs, linoleum probably decades old,
- Cleanliness: it was clean, but very old looking
- Authenticity: Small cozy place reflecting the cuisine of the land.
- Quality: quality of the food was amazing
- Price: very reasonable prices \$\$

i. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multi-cultural experience in a class discussion?

Culture:

- There are more than 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia with just as many languages and over 200 dialects are spoken throughout the country.
- Ethiopia is the only country in Africa with its own unique script.
- Ethiopia claims to hold the Ark of the Covenant as well as a piece of the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified.
- Ethiopia is known as the Cradle of Mankind, with some of the earliest ancestors found buried in the soil. Lucy (3.5 million years old), the most famous fossils found, were unearthed in Hadar.
- Ethiopia remains one of the only nations in Africa never to be colonized. It was occupied briefly by the Italians from 1936 to 1941.

Food and drink:

- Coffee, one of the world's most popular beverages, was discovered in Ethiopia, in the region of Kaffa.
- Ethiopia has the largest per capital density of cattle in Africa and the 10th largest in the world.
- Teff, the grain used to make the Ethiopian staple injera, is an ancient grain believed to have originated in Ethiopia between 4000BC and 1000BC. It is the smallest grain in the world and is rich in calcium, phosphorous, iron, copper, aluminum, barium and thiamine and is a good source of protein, amino acids, carbohydrates and fiber. It is a great gluten-free option.

Reference

- (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://countrystudies.us/ethiopia/94.htm>
- Interesting Facts about Ethiopia. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.abebatoursethiopia.com/about_ethiopia/interesting_facts
- Crummey, D. E., Mehretu, A., & Marcus, H. G. (2019, December 13). Ethiopia. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia>
- Ethiopia. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Algeria-to-France/Ethiopia.html>
- Figure I, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone.
- Figure II, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone.
- Figure III, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone.
- Figure IV, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phones.
- Figure V, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone.
- Figure VI, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone.
- Figure VII, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone.
- Figure VIII, Meskerem (2020). retrieved from personal phone
- Noll, D., Charlie, Noll, D., Rhonda, Demssie, E., Mekdes, ... Wesley Travels. (2019, December 27). Ethiopian Food: A Culinary Travel Guide to What to Eat and Drink. Retrieved from <https://uncorneredmarket.com/ethiopian-food/>
- Raffaele, P. (2007, December 1). Keepers of the Lost Ark? Retrieved from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/keepers-of-the-lost-ark-179998820/>
- Roach-Higgins, M. E., & Eicher, J. B. (1992). Dress and Identity. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10(4), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9201000401>

9:59

LTE



FOOD & DRINKS

Meskerem Ethiopian Cuisine

Photo from Yelp

2/14/20

1% Daily Cash

\$41.54

+\$0.42



Meskerem Ethiopian Cuisine, New Y...