



*'Proeft de kost en kauftse met uw' oogen'. Beeldtraditie, betekenis en functie van het Noord-Nederlandse keukentafereel (ca. 1590-1650)*

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## Summary

This dissertation examines the Northern Netherlandish kitchen scene from c. 1590 to c. 1650, and addresses the pictorial tradition, meaning and function of the works that form part of this thematic group. These paintings typically feature a combination of still-life elements, images with contemporary figure types and religious scenes. They generally present the kitchen as ambience and depict activities and motifs connected with the preparation of food. The earliest known example in this genre was introduced in 1551 by Pieter Aertsen, who, with his nephew and pupil Joachim Beuckelaer, were among the most important painters of this theme in the 16th century.

While around the third quarter of the 16th century painters of kitchen scenes can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand, by the first half of the 17th century quite a lot of painters in the Northern Netherlands were pursuing this theme. What becomes obvious on further investigation is the enormous diversity of types of images and the divergency of styles, formats, picture modes, motifs, figure types and actions. Very different categories of images can be distinguished within this thematic group, varying from kitchens with religious scenes to purely profane representations, from farcical scenes to idealistic images, from kitchen pieces with genre figures to kitchens without figures, and at the other end of the scale those featuring portraits. But all kinds of mixed forms also occurred. This same diversity typifies the fairly large number of artists spread across different centres in the Northern Netherlands who produced kitchen scenes: these vary from very ambitious history painters with a prominent reputation to low paid artisans. They included specialist painters of kitchen scenes, who produced many examples of this genre, while others, as far as we know, produced no more than a single work on this theme.

This research aims to do justice to this diversity and addresses the question of how this relates to the differences in meaning and function of these paintings and, further, to the diverse backgrounds of the audience for whom they were intended. How can the popularity of this theme among artists and their public be explained?

The kitchen scene in the Northern Netherlands between approximately 1590 and 1650 has barely been studied. The two studies worth mentioning on the subject, by Sullivan (1984) and Stukenbrock (1994), focused one-sidedly on the moralising function of the images; Stukenbrock referred to these works as representing *vanitas*. The views of both authors are directly in line with an influential interpretation model that has been developed since the 1970s for the 16th-century kitchen scenes by Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer, which have been the subject of many publications. (A historiography of the many studies of the 16th-century kitchen scene, particularly the works by Pieter Aertsen, can be found in Appendix I). It is typical for both publications that there is no mention at all that these kitchen scenes can be amusing, farcical or laughable, nor is any mention made of the sensory pleasure that they offer the viewer or the nature and working of the illusionism that must have played such an important role for the artists and their public. It is these very characteristics, this research argues, that constitute the essence of these works and that are directly related to their significance and function. In general, the Northern Netherlandish kitchen scenes from the first half of the 17th century have been done an injustice by treating artists from this period as unthinking imitators of Aertsen and Beuckelaer and judging the quality of their works unfavourably.

### *Method*

This study demonstrates that painters of kitchen scenes in the late 16th century and in the first half of the 17th century consciously and actively reacted to one another's work and to that of their predecessors; they succeeded in improving upon their works and making innovative products, and in so doing they attracted the attention of an ever larger and broader public. The diversity of types of images is shown to be a consequence of the catalytic effect of this process of mutual rivalry.

I analyse this process minutely and refer to a diverse range of sources to explain the different types of images. I further endeavour to gain insights into the frame of reference within which the images were perceived by the contemporary audience in order to understand the thoughts and associations that the paintings were able to evoke. This gives us a better understanding of how artists handled conventions and dealt with the expectations of the public, and why they opted to renew – or not to renew – their repertoire of motifs and the way these were presented.

First of all, I analyse the different types of kitchen scenes and compare them with their own pictorial traditions. I then examine how themes and motifs from kitchen scenes occur in other pictorial traditions and how they were used by painters of kitchen scenes. Then, the images of the kitchen, the kitchen staff and the theme of victuals are studied on the basis of different types of written sources, varying from print captions, art theory, treatises on painting, satires, farces, poems, table plays (*tafelspelen*), edifying literature, emblems and country house poetry to cookbooks and medical textbooks. I demonstrate how different pictorial traditions within the thematic group – in general terms a profane-religious, a farcical and an idealising group – relate to one another and interpret these on the basis of pictorial and written sources that bear most similarity to the relevant category. Finally, to understand the dynamics of this process, I examine, particularly using 17th-century inventories, the monetary values that the paintings represent, the rooms in which they were found and who owned them. In studying the development of the thematic group, specific attention is paid to the role of the viewer and the way this role changed over the course of time. To gain insight into how this process works, this study applies both a chronological and a thematic approach. The objectives indicated above are achieved by combining art historical methodology with a broad cultural-historical approach. Consequently, the topic of this dissertation is broad; it covers painted food and other representations of food. This broad scope is necessary to allow us to understand the high quality, quantity and diversity of the types of images that form part of this thematic group.

### *Humour and amusement*

A key theme running through this book is the tension between the humour and morality that characterise these works. Previous authors, particularly in studies about 16th-century market and kitchen scenes, have emphasised one-sidedly the moralising aim of these paintings. By contrast, this dissertation focuses strongly on presenting an alternative view, concentrating on the humour that plays such a prominent role in many of these paintings, and the humour mechanisms that they employ. To understand how this humour worked, what made these paintings comic and how the comic aspect relates to moral values and moralisation, pictorial motifs are studied in close conjunction with very diverse comic images and texts. I refer extensively to sources that express the iconography of Carnival and Lent, since the visual language of the kitchen and gastronomy play a prominent role in this and the kitchen piece is closely related to the 'Carnavalesque'. A key question here is how the repertoire of motifs that

feature in kitchen scenes relates to texts and images with Carnival iconography and how food functions as a motif for comedy.

In what way were these paintings amusing? To answer this question, the subjects and motifs in the kitchen scenes are studied against the background of comic traditions in literature and the mechanisms of the 16th and 17th century 'laughter culture', a working method that has provided rich insights in Mariët Westermann's *The Amusements of Jan Steen. Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (1997). In very rare cases, there are direct links between paintings and farces or comedies, but the links between farce and comedy culture and market and kitchen scenes are far more abundant at a general level. This can be seen simply from the fact that they to a large extent share the same stock characters (peasants, whores, kitchen maids, matchmakers, lecherous old men, etc.), as well as particular themes and motifs.

Apart from the choice of specific themes, motifs and figure types, there are particular 'signs' that give many kitchen scenes their comic nature. The fact that these works contain elements of comedy can be observed directly in the laughing figures; laughing faces act, as Westermann put it, as a laughing prompt, an indication that there is something to laugh about. They are also thought to have a contagious effect on the viewer. The presence of such laughing figures – they are often on the edge of the scene – makes the scene seem even more real because, as happens in plays, they take on the role of eye witnesses.

#### *Amusing deceit*

A comparative analysis of particular types and motifs demonstrates that an amusing game with illusions and delusions is part of the essence of many kitchen scenes and that in this respect there are strong links with the Dutch comedy culture. This deceit manifests itself in all kinds of forms, including ambiguity, trompe l'oeil and delusion. This pervasive preoccupation with illusion and deceit – and the failure of judgment that goes with it – as a continuing source of amusement is typical of many of the paintings discussed here.

As an introduction to the theme of this study, the first chapter focuses on one specific painting, in which the 16th-century artist Pieter Pietersz. presents himself in a comic role and in an extraordinary way expresses beliefs that are closely related to these essential characteristics of the genre. This chapter gives a broad introduction to the pictorial and written traditions in which the visual language of the kitchen scene is rooted. It also briefly explains how the representation of food was related to the comic genre.

#### *Origin and development of the kitchen scene in the 16th century*

Chapters II and III address the origin and development of the 16th-century, mainly Antwerp, kitchen scene as a thematic group. My approach differs from earlier publications that have treated this genre in isolation. Chapter II.A., focusing on the *Meat Stall* by Aertsen, studies in particular how the innovative composition of this work relates to previous pictorial and textual traditions featuring a culinary visual image. This chapter addresses kitchen humour since classical antiquity in a kaleidoscopically structured summary and further develops the links outlined in chapter I between representations of food and kitchen humour. The iconography and the coming into existence of the *Meat Stall* in particular and the theme of the kitchen scene in general are shown to be related to two factors. The first circumstance relates to the renewed interest in classical literature and, in particular, the interest in comedy and satire. The second factor comprises many expressions of 'popular' (feast) culture and how this is represented. The remainder of chapter II.A. is dedicated to the innovative manner of portraying religious kitchen scenes in the 16th century, where the emphasis is on the theme of

Christ in the house of Martha and Mary. This subject is compared to the pictorial tradition and a study is made of the way in which in particular kitchen maids, the main protagonists of these and many other kitchen scenes, are depicted and how this method of presentation relates to how this motif is presented in different traditions, such as inn and brothel representations, the carousing Prodigal Son and the iconography of gluttony.

When, in the middle of the 16th century, Pieter Aertsen introduced monumental paintings prominently depicting food and kitchen paraphernalia, and in particular kitchen girls and boorish types, these must have made an overpowering impression. They testified to ingenuity, virtuosity and wit. This led to the emergence of a new visual form, a form with which the artist nevertheless reflected on existing traditions, such as Carnival iconography, peasant graphic satire, brothel scenes, the carousing Prodigal Son and the iconography of gluttony. But it was above all the unconventional method of presenting these images that was experienced as highly surprising and witty: for the first time, lowly subjects were presented on a monumental scale and the usual distance between the viewer and the image was eliminated. Moreover, Aertsen also turned the accepted hierarchy upside down by representing religious subjects as small scale. Aertsen apparently had an excellent understanding of how he could meet a public need for a new kind of image. The fact that the theme was at the same time familiar probably explains the success of these images. Aertsen also understood that he could develop these themes in very different ways – both in profane kitchens, as well as in kitchens with religious subjects – in order to differentiate his products for a diverse audience.

In the kitchen scenes featuring religious subjects, introduced by Aertsen, entertainment and morality go hand in hand. These scenes do not express a purely moralistic function through the didactics of contrast; rather, they focus on the tension between the pleasure of viewing the scene, the food and women that provide a visual temptation, and the confirmation of moral values. The viewer is invited in an amusing way to contemplate the tension between material issues and spiritual values, where the pleasure and humour are grafted onto – and further strengthen - a powerful Christian morality. However, these images were certainly not intended to be actively moralising or to instruct. These types of images were particularly popular in the third quarter of the 16th century.

Chapter II.B. shows that the 16th-century kitchen scenes with no religious subjects – of which the theme is mainly rooted in peasant and Carnival iconography and the tradition of sins - must have functioned differently from the religious kitchen scenes, although there are many similarities. The many links between peasant kitchens and carnivalesque kitchen pieces by Pieter Aertsen, Pieter Pietersz., Joachim and Huybrecht Beuckelaer and Maerten van Cleve with the comedy and farce culture make it apparent that these last works have to be regarded as the manifestations of the ‘World-Upside-Down’ theme. These images will have functioned in the recreative context of celebrations, or in any event refer to such occasions. We can deduce this from the strong similarities between the repertoire of motifs of these kitchen scenes with that of table-plays (*tafelspelen*), the “*refreinen in het zotte*”, or comic poems that were performed or presented at weddings, on Shrove Tuesday and other celebrations. But it is also apparent in the way they are presented; they largely suggest a festive context and focus strongly on active participation by the viewer(s). Many motifs are rooted in the traditions of the Deadly Sins, but a change of emphasis transformed this iconography into comic images. Moral values thus formed the ground on which humour could flourish.

Kitchen scenes stimulate sensual pleasure, which may in some cases remind people – through the presence of a religious scene – that spiritual nourishment is more important than earthly

pleasures. People can be happy about frivolous kitchen girls who offer themselves or who do it with lecherous manservants, peasant types and old men. In short, these are people with no power of discernment, who are not thinking about what is really important but are solely interested in satisfying their earthly desires. The viewer, who generally belongs to an environment of citizens, is amused by the immoral behaviour indulged in by 'other people'.

*'S-Werelts Ruyme Keucken' ('The World's Large Kitchen')*

Chapter III examines the relation between the theme of the kitchen scene and the iconography of the Elements, the Seasons and the Months. To explain this, I examine the place of kitchen scenes and closely related images of food in the series of the Elements, the Seasons and the Months, particularly from the second half of the 16th century. The relationship with this iconography is fundamentally important in understanding kitchen scenes from both the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. I demonstrate that painters of kitchen scenes to a large extent enriched and renewed their compositions after the late 16th century by borrowing motifs from images of the natural elements (for example, an artist from the circle of Frederick van Valckenborch), the seasons (Lucas van Valckenborch and Georg Flegel) and the months (for example, Jean-Baptiste de Saive I), themes in which food and the visual language of the kitchen frequently play a prominent role. The painted and printed series of these masters exhibit a close iconographic relationship with the kitchen scene. Not only are there strong similarities in motifs, figure types and their actions, a kitchen scene was sometimes also part of such a programmatic series, as appears from Joachim Beuckelaer's highly innovative ensemble of the Four Elements. It is demonstrated that the kitchen can serve as a metaphor for the world within such series. Given these similarities between both thematic groups, it is probable that many kitchen scenes would have evoked associations with the four elements, the seasons or the months. Kitchen scenes do not portray the elements, the months or the seasons in a programmatic way but they often refer expressly to these eminences, including by showing the produce from different seasons (viz. Pieter Cornelisz. van Rijck, Floris van Schooten).

These series of the natural elements, the seasons and the months can be divided roughly into two categories of images. On the one hand there is a tradition in which food is exalted and the emphasis is on the utility and the sensual pleasure that food provides: chapter IV shows that it is primarily this tradition that Frans Snyders from the Southern Netherlands elaborates on with his innovative 'pantries', and to which many artists of independent kitchen still-lives in the Northern Netherlands seem to refer (such as Cornelis Jacobsz. Delff). On the other hand, there is a tradition that emphasises sensual seduction where food serves as an element of farce. Both approaches – the glorifying and the humorous – may be combined in one image or in a series of images. The first category exhibits many connections with country house poetry in general and the Dutch *hofdicht* in particular; the second is a further development of the peasant satires, carnivalesque traditions and comedies. These are seldom direct links, but relations at a general level. We can distinguish the same categories within the profane kitchen scenes from the first half of the 17th century, where the second - comic - category strongly predominates.

*Kitchen scenes around 1600: high ambitions and amusing artistic rivalry*

Chapter IV, that introduces part II, focuses on the stylistic and iconographic development of kitchen scenes from the Northern Netherlands in the last decade of the 16th century and in the first three decades of the 17th century.

Sections IV.2 and IV.3 concentrate mainly on the kitchen scenes of the ‘late mannerists’: ambitious compositions that were prompted by rivalry at the highest level and that were produced by the most successful history painters of the period, artists with high artistic aspirations such as Abraham Bloemaert, Cornelis van Haarlem, Joachim Wtewael, Pieter Cornelisz. van Rijck, Jeremias van Winghe and Adriaen van Nieulandt. A number of compositions by specialists Cornelis Jacobsz. Delff and Floris van Schooten also belong to this ambitious group. These are compositions that are particularly rich in invention, that do not repeat any existing atelier formulae and were probably intended for a very affluent and undoubtedly educated public, or were sometimes made for the artist’s own use.

It is demonstrated that artistic rivalry was of paramount importance to these ambitious artists; they vied with each other and their forerunners, just as Pieter Pietersz., Maerten van Cleve, Maarten de Vos and Huybrecht Beuckelaer competed in the 16th century with Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer who in their turn tried to outdo their predecessors from antiquity. The new generations of artists who took up the theme from around 1590 intensified and improved the illusory aspects and other means of involving the viewer in the image. The fact that the kitchen scenes by Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer had become very valuable and desirable collectors’ items in the late 16th century and early 17th century was a powerful incentive for these new generations of artists to compete with their predecessors. This is explained in chapter IV.1.

It was the ‘late mannerists’ in particular who around 1600 demonstrated their virtuosity in kitchen tableaux by entering into an amusing rivalry with these illustrious predecessors, as well as with Italian painters of kitchen scenes. They cite motifs from very different sources, which they transposed into their own style by integrating these sources in an artistic and subtle way in a new form: we are dealing here with *aemulatio*, where painters refer deliberately to other masters. The educated public of well-off connoisseurs for whom these paintings were probably intended undoubtedly appreciated such playful references. A separate section is devoted to Emperor Rudolf II, because, as a fervent collector of kitchen scenes, he almost certainly has played a particularly influential role in stimulating this developmental phase of the theme. The artists of the new generation knew many works by Aertsen and Beuckelaer, probably primarily via the above-mentioned collectors (such as Jan Nicquet, Sion Luz, Melchior Wyntgis, Jacob Rauwert, Jacques Razet) who were part of a network of art lovers and will also have been the main audience for this new generation of artists.

Chapter IV.3. addresses such issues as the question of what religious and historical subjects were represented in kitchen scenes, how the repertoire of themes relates to that of kitchen scenes with religious subjects from the 16th century, and which changes took place in the pictorial modes. The first quarter of the 17th century saw a shift in and a renewal of the repertoire of historical subjects: instead of Christ with Martha and Maria, it is now the Meal at Emmaus that is most popular; new themes include the parable of the Great Supper and the history of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony. After a short resurgence in the first quarter of the 17th century, the production of this type of image diminished strongly and almost exclusively kitchens with no religious references were produced. At the end of this sub-chapter, I offer an explanation for this phenomenon in a discussion on the traditionally complex relation between humour and religious truth.

### *New types of images: laid tables and kitchen still-lives*

The subsequent Intermezzo and chapter IV.4. examine how at the start of the 17th century the kitchen still-life partly branched off from the kitchen scene and how this related to the development of the laid tables – the *ontbijtjes* (breakfast pieces) and *banketjes* (banquet pieces).

Previous chapters have shown that painters of food are constantly seeking new means of surprising the audience with increasingly convincing illusions, where the viewer plays a more active role. The drastic innovation that took place when, in the first decade of the 17th century, the first independent kitchen still-lives and laid tables without figures were introduced in the Northern Netherlands by Cornelis Jacobsz. van Delff and Floris van Dijck respectively, is explained here as a logical consequence and an ultimate result of this process. In order to gain insight into the meaning and function of these innovative types of images, this chapter also examines how they relate to previous traditions, and diverse written sources (such as those on the *xenia*) are involved in the discussion.

This chapter demonstrates that the independent laid tables show, as it were, close ups of the rich banquets that feature in the more extensive compositions to which the audience up to then was accustomed: images with merry companies, brothel scenes, kitchen scenes, meals enjoyed by the Civic Guard or idealised scenes of meals. The laid tables often portray an ambience of opulence, with overturned and half-empty glasses and jugs alluding to an exuberant celebration taking place or having taken place shortly before. The viewer is given a strongly magnified image of a banquet with figures, in which he himself now seems to play a more active role than ever before. The innovative step of eliminating the figures completely from the painting must have developed from the realisation that this would reduce the distance of the viewer from the meal and increase the illusionistic effect. The objects and food can then be represented as more true to life and suggest even more vividly to the viewer that the painted meal is intended for him. I demonstrate how Van Dijck and Gillis, shortly after they introduced the independent laid tables, incited competition from painters such as Floris van Schooten, Roelof Koets, Pieter Claesz. and Willem Claesz. Heda.

An important motivation for Delff to develop independent kitchen still-lives was undoubtedly that these could be produced much more quickly and cheaply than his large-scale compositions, which allowed him to respond better to the increased demand for this kind of painting and to serve a broader public. The new types of images of the kitchen still-lives (produced by, among others, Dirck Govertsz., Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp and Harmen van Steenwijck), but also the hunting still-lives that were introduced some time later and the fish still-lives, closely reflect and arise directly from existing pictorial traditions which were familiar to the audience, such as the kitchen scene and the iconography of the elements, the seasons and the months. As happened previously with the earliest independent laid tables, here, too, the figures were omitted to achieve more natural effects and to allow the viewer to play a more active role. While with kitchen scenes the figures determine the context of an image by means of signals and codes, and give it a specific meaning, with kitchen still-lives there is an open iconography, so that they evoke a broader spectrum of possible associations. They were consequently more suitable for a broader and more varied public of buyers and offered this audience the possibility of seeing them as pictorial counterparts of the idealistic descriptions of food in the country house poetry and in particular the genre of the Dutch *hofdicht* that arose almost simultaneously with the kitchen still-life. In that sense, the country house literature must have played a stimulating role in the development of kitchen still-lives and, even more so, in the development some years later of hunting still-lives and some types



of fish still-lives. With their open iconography, these types of images fitted well with the ideology of the country life.

#### *Continuing specialisation and differentiation of specialisms*

In the period from 1615 to 1630, kitchen scenes appear to have been produced increasingly by such specialists as Cornelis Jacobsz. Delff and Floris van Schooten. Chapter IV.5. shows that around 1615-1620 a change gradually took place in the production of kitchen scenes with figures and that, in relation to the large-scale works produced up to that time, not only were the dimensions of the paintings and the number of items represented smaller, but the use of colour, the method of presentation and the themes were also transformed. After some time, they also adopted a smaller format and used more subtle colours and developed new types of images, that, like the laid tables and kitchen still-lives, were partly inspired by Southern Netherlandish examples. I demonstrate that these changes arose as a reaction to an increasingly broad public and a growing demand for less expensive paintings, with the aim of creating a more convincing suggestion of reality. The fact that Delff and – from around 1620 – Van Schooten also painted kitchen scenes in which the iconography was of a more neutral character and without explicit sexual allusions, must equally have been a consequence of the fact that around this time they were aiming to reach an increasingly broad audience.

Chapter V addresses the stylistic and iconographic development of the kitchen scene between approximately 1630 and 1650. The first paragraph examines how motifs and figure types in particular kitchen scenes are related to laid tables with genre types, a type of image that was produced particularly in Utrecht and that closely resembles the older traditions of the iconography of Shrove Tuesday and jesters. This section builds on the discussion in chapter II.B. and again focuses on the question of whether the laid tables with such figure types may have functioned in the recreational context of the festive occasion, or refer to this. I then examine how the new specialism of the peasant kitchen arose in the thirties and was quickly adopted by a large number of artists particularly in Rotterdam and Dordrecht. This is followed by a sketch of developments around 1640-1650, where greater attention is paid to the occurrence of kitchen scenes as pendants and a category of kitchen pieces that included portraits of real people. It is shown here that only a very small group of kitchen scenes with portraits, including family portraits, can be regarded as images of virtuous households (David Teniers, Hendrick Martensz. Sorgh). These images present food in the kitchen in an idealistic light and above all express the desire to live in fruitfulness, abundance and prosperity. These types of images are iconographically most closely related to 16th-century representations of families eating meals and the idealised images of the months and seasons, and they show many similarities with the ideals of the Dutch *hofdicht*. These images, too, serve – albeit in a more subtle way – for amusement. Finally, a brief indication is given of how the ‘kitchen scene’ especially among the *Leiden Fijnschilders* – and spreading from Leiden to many other genre painters around the middle of the century – takes on a completely different character, although retaining many motifs from the previous tradition.

#### *Kitchen scenes and the market: prices, the profile of the public and their place in the home*

To gain insight into how kitchen scenes were received, collected and valued, chapter VI discusses the locations for which these paintings were intended, the values the works represented and who their owners were, based on such sources as 17th-century inventories of household goods in a number of larger cities in the Northern Netherlands. This makes it easier to understand how the paintings functioned in their original context and sheds light on the

frame of reference of the contemporary audience. With this latter purpose in mind, at the end of chapter VI the profile of the public for kitchen scenes is compared with that for farces, jest books and other expressions of 'laughter culture'. The primary aim is to explain those market mechanisms that form the basis of the stylistic and iconographic development of the kitchen scene (and related paintings depicting food), as described in the previous chapters.

This chapter establishes that, certainly from around 1620, an increasingly broad audience existed that surrounded itself with paintings of victuals: kitchen scenes and paintings with food were found among very diverse professional groups. The major share of the owners belonged to a moneyed class of predominantly merchants; members with a humanistic background, such as Arnoldus Buchelius, Aernout van Beresteijn and Theodorus Schrevelius were part of this group or maintained close contacts with them. Many kitchen scenes could be found, however, among those who practised the free professions, craftsmen, shop keepers, painters and art dealers. It is striking that precisely such professions as innkeepers and pie makers and confectioners had a special preference for kitchen scenes and still-lives depicting food: we may assume that professional considerations played a role here.

In addition, it is shown that the valuations of kitchen scenes could vary considerably. At the end of the 16th century and in the course of the 17th century, exorbitant sums were often cited for kitchens by such great names as Aertsen and Beuckelaer. The high appreciation of kitchen scenes by Aertsen, who is foremost among the painters mentioned most frequently in the Amsterdam inventories, endorses the hypothesis proposed previously that 17th-century painters, encouraged by the public for whom they worked, were stimulated to compete with their 16th-century predecessors.

But it is equally striking that certainly from 1600 onwards the Amsterdam art market (and probably that of other cities in the Northern Netherlands) was flooded with cheaper kitchen scenes by artists from the Southern Netherlands, which made it possible for people to purchase kitchen scenes in very diverse price categories. It is demonstrated that the process of development of new types of images after 1600 received a powerful impetus from the influx of immigrants from the Southern Netherlands, which included many painters of food as well as a considerable part of a new audience. Not only was the custom in the Southern Netherlands of surrounding oneself with paintings of different price categories, including kitchen scenes and other images of food, imitated by the local population, this must also have generated a demand for paintings of a higher quality, that were technically more skilful, more life-like and more interesting and attractive in terms of their inventiveness.

This new rivalry must have been an enormous incentive for the local artists to adapt their production methods. Many, primarily Delft and Van Schooten, did so by increasing the specialization and within their specialist field supplying a differentiated range of both relatively rapidly and cheaply produced works that were smaller in size, as well as elaborate and expensive compositions of enormous dimensions. Others, such as Wtewael, Van Rijck and Van Nieulandt focused with their large-scale and obviously expensive compositions on an affluent and elite public. To avoid the market for painted food becoming saturated, many artists generated new demand by surprising the audience with innovative images such as kitchen still-lives, the laid table, the peasant kitchen scene, the hunting still-life and the fish still-life. That many artists were particularly successful in their strategy is apparent from the rich variation of types of images and their different styles, formats, iconography and dimensions, that we come across, often even within one household. This diversity is undoubtedly not only the consequence of the rivalry between artists, but must also have arisen

from a competitiveness among the owners, who enthusiastically tried to outdo one another in the wealth of the artworks they owned. They displayed their kitchen scenes, kitchen still-lives and other images with foodstuffs as a means of expressing their hospitality and to show how well filled their store rooms were.

A further striking finding is that kitchen scenes, as well as other images of victuals, were regularly kept in the kitchens (and other areas where meals were enjoyed) of houses in Leiden, Haarlem and Dordrecht. Although Amsterdam constituted a remarkable exception to this, and kitchen scenes occurred much less frequently in the interior of the kitchen in the North than in Antwerp, this fact was the reason to address in greater depth the question of whether there was a particular connection between the function of kitchen pieces and the kitchens themselves and/or the places where meals were taken. This discussion further endorses the hypothesis proposed earlier that many kitchen scenes served as comic amusement in the recreative context of a celebration, or in any event referred to such an occasion. This context will in many cases have been shaped by the meal, that was taken in a kitchen or parlour, where the comic personages in kitchen scenes or images with laid tables would have transferred their exuberant gaiety to the group of people eating or where painted food generally added lustre to the meal.

Above all, it appears that kitchen scenes and related images of foodstuffs have served as amusement and that they exercised an irresistible attraction for many people as a result of the special ability of the painters to deceive the eye with their painted illusions and to tempt the senses to pleasure. In the competition with their famous predecessors from both antiquity and the 16th century, as well as with their contemporaries, and encouraged by the public, 17th-century artists produced these images featuring victuals, of which the quality, quantity and diversity amaze us even to the present day. The conclusion of this study explains this phenomenon by focusing on the mechanism behind this development, and the impulses that have 'driven' the process. There it is established that the essence of many kitchen scenes is expressed in a nutshell in the poem referred to in the title of this study: 'Taste the fare and chew it with your eyes'.