

## A Taste of the World

I open my eyes slowly as the sun begs me to wake up. The intruding light is not alone in its efforts to reunite me with the world, as a familiar scent drifts into my bedroom and pulls my sense of smell out of its slumber.

The creaking hardwood floors meet me as I walk downstairs. Entering the kitchen, I find my mom at the stove cooking *rghifa*—a traditional Moroccan sweet bread typically enjoyed for breakfast with honey. My dad, who considers it a tragedy to have *rghifa* without Moroccan mint tea (*atay*), stands beside my mom making the essential drink. The smell, stronger now in the kitchen, takes me back to countless summer mornings I spent in Marrakech and El Jadida, the cities where my mother and father grew up respectively.

It was 2012. My happiness was unbothered by the searing heat of the Moroccan summer as I sat amongst my family in my aunt's backyard. Humidity and the steady hum of *Darija*, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, swam through the air. I almost burnt my tongue as my *atay* craving overpowered my will to wait for it to cool.

Even now, as I sit eating breakfast in Parker, Colorado, the culture of my origins surround me like a blanket. It is the reason I could spend hours sitting at a coffee shop with friends or family, the reason family parties are filled with card games and music, the reason I celebrate Ramadan.

“Leena,” my mom says, hinting at me to help clean up, her voice gently interrupts my thoughts. I begin to notice something as I place the containers which lay on the countertop back into the pantry. Yeast from Canada, sugar from Brazil, honey from Argentina— each ingredient comes from a different part of the world. It is as if the entire globe is at my fingertips. I begin to wonder if it would be possible to make this meal, and so many others, without these imports. As I continue cleaning, I ask my mother if she can make *tagine*, a traditional Moroccan meat and sauce dish that I've been craving, for dinner soon. *D'accord, d'accord* she responds.

Until 1956, Morocco was a French colony. As a result, French influence permeated Morocco, and though the country is independent today, the colonization had a lasting effect on the country's culture and customs. When I began studying the French language in middle school, I was shocked to learn that numerous words and phrases I previously understood as Moroccan Arabic were actually French. I continue to study the beautiful language today, as it has allowed me to learn about values and traditions from across the globe. My French classroom has become a space where I feel comfortable discussing events from around the world, even if I am challenged to voice my ideas in a different language.

Like *rghifa* or the Arabic-French language spoken under my roof, my identity is at the intersection of various cultural planes. From the American suburbs I call home, to the vibrant streets of Marrakech, these places, languages, foods, and customs, have come together to create who I am. *Rghifa* wouldn't be what it is without combining imported ingredients from across the globe, and I wouldn't be who I am without the blend of cultures and products that surround me each day.