"Collected food and domestic knowledge in The Gambia, West Africa" by Clare Madge investigates the domestic lives of Gambians in processing, cooking, preserving and storing collected food. Madge breaks her article into five sections: her case study and methodology, the processing and cooking of collected food, the storage and preservation of collected food, the nutritional value of collected food, and her conclusion.

Madge’s case study is of Berrending, a village in Western Division of The Gambia, one of the poorest countries in the world. Berrending is in a sub-Saharan tropical climate with erratic rainfall and a regular “hungry season” (Madge 1994: 282). Berrending consists of 650 individuals living in 40 households. Madge concentrated on eight households for her ethnographic study. The wealth of each household could be determined by visual signs such as cow herd size, concrete or mud walls, and food eaten. There is a gendered division of labor between the three main food collection methods – gathering, fishing, and hunting. Gathering is the most prevalent and is mostly done by the women of the village while hunting and fishing is mostly done by the men.

Berrending villagers typically eat two main meals a day in the early afternoon and early evening. These meals usually consist of a staple of rice and a food sauce or fish. Sometimes millet will replace rice, but not by choice. Often children have leftovers for breakfast while the adults snack on fruit, bread, or bush tea. Food preparation is done by one woman in the household with the help of a younger girl who stays in the fasidoina which often contains the kitchen, toilet, shower, food pounding area, and firewood storage. Sometimes cooking will occur in the rice fields and food pounding often occurs in the central area of the village. Frequently women will supply labor such as transporting headloads of fish in return for said fish. Younger women tend to remember recipes better than older women and wealthier women recall fewer recipes. This is because younger women do the most cooking and wealthier women can purchase food. Some collected food is considered to be of a lower status and is called “monkey food” (Madge 1994:286). Other recipes have come to Berrending through direct diffusion with the Wolof and Abu cultures as well as with European tourists.

Berrending villagers most commonly preserve their food by drying it in the sun, but they also will wood smoke it, preserve it in salt or herbs, can it, or bury it in the ground. A lot of the collected food in Berrending is nutritional including leaf sauces which protect against malaria. NGO and government health workers have failed to recognize the nutritional benefits of most of the collected food in Gambia and are instructing villagers to eat and grow food that is not native to their areas. Also hunting and gathering is associated with low status by Eurocentric standards.

Clare Madge’s investigation of Berrendering's food culture could be considered salvage ethnography as more and more Eurocentric ideals permeate Gambia and the rest of Africa. It is interesting, although not surprising, that the women of Gambia play the larger role in food collection and preparation. This case study will serve as a fascinating comparison to my group project’s topic, Food and Gender in North America.