Abstract:
The Mughal Empire in India enjoyed significant trading links and cultural contact with Central Asia, Iran and Europe. These interactions resulted in cross-pollinations of culinary cultures as well as changes in dietary habits and taste. This cultural contact was also reflected in some of the cookbooks of the period, which played the role of cultural purveyors between the culinary worlds of the Europeans and the Indo-Persian elite. Another significant aspect of these transcultural interactions was the entry and absorption of New World foods: in particular, tomatoes, potatoes and chillies. Culinary interactions took place not only across geographical and cultural zones, but also between closely interacting social groups within the subcontinent, for instance between the Mughals and the Rajputs. The object of my talk will be to examine the manner in which these various culinary interactions and changes took place, and to examine possible theoretical paradigms to better explain and understand these processes. I analyse these themes by looking at some new manuscript sources and adopting interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives.