

Peruvian Cuisine, Food and Politics

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Jornada Peruana, CLS-HSG, University of St. Gallen, March 8th 2013

1. Intro

2. Food Heritage and Development

- Today, to talk about Peruvian food is to talk about “opportunities”
- It is expected that the recognition of Peruvian food within and outside national boundaries will impulse initiatives and policies to boost social improvement and economic development in the country

3. Food Heritagization in Peru

Gastronomic Boom (late 90's – 2005). Native, « traditional », indigenous ingredients in fine-dining settings: All the credit to the chef's inventivity. Cultural aspects of native food and ingredients remained hidden.





Gastronomic Boom (2005 - present). Reversal of this dynamic. The figure of the peasant, or native farmer, was made explicit since considerations on Peruvian food diversity were linked to an entrepreneurial vision connecting traditional food knowledge to food commodities.



« Behind our beloved Creole cuisine (cocina criolla), our chicken grills (pollerías), the neighborhood chifas (“chinese-peruvian” food), the novo-andean restaurants, Arequipa’s picanterías, the anticuchos (beef heart skewers), Peruvian sandwiches, Nikkei cuisine (cuisine made by descendants of Japanese immigrants) or the cebicherías (ceviche restaurants), there exist immense opportunities to create concepts that transcend the local to become Peruvian export products that not only aspire to rub shoulders with concepts already installed globally as pizzerias, burger franchises, sushi bars and taquerías mexicanas, but also aspire to generate enormous both economic and nation Brand benefits » (Acurio, 2006)

Food & Cuisine = Concepts = Cultural commodities founded on representational qualities → Celebration of diversity

Discourse based on the recognition and valorization of multiculturalism

Certainly [the chefs] are the spearhead of this movement, but we must consider that there are many more people and activities involved [...] Peasants are probably the most implicated, and they can also be the more benefited. They are responsible for maintaining the variety and quality of foodstuffs, the thousands of varieties of potato, the sweet potatoes, the corn, the Andean staples, they are responsible of the breeding of alpacas (whose meat is a new ingredient of Peruvian food). **But at the same time, they also need to improve their farming methods to increase productivity and income, while taking care to preserve and develop natural and organic methods. Scientists, universities and research centers have to help with biotechnology and other advancements to fertilize the plants ecologically, to take care of pests, to improve the yield per hectare and, if possible, the taste and the durability of products, all this without chemicals or preservatives [...]** Of course, there will be **thousands of opportunities** for young entrepreneurs who want to work on sea-culture, to engage into organic farming or into forestry, to process healing herbs, to open travel agencies focused on gastronomic tourism and, of course, to open fine-dining restaurants. (Villarán F., 2006, p. 3)

4. Scope and limits of the heritagization of Peruvian food

“Creole cuisine (*cocina criolla*) is full of examples where ingredients from here and from there **suddenly merged in a final and conclusive hug**, which gave rise to all the dishes that constitutes it nowadays” (2006b, p. 22).

- To what extent this inclusive national food heritage project is sustainable and fair?
- “Traditional” aspects of Peruvian food cultures are combined and displayed in commodities that tend to develop in markets more in terms of profitability than on relying on cultural, “ethnic” attributes.

- How to articulate traditional food production with global markets?
- Which part of traditional food systems and local knowledge will last during the making of an exportable Peruvian culinary system?
- What would be the main consequences on rural population's food systems, agricultural landscapes and nutrition patterns?

- Concepts such as food security, food sovereignty and food justice are not enough present in the food politics agenda
- Goals of “social inclusion” highlighted by the articulation between cuisine, food and politics will not be reached without a more inclusive narrative about the local food system.

THANKS