The mixture of ingredients
ashed white carrot has recently been gastronomically approved by famous chefs on Parisian tables, while in Brussels, at European technocrats’ parties, trays with shrimp pie pass around, supplied by anonymous Brazilian cooks. The re-editions of pioneering books by Luís da Câmara Cascudo and Eduardo Frieiro and internationally awarded publications like “A Formação da Culinária Brasileira” (The Formation of Brazilian Cuisine) by SENAC (National Commercial Training Service) are evidence that Brazilian cuisine is claiming its place in the culinary world.

In fact, in the 19th Century, European menus already featured consommés à la tapioca1 (broths thickened with little manioc flour balls) and brésiliennes (pies or ice creams sprinkled with Brazil nut). Not to mention the first centuries of the colonial period, when Brazilian land was the leader on food globalization – if we consider the exchange not only between America and Europe, but with Asia and Africa as well. By Portuguese hands, manioc becomes a basic ingredient in Africa, cashew nuts become familiar in the curries2 of India, sweet potato is introduced in the Japanese island of Kyushu, while cornbread from Minho takes the lead in replacing European cereals for corn flour, such as the polenta of Veneto. Above all, the Portuguese benefited Brazilian shores with coconut trees, banana trees, mango trees, jack trees, rose apple trees, pepper trees, oil palms as well as the raising of cattle and poultry, not only European, but also helmeted guineafowl and zebu.

Brazilian cuisine is hybrid in its origin and integrates, in this continuous mixture, ingredients and preparations that are not only Portuguese and indigenous, but also African and Asian. As such, it has developed since the beginning as one of the most globalized ones, involving all regions and social levels, without compromising its originality in comparison to the most well known cuisines of the Americas, those of Mexico and Peru.

No doubt those enjoy greater fame because they are more structured cultures and, therefore, better described by the chroniclers of the conquest period. Bernardino de Sahagún and Bernal Díaz del Castillo praise the riches of the indigenous markets and the splendor of the Montezuma feasts, with products like chocolate. Even the Flemish tapestries enthroned the turkey and the llama, “the lamb of the Andes”, in their prestigious decoration. In addition, Spanish conquerors organized more systematically the transfer of their agriculture and cattle raising to the New World. The grand banquet organized in 1538 by the conquistador Hernán Cortés, in the capital of New Spain, clearly demonstrates this self-sufficiency. At that time, the first tavern in Spanish style was already open for business. Some time later, large convents for women elaborated sophisticated recipe collections in order to host their male visitors.

In comparison, the Portuguese-Brazilian cuisine seems modest and weak. If in Spain the editorial movement of cooking books was as precocious and abundant as in Italy or Flanders, in Portugal it was not until 1680 that Domingos Rodrigues published Arte de Cozinha (Art of Cooking) and Lucas Rigaud his Cozinheiro Moderno (Modern Cook), the only two cookbooks published during the colonial period. If corn deserves, in paintings and sculptures, an Eucharistic status of holy bread given by the Spanish Jesuits, manioc has never been given any prestige in the iconog-

1 Broth made from tapioca, a grainy starch extracted from manioc.
2 Indian flavoring made from a mixture of several spices, mainly saffron.
raphy and is relegated almost as a diabolic root to foment indolence. General works that explore the edibility of Brazil’s plentiful fauna and flora, such as the *Tratado Descritivo do Brasil* (Descriptive Treaty of Brazil - 1587) by Gabriel Soares de Souza, or the *Diálogos das Grandezas do Brasil* (Dialogues of Brazil’s Grandeur - 1618) by Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão, are almost unknown or still in manuscript. This disregard can be attributed to the infamous secrecy policy, since it was not convenient for the Portuguese Crown to unveil even more the rich nutritious potential of the Brazilian *capitanias* (first administrative regions) which were conveyed in publications by travelers and in Jesuits’ letters. The strategic value of manioc – which supplied cheap and healthy provisions for soldiers and slaves – should not be scattered to the wind. Another possible explanation is that Portugal paid more attention to the spices and fruits from the East Indies – permitting the *Colóquios dos Simples e Drogas da Índia* (Colloquia of the Simples and Drugs of India - 1563), by Garcia da Orta, to be printed in Goa, India. Nothing similar is published about the Portuguese-Brazilian cuisine.

This lesser visibility is a result, in part, of its own creation process: slow and diffuse, with less influence from the elite and more popular participation – notably female, African and even indigenous. In *Grandeza e Abastança de Lisboa em 1552* (Lisbon’s Splendor and Abundance in 1552), João Brandão presents his city as an enormous food court. Brandão calculates, besides the taverniers, pastrymen, butchers and confectioners, “five hundred ovens to bake bread and one thousand women that earn a living selling baked bread and as bakers, on their own or by commission”, and hundreds of women who were couscous makers, almond cake makers and animal viscera saleswomen. Other women sold fresh cheese, butter, vermicelli, broad beans and cooked plums, portions of fried fish, duck, hare and other game, shrimps and snails, *alféloas, gergilada, pinhoada*, preserved fruits, quince and orange marmalades to people who were going to India and Guinea, or roasted sardines by the Ribeira docks. Clean, rich and with their “chains around their necks, jewelry, bracelets around their arms”, many of them were African, slaves or freedwomen, announcing the black women of Brazil, carrying their baking trays.

In so many small ships leaving the docks in the north of Portugal for the African and Brazilian coasts, the sailors improvised a good por-
tion of the provisions. Foreign eaters, like the Venetian Cadamosto (1455) or the Flemish Eustache Delafosse (1479), proudly describe how they, in this manner, came to taste palm wine, ostrich egg, turtle meat cut and salted as bacon, or even elephant meat which was much less tasty. While the sailors of the East Indies Company ate in groups of seven from the same tub, with food strictly controlled, Portuguese ships sailed overloaded with a great variety of delicacies, and each one cooked their own food to their own taste, although they were inclined to share. On board, they spent their time fishing; on land, hunting or gathering. This gluttony – and the citric fruits against scurvy – explains the lower death rate on Portuguese ships.

Since the beginning of the discoveries, the Portuguese eating habits have already been characterized by its rare eclecticism, balanced with products from the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds. With high and low lands, different climates, many rivers and the sea at a short range, the Portuguese combined agriculture, shepherding and fishing with hunting and gathering. In their kitchen, they alternate between stews, guisados\(^5\) and roasteds, ovens and grills, pork fat, olive oil, vegetable oils and butter. They compensate the expensive cereals with nuts, legumes and roots, which are less expensive. Very few European diets include so many greens, collard greens, pumpkins, turnips and onions. Their seasonings mix precious spices like saffron and cloves with garlic, coriander, fennel, herbs and other spices gathered in the fields. Their fruit vary from the Nordic delicacy of apples, pears and cherries to the meridian exuberance of figs, melons, pomegranates and almonds. They do not reject any meat. They are noted for the ritual killing of pork and the sausage making of *sarrabulho* and *chorizos*. Although they appreciate shoats, lambs and young goats, they rarely eat calf and veal. Maybe because they use their cattle more for traction and dairy products. From the sea, no fish is unwanted, from tuna to sardines – including all mussels. With this “water gastronomy”, they are the first to replace the carnivorous excesses of the Middle Ages with the new fish diet of the Modern Age.

Furthermore, with the influence of the Middle East through the presence of Arabs and Jews, they become familiar with rice, sweetened or fried in the pan, with flaky dough and fruit preserves in honey and sugar, making use of almost insipid products like citron and quince. The quick re-conquest facilitated the internal circulation and the markets, with the Portuguese being the first merchants to negotiate large loads of food instead of dedicating themselves to textiles. In trade with Northern Europe, they supplied dried fruits, citric fruits and wines, which they exchanged for dried herring from the North Sea, bacon and Flemish cheese, which although with less flavor, can be better preserved during long trips.

Due to this indiscriminate gluttony, the omnivorous Portuguese were more prepared for the unknown gastronomic adventures through the new worlds. For their survival, but also out of curiosity, they tasted all edible and similar products, which were susceptible to their cooking techniques. They were not satisfied with the substitutes for the most appreciated food in Portugal. They also dared to try out novelties, without any guilt over such a paradisiacal abundance, which was almost sinful.

Not everyone appreciated the local delicacies. The Marquis of Lavradio complained, as soon

\(^5\) Stew prepared by sautéing the ingredients.
as he arrived, in 1768, about the food of the land “unbearable squirting cucumbers”. The illustrious Luís dos Santos Vilhena from Bahia despises the “boring viandas” like mocotós, carurus, vatapás, mush, pamonha, canjica, acaçá, acarajé, bobó, coconut rice, coconut bean, polenta, rice or corn flour sponge cake, sugar cane sticks, sweets of infinite types”. Nevertheless, his list reveals a first inventory of the Brazilian cuisine. The beverages are even worse: “a dirty water made with honey, and certain mixtures, called aluá, which replaces the lemonade for the Negroes”.

Fortunately there is no lack of literate observers like Friar Cristóvão de Lisboa in História dos Animais e Árvores do Maranhão (History of the Animals and the Trees of Maranhão - 1627), the Saxon soldier Zacharias Wagener with his Zoobiblion, Livro de Animais do Brasil (Zoobiblion, Book of the Animals of Brazil - c.1634-1641) or the Jesuit João Daniel in Tesouro Descoberto no Máximo Rio Amazonas (Treasure Discovered in the Maximum of the Amazon River – around 1758-1776), that registers the mouth-watering baking skills of extracting the most from manioc for fine flours, carimã cakes and beijus. Wines and liquors are extracted from cashews, pineapples and genipap. Passion fruit juice in vinegar goes well with fish, in a recipe recovered four centuries later by chefs from Pernambuco. Long-legged birds with good white meat are found in such quantities as the capons and as exquisite as the partridges. The blue land crab could almost be compared to the dazha, a crab praised by Chinese poets and painters. Butter is made from manatees’ fat, “each one making thirty or more pots, and a lot of oil from the tail”, and from the meat, which is similar to pork, “sausages and chorizos are made, and salpresos taste like the best ham of Lamego” – these

4 Any type of food or snacks.

5 Meats conserved in salt.
manatee sausages are even sent to Portugal. Friar Cristóvão displays an uncommon sense in distinguishing between the eating preferences of native Indians and Africans, whom he considers trustworthy partners in these gustatory experiences. The Negroes, for example, appreciate the yoroti, a type of pigeon of the woods that, like the pigeons of the old continent, are faithful to their companions for their entire lives. Because of the bird’s behavior, the Africans fed them to their wives “in order for them not to talk to other men”.

Exiled in his Portuguese prison, the Jesuit Daniel dreams of tacacá, “a bit of water thickened on the fire with carimã flour, with streaks of tucupi and the whet of the malagueta”, açaí, maniçoba, “better than collard greens stew” and the passion fruit jelly that is swallowed “like someone eating coddled eggs”. Inside the Brazilian oranges “the largest European would be loose if inside the Brazilian ones”. Cashew nuts, which “when roasted, put to shame European chestnuts”, are mixed with vegetables or “with almonds and candies, covering the roasted ones with sugar”. During the hinterland’s harvest, the inhabitants “feast” on small turtles that have barely left the egg. “When roasted they are just like torresmos, almost as good as the pork ones. A few months old, about 25 centimeters big or more, cut in the chest for cleaning and filling with spices, vinegar, onions and roasted, they are admirable”. From each large turtle, they can make “seven or more different dishes: first, the sarapatel, second, the sarrabulho, third, the roasted breast, fourth, the fricassé, fifth, the meat and vegetables stew, sixth, the soup, seventh, the rice. These are the most usual ones, but in private homes they just stew the meat. If it is one of the big ones, just one is enough to feed a whole community”. Like any Portuguese, he loves egg yolks very much, and, especially, turtle eggs are “almost all yolk, with a small circle of egg white, great for making ovos moles”.

The Brazilian ingredients are valued in these nostalgic recollections, which seem to praise them in the same way that Marcel Proust’s words celebrated the Madeleine of the French sweet shops. In the absence of recipes and cookbooks, abundant colonial documentation can recover the history of Portuguese-Brazilian cooking. These texts are essential to boost its self-esteem, which is far too low, asphyxiated by the foreign character of the gastronomic temples of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro or guilt-ridden under the weight of hunger and malnutrition.

Eddy Stols
Doctor in History,
Catholic University of Leuven, Brussels.

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