

Food History: different approaches - Brazil and Portugal

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Banquets as a space for consolidating national identity. Brazil (1889-1930).

In my current study I analyse formal meals as occasions where politicians divulged their political actions during the Republican period in Brazil (1899-1930). This presentation approaches these developments by looking at the menus gathered by Brazilian politicians during the years 1889-1930, for example: Epitácio Pessoa (President of the Republic, 1919-1922), and Washington Luís Pereira de Sousa (President of the Republic, 1926-1930), among others politicians. Menus Collections, photographs, and newspaper commentaries are the documents used for analysing the food practices in this political period. These documents reveal the meal choices, the type and motivation for the reunions, the lists of guests, as well as the sitting arrangement following the protocol. Unfortunately, the staff that prepared or served the meals are never mentioned, but in some cases, it is possible to identify the name of the orchestra regent. Another essential ingredient in the analysis of food practices is to observe how culinary and diplomacy walk hand-in-hand during this period of consolidation of the Republic in Brazil. In other words, the construction of a national identity that would pass through food, as a cultural dimension of all people. This is an interesting exercise because there are few studies that consider this issue in Brazil. This study recognizes the menus as an important instrument to apprehend aspects the sociability, food practices and political network during the Republican period in Brazil (1899-1930).

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Four banquets in six days - the visit of the Brazilian President Café Filho to Portugal in 1955

In April 1955, the President of Brazil João Café Filho, made a State visit to Portugal, despite the political instability and the serious economic crisis that Brazil was going through. Café Filho insisted on the importance of his visit to Portugal and thus, the trip was approved by the Brazilian Senate, with the condition of reducing the expenses to the minimum necessary. This frugality revealed to be in deep contrast with the pomp and circumstance which marked his visit to Portugal namely, and as I will present in this communication, with the four banquets that occurred during this six-day visit of State.

Banquets are key moments of commensality and political sociability and the food served is a vehicle for identity representations, with a gastronomic, political, ideological, and symbolic dimension. For the present analysis of the four banquets, I used the menus as the main source, crossing this information with other sources as newspapers, magazines, and different types of documents concerning these events, as guest lists, invitations, protocol correspondence and table sitting arrangements. I will focus on these banquets as examples of the use of the emerging Portuguese cuisine as a political and ideological statement, in a display of nationalism by the

authoritarian political power that ruled the country those days.