A New Culinary Culture in Colombia: Equality and Identity in the Interpretation of Traditional Cuisines

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Abstract

Cooking responds to this double entendre of a past that is collected, interpreted and then projected on to a present that then overcomes it. New food trends necessarily imply questions about social and cultural equality and identity. That which is novel is exciting and refreshing; it implies learning and broadening boundaries, which are often geographical and social and always cultural. However, the process also entails the inherent challenge to define and answer what is lost and valued in a new scenario and to understand to what purpose. Some categories that have been used to understand such historical processes of cultural production in social systems are class, race, ethnicity and gender, as well as concepts associated with territory, differentiation, integration and democratization, authenticity and exoticization.

My purpose in conducting an analytical approach to the development of the gastronomical and culinary subject in Colombia and of building a diagnostic map of it, responds to the wish to contribute to the understanding of the *function* of food research in solving specific questions of inequality, estrangement, and deracination, as well as understanding new senses of belonging and appropriation that emerge because of urban reconfigurations.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I received a B.A. in Philosophy from Universidad Nacional de Colombia in 2003, a Diploma in Culinary Arts in 2004 from Fundación Universitaria Andina, and an M.A. in Sociocultural Anthropology form Cornell University in 2011. I have dedicated my career to Food Studies, starting with scholarly work but also including consultancy, editorial work and publishing. I have advised and coordinated projects of implementation of The Public Policy for the Knowledge, Safeguarding and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia (adopted by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia in 2012), and I recently published a book, *Sabor de casa: doce maneras de hacer cocina colombiana y la historia de sus protagonistas –Taste of Home: Twelve Ways of Doing Colombian Cuisine and the History of their Protagonists–*(Intermedio Editores, 2017), with the stories and visions of fourteen Colombian chefs who have lead the revitalization of Colombian cuisine in the last twenty years.

In short, I have concentrated my professional efforts in the understanding and visualization of distinct culinary practices in a contemporary context. All this from a pragmatist vision of theories of knowledge, based on the establishment of reflections, relations and conclusions that can have a concrete use. I am currently working on the development of a digital platform called "The power of cuisine" – an analytic map of the culinary and food scene in Colombia that makes available relevant information from different sectors. My intention is to bring to light significant debates for the field of food studies in order to help develop a solid repository of culinary knowledge along with a conceptual and methodological base through which to articulate informative and comprehensive plans of culinary action. Such a platform could be replicated in different cities as a framework for sustainable projects that take advantage of the potential of cuisine to be the powerful tool it can be in conflict resolution processes.

To my son Jerónimo

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PREFACE

"The gastronome is neither imprisoned by tradition nor impressed by novelty". "Periods of gastronomical changes are inevitably also periods of gastronomical *polemics*. When there are no polemics, there is no experimentation, since controversy does not arise if there is no tension between tradition and invention, or between on the contrary invention and academicism" (Revel 1982: 149, 155).

This research project is about cuisine[1] and identity, ethnicity and inequality in Colombia. I study different interpretations of Colombian culinary traditions and the discourses that are weaved from them, not necessarily as part of the same network but rather as part of the same cultural umbrella and national reality, looking at the *what to do* and *how to* protect these traditions in the torrent of innovating trends. The questions I ask are why should we protect these traditions in the current torrent of innovating trends? And how? How is the evolution of local cuisines being fostered and by whom?

In its most formal definition, tradition is understood as "a way of thinking, behaving or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family society, etc. for a long time" and as a particular set of stories and beliefs (MW 2016: a). Correspondingly, innovation is defined as "the act or process of introducing new ideas, devices or methods" or the ideas, devices, or methods in themselves (MW 2016: b). That which is novel is exciting and refreshing; it implies learning and broadening boundaries, which are often geographical and always cultural. However, the process also entails the inherent challenge to define and answer what is lost and valued in a new scenario and to understand to what end. These specific questions of *what to do* and *how to act* poses in essence an issue of value codes and normative

[1] I rely on the understanding of cuisine as set of practices resulted from both the knowing of how to prepare and use certain foods and the logic under which this knowledge is applied. I use Priscilla Ferguson's definition of the term cuisine as "the properly cultural construct that systematizes culinary practices and transmutes the spontaneous culinary gesture into a stable cultural code. Cuisine, like dining, turns the private into the public, the singular into the collective, the material into the cultural" (Ferguson 2004: 3). What I herein call culinary knowledge, is a composite of the skill, the expertise—a technique—, and of the logic underlying it, that change from place to place and which in turn account for the actual differences between one cuisine and the other.

frameworks, evidenced in daily decisions regarding food, that necessarily imply questions about individual and collective definitions of the self and about social and cultural cohesion or exclusion.

Therefore, my purpose in conducting an analytical approach to the development of the gastronomical and culinary subject in Colombia and of building a diagnostic map of it, responds to the wish to contribute to the understanding of the function of the anthropological perspective and an interdisciplinary approach in solving specific questions of inequality, estrangement, and deracination, as well as understanding new senses of belonging and appropriation that emerge because of urban reconfigurations. As the set of practices that signify sociocultural, economic and political aspects of food production, processing and consumption food helps to construct senses of belonging. Within that universe, cooking is one of the key practices that helps to define who we are individually and collectively, serving as a vessel of contrasting dimensions of human life: the symbolic and the material, the past and the present, the comprehensive and the bounded, the communal and the singular, the social and the discrete. Some categories that have been used to understand these historical processes of social systems of cohesion and differentiation are class, race, ethnicity and gender, as well as concepts associated with differentiation, integration, territory, authenticity and exoticization.

The constant tension between what changes and what remains is the base of human action and of what we call culture. Change is a sign of movement, of learning and of production of knowledge, and transformation in the practices and traditions is a continuous of cultural production. On the other hand, the condition for communities to

persist, beyond any generational, economic or socio-political transformation, is precisely permanence of certain practices and customs. This same tension occurs and defines what is happening in the culinary realm with food movements and trends. Cooking synthetizes the tension between a past that is interpreted in the present, but that is also surpassed by the present. Vanguard chefs, professional cooks, traditional cooks, restauranteurs, entrepreneurs, researchers, managers, officers and operators, and the communities as such, are all part of this process that takes place in different scenarios and in the multiple interpretations each diner has when tasting a dish or when conceiving it, researching it, and interacting with any version of traditional cuisines.

I use as a starting point the fact that an important expansion of cultural and political initiatives in relation to food practices has been occurring for the past four decades. We see this reflected in the growing interest on the subject by governmental entities, private organizations and citizen groups: in the growth of the food and beverage industry with the increasing opening of different types of restaurants, cooking schools, stores specializing in local and foreign ingredients; in the emergence of television shows and publication of specialized magazines and books, and in the execution of thematic festivals and events.

Some of the most renowned culinary activities currently include ‘fusion’ cuisine, and ways of preparing and consuming food based on the sustainable organic, local and home-style approaches. There are also movements that coincide with these trends or align themselves with it, including efforts by local producers who generate alternative agriculture practices and production chain modalities to those of monocrops and agro

industrial methods, in an effort to gain greater control over what they produce and is consumed.

Latin America is not a stranger to this phenomenon. As explained by historian and food researcher, José Rafael Lovera:

> During the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, the continental panorama did not change significantly. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the cooking profession flourished in Europe – particularly in France – and those practicing it gained considerable social prestige and a high economic status which soon had an influence on South America. It was mainly during the 1970s that the expansion of mass communication and the consequent globalization phenomenon brought about the emergence of many culinary vocations –especially of men. Young men could explain to their parents that the culinary profession was neither only for women nor socially unacceptable at the international level. This is how the traditional conception of male cooks changed and an era of professionalization began, with the creation of cooking schools in the main South American cities (Lovera 2005: 80).[2]

Food and cooking practices are embedded in daily life through public and private spaces such as restaurants, communal meals, domestic routines, etc. However, these daily expressions are reinforced, transformed, recreated or projected by broader contextual events such as public policy, social movements and major cultural events

[2] Although in Colombia the phenomenon of professionalization of cooking has been led by men, as pointed out by Lovera, it should be noted that participation of women in this phenomenon and in some culinary activities is considerably and probably greater than in other countries of Latin America, Europe and the United States. This has always been the case in the home environment and in general in Colombian traditional cuisine.

that emphasize different dimensions of food. For instance, there has been an historical tendency in The United States to focus on programs of food nutrition, food assistance, food regulation and farming, mainly coming from The Food and Drug Administration—FDA—and The Unites States Department of Agriculture—USDA—. Nonetheless, there are recent initiatives with a more comprehensive approach such as the healthy school lunch program or the vegetables garden project (promoted by Michelle Obama, wife of the former president Barack Obama), that mirrors food debates and initiatives taking place nowadays worldwide.

Apart from the leading role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations—FAO—, probably the biggest movement pointing in that direction today is The Slow Food International Movement that aims to preserve biodiversity and gastronomic traditions, and to promote food and taste education, linking the act of producing with the act of eating—and all the stages in between—.[3]

On the other hand, in many countries in Europe there has been and increasing interest in creating or reforming food policy in favor of the growth of sustainable food and promoting healthier eating habits through new agricultural methods, educational programs and better information about food production. As Nancy Milio describes in her analysis of food and nutrition policy in Europe, in countries like Finland "the structural changes in farm and food production are largely the result of new political and economic realities both in Finland and internationally, resulting in the

[3] Today Slow Food International has around 10.000 arks of taste products, 10.000 good gardens in Africa, 10.000 local groups, 100.000 members and a University of Gastronomic Sciences opened in Pollenzo, Italy in 2004 (Slow Food, a.)

Government focusing on fiscal efficiency, decentralization and a more competitive, consumer-oriented market. This new environment is creating pressures to reduce surplus animal fat production and to expand markets in new foods for Finns and other Europeans who, for reasons of demography, health or working or living arrangements, demand new and sometimes healthier foods" (Milio, 1998: abs).

In France, there is an interesting leading initiative with regard to both the cultural and the political economy aspect of food. In 1992 French politician and ex-ministry of agriculture Stéphane Le Foll presented in the Council of Ministers the four axes of a new food policy that is in process of implementation since then. These for axes are social justice through the access to sufficient, secure and nutritive food; proper education to children and young; food waste reduction and responsible and ecologic agriculture.

Food movements in Latin America reflect these global trends and the main angles from which the questions are being addressed. Many countries in this part of the world are working toward the same direction than Colombia is, focusing around biodiversity and culinary heritage as an essential starting point for the development of local cuisines. México and Perú are leading countries in preserving their culinary culture and promoting gastronomic tourism. There are also some efforts to build a food network across countries, through the exchange of relevant information, the organization of seminars, meetings, conferences, gastronomic fairs and food markets, and the recent creation of an intergovernmental initiative of cooperation called Ibercocinas - Tradition and Innovation, created to rescue and promote traditional Latin

American regional cuisines and to cultivate culinary innovation and cultural tourism.[4]

In spite of this expansion, the fact that aspects of daily life and routine habits such as cooking and eating have not historically constituted a priority in academic or research interests, makes understanding their structural function in social life a decisive component of an informed analysis in sociocultural studies.[5] As we will see, food research is becoming an important field to understand questions of localization, assimilation and knowledge (Murcott, Belasco and Jackson 2013; Miller and Deutsch 2009). In its capacity to combine the study of a given social system based on the analysis of the daily specifics, but that highlights and concentrates in the connections between different locations, spaces, sources of knowledge and experiences, field work is an important methodological tool in this kind of research (Monaghan and Just 2000: 26; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

But the research process as such is not a mechanical and evident process. There are transversal principles in any research (ethical and procedural), but each new study subject and its methodology is defined by what a community, a specific subject or a series of events determine. Research focuses on a question aimed at solving a problem. The main objective of a research project is to expose a problem and provide

[4] The initiative was approved in the 24th Iberoamerican Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Veracruz, México in December, 2014 (it is constituted by six countries: México, Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay, Chile and Perú and by the Iberoamerican General Secretariat -SEGIB-).

[5] Thinking about the contribution of food studies to understanding human behavior, and its use in the work of other areas of discipline, this focus also provides a methodological tool and a channel to discover relevant difficulties and issues to which one could not easily arrive directly: migration processes, assimilation, resistance, understanding of individual, community, regional, national identities; and also facts symbolized, channeled, molded and modified by food and cooking: emotions, fears, anxieties, ways of being and specific moments and locations, as well as transcendent in punctual events (Miller and Deutsch 2009: 8-9).

guidelines to its possible solution or understanding suggesting a specific methodology. (Boot, Colomb and Williams 2008: 51-54). This applies both to "practical" and "theoretical" problems because they all have the same nature in terms of the tension, conflict, disjunction, or controversy on which they are based. In the case of practical problems, the conditions are always the state of things, while in the case of theoretical, the condition is an expression of lack of knowledge or understanding. In the former, the cost is a negative result (a broad range of undesirable consequences that range between minor damages and real social and economic tragedies). Regarding theoretical problems, one has a question that might lead to a more significant or crucial one (Boot, Colomb and Williams 2008: 54-55, 57-62).

The question that motivates this research is more of a theoretical nature, since it deals with identity characteristics and ways of belonging, but is important in practical terms because understanding these meanings implies deciphering motivations, communications codes and expectations that are potentially related to strategies of reconnection and creation of projects with common goals. For this reason, the first hypothesis I base on, is the idea of that through the analysis of the sociocultural and economic aspects of food production and consumption, social scientists seek to understand the defining aspects of human behavior and of the social nature of a community. Practices around food serve the individual, and collectively, as a means for a society to express its own values, to exert processes of resistance, appropriation, assimilation and mixture. As Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) argue when discussing the idea of Culinary Capital, people use food and foodways to reinforce but also to question and to undermine social norms. To approve and reproduce those

norms, and to fight back as well. This conversation supposes to use and to understand food in all its richness and complexity instead of as a self-evident symbol that equates purchasing power with social status, and education with taste, enjoyment and agency.

Production, consumption and exchange of food and of culinary knowledge, can serve as processes to achieve common interests, operating as effective systems of communication that aids place making (Dusselier 2002: 150). As I will show, place making consists in the construction of a space in terms of the cultural features and sociopolitical structures that define a given community, that mingle with ecological aspects to define a specific place. Flows of people and goods can shape food identity and generate ideas of liberation from previous restraints and of empowerment – especially when displacement and reterritorialization has occurred – (Dusselier 2002:138; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). More importantly, when these flows take place, people tend to think about who they are in relation to others. Multiple voices of actors and social groups coexist within a single community, and the question of how to reconcile this multiplicity and understand it in terms of historical process for which certain cultural construction become 'natural' values and norms emerges (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 6, 115).

Multiplicity, plurality and indeterminacy are possible not only in time but in space and locality: "precisely because space is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded in material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed" (Massey 2005: 9). In the same way places are not bound, culinary knowledge is not a fixed and self-contained construct and it is always in process of decipherment

and change. Subsequently, neither are local cuisines. Thinking of local practices as a political defense against the foreign, the global – or inversely as an imitation of it – would suppose a reductionist, essentialist posture (Massey 1995; 2005).

These considerations serve as a context to establish the analytical perspective I propose in this research. Arising from the possibility to think about cultural local constructs with complex, and even contradictory, social codes, I address specific discussions about authenticity and exoticization, assuming that the former may not only imply practices of differentiation and construction of a cultural product through an external perspective, but also growth, appropriation and horizontality. And that the latter may not only be associated with instrumentalization of marginalized groups' knowledge – through idealization or commodification –, but with actual practices and a discourse based on vividly experiences that supposes a mixture of attitudes and contributions, that have the capacity to bring different social groups closer together.

To understand the construction of senses of belonging entailed in these flows – and the rural and urban communal dynamics and social expectations they imply, I find it particularly useful the anthropological and sociological approach according to which the social meaning of food and cuisine is comprehensible through a combination of a structuralist analysis and the observation of everyday life expressions (Miller and Deutsch 2009; Johnston and Baumann 2007; Warde and Martens 2000; Fine 1996). I endeavor to do that through the examination of different events and discourses, that are mainly defining the culinary scene in Colombia. On the one hand, the nature of a particular set of restaurants and of their chefs-owners' projects in relation to Colombian cuisine. On the other, the institutional understanding of cuisine is exposed

in policy and normative documents about Colombian traditional culinary knowledge and Colombian gastronomy.

Generally speaking, as some scholars have noted, some of these significant aspects of social and cultural life in relation to foodways can be seen in restaurants because they are public social spaces, that embrace different forms of exchange and modes of production and portray the symbolism of consumption in daily life (Beriss and Sutton 2007; Wright and Ramson 2005; Warde and Martens 2001). Although recently restaurants have been defined by many as spaces that contribute to the homogenization of culture in the context of globalization, they have also played an important role in reaffirming and reconfiguring the local (Beriss and Sutton 2007:1). In so doing, they play a significant role in the process of creation and transformation of national and regional cuisines and of new articulations with indigenous cuisines. Culinary expressions in the context of restaurants show that cuisines and food practices are dynamic processes subjected to change and recreation (Watson 1997).

On the other hand, as various authors have started to observe, policy work, designates a particular field of activity with the specific purpose of describing a program or "state of affairs", but also to describe what governments achieve and aim to achieve in terms of their political action plans. Even when the policies and policy making as a whole are increasingly becoming preeminent as organizing principles of societies, there is not a critical approach to them precisely because of their supposedly formal nature: "typically, 'policy' is represented as something that is both neutral and rational: a mere tool that serves to unite means and ends or bridge the gap between goals and their execution – in short, a legal-rational way of getting things done"

(Wedel et al. 2005: 37). However, even if as a rational tool, policies correspond to a certain kind of "instrumental reason" and subsequently they imply dynamics of power that need to be analyzed and observed: "while policies may be clothed in neutral language – their ostensible purpose is merely to promote efficiency or effectiveness – they are fundamentally political" (Wedel et.al, 2005: 2, 34, 37. Also see Shore and Wright 1997: 4). They are about how things ought to be done, so thet do have an agenda. What is also interesting is that they have quite a synthetic power, because of their capacity to connect disparate actors, playing an essential – even if indirect – role in shaping collective ways of thinking; a shared identity (Wedel et.al 2005: 31. Also see Shore and Wright 1997: 4-5). In a way, they are becoming an institutionalized methodology and structure to define, determine and follow up ways of political action and social behavior, because even if through constraining prescriptions, they make explicit what might have been implicit beliefs and practices. They are in short a "social, cultural and political construct" (Wedel and Feldman 2005: 1).

To address some of the complexities generated by food itself, thanks to its symbolic power and corresponding capacity to connect defining abstract categories with concrete action principles in specific cultural contexts, I find it relevant and useful to rely on a broader framework that harmonizes with this quality of food, in terms of the way such a framework articulates theory and practice to respond to both the question of how the past is updated into the present in interpretations of traditional knowledge, and the discussion on how ideas are enacted. My perspective is then based on some of the theses of practical philosophy, specifically pragmatism, and in postures of anthropology and sociology that coincide or resonate with the pragmatic

perspective through their own categories of analysis and methodological tools.

The basic principle of these theories is that social and humanist knowledge may be read and overall understood in concrete practices; that theory and practice go hand in hand to revolve around experience and in a way that critical studies can be tangible; that thinking does not mean the absence of action and doing does not mean the absence of thinking. William James and George H. Mead establish as principles of action only those that work in practical life; hypothesis whose credibility does not necessarily come from proving an intellectual logical construct but on the fact that concepts and interpretations of activities are alive and operating, thanks to a specific relation to a community that uses them in effective practices because they are actually believed but people (James 2009).

One way of bringing these theses to the culinary universe is through studies on material culture of pragmatic origin, such as those of Richard Sennett, in his research about how different social groups give meaning to material objects and trades. He suggests a reconciliation between theory and practice and between producer and consumer, through a more comprehensive and organic vision of artisanal and technical trades, and of culture as a set of daily practices, not static representations (Sennett 2007, 2008). Consequently, I complement my analysis with the considerations of Colombian anthropologists and researchers who argue that each regional cuisine is unique insofar as it uses local technology and materials and accessories that belong to a specific habitat with specific eco-environmental and cultural conditions (Illera 2012; Sánchez and Sánchez 2012; Estrada 2003).

Finally, I find it necessary to address the relationship between culinary

traditions and new trends, and the sense of "belonging" in discussions about cultural production and consumption (Mac Cannell 2008; Munasingue 2001; Bourdieu 1984), and the idea of 'culinary ideologies' in the process of building a local/national cuisine (Appadurai 2008, 1986; Bestor 2004; Bourdieu 1984; Sánchez, n.d.). I will do that addressing conversations about local debates with reflections on similar phenomena in other geographical and historical contexts. The development of new culinary techniques and food habits, and the creation of a cuisine in Colombia, is a synthesis of local food knowledge based on, and through which, cultural and social meaning of a greater scope is built. In addition to the aforementioned theories, this project is therefore theoretically based on existing specialized literature on cooking and food, from the anthropological perspective and related disciplines such as sociology, social psychology and the philosophy of taste.

In Chapter one, I present a summary of the work made for major scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences, about the relation between food and meaning. Also, a brief recount of significant facts in the history of Latin American and Colombian cuisines, and an overview of the main debates I will address in the following chapters.

In Chapter two, I begin by describing the political and socioeconomic events that have allowed a growing culinary scene in Colombia. In this context, I offer a summary of Colombian regional cuisines and begin analyzing why the recreation and promotion of traditional culinary knowledge seems to be the axis of this scene. I present a series of events and documents that synthesize the panorama and the perspective of the main actors at stake (the culinary industry, the state, academia, and

independent organizations of producers and consumers). The chapter ends offering an overview of the main debates I will discuss in the next two chapters, based on concepts such as tradition and innovation, culinary authenticity, exoticism and cultural production.

In Chapter 3, I contextualize my fieldwork data in the structural tension between past and present that is a key factor in processes of cultural production. I present the testimonies of Colombian cooks that have been major actors in developing a restaurant culture in Colombia, and in generating debates about what a Colombian is and should be. Subsequently, I present some information about the country's normative framework in relation to traditional cuisines and to the development of a gastronomic culture. Finally, I introduce the theoretical framework with which I will engage in the last chapter, with respect to the process of vitalization and revitalization of local cuisines in this country.

Chapter 4 presents some of the debates that I consider relevant in relation to the construction of a so-called Colombian cuisine and some of its potential implications in terms of cultural identities and social structures. I base my analysis in some analytical categories that have been used by sociologists and anthropologists to understand culinary practices and food movements, such as culinary authenticity and exoticization and their role in acts of social differentiation or democratization, and in new ways of social connection.

I conclude using the pragmatist philosophical hypothesis, to understand how ideologies and social norms operate in practices of daily life such as cooking, and culinary discourses around food practices, creating processes of resistance and

enrichment, and ambiguous scenarios in which neither a vertical or linear representation of social organization, nor a utopian state of equity through ideologies is fully achieved. I believe this approach also allow us to understand cultural production in a more fluent way, and as a process of vital engagement (to use Richard Sennet's expression).

My overall goal in undertaking this research question is, on the one hand, to construct an analytical map of culinary practices, discourses and current perspectives in approaching the subject of cooking and food in Colombia, that exposes significant problems related to identity processes. On the other hand, I aim to contribute to existent literature on the study of cooking and food in Latin America from the perspective of social sciences and related areas. Beyond this, I hope to contribute with analytical and research tools that may be useful in designing public policy, research initiatives or cultural entrepreneurship in local communities. A main issue at stake in the study of foodways is the question of how a community defines itself, and is defined by others. This includes questions on sovereignty, the nature of the territory and the role of education; about the feeling of pride and a sense of belonging, and the need to project a future by rethinking the past and acting in the present. The role of food as a question and as a challenge is in play, as well as its role as a possibly specific and partial answer and solution, because of its power to nourish; to transmit and define, to reconstruct and heal; and to inspire and imprint.

Chapter 1

Vibrant Cuisines

1. Before and after all, food is meaning

Meaning is a key element to understanding the relation between cooking and eating and the nature of social life. Therefore, it is key to understanding why social scientists are interested in interpreting and explaining food practices to better understand culture and civilization. From the specialized viewpoint of linguistics, meaning is what is communicated and conveyed by language. However, as what gives sense and explains human intentionality and action, meaning is all that is communicated in cultural practices, social facts and historical events. In an abstract sense, it is the meta-structure underlying social orders. In a material and concrete way, it is the flesh of social relationships, the message carried in human connections of many sorts.

Although for a long time human actions such as cooking and eating have been regarded by scholars and thinkers as an essential component of material life, their importance in the academic investigation of cultural processes and the development of societies is rather recent and still in a stage of consolidation, given that meaning is not explicit in all activities but can be understood through proper analysis. The importance of these processes goes beyond the material, and understanding these underlying values is what such analyses seek to uncover.

Cooking is the transformation, preparation and processing of food. This process might involve the use of a set of principles and techniques in order to improve the nutritional value and digestibility of food but might also improve its flavor, appearance, and presentation. In this sense, cooking is a cultural act that might or might not involve the alteration of food through the use of fire but reflects the transformations humans create in food production. On a physiological level,

eating is the mere act of ingesting food to nurture the body. However, as in the case of cooking, eating is also a cultural communicative act by which the food consumed becomes part of the individual and by which simultaneously the individual becomes the food consumed —in some cultural contexts in a symbolic level, in others materially as well.

On its part, gastronomy is a related concept that for some, complements the significance of cuisine and cooking as creative cultural acts, for others, it includes and elevates such practices, and for some others, it represents a related but different set of actions, principles and discourses, to those attained by simpler culinary expressions.[1] Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin defined gastronomy as: "the intelligent knowledge of whatever concerns man's nourishment. Its purpose is to watch over his conservation by suggesting the best possible sustenance for him" (Brillat-Savarin 2008: 51). He thought that apart from consisting in part of physics, chemistry, cookery, business, political economy, etc., gastronomy considers "the action of foods on man's morale, on his imagination, his spirit, his judgment, his courage and perceptions" (Brillat-Savarin 2008: 52). Pierre Bourdieu defines it as "the set of rules which govern the cultivation and *education* of taste" (Bourdieu 1984: 68). And Jean Francois Revel talks about the *gastronome* as a researcher that is at once curious and suspicious, venturesome and timid. As the one that should always seek new sensations and at the same time fear novelty (1982: 149). In sum, gastronomy is the art of codification of good eating, and cuisine and gastronomy are material and historical expressions through which people exercise their capacity to interpret, appropriate and transform social orders.

Therefore, as a whole the culinary universe consists of a set of shared protocols, comprised of five essential elements; some preparations or base foods – the nucleus; a specific way of

[1] This, having in mind that the term *gastronome* did not appear in history until the nineteenth century although the practices date from many centuries before. The historic appearance of both practices and of the cook and the *gastronome*, are a topic of major debate that I cannot address here.

manipulating food – the techniques; a series of principles regarding flavor – defining flavors; a specific set of manners or codes – etiquette; and an infrastructure that defines a type of specific production, distribution and consumption chain (Belasco 2008: 18-20). The dishes and preparations, are a combination of these fundamental elements; their synthesis. Flavors, textures, smells, configurations, preparing and serving utensils, eating rituals, they are all pieces and clues we have to solve the puzzle of each culinary universe and the vital dynamics of production and consumption; the relationship between the earth, cuisine and the table, that is represented by the ways in which products are growth, manipulated and consumed.

Another dimension of this universe is how people talk about food and cuisine. Reflections and discursive constructions elaborate what happens within these systems by different means of communication (conversations, printed publications – newspapers, magazines, books, documents, recipe books, brochures, catalogues, guides, manuals, advertising pieces – and virtual networks, sermons, debates, etc.). Gastronomy is more than producing a meal, it includes the underlying assumptions about what is food, how it is prepared, who prepares it, and also how people discuss, prepare, and consume it in socially correct ways. Both the sensory and the discursive make up the cultural production for cuisine and food.

Social sciences and sociocultural studies focus on everyday life practices. These are privileged contexts and spaces to look at larger political and socioeconomic processes and the nature of mankind as a whole, because they offer the possibility for looking at meanings in all their richness and colorful complexity. It is precisely the embedded richness of everyday life that explains the particular interest of social scientists in cooking and eating, who aim to explain the relation between food practices and society in terms of their capacity to signify and determine larger social orders. However, the importance they give to different spatiotemporal frameworks

for the construction of their overall conclusions, and the emphasis they put on individual and collective experiences and subjective and localized—historical—processes varies.

Some of these overlapping and conflicting viewpoints focus on the need to historicize the study and to observe changes in meaning as a historical process (Benjamin 1968, Foucault 1971, Mintz 1985). Others emphasize the sociological nature of the construction of meaning (Douglas 2008, Durkheim 1965, Warde 1997), or use innovative methods such as those applied in cultural geography, which intend to link in a causal way the actual space in which social practices occur with their cultural meaning (Pitte 2002). There are also perspectives that base their approach on the study of primitive concepts and modes of thought, addressing some of the most basic questions in relation to cooking and eating— i.e. what is edible and what is not, and why and in which social contexts or events they are consumed (Frazer 1959).

On the other hand, there is the well-known linguistic structural approach to cultural phenomena. Lévi-Strauss is the main representative of this view that is based on the Saussarian linguistic method. In the description of this method Lévi-Strauss says: "from words the linguistic extracts the phonetic reality of the phoneme; and from the phoneme he extracts the logical reality of distinctive features" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 20). According to him, there is an absence of consciousness in linguistic processes and it is because of this absence that the observer cannot influence, modify or alter the observed phenomenon, even if he becomes conscious of it (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 57). This is the reason that for him language "lives and develops only as a collective construct" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 57). Having this in mind, Lévi-Strauss explores the idea of whether the method of structural linguistics can be used to study social life and beyond; whether the nature of language and the nature of social life are the same; whether language and culture are alike in substance besides being operationally equivalent (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 62).

His overall purpose with this method is to look at the deepest structures of society in order to abstract general principles of different social arrangements and to identify universal—unconscious—rules of communication between people. Referring to this goal he says: "I expect to prove that there is a kind of logic in tangible qualities, and to demonstrate the operation of that logic and reveal its laws" (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 1). Lévi-Strauss expects to do this through the analysis of empirical categories—such as food principles. He argues that "empirical categories—such as the categories of the raw and the cooked, the fresh and the decayed, the moistened and the burned, etc., which can only be accurately defined by ethnographic observation and, in each instance, by adopting the standpoint of a particular culture—can nonetheless be used as conceptual tools with which to elaborate abstract ideas and combine them in the form of propositions" (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 1).

On his part, Roland Barthes argues that sociology should examine the structure of cultural objects—among them food practices—before figuring out how society makes use of them (Barthes 1975: 54). This idea has a structuralist tone and is based on the methods of linguistics as well. However, Barthes also highlights the importance of looking at collective representations and the uses of cultural objects to understand symbolic orders in a different way, seeing food as a circumstance more than a substance that operates as a function of the categories of activity and leisure —for example seeing coffee as the occasion to interrupt work more than a boiled, dark stimulant beverage (Barthes 1975: 59). Food must be seen as part of a dynamic practice that needs to be understood by the social scientist in terms of the particular context in which it takes place and, furthermore, in terms of its plastic character in relation to processes of signification. In his reflection about myths as forms of signification and a type of speech through which symbolic orders are naturalized in social life, Barthes discusses the issue of human techniques—the knowing

how to do something—in relation to food habits. Expertise and cultural knowledge is shown by people in different contexts and levels: "knowing how to drink [wine] is a national technique which serves to qualify the French-man, to demonstrate at once his performance, his control and his sociability." (Barthes 1972: 59).

From the standpoint of the so-called developmental, sociogenetical or figurational perspective, the main exponent is Norbert Elias with his study of the historical development of civilization. His approach is based on the idea that there is an essential relation between changes in the structure of society and changes in the structure of behavior and psychical makeup (Elias 1994: xv). In turn, this connection relies on the idea that the process of civilization in the history of the West has been determined—and has been actually made possible—by a psychological maturing of Western societies and the development of self-consciousness. This development has had a determinant impact on the changes of social structures and that on the whole gave birth to the French concept of civilization and the related German idea of Kultur (Elias 1994: xv). Based on this connection between psychological and sociological processes, Elias explores the slow transitional change in food manners determined by the development of the concept of civilité in the renaissance out of the concept of courtesy that characterized the knightly feudal middle ages: "society was 'in transition.' So, too, were works on manners. Even in the tone, the manner of seeing, we feel that despite all their attachment to the Middle Ages something new is on the way. 'Simplicity' as we experience it, the simple opposition of 'good' and 'bad,' 'pious' and 'wicked,' has been lost. People see things with more differentiation, i.e., with a stronger restraint of their emotions" (Elias 1994: 57).

Stephen Mennell's study of food manners draws on this sociogenetical method. The main purpose of his analysis is to understand how taste changed and developed in society over time

through the identification and explanation of differences in tastes between England and France. Mennell is also interested in identifying some common patterns to figure out a system of food structures that nonetheless he still considers to be culturally shaped and socially controlled (Mennell 1985: 4). For him, the structuralist approach by itself can offer a classification but not an explanation of food preferences over time (Mennell 1985: 13). That is why, based on Elia's method, Mennell argues that social conventions and cultural tastes in relation to cooking and eating must be understood as functions of broader processes and factors of social development such as nationalism, class and religion (Mennell 1985: 15). It is in this context that he analyzes the development of cooking and conceptions of good food in the history of manners in France and England.

Although Michael Foucault's perspective on the study of the external world and society has a strong structuralist component, it is essentially characterized by the historization of human behavior. Foucault's theoretical analysis of the role of history in the study of human nature has been the basis for many contemporary perspectives that focus on material and bodily practices to understand larger social processes. He formulates the question of the impossibility of establishing relationships between incommensurable objects, events and things (Foucault 1971). There is however, a possibility to establish some epistemological coherence among things. Although this order it is neither immediately perceptible nor determined *a priori*, Foucault argues that there is nothing more empirical than the process of discovering the inner law between things (Foucault 1971: xix-xx). The historical component resides precisely in the possibility of establishing "concrete relations between limited totalities" of modes of being determined by social forms, language and human life in itself (Foucault 1971: 373).

There is a substantial tension underlying all these approaches. A tension between what can be generally described as the "practical" and the "meaningful" and that, as Marshall Sahlins says "is the fateful issue" of modern social thought (Sahlins 1976: ix). The key point at stake is "whether the cultural order is to be conceived as the codification of man's actual purposeful and pragmatic action; or whether, conversely, human action in the world is to be understood as mediated by the cultural design, which gives order at once to practical experience, customary experience, and the relationship between the two. The difference is not trivial, nor will it be resolved by the happy academic conclusion that the answer lies somewhere in between, or even on both sides (i.e., dialectically) (Sahlins 1976: x). Therefore, his particular take on the issue states that culture, understood as a meaningful order of things and objects, is the object of study that can mediate between this dualism (Sahlins 1976: x).

Clifford Geertz on his part put the emphasis on the concept of culture as well but understood as a web of significance (Geertz 1973: 9), arguing that the context of meaning must be thickly described and, moreover, that to look each time at the particular cultural context is the only way of sorting out structures of signification. He also says that cultures are made out of codes but that these codes do not convey meaning by themselves, pointing with this to the necessity of describing—and interpreting—a microscopic, "textured story" of social events (Geertz 1973: 30).

Cooking and eating make part of this set of microscopic, textured and thick cultural practices that help social scientists to sort out structures of signification. Gabrielle Spiegel's explanation of the "linguistic turn" that took place in historical writing and research in the late 1960s and the 1970s, and of the subsequent "cultural turn", is also helpful for understanding this tension. These alternative view, as in the case of Geertz and Sahlins, resides in the importance of focusing on concrete practices, experiences, things and objects to understand social orders. Spiegel

summarized the linguistic turn as: "the notion that language is the constitutive agent of human consciousness and the social production of meaning, and that our apprehension of the world, both past and present, arrives only through the lens of language's precoded perceptions" (Spiegel 2005: 9). On the other hand, he describes the cultural turn as an attempt to overcome the division between society and culture in order to avoid the social determinism produced by a functionalist methodology employed in the social sciences, and to focus on the idea of culture as the space of creation of meaning instead (Spiegel 2005: 8).

After this turn, there was a new focus on experience and practice. Instead of having a set of universal principles to define every social construction that "precedes" the world and renders it intelligible, social practices are seen now as a way of "knowing how" to act and to do things (i.e. a practical knowledge of the world): "the hallmark of this approach is a new conceptualization of the body, no longer seen as an 'instrument' used by an agent in order to act, but the place where mental, emotional, and behavioral routines are inscribed" (Spiegel 2005:19). When culture is understood as a performative act, the relevance and significance of practices such as cooking and eating it is more evident.

On the other hand, there is the ecological and biological explanation of food practices that characterized the materialistic approach of scholars like Roy A. Rappaport (1979), Marvin Harris (1985) and Richard W. Wrangham (2009). Harris argues that there are enough practical reasons to understand why people cook and eat what they cook and eat, and that there is therefore a logical order in which preferences and aversion precede messages and meanings (Harris 1985: 15). This is not to say that food practices are not symbolically charged but to affirm that the meaning of food is a consequence of its practical function. This of course has a direct implication in the way in which social structures and the formation of cultural identities should be interpreted by social

scientists. Moreover, if we bear in mind that, as Harris argues, "food preferences and aversions arise out of favorable balances of practical costs and benefits," even when this does not mean that "the favorable balance is shared equally by all members of society" (Harris 1985: 17). According to Harris, this is another reason to reject the legitimacy of the existence of arbitrary symbols in relation to foodways. In consequence, he concludes that "to eat better we must know more about the practical causes and consequences of our changing foodways. We must know more about food as nourishment, and we must know more about food as profit. Only then we will really be able to know food as thought." (Harris 1985: 248).

Additionally, Richard Wrangham (2009) offers a series of biological and nutritional arguments to support the thesis that the control of fire and the advent of cooked meals can explain the existence of the homo erectus (Wrangham 2009: 2). According to him, explanations of ecological and biological nature not only allow to understand the social dimension of cooking and the historical development of cuisine, but also to explain social phenomena related to food habits such as the modern social division of labor (and the family as a social institution), and also emotional and intellectual skills—among them moral standards (Wrangham 2009: 137).[2]

A similar call about the need to focus on and eventually improve eating habits and nutritional standards is made by Mary Douglas but from a cultural approach to the study of food (Douglas 2008). She advocates for a sociological and humanistic explanation of hunger in which the key question to connect food with the understanding of social arrangements is how it enters the moral and social intentions of individuals (Douglas 2008: 10). Her particular way of tackling

[2] In his comprehensive analysis of the role of food, cooking and eating—and the preparation, consumption and performance of it—as essential characteristics of culture, Montanari addresses the tension between the structural and the materialistic outlook to food practices. He synthesizes the problem pointing to the necessity to discuss the logical sequence between habit and taste, and also between eating and conceptualizations about the act of eating (Montanari 2006: 72).

what she describes as culinary complexity is an interpretative analysis inspired by the structural model but one that takes more into account the cultural contexts and the everyday life variation—or not—of food patterns. This method also draws on the Durkheimian idea of a collective consciousness and society as a force of cohesion that goes beyond the sum of individual parts. Referring to research conducted with this method she says: "the researchers did not seek to understand meanings that are conveyed by food; they sought clues only as to sheer *quantity* of discriminated meanings that the food could carry. This may sound ambitious, but it is a much simpler task than trying to generalize as to what any particular item of food means. The task of interpretation is much more difficult than careful counting of the number of changes in food rules that respond to a preselected list of cues from the social world" (Douglas 2008: 20).

There is also the philosophical approach to issues of taste and the relation between food and social orders mediated by meaning. Using philosophical categories and tools of analysis Carol Korsmeyer argues that "while the tension between aesthetic and gustatory taste reveals differences between arts and foods, the tenacity and aptness of this aesthetic metaphor indicates the tremendous complexity and subtlety of the literal sense of taste and the vivacity and power latent in the bodily intimacy of this sense" (Korsmeyer 1999: 6). Although she is mainly interested in showing the aesthetic character of the sense of taste, underlying this purpose is the task of looking at the cognitive dimensions of food and eating in order to show how the taste of foods is subjected to our manipulation in a way that can actually mean and signify to construct thought and culture (Korsmeyer 1999: 101).

Different philosophical ways of understanding the world have served as a conceptual basis to articulate many of these approaches to food. In the process of paying more attention to everyday life practices and to material culture along the way of the "cultural turn", a call has been made for

many scholars within the social sciences and cultural studies, for performing a more connected analysis of the dynamism, creativity, experience, interpretation and rich detail embedded in their object of study. A call to understand how culture "lives" in practice and to offer a better account of the relationship between social organization, social action and the production of meaning (Calhoun and Sennett 2007: 2, 5). Without having any privileged in the realm of cultural artifacts, food embodies these three things, and it also connects them. It is both a fact and a tool of analysis.

More importantly, as Calhoun and Sennett argues, a happy thing of thinking of culture essentially as practice, is that it allows to better understand how it is, let's say, improved or trained in action, and how because of the skill involved in handling cultural artifacts, action is the base to talk about and to conceptualize culture; to think it. Thus, human thought is also improved and trained through action: "the accidental pun in the phrase "practicing culture" is meaningful; it is both something one does and something one learns to do better by doing it (…) It is made and remade in almost imperceptible small ways as well as occasional large bursts of innovation" (Calhoun and Sennett 2007: 6-7).

There is also the beautiful idea of the "active struggle" that they propose, following Bourdieu's idea of the production of practice and Erving Goffman's perspective on performative culture and human interaction—based on their turn in a Western tradition that goes back at least to Aristotle and that focus on practical reason. There are active struggles that take place when humans *do* culture. Not to say that intention is always conscious but that acts do have always a conscious element. These struggles are therefore the material of social transformation and what allows social theory to express "its most significant meaning by shaping [them]" (Calhoun and Sennett 2007: 6-8).

I see that the tension between past and present, and for this case, the tension between

traditional and novel cuisines, might very well represent a colorful display of significant active struggles. Latin American food culture is certainly not the exception in this regard. Rather, it is fairly a vibrant historical collection of tasty cultural artifacts and distinct culinary skills, that challenges binary understandings of empowered elites and disempowered many others, of high and low markers and makers of culture, and of a split between agency and structure. A perspective on culture as experience and practice questions these understandings.

I will look at testimonies of cooks, thematic events and relevant sources of editorial and organizational information that are contributing to shape the current culinary scene in Colombia and that illustrate some of the points that these theoretical approaches tackle. The axis of the whole process is how meaning is communicating through cooking and translated in the different interpretations of traditional culinary knowledge in contemporary contexts such as restaurants of different kinds, food events, food media and food policy. A key component is the causal link between place making and cultural meanings – through culinary expressions here –. This idea is legitimized for example in the weight that many actors give to the role and potentiality of biodiversity to consolidate a culinary identity in Colombia, and in the insistence on reaching or recovering culinary authenticity through a closer relationship with local producers and products and on the whole, with the territory in all its distinctiveness. The notion of cultural capital embedded in both, the ways in which Colombian cuisine is being produced and consumed now and how cooks, stakeholders, state agents and customers talk about cooking trends and food principles, also illustrates some of these theoretical queries. Another powerful element is the collective consciousness that have a cohesive force beyond individual intentions and goals, and that seems to be generated in this case by peace efforts and a generalized environment of reconciliation due to the complex country's historical political situation. As in the case of other

Latin American and world cuisines, there is also a particular impetus to generate movements, trends and paradigms, determining what is happening in the cooking scenario, combined with an unconscious input that lets us see the way in which structural orders and larger social processes operate. And of course, at the base of all this, is the rich and nuanced social reality that displays all its qualities in the active tensions of a performative culture, in this case, through food and cooking.

2. Splendor of a region

> "Let us talk about Latin American cooking as a starting point. America was occupied by Indians, some white, bearded guys arrive in some ships, they occupy the territory, begin conquering it, devastating it, and then they bring some African slaves. And after the 19th century, the migratory wave after World War I begins and Arabs, French, Italians, Jews and Germans arrive, a bunch of people arrive, in some places more than others, the Chinese arrive to build trains, the Japanese arrive. Then America is a mestizo place. (…) If there is a place in the planet with evidence of culinary miscegenation and where there is cultural diversity, that is Latin America and obviously, Colombia. But then each country weaves its own history…"[3]

Through Latin America – a region that includes all Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries, and to a lesser extent, French-speaking countries of the American continent – cuisines are one of the cultural languages that has reflected acts of liberation as well as oppression for centuries. Of rejection, adaptation, conciliation and also of unresolved conflicts that have taken new shapes throughout history, especially since the arrival of Europeans at the end of the 15th and during the 16th century.

[3] Cook Alex Quessep (personal communication August, 2014).

The plurality and wealth of Latin-American regional recipe books is an evidence of this and suggests key questions regarding the relation with socio-political processes of resistance and adaptation from the perspective of its mestizo essence. And even if that plurality gives the impression of being infinite throughout the continent because of the diversity of its ingredients, the creativity of its preparations and the fertility of its land that still resists environmental degradation, there are common traits that characterize these cuisines.

They are culinary expressions with powerful traits, such as those culturally and geographically defined by the Andes mountain range that imposingly runs through the South American country. Or by the gastronomical language of thousands of kilometers along the Pacific Coast; or by the great Caribbean, unanimous in its joy and warmth. Also by confectionery and bakery of the Iberian Peninsula with Arab nuances, that in the context of evangelization processes and disciplined conventual routines acquires a magical aura with a touch of picardy in new lands. This new sweet wealth of the American soil was complemented with the rigorous French, German, Austrian and Swiss confectionary and baking techniques.

Evidently, this unity is also seen in prehispanic ingredients such as corn, sacred for so many native peoples for its function as core food and the representation of the majesty of the earth, from different deities and the very essence of the human race. Corn is without a doubt one of the backbones of the region, from the semi-desert landscapes of Northern México, passing through Mesoamerican and the Andean slopes, to the Humid Pampa of Argentina on the southern part of the continent.

Also, the set of daily culinary rituals around cacao and coffee, the former a native crop and a symbol of cultural strength of indigenous peoples, and the latter adopted as their own after centuries of being introduced from its region of origin, Ethiopia, through Europe. There is also *ají*

that although is not the protagonist in many preparations in different geographic and political areas of the continent, it has always been present and is a fundamental component of Prehispanic diets because of its flavor and nutritional value, constituting in many cases the only seasoning condiment a long before salt.

On the other hand, the nuances of these cuisines are as many as there are thermal floors, geographies, climates and lifestyles. In Perú, the Chinese and the Japanese, the Arab in the Caribbean, German influences in some Brazilian cuisines and the prevalence of the Italian on the south of the continent, and to a degree in Venezuela. In countries such as México, Guatemala, Perú, Ecuador and Bolivia, the predominance of indigenous flavors thanks to the brave survival of their ethnicities. Diversity also unfolds and blooms in common culinary subjects – that transcend political limits and thermal floors even if their versions are in the hundreds – such as *tamales, arepas and tortillas* (with a nobility that is difficult to match) and the so called "*pan dulce*", a local interpretation of European breads that probably resulted from new preparations that had sugar as a main ingredient, a product that played an important role in the feeding dynamics of work forces; and the abundant consumption of fresh fruits in all their possibilities, soups, fermented drinks based on grains, cereals, aromatic herbs and once again, fruits. In addition, the peasant component that characterizes Andean cuisines and all arable land, as well as the deep Afro flavors, predominant in the Antilles, Brazil and both Colombian coasts. The rustic, stout and hearty cuisine of the Orinoco plains and extreme regions such as the Patagonia. The journey is long and fascinating…

As part of the representations of the sociopolitical history of the American continent, there is a generalized devaluation of the indigenous and African contribution of Latin American cuisines based on cultural exclusion. In spite that, for example, the indigenous population that was close to

100 million when the Spanish arrived, used efficient and very productive agricultural techniques, which defies the concept that Spanish technology based on cattle farming was more ideal (Patiño 2012; 31). Later on, this devaluation was reinforced by the discrimination of peasant diets based on a cultural and class categorization, spatial distance and principles of production and consumption of urban dynamics that gradually defined the use of the country lands with their growth.

Indigenous diets in the American continent have been recognized in chronicler's stories for their frugality and simplicity "the Peruvians were sober, not fanciful of European pottages: "they want their chili sauce more than our spices"" (Calancha, 1639, 388. In Patiño V. 2012: 152). This disposition contrasts with the excesses generated as of the Spanish discovery and that also branded in America new production dynamics of extractive nature; "in general, with the inflow of Indian riches, customs were gradually modified, and acquired a hedonistic air in Spain. [Chroniclers] complained that during the 18th century, temperance when eating was being lost, so revered by the ancient" (Fernandez de Navarrete, 1982, 297. In Patiño V. 2012; 337). Native diets were also characterized for using nuclear food to their respective culinary systems for different ends and with different techniques, but with a homogenous ecological sense. That is the case of core foods such as maize or manioc. As affirmed by Fajans, for the case of cassava "the bread of Brazil" and a true staple in South America, although not all those products have the same rich symbolic and material value, it is very significant to find one food taking so many different forms in so many cultural and social contexts but as a continuous unitary process: "To those who enact the processes of manioc production or other highly transformative processes, the different principles of gastronomic transformation become readily and frequently evident (…). [These phenomena] of food production symbolically reflects the process of life and social transformation" (Fajans 2012: 51).

Regarding foods that participated more actively in the Columbian exchange from the indigenous side, we find tubers such as potato, yucca, sweet potato, sagú, achira and to a lesser extent, ullucos, ibias, yacones and cubios. Vegetables such as hearts of palm, cereals such as corn, quinoa, beans, corn and chachafruto, and fruits such as tomato and chiles, peanuts and cashews. Although they were not popular with foreigners who arrived, Indians in different regions consumed insects, mollusks, crustaceans, batrachians such as frogs and toads, ophidians such as snakes, and related reptilian species such as iguanas, caimans and turtles. Of course they ate a great variety of fresh and salt water fish, birds and mountain mammals.

On the side of the European pantry, we can find roots such as beets, turnips and carrots, tubers such as African and Asian yams and Malanga, bulbs such as onions and garlic, rhizomes such as ginger, leaves such as cabbages and similar (chard, spinach, lettuce, endives and watercress). Grains such as lentils, chick peas, broad beans and a variety of other kind of beans. Cereals such as barley, oats and rye; and wheat and rice and vegetables like sugar cane that have been for more than two centuries major crops throughout the continent. Also sources of animal protein then predominant in local feeding systems, such as bovine and porcine cattle, and to a lesser extent, goats and sheep gained in importance. Also chickens, geese and pigeons were added. In spite of the abundancy of native fruits in Latin America, the inclusion of banana and plantains, dates, figs, almonds, peaches, cherries and plums, quince, apples, pears, strawberries, tamarind and varieties of citruses, stand out as popular additions (Patiño V. 2012; 233-97; 393 and multiple sources).

The number of products and preparations in play during this exchange is overwhelming and undoubtedly does justice to the enormous complexity of a historical process that began more than five centuries ago and is still ongoing, as it would be expectable for such an existential clash.

However, in spite of resistance from the parties to assimilate strange customs, among them, culinary and gastronomical as affirmed by scientific historian Victor M. Patiño, "the implacable process of acculturation was gradually breaking through, both for aliens and for terrines, and it was more intense, of course, where contact with different ethnic groups was proportionally narrower, as in cities, land grants, etc." (Patiño V. 2012; 406).

As cultural promoter and writer Germán Patiño also says, Colombian traditional cuisine emerged as part of the new creole culture in a long process that finds its deepest roots in the Columbian encounter mainly characterized by the Spaniard exercise of power, and culturally by more or less active traces of the Prehispanic, Andalusian, Morish and Castilian: "It was in its time, a new cuisine, a popular creation, responsible, here and in other parts of the continent, of what José Rafael Lovera[4] called 'a golden age of food' (…) flavors of which we have forgotten" (Patiño G. 2007: 52). According to Patiño, the taste of the Latin-American elites for imitation of the European in modernity, excised this "feast" that should be for cooks, researchers, policy makers and the collective memory of different ethnic groups of the region nowadays at the heart of Colombian and Latin-American culinary heritage.

This is precisely the question around which this research arises. Once cosmopolitan ideals become a part of, and foreign codes are adopted as, a model to be followed from the Colonial times to the social regimes that were more formally established since then, what happens to what was there before? Is something essential lost? Is there any preexistence that should be respected and protected? Under what criteria?

This debate and the challenges it implies has been nicely addressed and well phrased by Cook Gastón Acurio, probably the most recognized Peruvian figure worldwide because of the way

[4] José Rafael Lovera is a well-known Venezuelan historian and food researcher interested in Latin American gastronomic cultures.

in which he has approached Peruvian cuisine to promote it internationally but also for his endeavor to work it from within. He has gained recognition on the part of Peruvian elites, but also from more popular sectors of the country and represents an army of professional cooks that has served as ambassadors in the last three decades that has gone outside the country or has left other jobs abroad to work in Perúvian restaurants. He also represents and promotes hundreds of popular cooks in Perú that have worked a lifetime cooking daily meals, but are now on the spot. As Acurio says referring to this phenomenon:

> "The nineties arrived and a series of questions arise, not only in Perú but around the world. Were traditional cuisines worthy? Should modern cuisines represent a country? Was our creole cuisine sufficiently rich, varied and sophisticated so as to be offered to the world, or did it need modernizing to give it a new face that made it ideal to be presented in the new global scenario? It is in this stage that the new Andean cuisine appears and consolidates as a proposal that claims ancestral Perúvian products with modern techniques (…) However, confusion arose when some though that new Andean cuisine was born to substitute creole cuisine or regional cuisines, when it was really feeding from them and in a certain way paying great homage" (Acurio 2006, V1: 52).

Peruvian cuisine, has been indeed an example of a pathway for other Latin American countries to explore and develop their culinary potential. The success with which Perú has spread his cuisine across the world is a mix of Acurio's leadership role in promoting and encouraging Peruvian food identity inside and outside the country

– boosting national pride –, with a well-planned touristic strategy and a culinary set of flavors that seems to easily attract different palates around the world. This set of flavors is based on simplicity, richness and freshness because of the use of several tropical ingredients, and also on creativity and sophistication in a recipe collection characterized by a remarkable spicy accent (we see this in the use of fresh seafood and other animal products, a native variety of corns, potatoes and other tubers,

several types of chilies, and the interesting culinary input given by Japan and China because of the arrival of a large group of immigrants to the country at the end of the 19th century).

The overall phenomenon coincides too with a gastronomic momentum: the global process that for the past decades focused on a greater interest to understand and interact with production and consumption systems, including debates about why we eat what we eat, whether it is pertinent to modify habits and practices concerning cuisine and food, and who has the authority to define and modify those habits. This question necessarily entails looking reflexively at the relation between the past and the present and their respective expressions, in this case traditional culinary knowledge and innovative trends.[5]

In a broader scope, the challenge posed by cultural production and by the complexities of its relations of power is what Sherry B. Ortner refers to with the idea of "resistance" and "ethnographic refusal" (1995) in the context of an interpretative approach to the study of culture. What she, inspired by Geertz, calls ethnographic thickness is the understanding of meanings of an event "through richness, texture, and detail" – i.e. contextualization (Ortner 1995: 174, 189). Many analyses fail because they do not contextualize the study in terms of the politics of the subjects involved, the richness of their cultures and the agency that these subjects have in relation to the projects at stake and their intentions, desires and fears (Ortner 1995: 176, 187, 190).

Pescados Capitales: la vida en la orilla is an example of this tangle of questions and struggles to disentangle. It tells the story of a business in Lima, Perú – "Pescados Capitales" – that has grown, matured and transformed according to the rhythms of the national cultural and sociopolitical reality and Peruvian identity politics in the context of a rapid worldwide

[5] As Pollan observes "Food quality is now determined less by abundant quantity and global provenance and more by sourcing (the more local, the better), artisanality (the smaller the run, the better), taste (with organic methods favored), sustainability, healthiness, and the mindfulness with which it is eaten" (Pollan 2014: 8).

gastronomic growth. In this sense, it is an autobiography of a project and a business that has a life of its own and an ethic and philosophy that the authors intend to explain through the recollection of daily stories of the restaurant, and at the base of which there is a sense of national pride but also a challenge to recreate and to consolidate a modern Perúvian identity. A concept and "battle" that for the authors of the book and owners of the restaurant, only be won by a collective effort. In this case the effort to offer the best samples of Peruvian creativity (Toronja and Etiqueta Negra 2009, n.p.).

The nature of culinary projects like this one, are a good example of the interplay between tradition and novelty, cosmopolitanism and parochialism, and the global and the local in the context of food and cuisine. Genuineness and purity, honesty and passion, simplicity and sophistication, Peruvianess and otherness, are some of the values underlying the culinary work here. Underlying these values there is an ethic and a philosophy defined by an ecological and social consciousness and respect for the labor of each worker, but also by a hedonistic motivation and the desire to help consolidate the country in the international culinary scene and the awareness of the necessity to promote the autonomy of national economy.

These principles are not exclusive of the Peruvian case but illustrate a tendency all around the region as an expression, in its turn, of significant forces of cultural production and sociopolitical dynamics worldwide. One of the stories presented in the book synthesizes the point: "After the last spoon of a *Suspiro de Lúcuma*[6] I took the best decision of my life: to stay in my country with my family" (Toronja and Etiqueta Negra 2009, n.p.). Aspects of everyday life such as work, family, cooking and education create meaning in a way that is always particular

[6] *Suspiro Limeño* is a typical Peruvian dessert that consists of a custard made with sugar, milk, egg yolk and vanilla and that is covered with a meringue top and cinnamon. The original recipe does not include Lúcuma and the restaurant offers an alternative version to the traditional *Suspiro* with this exotic fruit from the Andes.

and historical in essence. As other forms of material culture, the development of new culinary techniques and food habits, and the overall production of a new cuisine in Colombia might be seen as a synthetic form of local knowledge from and through which meaning is constructed. A "thicker" understanding of acts of imitation and differentiation would allow us to understand the complexities entailed in these acts, and different ways in which Colombians enact global models and cosmopolitan ideals – or not – along the way of constructing their own culinary experience and practice ("lo propio"), through the interpretation of traditional culinary local knowledge. I intend to show some of these ways in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Current Culinary Scene in Colombia

1. The economic boom and the food service industry[7]

Due to its geographical location and the diversity that resulted from the Columbian exchange, Colombia is one of the richest Latin American countries in terms of crops, available foods and culinary techniques. This does not seem surprising in a region characterized by centuries of transculturation in which pre-Columbian lifestyles intertwined and merged with the Hispanic and the African input to create a whole new set of cultural expressions, among them, a brand new spectrum of regional culinary forms and new blended cuisines. The Amazon Rainforest, apart from being often called "The Lungs of the World", has been recently predicted by many as "the next pantry of the world".

However, in contrast with other Latin American countries such as México that has an older gastronomical tradition and greater global recognition of its cuisines, or Perú, where the variety of food and cuisines has been encouraged – through the promotion of tourism and the more recent sponsoring of research of native ingredients and techniques – Colombia has not been characterized for having an outstanding cuisine at the international level. Likewise, the country differs from cases like Argentina where the culinary scene is prominent and the custom of eating out is historically much more common, to a great extent due to the fact that the country was regarded, in the early twentieth century, as a Latin American model of modernity and progress.

[7] I refer to current events that replicate in very similar terms in the larger and medium cities of the country (Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Pereira, Bucaramanga, Armenia, Santa Marta, Pasto, Popayan, etc.). However, the majority of data provided is from Bogotá, the capital and largest city, where main trends are more evident. Bogotá concentrates a high participation in the national economic activity and shows the highest income per capita.

The great economic recession that characterized the post-World War II period in the fifties and the sixties, contrasts with the behavior of the Colombian economy in the seventies: a considerable increase in the international demand for national exports concomitant with a shift in governmental policies that implied much less intervention of the state in private enterprises. The main areas of exports were manufactured and agricultural products—mainly coffee but also cotton, sugar cane, tobacco, meat and plantains—and the emerging trade of narcotics (Kalmanovitz 1994: 449-50). This economic boom coincided with the return of several Colombians to the country, who after receiving educational training in US universities went back to the country to promote the economic liberalization, and the assimilation of a neoliberal ideology that started to displace protectionist governmental policies (Ocampo Ed. 2011; Kalmanovitz 1994: 464).

Nonetheless, the existence of a speculative market managed by imperialist countries resulted in an overwork of manufactured and agricultural exports and the trade of illegal drugs. This fact contributed to generate a considerable external deficit for Colombia and a large increase of internal inflation. Additionally, a vast increase in the price of oil in Colombia in the mid-seventies due to a loss of autonomy in the supply of this essential fuel, led the country into an economic recession and unemployment rates of nearly 30 % (Kalmanovitz 1994: 480). In general terms, although with less evidence in Colombia than in the case of developed capitalist countries such as the United States and England, neoliberal policies implied a deep lack of commitment with social policies and this recession generated even more social inequality. This situation was partially caused and worsened by the armed conflict that started to become unmanageable, involving not only the national army and police, guerrilla groups, and illegal drug cartels, but also emerging groups of self-defense and private justice (Ocampo Ed. 2011). “Dramatically divided between those who have everything and those who have nothing, between peasants and landlords,

between employers and workers, between the army, the paramilitary and the guerrilla groups, between the state and narcoterrorism, the country additionally faced conditions of slow growth, sometimes outright stagnation, and a deterioration of its quality of life" (Kalmanovitz 1994: 524).

Overall, instead of alleviating the traditional difficulties of a capitalist economy, neoliberal policies seemed to have aggravated the political and socioeconomic situation in Colombia. On the political side, although peace negotiations between the government and guerrilla groups were taking place, the conflict was worsening due to the intervention of private justice movements in the cities and paramilitary groups in rural zones. By the end of the eighties, there was a generalized atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty about the national political and socioeconomic future scenario: "The anxiety is [therefore] truly the mark of a Colombian society that cannot find itself and that does not know how to channel its energies without exploding. There is a cultural crisis that manifests itself in the uneasiness of the new generation, destined to an uncertain future that seems to offer no way forward" (Kalmanovitz 1994: 524).

Nevertheless, the decade of the nineties was characterized by a relative optimism because of the demobilization of private justice groups, the development of peace agreements with some guerrilla groups and a change of strategy in the war against illicit drugs that reduced narcoterrorism in the country. At the same time, some degree of economic liberalization was once again a key feature of state policies. With the promulgation in 1991 of a new constitution, the Colombian economy entered into a relatively stable phase where there was an atmosphere of greater tolerance and hope and recovery of the economic growth. However, the armed conflict was far from being over and the instability and fragility of an economy largely sustained by drug trafficking was pervasive. Between 1980 and 2014, the GDP grew at an annual average rate of 3.6 %, showing a lower growth than the previous economic period (Ocampo ed. 2011: 297).

After a period of economic crisis between 1998 and 2002 that resulted from the behavior of the world economy, there was a new boom in the exportations of agricultural products and mineral resources and thus considerable national economic growth. This period coincided with the 2002 election of president Alvaro Uribe Vélez for two periods in a row. Under the flag of "seguridad democrática" (democratic security) Uribe strengthened the capacity of the national armed forces and police and managed to recover security in a large portion of the national territory. A generalized perception of security created an environment of trust in the country and the rate of investment grew even more rapidly reaching 27% of GDP in 2008. Annual international investment was nearly US $ 6.000 millions higher between 2004 and 2013 than in the eighties (Ocampo 2011: 307). An atmosphere of economic growth was undeniable and one of the sectors in which this bonanza was evident was tourism and the foodservice industry.[8]

Although the overall operations of the food industry have decreased slowly between 2008 and 2015, their importance in Colombian GDP is still prominent and the foodservice industry is still very active (Ocampo Ed. 2011: 301; Euromonitor International, 2010: a).[9] Among other Latin American countries, Colombia is one of the places that shows the greatest growth in this respect with a range of annually growth between 4 and 6 %. According to the Colombian Association of the Gastronomic Industry – ACODRES –, the restaurant sector currently represents 4% of the GDP

[8] Although I will not discuss the issue here, President Uribe has also been deeply criticized for his cynicism, represented in situations of clientelism, corruption, a generalized aggressive style of administration, and for the socioeconomic consequences of the reintegration to society of paramilitary groups that he helped to demobilized. Overall, these critics point to the state of social inequality, poverty and relative underdevelopment in which the country still is.

[9] Euromonitor is an international global market research company but most of the sources that it uses to make these reports and the information it collects come from a number of Colombian reports and Colombian agencies.

and generates more than 600,000 direct and indirect jobs only in the country's capital (ACODRES 2016: a).

According to "Passport Consumer Food Service – Colombia 2016 report", consumer foodservice current sales values in Colombia grew 5% in 2015 and there are more than 30,000 independent full service restaurants (in addition to fast food restaurants, deliveries, coffee shops, bars and chain restaurants, that total more than 60,000). As studies from the National Administrative Statistics Department – DANE – during the second quarter of 2016, restaurant, catering and bar services registered a 4.3% growth in nominal income and 4.1% in occupied personnel in comparison to the same quarter in 2015. During this year and until the second quarter of 2016, growth in nominal income was 6.2% and 4.1% in occupied personnel. During the past twelve months, until the second quarter of 2016, income grew 6.9% and occupied personnel 2.1%, in comparison with the previous year (DANE 2016: a, p.5). Although the consequences are unpredictable now, it is likely that this growth will continue or increase as a result of the implementation of the peace agreement to end the conflict and build peace between the Colombian National Government leaded by President Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – Army of the People – FARC – EP, signed on November 24, 2016.

This growth has been particularly manifest in the opening of several fine dining restaurants in the last decade. Many of these restaurants advertise themselves as offering some version of a native cuisine, a Colombian cuisine based on fusion cooking, a new Colombian cuisine, a gourmet, local, artisanal, authentic, avant-garde cuisine, among other labels. This, is in the context of a general expansion in Latin America of the culinary industry based on new investment and the opening of specialized training institutions in capital and big cities. As historian Lovera points out: "The emergence of cooking schools, fostered by the considerable increase especially in the number

of young men showing serious interest in the culinary arts, changed the panorama that had prevailed for centuries in the continent. It paved the way both for the study of modern culinary techniques and for the need for innovation in the preparation of the typical South American dishes (…) They serve to foster their members' professional improvement, implement better working conditions, and act as employment agencies and contacts with foreign associations for exchange programs" (Lovera 2005: 81).

Related to this phenomenon is the fact that some of the owners and chefs that started to run the new restaurants are members of the Colombian elite who had emigrated to escape from the violence that the country experienced during the eighties and nineties and who then returned later on. Similarly, many of the patrons who visit these restaurants are members of the elite living outside the country or international elite tourists. Apart from such fine dining establishments, there are others that started to promote themselves by offering authentic traditional cuisine, fresh market fare, or a particular regional cuisine, and still others that offer home cooking or 'popular' dishes.

In general terms, according to a similar report about Colombia's foodservice industry "Colombian consumers are becoming more discerning and demanding with regard to food quality (…)" and therefore "quality is improving with regard to innovation and ingredient combination (…)". The report also states that popularity of eating out is increasing for pleasure, convenience, business affairs and related reasons (Euromonitor International, 2010: a, p. 5.). Nonetheless, this same study points out that eating out is still regarded as a luxury activity given the average purchase capacity of Colombians and the fact that "middle and higher-income segments of the population (…) drive this increased demand, as their level of education makes them more likely to value the experience of trying different cuisines and dishes as a culturally enriching experience" (Euromonitor International 2010: b, 2). "The country's entry into the modern, globalized world

has fostered a cultural change in the attitudes that Colombians have toward foods" (Euromonitor International 2010: b, 1). [10]

Moreover, the study observes that besides the increasing opening of restaurants focusing on international gastronomies "a new trend called fusion cuisine in which traditional Colombian and Latin flavors are mixed with international recipes and ingredients, has become widely popular" (Euromonitor International 2010: b, 1.), except that the availability of these cuisines is still rather limited to the people that can afford to dine out in upscale restaurants. The report also establishes that despite lower economic growth projections, consumer foodservice in Colombia retains strong potential for expansion due to the urban lifestyles and the rising urbanization and other factors such as traffic congestion in the main cities of the country (Euromonitor International 2016: 2-3).

These numbers and observations of the restaurant sector in Colombia translate into numerous qualitative descriptions of the local culinary landscape, that express more or less critical or enthusiastic positions by the academia, the state, and different independent opinion sectors, such as this commendable critique from Food Media under the title "Colombia's Culinary Comeback": "Move over, Buenos Aires: South America's newest culinary darling is Colombia's comeback capital. Crime is down, business is booming, and the restaurant scene is so hot that the food world's biggest names are flying in for a taste. Bravo Bogotá¡" (Condé Nast Traveler 2013: a).

2. Regional products and traditional cuisines

In his presentation of a publication of a collection of booklets on traditional flavors of Colombia in 2014, the Director of Patrimony of the Ministry of Culture in Colombia defines traditional cuisines as follows: "Traditional cuisine, like language, will never be static. It varies

[10] Middle-income consumers are said to be the main drivers of foodservice expansion in recent years (2016: d, p. 3).

between families, it will be lost or be enriched in recipe books or through oral tradition, it will change depending on the mood of the cook and his or her tastes; ingredients will be added or omitted, depending on the possibilities of the region. In spite of the variations, many recipes are preserved almost intact in time and will be known as 'traditional cuisine'" (Ministry of Culture, 2014: 9-10).

But how more exactly are traditional Colombian cuisines understood and what is at stake in the current interpretation of them? Does a 'deconstructed' *sancocho* or beans served in a 'tower', do threaten, replace or otherwise coexist and complement the traditional versions? If a restaurant charges triple the price for one of these dishes than for traditional beans and, furthermore, if traditional beans now cost triple what they did a few years ago (at least in some establishments) what is behind this change and why does it become potentially excluding, restrictive or simply another choice? Does a new version of a notable local cuisine dish defy or rather honor the original version? There is a process of interpretation of traditional cuisine in different regions of Colombia that is generating cultural products and discourses, along with the tension and debate that is characteristic of processes of appropriation and re-appropriation. Within this context, there is a transformation of the ways to understand Colombian cuisine and the context of its recipes. Rescue, rediscover (or discover), protect and disclose, recreate, represent and renew, are some of the actions at play in peoples' creations.

Some of the activities in which this process is evident, as I mentioned, are the constant and increasing opening of new restaurants, but also specialized shops or venues with specific culinary themes, and the organization of academic seminars around food and diverse gastronomical events. In parallel or as part of these activities, there is a proliferation in the presence of panels and debates

in printed and digital media about Colombian cuisine, the restaurant industry, food sovereignty and security, public policies to serve and promote gastronomical tourism and preserve the culinary heritage. In addition, the creation of awards and acknowledgements for projects that showcase and work to develop culinary subjects enhances this community. Such initiatives promote knowledge, preservation and the promotion of culinary diversity in the different regions of the country.

This search for and reconstruction of diversity is in fact one of the cultural pillars of the different regional divisions in which a territory may be divided and offers a way to understand local identities.[11] Such projects offer a reason for and a representation of its complexities and nuances. Anthropologist and chef Julián Estrada embodies this idea, following French scholar Jean François Revel (1982), arguing that even when cuisine is one of the daily manifestations of culture that operates as a function of the construction of national identities in the same way in which other events such as the national economy, politics and security do, "(…) one does not arrive at the concept of the 'national' by simply and mechanically adding that which is 'regional'" (Estrada 2003: 214). Each regional cuisine is different and unique and should be understood as "one in which local technology uses accessories and materials that belong to the habitat, with almost exclusive products and spices, and one in which elements like air, the weather and fire mix with distinct flavors and the specialized hand, to obtain a recipe that only in that place is prepared originally" (Estrada 2003: 215).

On the other hand, even though it is possible to make different regional divisions of the country according to climatic zones and exclusively geographical criteria, I base my idea of

[11] The Royal Spanish Academy – RAE – defines a region as a "portion of territory determined by ethnical characteristics or special weather, production, topography, administration, government, etc., circumstances." Also as "each of the large territorial division of a nation, defined by geographical, historical and social characteristics, and that may themselves be divided into provinces, departments, etc." (2016: a).

territory and space on a social product defined by the sociopolitical and economic history of a nation, which determines the different cultural landscapes from which geographical spaces may be eventually detached. I follow the regional division carried out by the Popular Research and Education Center – CINEP – (1998) in its study about the different socioeconomic, political and cultural processes, of construction of Colombian regional multiplicity, to expose a general landscape of agricultural activity and the most characteristic products and dishes of this country. According to this division, Colombia has eight sub-regions: the northwestern region, the Caribbean region, the Santander region, the Cundinamarca and Boyacá region, the Upper Magdalena region, the Southwestern region, the Pacific Region and the Orinoco and Amazon region.

Chart 1. Colombian traditional cuisines by sub-regions (please see attached Excel file).

3. The food landscape

3.1 Restaurants

As shown in the statistics in Section 1 of this chapter, restaurants have been positioned as a gastronomical space. They are slowly becoming an opportunity to recover culinary traditions at risk of disappearing, and ingredients that have become scarce or that have been restricted for several decades to use for subsistence agriculture or direct consumption in indigenous and peasant diets.[12] Fine dining restaurants have become a space to socialize, to educate one's taste and to offer

[12] In her historical study of the invention and the development of the restaurant (2000), Rebecca Spang examines social practices that have been and continue to be specific to restaurants and to gastronomic sensibility through the history of this public institution, even when they reflect larger socioeconomic and political organizations. In this context, she notes how different moral and social values such as decency, honor, honesty, fairness, conviviality and enjoyment, were associated with the space of the restaurant and, more importantly, how the particularities of this association shift in time as the restaurant and gastronomic culture develop (Spang 2000: 149-150). I will look into some of these complexities in the next chapter.

new experiences to local consumers as well as to national and foreign tourists. As far as restaurateurs and chefs are concerned these spaces are of course a business opportunity, but they are also a vehicle for the professionalization of the craft or transmission of the very same values which such spaces generate and which nevertheless represent underlying community values (Chrzan 2006; West and Carrier's 2004; Long 2004; Urry 2002). Even if many of these restaurants offer foods and dishes from other parts of the world, those which offer local dishes have become an important showcase for the different trends and manifestations of local cuisines (Toronja and Etiqueta Negra (Eds.) 2009; Wilk 2006).

In the current trends, Colombian traditional cuisines are interpreted and enacted in three main urban food settings: fine dining restaurants, comfort food restaurants, and market places. Here we can see a few examples of dishes offered in the set menu of representative fine dining or upscale restaurants in Bogotá that interpret regional traditional cuisines or emphasize the use of local-traditional products:

> Restaurante Leo cocina y cava:
>
> (*main course / starter*); Dish of cubios, snails, sprouts, ullucos, lettuces, chachafruto, tamarillo, sweet cucumber braised Angus, salt of Manaure, yuyo (wild turnip), purple corn.
>
> (*main course*); Babilla (caiman), clarified huitoto chili sauce, yucca (*starter*); Mutton, sweet pepper, Malanga (taro).
>
> (*main course*); Arrechon (artisanal alcoholic beverage) chilled cream, sapote gel, cupazú, caucan cacao.
>
> (*dessert*); Santanderean cocoa globe, titoté (fried-toasted coconut) and sesame peel; frozen cream, naidi or asaí (palm fruit), Jackfruit, and millet candy (Leo cocina y cava 2016: b).

Restaurant Club Colombia:

(*appetizers*); Santarrosan small chorizos with arepa.

(*appetizers/side dishes*); corn wraps; mixed Colombian empanadas arracache cakes; Bogotá arepa with butter and cheese.

(*starter*); Pacific prawns ceviche.

(*side dishes*); Sweet plantains in Kola Román (local soda); avocado, onion and tomato salad.

(*main course / side dish*); Calentado (mix of leftovers).

(*main courses*); Rib sancocho from the highlands; fish sancocho in coconut milk; brisket with chorreado (*criollo sauce*); cow tongue in sauce. (*desserts*); Gooseberry cake; mamey (exotic fruit) in mantecada (buttery cake); almojabana (sweet and salty bready corn pastry) in cake with cheese and molasses; mixed fruit syrups with fresh cheese (Club Colombia 2016: a).

Restaurante Salvo Patria:

(*appetizers*); Red beets cream soup, pork and beef meatballs with Paipa (farm semi-firm) cheese sauce, and baked potatoes (an "altiplano cundiboyacense" daily special); Smoked cassava with elderberries and sour cream ('costeño style'); Breaded squid simmered in hot chili peepers oil, sprouted peas, lemon, and green mango.

(*main or side dish*); White bean salad, avocado, pickled green onions and artichokes.

(*main courses*); Pork bondiola braised with brown sugar loaves, mashed creole potatoes, and cherry tomato salad.

(*desserts*); 'Fatherland' millefeuille with milk caramel spread (*arequipe*) and vanilla; tamarillo, blackberries and quinoa crumble with ice cream (Salvo Patria 2015: a).

Restaurante El Panóptico:

(*appetizer*); Thin slices of guatila (*citron*) or "papa de pobre" (pauper's meal) with pickled cubios, hibias, and chuguas (Andean tubers).

(*main dish*); Colored quinoa and rice salad with heirloom tomatoes and farmer cheese; Smoked chicken with tucupí (cassava juice with ants, fish powder and salt (op)); *Pusandao* (casserole of plantain and beef from the Pacific basin).

(*dessert*); Corn tart with red berries sauce (Vive.in 2015 a., personal archives).

In their turn, comfort food restaurants are a dining-out modality, deriving from an older tradition in the country. As cities grew bigger and jobs became more specialized or technologically demanding, lunchtime for employees was gradually reduced and the chance to eat lunch at home became more difficult, distances withstanding. This type of restaurants, which cater for these particular clients, offer typical home lunches, traditionally prepared, with local ingredients. They are usually called *almuerzos ejecutivos* ('executive lunches'), *corrientazos* ('run-of-the-mill'), or *caseritos* ('like at home', 'mothers' cooking'). Some of them have adapted to their clients' new daily routines and thus adopted contemporary trends and tastes such as offering smaller quantities and better balanced diets, for example by increasing the amounts of greens and reducing carbohydrates, or resorting to less fats, thickening agents, and sweeteners. Nevertheless, the range is broad and the actual content and scale of prices vary depending on the public they target and their purchasing power. Professionalizing their cuisine is not the main issue for these latter venues, yet this does not mean that they lack well defined culinary techniques and sound culinary knowledge. Their main concern is precisely to preserve traditional knowledge and a faithful reproduction of home-cooking to satisfy a sector of the population. Here are some examples of a typical comfort food restaurant's menus of the day or *almuerzo del día*:

Restaurante Cositas Ricas

(*starter*); Rice soup.

(*main course*); Grilled steak, fried cassava (‘*yuca’*), white rice with spinachs, beet and carrot salad fresh.

(*dessert*); Cheese with berries confit or figs in syrup and dulce de leche.

(*beverage*); Guava juice. (Cositas Ricas -personal archives-).

Restaurante Andante

(*starter*); Pumpkin or corn cream soup.

(*main course*); Chicken in coconut sauce, sweet plantain slices, plain white rice, green salad with vinaigrette.

(*beverage*); Pineapple juice (Andante Café -personal archives-).

Typical ‘like at home’ lunch:

(*starter*); Barley soup.

(*main course*); Fried or sautéed cow liver with fresh picadillo (cilantro and scallions) or lentils stew, plain white rice, salted boiled potatoes or fried/baked sweet plantain, and spinach, celery and apple/pineapple salad.

(*dessert*); Cooked mountain papaya in light syrup.

(*beverage*); Passionfruit milky juice (personal archives).

Many marketplaces and rural open markets are also by their nature a venue for the exhibition of local cuisines. In these spaces, the relationship established with the local produce is direct and the dishes offered are prepared with the products they retail. These are the stage *par excellence* for the traditional dishes of the country’s different regions and the expression of peasant foods and tastes, also known as ‘*cocina popular*’ (local traditional cuisine).[13] Some typical dishes at the markets’ tables are:

[13] Bogotá has 64 market places of which 19 are state-public markets and the rest “community public” markets. Most of them offer tables to dine (IPES n.d.).

> Regular pasties ('*empanadas*'); Liver and onions steak; Corn soup; *Cocido boyacense* (casserole from the Colombian high Andean plateau); *Ajiaco santafereño* (Bogotá's typical potato cream soup with garnishes); Cornmeal porridge (a typical soup from Santander State); Potatoes with peanut sauce (typical from Cauca region); Flank steak in creole sauce, plain white rice, potatoes wrapped in tomato, onion and cheese sauce ('*papas chorreadas*'), plus avocado salad; Fish stew ('*viudo*') and fish soup, shrimp ceviche; *Tamales* (a cooked corn dough enriched and seasoned with meats and vegetables); *Arepas* (corn cakes); Fruit salad and fruits juices (Personal archives; IPES, n.d.).

In the case of fine dining restaurants, professionalization is a necessary element in order to understand their particular culinary knowledge. Their trade is based on a marked European influence and regional input behind what in the trade is known as "cocina internacional", which in turn has played a significant role in the technical and professional cuisine teaching methods imparted via public entities such as the National Learning Service—SENA— and its National Hotel, Tourism and Food Center, founded well over 40 years ago. Later, this trend was carried on via sundry culinary training courses and career opportunities offered by private schools and institutions.

At the same time and, to a greater or lesser extent, in these same training centers, Colombian cuisine is increasingly being taught. Furthermore, as long as these restaurants use local ingredients, they will necessarily need to resort to some Colombian regional traditional culinary techniques and knowledge.[14] Therefore, international techniques are applied to local ingredients,

[14] This is the case of typical preparations that use local ingredients such as corn and plantains. For example, *arepas* that need particular local utensils to be cooked in the proper way, such as a hand mill or a small griddle called *parrilla arepera*; or *tamales* that are steamed and served wrapped in plantain or *bijao* leaves; or *patacones* (mashed fried green plantains) that are mashed with a wooden device called *pataconera*, after being fried in vegetable oil and before being fried for a second time.

local techniques to foreign ingredients, and local techniques to local ingredients.[15] In the case of comfort food restaurants, both the techniques and (most of) the ingredients are local, having in mind as well that many foreign products were introduced so long ago that they are now staples of the Colombian diet. There are meals prepared following traditional 'home-cooking' techniques (up to a certain point under the influence of European recipes and techniques, precisely because this type of cooking has long been made part of the national home menu).[16] These comfort food restaurants usually offer a warm, homey (if somewhat formal), pleasant, and efficient service. The general idea behind is to make people feel at home.

At the open market tables, something rather similar takes place, but the setting, as opposed to that of the comfort food venues, is rather more popular. In general terms, when dealing with traditional Colombian dishes —much more so *vis-à-vis* rural peasant cuisine— both techniques and ingredients are necessarily local.

The logic behind cooking within these spaces is one-of-a-kind: to offer plentiful and generous portions of 'home-cooked' foods. The service is guided by the same warm and efficient criterion followed by comfort food restaurants, if in a slightly more rustic ambience. A family and

[15] Leonor Espinosa, one of the most acclaimed Colombian chefs today says about her most famous restaurant: "[This cuisine is] product of the recreation of promissory species brought to life in seas, rivers, mountains, prairies, valleys, jungles, and deserts, combined with our ancient culinary wisdom and in harmony with prevailing contemporary culinary philosophies" (Leo Restaurant 2015: a.).
Another well-known national cook and food researcher from the Caribbean coast, Quessep, referring to what he thinks he expresses as a Colombian when cooking says:

> "As time goes by, we add to our mix and mixtures, but rather than strictly acting on reason, we try to improve our awareness (…), yes, we are now more aware of that. Nevertheless, I'd like to say that we are now also less inhibited, less orthodox when mixing (…) We aren't any longer looking for somebody's approval or following any particular line, I think our cuisine rather responds to certain cultural, emotional aspects that relate to what we think we are" (Personal communication, August 3, 2014.)

[16] A few examples: hors d'oeuvre, rice pudding pasties (a typical Spanish dessert). Boronia (plantain and eggplant purée), curry rice, roast beef in mustard sauce, roast beef simmered in cherry, macaroni with chicken, banana passionfruit mousse, marshmallow and coconut cake, bread and peach pudding (Nestlé 1988; Instituto Colombiano de Cultura 1984; 1973; Román de Zurek 1963).

friendly atmosphere usually surrounds these tables, and the diner is in close proximity to stalls selling vegetables, fruits, cereals, meats, and dairy products, so that the connection to lands and the provenance of the produce is more evident.

3.2 Food events and food publishing

Besides restaurants as preferred locations to develop gastronomical, culinary and food themes, other opportunities to recover and transform traditional or local cuisines have emerged. In various parts of the country, gastronomical and food and agriculture fairs, culinary shows and business conferences of the food and beverage industry are held throughout the year. Some of these events emphasize the promotion of cuisines in different types of restaurants (for which the events constitute a disclosure and sales alternative), others offer the commercialization of local and foreign products, some others reflect upon the state of the gastronomical industry, the culinary heritage, the role of different stakeholders in the future of the culinary and agriculture sector in the country, tourism strategies, etc.

There are main agricultural and food events that can be grouped in two main general categories: culinary showcases with a component of theoretical discussion about food practices (in some cases), and initiatives that aim to promote the agricultural sector. Some examples of the first group are[17]:

- **Alimentarte Food Festival** (Bogotá): culinary showcase of the local and international restaurant industry; conferences and special dinners offered by guest chefs in different renowned restaurants in the city.

[17] Personal records and online sources.

- **Alimentec** (Bogotá): a large scale event of the food, beverage and related services industry in Colombia and the world.
- **Bogotá Restaurant/Food Week** (Bogotá and other capital cities of Latin America): special discounts at fine dining restaurants in the city.
- **Bogotá Wine & Food Festival** (Bogotá): culinary shows, wine tastings, cocktail demonstrations and others.
- **Expo La Barra** (Bogotá): a business conference for stakeholders of the HORECA – Hotels, Restaurants, Casinos, Banquet Houses and Catering – sector.
- **Expovinos** (Bogotá): large scale expo of the wine industry in Latin America and the world.
- **Pacífico Cocina: International Festival of Flavors** (Cali): an event that showcases the cuisines of Valle del Cauca, the Colombian Pacific Region and International culinary trends.
- **La cocina importa** (Riohacha) (Cuisine Matters): an event that seeks to rescue, preserve and showcase traditional cuisines of La Guajira.
- **Maridaje** (Medellín): restaurant, pastry shops and food brand expo in the Antioquia region.
- **Sabor Barranquilla** (Barranquilla): products and services showcase of the gastronomical and cuisine sector of the Caribbean region and other regions of Colombia, with national and international guests.

Some examples of the second group are:

- **Agroexpo** (Bogotá): large scale event at the Latin American level, seeking to promote the agricultural sector of the country and the region.
- **Agroshow Pajonales** (Bogotá): showcase of the agricultural, farming and related sectors.
- **Expocrecer alimenta** (Bogotá): a virtual event that offers specialized information about the stakeholders of the food and beverage industry.
- **Expoespeciales café de Colombia** (Bogotá): an expo of special coffees of Colombia and other regions.

- **Mercado campesino de la Plaza de Bolívar** (once or twice a year in Bogotá): a market of organic products, fruits, vegetables, root vegetables, flowers and crafts, where more than 250 producers participate through organizations and cooperatives from Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Boyaca, Meta, Tolima and other nearby regions.[18]

There are also many culinary shows in cultural events throughout the year and small shows in different departments and municipalities, in order to promote gastronomical tourism and recently, particularly local cuisines. Conferences, seminars and forums also showcase research projects and technical information of the food and entertainment sector. Such events offer opportunities for debates or dialogue between different agents who affect the direction of the production and consumption dynamics of the country (producers, cooks, entrepreneurs, researchers, state officers, restauranteurs). Some examples are:

- **Inventory of own and innovative recipes in the district markets of Kennedy, La Perseverancia and Quirigua** (Colombian Academy of Gastronomy IPES, 2010). A project to promote market places as a tourism attraction and to protect popular cuisine.
- **V Congress of Andean Cuisines**. A space to promote research and debate around the subject of tradition and culinary heritage in the Andean Region (May 11 to 13, 2011, Bogotá).
- **Food Fair (October 14, 2011, Bogotá)**. An event organized by the city administration to address subjects such as political economy of food in the city, The Master Procurement Plan for Bogotá, and culture and gastronomy in the urban space.
- **Gastronomy Forum of the Tourism Vice-Ministry** (several versions in different cities around the country). An event seeking to promote Colombia as a gastronomical destination (tourism, productivity, associativity, entrepreneurship, etc.)

[18] In addition to this market, the Bogotá D.C. Mayor's Office organizes peasant markets at different market places in the city or in strategic areas on weekends or on a monthly basis.

- **"Between tradition and innovation: highlighting the knowledge of cooks"**. A development and validation project for two models of recovery, strengthening and positioning of intangible heritage, with emphasis on gastronomy at market places of the Perseverancia and La Concordia neighborhoods, with plans to replicated them throughout the market network in the city.[19]
- **Symposium "Food and Country: Power, Identity and Heritage in Colombia"** (June 2-5, 2015). 15th National Anthropology National Congress: regions, post conflict and possible futures.
- **Culinary Showcase of the Ministry of Culture at Expoartesano 2013, 2014 and 2015** (Plaza Mayor at Medellín). With the participation of cooks and traditional cooks from different regions of the country, researchers and local leaders in a "dialogue of knowledge" and conferences.
- **Conference: Gastronomical Tourism and its Potential for Colombia** (July 17, 2015, Bogotá). Event organized by ProColombia. [20]
- **Traditional Samarian Cuisine Festival** (three days at the end of July, 2015, 2016). An event in the framework of the Fiestas del mar in Santa Marta, organized by Santa Marta Mayor's Office.
- **Traditional Cuisine Meet: source of ancestral knowledge** (October 2015, Cali): promotion event for traditional cuisines of Valle del Cauca and other regions of the country, organized by the SENA, Cali headquarters.
- **Conference: Heritage cuisine in Colombia** at **Alimentex IX 2016** (June 8-11, Bogotá). Conference organized by the SENA with local and international researchers (special panel: carriers of traditional culinary knowledge and rural or less favored community leaders in conversation with other cooks and researchers).

[19] Agreement No. 2013 from 2012 between the Economic Development District Secretariat and the Fundación Escuela Taller de Bogotá (FETB). 2012 Diagnostic Report.

[20] ProColombia is the state entity in charge of promoting tourism, foreign investment and the country brand. As part of its mission objectives ProColombia manages invitations to Colombian cooks to international gastronomical fairs.

In addition to these types of events are the acknowledgements and competitions organized by the state through different institutions and private organizations in order to promote research and practical work in relation to culinary heritage and Colombian gastronomy. Some examples are:

- **Colombian National Traditional Cuisines Award** (Bogotá). Annual award carried out by the National Incentives Program and the Direction of Patrimony of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia since 2007.[21]
- **"Somos Patrimonio" Award, VII edition "Flavors of our knowledge"** (Convenio Andres Bello, 2014).
- **Alpina Round Table** (2002 – 2012 in six editions). Award for culinary students and professional chefs in two categories; junior and senior.
- **"El Ajiaco Santafereño" Competition**. (November 22, 2015, Bogotá). Organized by the Fundación Escuela Taller de Bogotá – FETB.
- **La Barra Magazine Awards** (it has been held for 11 consecutive years in Bogotá). The categories in this award are: best restaurant, best wine proposal, best pastry proposal, best traditional Colombian food restaurant, best casual dining restaurant, best fast food restaurant, best coffee proposal, best sit-down restaurant, best service at a restaurant, best new chef, best restauranteur, best new restaurant, best chef, best sommelier, best new sommeliers, lifetime achievement, best design and décor and best hotel in Colombia.

Another development channel of this process takes place in audiovisual and written media in the area of food and feeding. Specialized magazines such as Catering, La Barra, Carulla, Cocina Semana, Diners (gastronomy section) and the daily or weekly gastronomy section of various local newspapers such as El Tiempo, El Espectador, El Colombiano, El País, El Heraldo, and other equivalent publications in capital cities in the country. Also publications in social media such as

[21] In past editions, this award had two categories: "Reproduction" and "Innovations". As of the 2016 edition, it only has the former.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, where information about events and restaurants circulates, in addition to what is published on their own websites. In these networks, different stakeholders-chefs, researchers, restauranteurs, producers, marketers, consumers and private and public organizations express their opinions, share their initiatives and projects and promote their products and services.

As far as printed material, the country does not have specialized publishing in cooking and food. However, there are publishers that have a certain trajectory in publication of recipe books, that include research on ingredients, products, dishes and culinary customs (Circulo de Lectores – previously – and Intermedio Editores (Casa Editorial el Tiempo), Villegas Editores, Editorial Planeta, Ediciones Gamma, Siglo del Hombre, among others), as well as institutional publications of the National Press, and research projects published by different universities around the country or by governmental and municipal administrations in each region.

In the audiovisual realm, cooking shows have been very popular for several years. Although a few years ago most of them were strictly cooking shows (live demonstrations of recipe preparation), with time they have diversified to include shows about products and ingredients, interviews with chefs and other celebrities in the industry, and cooking-based reality shows, competitions and award shows (shows with regional scope such as Cocineros al Límite or Master Chef), produced in Colombia and broadcasted on national channels such as Señal Colombia, or regional channels like Teleantioquia and Telecaribe, or producers and channels that operate in several countries in Latin America like El Gourmet.

Documentaries as an audiovisual research project on food and culinary heritage have also achieved a small space in the past years. They have become more popular in recent times although they are mainly financed by the state as part of their educational programs and their missionary

work with minorities and less favored communities. Material of this type can be seen on the Public Media System – RTVC – on its different lines – Señal Colombia, Canal Institucional, Radio Nacional de Colombia and Señal memoria; or on regional channels.

The number of educational brochures produced for the general public by governmental and non-governmental entities, books for the general and specialized public, and technical reports from state or corporate projects have increased during the last decade. There is even a bibliography compiled by a renowned Colombian historian: *Alimentación y cocina: Bibliografía básica* (*Food and Cuisine: A Bibliography*) (Printed version: Melo 2011, with regular virtual updates). The Luis Angel Arango Library held a "Libros de Cocina" (Cookbooks) exhibit in May and June 2013, mainly based on a collection of ancient recipe books and manuscripts owned by the library, as well as historic archives, academic research, specialized and general public periodicals, and national newspapers. To a lesser degree, the National Public Library Network of Colombia holds these types of documents as well.

Local training for workers in the food industry has also increased. Besides the SENA, that offers a technical professional degree in cooking at some of its regional branches, as well as several specialized technical courses in different food and beverage areas, the number other of institutions that offer the technical cooking and related subjects degree has multiplied in the past 10 years.[22]

The interest in food, tradition, recipes, and competitions has stimulated a resurgence of interest in and organization of the producers of these food ingredients. Thus the number of

[22] Some professional or technical institutions that offer this degree are: Universidad de la Sabana, Universidad Externado de Colombia, Universidad Autonóma de Bucaramanga, Universidad del Norte, Politécnico Internacional, Corporación colegiatura colombiana, Corporación universitaria UNITEC, Escuela de gastronomía Verde Oliva, Colegio de gastronomía Gato Dumas (head office in Argentina), Instituto superior Mariano Moreno (head office in Argentina), La Salle College Colombia (head office in Canada), Escuela de Hostelería de Bilbao (head office in España), Universidad ECCI, Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina and Corporación universitaria UNITEC.

cooperatives and partnership initiatives of peasants and marketers who supply mainly specialized stores has also increased, in line with movements that promote local product consumption, organic and artisanal production. However, it should be noted that except for two or three locations and market places distributed around the city, these shops are located in the northern, western and northeastern part of the city of Bogotá, where inhabitants with the greatest purchasing power are. Consumers increasingly have more options and therefore demand new proposals, as established in reports such as the one produced by Euromonitor International.

3.3 Food policy and related initiatives

As the food sector grows and takes on a greater significance in both daily life and tourism, it requires a parallel community of state investment and constraint. The regulatory frameworks set forth by the Colombian State in relation to cooking and food are so rich, complex and promissory at the same time as they are incipient, diffuse and, in some cases, discontinuous. Some of the most active work that emerges through public policy, CONPES documents (that is, produced by the National Policy and Social Economy Council), actions plans and similar, are:

- **Strategic Plan for Promotion of National Gastronomical Tourism** (2014-2018) (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Bogotá, 2016).[23]
- **District Cultural Policies (2004 – 2016)** (District Culture and Tourism Institute, 2014, Bogotá).
- **Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia** (Ministry of Culture, 2012, Bogotá).

[23] At the tourism and culture secretariats of municipalities and governor's offices, and in the government action plans of each department, there are projects that approach the issue of food safety and sovereignty, and foodways in general. However, the information is not systemized and does not have traceable regularity yet.

- **Cultural Ten-year Plan** (Culture, Recreation and Sports Secretariat, Bogotá, 2011), and the equivalent documents at the municipal head of different departmental regions in the country.
- **National Food Safety and Nutritional Policy CONPES 113 from 2008** (National Planning Department, 2007, Bogotá).
- **Cultural Tourism Policy** (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 2007, Bogotá).
- **Master Food Procurement and Food Safety Plan** (Bogotá Mayor's Office, 2006).

Overall, these normative frameworks focus on major concerns and questions at the base of food production, distribution and consumption. The main issues addressed in the documents are: food safety and food sovereignty, the strengthening of peasant economies and agroecological practices, acknowledging of the cultural value of food practices, development of gastronomy having as a starting point local culinary heritages, consolidation of cuisine as a touristic product, and promotion of research, creativity and developing projects about foodways. The state seems to be leading a heritage movement that is determining in great part the direction to which Colombian cuisine is pointing to, for both, the interest to preserve cultural heritage and to build social programs based on this preservation, and the idea that this conservation will draw tourists helping to impulse economic development.

Other initiatives from the private or independent sector with partial support from the Colombian State include:

- **Colombia Gastronomical Industry Association – ACODRES**. A non for profit organization created in 1957 by a group of restaurateurs and related entrepreneurs, with the purpose of becoming the guild that represents the interests of the gastronomical industry in the country, through strengthening of gastronomical tourism and its participation in public decisions about the sector.

- **Colombian Gastronomy Academy Corporation – ACG.** A non for profit organization founded in 1994, with the purpose of generating the processes and projects that can contribute to a better knowledge of regional Colombian food culture, universal gastronomy and culinary flavors, as well as that related to the art and science of eating well.
- **Slow Food Colombia**. A *convivium* group that coordinates activities and organizes events in different areas of the country around food and eating, affiliated to the global Slow Food Organization, founded in 1989 with the purpose of avoiding local culinary traditions. It is governed by a concept of food being essentially linked to culture, politics, agriculture and the environment, and defined by three criteria: good, clean and fair.
- **Workshop Schools of Colombia**. **Peace Tools**. Training Centers for vulnerable young adults who receive theoretical and practical training in traditional crafts, among which is cooking, aimed at preserving and valuating cultural heritage. It is a project implemented in the country by the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development – AECID – and other international cooperation organizations, and the Government of Colombia, in 1992. Currently it has seven offices in cities that are part of the Heritage Town Network: Buenaventura, Cartagena de Indias, Barichara, Santa Cruz de Mompox, Popayán, Boyacá and Bogotá.
- **School of Sociocultural Food Studies and Colombian Cuisine (CESACC)**. Non-governmental not for profit organization (incorporated on January 18, 2010) with applied research, training and academic evaluation, disclosure of knowledge and consulting and advising in food and culinary matters in the country as main lines of action, based on the awareness of the need to exalt the creators, products, preparations, instruments and accessories that conform the country's culinary universe.
- **Fogón Colombia, union of cooks and their kitchens**. Non for profit association (incorporated in August 19, 2015), that brings together more than 50 professional Colombian cooks that join to work for valuation and disclosure of Colombian cuisines from the axes of research, articulation with the State, education, safety and food sovereignty, the environment, working with peasants and culinary artisans, cooking academies and tourism. All this framed within the Colombian peace process.

Some gastronomical routes created as part of state action plans, or private or mixed initiatives are:

- **La Ruta de los Sabores de María**[24]**.** A route created by the competition organized by the Corporación Destino Paraíso[25] in Valle del Cauca, with the purpose of recovering and improving traditional dishes of the vallecaucana region. It has seven preparations in total.
- **Foodie Trips**: **the itinerary menu of García Marquez, Cartagena Street Food and National Museum (**Among others). Foodies is a "boutique office that designs social gastronomical experiences" (Foodies 2016: a). The tasting routes are carried out in 3 to 5-hour trips.
- **Bogotá Gastronomical Route** (2016). Built by the Bogotá Mayor's Office through the District Tourism Institute – IDT, in a partnership with the Fundación Escuela Taller de Bogotá – FETB. It has four general sections: gastronomical manifestations, "unmissables", gastronomical zones and restaurant lists.
- **Almojábana Route (2015-2016)**. A route designed by local authorities and producers of the municipalities of Turmequé, Arcabuco and Paipa, with the purpose of highlighting and promoting one of the most representative products of the Boyacá Department.
- **Special Coffee Route**. A tour around the various municipalities of the Quindío Department to highlight the best coffees as part of the "Cultural Coffee-growing Landscape Routes" (National Cooperation Commission UNESCO Colombia).
- **Educational Research Routes of the Gastronomy Degree at the Sabana University** (Bogotá). They are part of the program's curriculum and were included with the purpose of promoting the safeguard of the Colombian gastronomical heritage. A total of eight that cover a large portion of the Colombian territory: Eje Cafetero, Nariño, Morrosquillo Gulf, Cauca and Valle del Cauca, the Caribbean, Santander and the Pacific Region.

All of these spaces (conferences, publications, awards, organizations, etc.) are indicative of the changes taking place in regard to the culinary scenario and its significance in the country's

[24] La María is a famous novel by writer Jorge Issacs that portrays among other cultural expressions, mestizo culinary fusions of Valle del Cauca in the second third of the 19th century, and the characteristics of indigenous, afro-descendant and Spanish cuisines.

[25] Destino Paraiso is a social development project of the Valle del Cauca Governor's Office, municipal Mayor's Offices, Chambers of Commerce and businessmen of the tourism sector in the region.

economic growth. These efforts coincide in contributing to an increase of the availability and use of local products and artisanal preparations, and in offering greater visibility and importance to "traditional" cooks, or "bearers of tradition" – as they have been defined or categorized within the discourse of cultural heritage and safeguard of traditional and popular culture, led by UNESCO (2016: a). Their overall objective is to protect social and economic dynamics and cultural practices associated with the country's culinary traditions. Therefore, a key question to pose is why traditional culinary knowledge in particular what wants to be protected and promoted and by whom. I borrow Steven Kaplan's words to describe what bread signified in Old Regime France, to help explaining the symbolic psychological and cultural force that traditional culinary knowledge seems to be having in the construction of a culinary identity in Colombia: "crystallizing both, collective identity and individual, bread forged the complicated links between sacred and profane, hope and anguish, whole and part, mother and child, prince and subject, producer and consumer, seller and buyer, justice and injustice" (Kaplan 1997: 1). Traditional cuisines are indeed linking opposite cultural forces, clashing intentions, divergent economic interests, different socioeconomic groups, collective and individual perceptions and motivations and, moreover, a good dose of social anxiety and faith in a better future.

4. Overview of conceptual debates and practical challenges

If traditional is associated with original, or things which do not transform, and if modern is associated with the new and dynamic, then culinary traditions tend to be associated with the former and are seen to be at risk of being forgotten. They must therefore be protected and described to remain alive. How this is done is what creates complexities and debates.

The creation of a new Colombian cuisine based on the revaluation of traditional cuisines and their different interpretations is apparently contributing to a new sense of belonging mainly defined by the interaction between global and local processes. It results in a gastronomy based on native culinary traditions and cuisines that at the same time molds or assumes cosmopolitan models and visions that frame it in ethical, esthetical and global political discourses of the contemporary world. The various interpretations of what is traditional that are found in restaurants, street food, catering, local products in specialized shops, and in domestic and celebratory, institutional, educational, informative and community work spaces, has gradually created a culinary landscape in Colombia with different edges, social and economic planes and cultural codes. A network that, although incomplete, unfinished and incongruent in several aspects, coincides with the intentions and principles of a search for the sense of belonging and construction of local and national identities, within the context of a worldwide accelerated phenomena of cultural production and information exchange.

Colombian, new, traditional, fusion or native cuisine, or whatever one may call it, is an answer to this double entendre between the local projected as global and the global interpreted and understood as local. Vanguard cooks, professional cooks, traditional cooks, restauranteurs, entrepreneurs, researchers, promoters, officers and operators, and communities as such, are a part of this process taking place in different scenarios and of the various interpretations each person has when tasting a dish or when thinking about it, researching it, and interacting with any version of these cuisines.

Within this tension, a sort of paradox in the relation between tradition and innovation resides in the fact that traditional knowledge is that which is spontaneously or habitually transmitted between generations. Usage and customs are the ones that constitute a habit that needs

to be learned and practiced but not remembered or decoded beyond its own rules and internal systematization. Therefore, why does this knowledge need to be remembered? There is a transmission of culinary flavors that occurs without the need for intention over and above habit. For the other part, there is a discourse about this knowledge that is centered around its idealization, its romantic reconstruction and its potential to become an instrument. As we will see, everyday practices, among them food and culinary practices, are the material to think culture. Therefore, both the practices in themselves and the sense we make of them can change or remain with the pass of time, but not without emerging tensions and paradox like this one.

Another challenging question related to culinary authenticity arises from this paradoxical tension between tradition and innovation, associated with a secondary tension created by the dynamics of the relation between local and global and the issue of cultural heritage. What is or should Colombian cuisine be in the end? What formal principles should it follow to be legitimated as such, and what should it be made of? Furthermore, who has the right to decide if it is legitimate or not? Also, to the extent that this cuisine is intended to meet international standards of taste and etiquette and contemporary global aesthetical principles, it seems to be similar in style to the upscale cuisine that it is being produced in many other parts of the world. What then makes it different from other cuisines of the world and what are the consequences of this potential uniqueness for a Colombian culinary identity? In other words, what are the effects of the fact that Colombian cooks and other key actors, are following global—formal—culinary principles at the same time that they are increasingly focused on the use of local ingredients and indigenous culinary techniques because of a remarkable increasing interest in traditional knowledge?

The public policy documents on cuisine and food in Colombia are especially rich and useful to approach these processes analytically, as well as the testimonials of different kind of cooks, food and gastronomic researchers, anthropologists and other scholars interested in cuisine and other cultural expressions in Colombia. These testimonials also show that there is no single interpretation of what Colombian cuisine is and should be, nor a homogeneous opinion about the meaning of the diffusion of a national cuisine and the path it must follow. At the base of these controversies lies that struggle to define what an authentic Colombian cuisine is or should be and the ways in which senses of belonging are constructed. The next two chapters will address these debates by providing an analytical description of relevant sources of information.

The extent to which this phenomenon is related to larger projects of development and social justice is also a matter of struggle and contestation. The question of the contributions made by these culinary constructions to a more equitable society and a more organic relation between the countryside and the city, or if it is otherwise contributing to inequality of opportunities and a disconnection between food production and consumption processes, lies at the base of this process.

Chapter 3

Vitalization and Revitalization of Local Culinary Expressions

1. A natural tension between past and present

As a basic activity of humanity that shares aspects with verbal languages, cooking has the capacity to mediate between the abstract and the concrete; between structures and universal principles, and the symbolic spaces where representations of food provide those abstract forms with content. These representations are the basic material of the change and permanent dynamics of the culinary universe. In so far as eating and cooking are natural and cultural acts the act of eating is both natural and social; we have fundamentally made it a social act. The emotional, intellectual and physiological experiences that constitutes it are the building blocks and the evolutionary material of the culinary practice as such.

Food and cuisine are also major topics given current convergences, with several economies around the world in crisis and the provision of food and the right to access it being compromised. Among current debates, the most important subjects in play are food safety – the equitable and sustainable availability of food – and food sovereignty – the possibility and the right of a community to define and decide with a good degree of certainty the agricultural dynamics and culinary systems-.[26] The main question could be shifting now with regards to emphasizing the symbolic value of food and of the different meanings of taste, to understand why and who has the right to produce food and have access to it. But the possibility of sustainable production and

[26] The protagonists of these processes are the agents that participate in the food production and consumption chain: producers (peasants and farmers), intermediaries (processors, distributors, traders), and consumers. Said processes and their agents are of interest and competency of governmental, nongovernmental, academic and educational institutions (ministries, educational centers, specialized shops, cooperatives, etc.).

consumption in an ecological and social sense can never be severed from the question of an adequate management of culinary capital. "Both perspectives are necessary for understanding how food and foodways circulate both materially and symbolically in a global context in which culinary capital affirms economic and cultural status across and between nations" (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012: 13. See also Pollan 2008 and 2006). [27]

Interestingly, as Johnston and Baumman note in their study of democracy and distinction through an analysis of the concept of ommnivorousness and foodies' discourses "throughout the 1990s and 2000s, an increasing range of consumers welcomed new 'ethnic' cuisines, a world of tastes cultivated by heightened processes of globalization and the diversifying cultural make-up of the population" (Johnston and Baumman 2015: 12). Hierarchizing food has taken new dimensions with this inclusion of the ethnic and exotic, and the value given to the most complex configurations that highlight democratic values such as ecological sustainability, multiculturalism and authenticity (Johnston and Bauman 2015:13).

The growth of marketing fresh, local, organic, artisanal, and other products responds to a "desire" by consumers for products that represent what is real and authentic, as opposed to massive and "faceless" (Johnston and Baumman 2015: 22; Lang 2007: 2-3; Belasco 1989): "One way to achieve a sense of realness and authenticity is by buying foods that feel distant from the industrial system, and developing personal connections with local growers, producers, and chefs. Beyond the local realm, consumers can identify culinary authenticity by a food's regional specificity"

[27] Based on the Bourdieanan concept on culinary capital, Naccarato and Lebesco aim to understand how and why certain foods or culinary practices connote status and power and represent individual and collective efforts to participate and mold citizenship projects and identities that correspond or question, and in any case are based on, norms and values of a specific society. This, understanding that culinary capital does not circulate in pre-established ways or with predictable patterns, but in multiple and many times contradictory forms (Naccarato 2012; 2.3), is the core of this project.

(Johnston and Baumman 2015: 23).

One of the inherent tensions in this cultural production process is the relation between tradition and innovation that implies a dynamic of action and reaction between "opposite" forces. The process of interpreting traditional cuisines in Colombia and the construction of a new local culinary identity does seem to include exoticization of traditional knowledge and the auto-exoticization of different actors as carriers and consumers of the country's culinary capital. As Belasco observes "by categorizing foods in [terms of] what's good to eat and what is not, a cuisine helps a society's members define themselves: to eat appropriate foods is to participate in a particular group; eat inappropriate foods and you're an outsider. Like language, a cuisine is a medium by which a society establishes its special identity" (Belasco 1989: 44). As described in Chapter 2, this process in Colombia, besides being extremely rich, colorful and vibrant, is multi-faceted and multidimensional, and in any case defiant because it signifies a marker of status and thus serves as a channel of excluding behaviors but also of initiatives of solidarity and social cohesion.

Referring to the double nature of the production of food – material and cultural –, many have argued that alternative forms of agriculture different from monoculture and industrial agriculture, such as the so-called organic food sector, are connecting us again with the earth – and connecting culture with nature – in a way in which the industrial production of food by definition cannot. Michael Pollan argues that "by buying organic [the consumer] is engaging in authentic experiences and imaginatively enacting a return to a utopian past with the positive aspects of modernity intact" (Pollan 2006: 137). Pollan also exposes the flaws and inconsistencies of this

food sector.[28]

For the case of Colombia, the process of building culinary expressions involves practices that can be interpreted as the imitation of foreign models and at the same time as approximations to tradition. Many of the places in which cuisine is enacted (restaurants, festivals, markets and fairs), resemble a cosmopolitan modern setting in terms of the physical space but also in terms of the techniques, the aesthetics determining food plating, and the style of service. At the same time, other places—and even the same ones—are working from the perspective of highlighting, protecting or giving more visibility to culinary local traditions and manners associated with food and cuisine. This dynamic can arise partly from a historic tension between foreign paradigms and an autochthonous past and therefore a possible dislocation between the past and the present (Massey 1995) – especially if one considers the past as that which personifies the true character of a place-. The problem becomes more complicated when having in mind the mixed character of locations with strong colonialist experiences, where the discourses of what is native has for centuries been a subject of enormous political and cultural difficulties and the source of constant social anxiety (Povinelli 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997).

A possible exoticization of traditional cuisines and auto-exoticization of cooks and consumers of the country's culinary capital make traditions potential objects of consumption. When traditional flavors are exoticized, there seems to be a reproduction or reconstruction that mummifies and in fact downplays the main actors of these cuisines, each of the people who work around them and those that consume them. Not because any of them should have special prominence – this anonymity is part of the charm of the daily and the authentic – but because the

[28] One of the "trickiest contradictions" that key actors of the production of organic food (such as Whole Foods) face, Pollan says, is to reconcile the industrial production of organic food with the "pastoral ideas" that they promote and on which they have been built (Pollan 2006: 138).

culinary experience of all these people (individual and collective) seems to be the spirit of the knowledge we call traditional and its raison d'être.

On the other hand, tradition is in some way shielded precisely because of being traditional. Culinary knowledge that does not resist acts of evocation would appear to indicate that, either new generations would not know how to use it in a harmonious way with local customs, or techniques and uses associated with it are no longer useful for current needs. Without a doubt, to the extent as they are live practices, traditions are up to a certain point resistant to change. The question is how much space is being provided for them to remain alive in a process such as the one Colombia is going through now; a process that illustrates and materializes some of the complexities entailed in the intention of updating or revitalizing traditional knowledge.

2. The voices of the cooks[29]

Culinary traditions are interpreted differently in terms of both techniques and technologies. Whether they are reproduced by word-of-mouth from family to family, or from community to community, in this transmission both aspects may be altered. Making sense of a cultural habit – such as culinary practices - can occur through a significant act of reproduction and repetition, but also through different ways of explaining or translating that habit from different perspectives (Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) 1983).

At least three pairs of "opposing" forces in tension play a role in the process of interpretation of traditional culinary knowledge, and the exercise of comprehension and

[29] Even when 'chef' is the word that is commonly used (in the media and in scholarly work), to refer to people working with cuisines in a professional level, I would primarily use the word 'cook' because this is the way in which the people I interviewed ask to be called nowadays. This is not a coincidence. Part of their current perspective on cuisine implies to see themselves as people engaged with local trends and cultural processes rather than as media stars—figure with which the word 'chef' tend to be associated as a stereotype in the last years—. Some of them don't really mind if they are called chefs, but if asked they prefer to be called cooks.

explanation at its base. On the one hand, what is considered ancestral and habitual, and the current and new. On the other, the homogenous and unifying opposed to the diverse and differentiating. Also, the individual or personal can be opposed to the shared and collective. Through these forces, the expansion of fine dining or upscale restaurants (among others types) and the creation of a new Colombian cuisine seems to be contributing to the consolidation of reinvigorated national identities, essentially defined by the interplay between contemporary global and local events, and regulated by cosmopolitan ideals and nationalist claims. There is an emergent national gastronomy based on native cuisines and culinary traditions. However, it also comprises cosmopolitan claims that frame it in political and aesthetic discourses of modern consumption and renewed senses of belonging that take elements from here and there.

As with almost every Colombian national, many of the actors involved in this culinary phenomenon have suffered in one way or another the consequences of violence and terrorism in the country, and they form part of a national reality largely represented in a deep rooted tradition of social inequality, racism and poverty. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, and is the case for other cultural expressions and daily practices, these situations have left Colombians with a generalized disrespect and lack of pride toward local foodways and lifestyles. The testimonies of several of the most renowned local cooks of the culinary scene, owners of fine dining or upscale restaurants, as well as some researchers with a social science, humanities or similar area backgrounds[30], are useful to illustrate these relationships in tension.

[30] It pertains the testimonies of a dozen of the approximately 50 professional cooks that are part of the *Fogón Colombia* National Association – recently incorporated (see Chapter 2 p.29), pioneers of the Colombian restaurant scene and protagonists of the debates that arise around building a new Colombian cuisine. Julián Estrada is an honorary member of that organization and a founding member of CESACC (see Chapter 2. p.29). Esther Sanchez is also a founding member of CESACC. Mark Rausch, although invited to be a part of *Fogón Colombia*, is working to independently unionize pastry cooks in the country. Unless expressly noted, the sources of the information given in this section are all personal communications that took place between May and August of 2016 (with some earlier interviews from 2014).

It is worth noting however, that these types of restaurants are only one of the subsectors that define the gastronomical scene in Colombia relative to traditional cuisines or the use of local products. There are also "almuerzo ejecutivo" or "corrientazo" restaurants, diners at market places, and causal, fast food, chain and hotel restaurants, where the use of local products is also observed as well as dishes which are approximations of traditional cuisines, although to a lesser extent than in the previous three cases. This, of course, does not include the corresponding dynamics of the domestic-private sphere and other relevant spaces such as street corner food stalls, catering for collective events, home delivery services, specialty shops, home celebrations, etc. My analysis does not cover what occurs in those spaces, which would require different analytical – and in some cases – methodological approaches, and that would overflow the study of the subject in the same project. It should be clarified too that testimonies of so-called traditional cooks and bearers of tradition[31] are not taken into account, on one hand because they constitute an extensive number in proportion to professional cooks – hundreds of thousands around the country – and on the other, because as is the case of other spaces that in some way work with Colombian traditional cuisines, discussing their opinions would require different research tools as well.

Overall, the logic that characterizes the positions exposed herein regarding traditional culinary knowledge and the development of gastronomy in Colombia, include questions regarding the nature of Colombian cuisine as such, the relation between tradition and innovation, and the values over which new senses of belonging are rebuilt and renewed. These are all people engaged in the revitalization of culinary traditions in Colombia, the promotion of Colombian gastronomy as a whole, and the construction of the subtle or more evident challenging and contradictory discourses and practices the process implies.

[31] In section 4 of this chapter I define the idea of the cook or bearer of traditions, and of traditional culinary knowledge, according to the normative guidelines that currently orient food matters in Colombia.

2.1 Colombian Cuisine in a few words

These cooks share a common interest in sustainability and on how the development of a Colombian cuisine can assure a more ecological approach to food production and consumption. This is coincident with the food and political movements that are gaining prominence around the world. Such an ecological approach implies a tendency to accentuate the use of native ingredients and culinary traditional knowledge, even if it is reinterpreted or adapted to "modern" palates and needs (in terms of the quantity, presentation and sometimes flavors as well).

All these cooks converge on having a clear motivation to revive a pride lost in the tortuous path of violence, preceded by a long history of discrimination and different expressions of violence. Even when the discourses of some of them are not explicit about this, it is a pervasive feeling and a generalized attitude. Some cooks though, highlight the regional character of Colombian cuisines, and the impossibility of defining it through types of recipes, ingredients or ways of preparing food. They locate the common feature in biodiversity, creativity and heartiness but not in a recipe collection or in a set of typical dishes. This emphasis on the identification of national dishes or recipes, coincides with an intention and a curiosity to find other ways through which a Colombian cuisine can be recognized. Such as modes of preparation or categories of preparations include food wrapping – *arepas* or *tamales* for example— found in multiple dishes or homogeneous recipes. Broader values and emotional aspects of social life, may underscore how they take ownership of a cuisine. Values such as sharing, solidarity, commensality and equality fall into such a category as do even fundamental human emotions such as love, care and warmness.

There are also postures that tend to be more traditionalist or conservative when thinking about an accurate definition of a Colombian cuisine: these include avoiding modern and foreign

techniques, and eschewing new aesthetics or fusion of flavors that are not part of the classic culinary repertoire and culinary heritage. Not all cooks take these positions and some work with a mix of international culinary models and local practices, advocating for the evolution of cooking and the transformation and widening of taste references and ways of understanding the cuisine of a specific place while still being attentive to work with local ingredients and recognizing the culinary heritage.

Tradition in the heart

Harry Sasson is one of the most renowned Colombian cooks due to the success of his restaurants[32], and for being a pioneer in positioning the trade in Colombia as a profession and a valued activity (his first restaurant in Bogotá opened in 1995). He defines Colombian cuisine essentially as "tradition cuisine". In a recipe book that reflects the fusion of indigenous, Spanish and African cuisines he defines what he considers "true" fusion, and not random mixtures such as "*ajiaco*[33] with caviar" because he does not believe in far-fetched products that most people do not even know. Likewise, he sees Colombian cuisine as diverse as the geography that characterizes the country: "an *ajiaco* is not the same as a *sancocho*, a *pepitoria,* a *tolimense tamal* and an *arepa de huevo*".[34] "Colombian cuisine stands out for the type and diversity of its products and for the simple nature and peasant origin and what he considers to be "the world's next pantry in terms of gastronomy".

[32] Harry Sasson (Bogotá), Harry's Restaurant (Bogotá), Harry's Bakery (Bogotá), Balzac Restaurant (Bogotá), Club Colombia Restaurant (Bogotá); Restaurant of the Charleston Santa Teresa Hotel (Cartagena).

[33] *Ajiaco is* a starchy soup from Bogotá and the central region of Colombia, made from different kinds of potatoes and guascas (an aromatic herb), boiled in a chicken broth and enriched with schredded chicken, a type of crème fraîche and capers (the last three ingredientes non native).

[34] Meaning that the differences in recipes, ways of preparing food, and sometimes in resources available, is broad across regions. Although *sancocho* is a type of soup that every Colombian region has, it's very different from the *ajiaco*. A *pepitoria* is a specific dish from dry lands, very "meaty" and bloody (its base is goat's viscera, blood, and rice). *Tamal tolimense* is an insignia recipe from the Department of Tolima. *Arepa de huevo* is a corn cake that is filled with and egg, and sometimes meat, and then deep fried, very characteristic of the Caribbean Colombian coast.

Leonor Espinosa, another of the most renowned vanguard cooks in Latin America today[35], also does not believe in the homogenization of Colombian cuisines into a single national cuisine based on certain characteristic dishes, nor does she believe in dividing the country into culinary divisions based on macro-regions. However, if she had to characterize it in any way, she would do so based on the subject of food wrapping, since there are more than 130 wrappings in the country made from leaves or other natural fibers, that are used not only to preserve ingredients and products, but also to cook and to serve them. For her, food wrapping made from natural fibers would be a wonderful way to define a "country" cuisine.

Abundancy and regionality

On her part, Luz Beatriz Vélez, ex-cook and cofounder of Abasto Restaurant and La Bodega Abasto (Bogotá)[36], known for offering "fresh, healthy and clean" ingredients, and for working with suppliers that are small local producers (Abasto 2016: a), considers that there is a product that unifies and characterizes Colombian cuisine: *arepas*, that in spite of having different cooking types, ingredients and textures depending on the region, have the same culinary principles throughout the country and the same subtlety and simplicity (see some examples in Chart 1. Chapter 2). She also believes that Colombian cuisine can be defined as one of soft flavors – except for Amazonian cuisine where the use of hot spices is more notorious – and if she had to think about a project for a Colombian cuisine restaurant she would do so taking into account arepas, due to the structural role she considers they have.

[35] Leonor is the owner of Leo, Cocina y Cava and Misia restaurants in Bogotá, and founder of Funleo Foundation, created in 2008, with the purpose of promoting Colombian gastronomical traditions based on their biological and cultural heritage and sustainable development (Funleo 2016 a.).

[36] Abasto comes from the Word "*abastar*" (to supply) or "*abastecer*" (to stock), in reference to provision of food, especially fresh food.

Julián Estrada is an anthropologist and cook-owner of the *Quereparaenamorarte* Restaurant in Medellín, and a pioneer of sociocultural studies in Colombian cuisines, believes that they are defined for their incommensurate wealth of good recipes and the quality of its products, although with an absence or flaws in service and the aesthetics of its dishes. He believes they should be enhanced by serving the preparations in a way that honors utensils and the places of origin of those recipes, emphasizing popular cuisines and living capital, without falling into exaggeration and redundancy (as it is the case of *bandeja paisa*, a typical dish from the department of Antioquia high in carbohydrates, protein and fat given that it includes rice, plantains, *arepa*, beans, meat, chorizo, *chicharrón* – fried skin pork –, fried eggs and avocado).

By contrast, in the words of Jorge Rausch, cook and co-owner of Criterion Restaurant in Bogotá, cuisines do not have a nationality at all. He believes there are urban and rural models more than types of gastronomy, and what he intends to achieve in his restaurant and his projects is to bring gastronomy close to an art or a trade that for him has nothing to do with nationality or regionality but with a style of doing things, with creativity in particular and diverse ways of applying culinary knowledge. For this reason, he does not like to talk about Colombian cuisines but of environments. Colombian cuisines, he says, are "a thousand things". In a country of regions each culinary zone is very different in terms of the historic fusion of cultures it portraits, traditional culinary knowledge and specific products on one hand, and on the other what cooks decide to do with them. Regionals cuisines are also a fusion cuisine of many cultures that presents the great biodiversity in the region. His brother, Mark Rausch, co-owner of the company and pastry chef for his restaurants[37], coincides with this view of biodiversity as the base of Colombian cuisines and its multi-regional—if not multi-urban—nature.

[37] The Rausch brothers and family also own Bistronomy by Rausch Restaurant (with two locations in Bogotá), Rausch Energia Gastronomica (coffee shop – restaurant with a location in Bogotá and another in Medellín), El Gobernador

Joy and passion

From another perspective, Antonuela Ariza, cook and co-owner of Minimal Restaurant in Bogotá[38], believes cooking and Colombian cuisine are basically "joy"; it is the traditional cuisines taught at the parents' and grandparents' homes, at restaurants and roadside stops, and in the day-to-day of Colombian people. It is the history behind all that and the knowledge of those who make it by means of oral tradition and research. It is also a cuisine that mainly belongs to women's stoves, and considers all the wonder it entails and promises. Catalina Vélez, owner of Kiva and Luna Restaurants in Cali, and gastronomic coordinator of Valle en Paz[39], has the opinion that Colombian cuisine is essentially diverse and explosive. Thanks to a racial and cultural combination that has occurred since the arrival of Europeans to America, and of the complex relationships that have since then been created, it is a "creative, curious and very recursive" cuisine. Therefore, she does not believe it may be defined in one word: "it is as extensive as Colombians, and must be defined based on its wealth. It will be the next world pantry".

2.2. Tradition and innovation, a key tension

by Rausch (Cartagena), Marea by Rausch (Cartagena), Kitchen by Rausch (Barranquilla), Kitchen Bistro by Rausch (San José, Costa Rica), and recently Local by Rausch (Bogotá).

[38] Minimal is a word game between the artistic movement known as minimalism and the intention of making the "least harm possible" that plays in turn with the popular expression "*menos mal*" (fortunately).
The restaurant defines his philosophy as follows: "Minimal is an exercise of gastronomic research-creation with the resources from Colombian geography, which is nurtured with the respect and appreciation we have for diversity and cultural traditions in our country, and which seeks to point out the unnoticed of living in one of the most diverse countries over the planet and the possibility of enjoying a human landscape so full of shades" (Restaurante Minimal 2016: a.-text originally in English-).

[39] Valle en Paz is a private non-for-profit corporation created in 2000, after two mass kidnappings in Cali by criminal armed groups, with the purpose of promoting socio economic development of small farmers affected by drug traffic and the armed conflict in the southwestern region of the Country. Catalina works as gastronomic coordinator since the creation of the corporation, sensitizing communities about the proper use of their own products and cuisines with the purpose of creating comprehensive wellbeing. Sonia Serna, food researcher and cultural manager, actively worked in this sense at Valle en Paz as well, and in similar projects in Valle del Cauca.
Luna and Kiva are currently closed. Catalina is projecting to open a new restaurant in Bogotá called Elemental, which she considers is the next step in the evolution of Kiva and her process as a cook.

In a similar way in which these actors see Colombian cuisine retrospectively and projected into the future, they think about the relationship between tradition and innovation. However, the effort to situate themselves in regard to this tension, or to define Colombian cuisine in relation to past and present practices does not seem to be as troubling as it is exciting or in any case promising. All of them tend to agree in the necessity to be open to progress and change in the ways in which Colombian cuisine is made with the respect that culinary heritage and traditional knowledge deserves. However, they also situate themselves and each other more clearly as "traditionalists" or "vanguards", mainly because they recognize the mixed nature of their own upbringing and urban background and their contact with foreign cultural models. The attitude that these discourses reflect is hard to reconcile with a social reality given the highly stratified, racist and discriminatory nature of Colombian society, but it is what most cooks make as a statement in relation to their work and efforts. They aim to transform or evolve Colombian cuisine and as a tool for strengthening connections between different social groups for the sake of social progress and the construction of peace.

Knowledge and acknowledgment

For Eduardo Martínez, co-owner of Minimal restaurant and an agronomist by training, the tension between tradition and innovation results from observing tradition as something that belongs to another, a perspective that seeks to create distance. Eduardo thinks that such a tension does not exist in the flow of his project, precisely because the restaurant's approach to peasants (and to rural dynamics in general) does not understate their codes and needs. They make producers more visible by inviting them to participate in the different activities that take place in the restaurant, giving them explicit credit for they work and of course, supporting they labor by buying their produce.

At the same time, he is aware of the fact that his restaurant is working from an urban perspective because of its own context and his training. Eduardo intends to work without distance with respect to the countryside but with clarity as to who they are. He thinks they "always work with honesty and care". For that reason, Minimal can approach traditional and vanguard projects with equal spontaneity. Always acknowledging that there is indeed a need to show the hidden or forgotten traditions, valuing daily life and how that construction of traditional culinary knowledge is and must be built at a small scale.

For Antonuela, his partner, working with traditional Colombian cuisines represents an opportunity to share with different types of people, to know their stories and what they know how to do, and acknowledging it: "How can you make *pollo enchichado*[40] without the lady from El Chorro de Quevedo by instance, or use it without making reference to her? No you cannot"[41]. In this sense, they say, the objective of Minimal is to be a space to "provide another task" to the traditional usage of local products, working with ingredients according to what they consider appropriate in terms of flavors, textures, smells and taste, but based on always acknowledging its origin. This exchange exercise has been consolidating over time between clients, suppliers, and the communities where many of these flavors originally come from, the team at the restaurant and, in general, of how this exercise is seen from outside.

Luz Beatriz Vélez is not against innovation either, insofar as it implies bringing in new ingredients and technologies. What she does not like however, is that the traditional is neglected in favor of the new. Personally, her work in the kitchen is based in tradition because she prefers to use that type of utensil (she prefers for example, to cook with clay pots instead of using an

[40] *Pollo enchichado* is a rare traditional chicken dish cooked in a sauce based on one of the fermented indigenous beverages called *chicha* (made out of corn).
[41] Antonuela refers here to a traditional cook that prepares Colombian traditional food in a street food spot located in a popular place of Bogotá city.

induction stove because that is what she saw as a child and how she learned to cook). In addition, she feels a special appreciation for traditional cooks above anyone else: “these are men and women who feed the souls of their diners and themselves on a daily basis with what they make, in their way and with their own seal”.

Without standing on one or the other side, Catalina Vélez believes it is paramount to be consistent. She thinks there are essential subjects that need to be the base of gastronomic endeavors because if Colombians themselves, and the cooks who feed them are unaware of their origin or do not understand it, there cannot be an adequate management of cuisines, its techniques, or its essential relation with the environment (utensils, methods, routines, etc.). There cannot be successful concepts based on what is local without this knowledge and there has to be a symbiosis based on that premise, instead of battles for the future of Colombian cuisine. She believes all is valid as long as there is a common root. She strongly defends food sovereignty evoking a national ethos too. “The difference between a Perúvian and a Colombian child is that the Perúvian child makes a perfect ceviche with pride. That this is visceral in him”. In a similar vein, for Harry Sasson, there is no innovation without tradition and therefore, if the traditions of Colombian cuisines are not rescued, there is no proper evolution: “if you cannot properly make an *arepa de huevo*, you cannot make an evolved *arepa de huevo*”. Also, making overly complex or far-fetched dishes implies a degree of specificity that obliterates cultural and culinary diversity.

Vanguardism and development

Emphasizing the key function of revolutionary elements, Leonor Espinosa considers that the world will evolve in the midst of the 21st century, and that culinary innovation cannot simply be ignored or rejected. Also, that in a country like Colombia, biodiversity through culinary innovation can generate development: “great culinary countries are so through innovation and not

tradition", even countries that do not have such a grand biodiversity. What happens for her, is that innovation implies highlighting what is local because new gastronomic proposals should not happen without the knowledge of culinary traditions and the use of local products in any case. In this sense, for her many cooks err when trying to innovate, because they are not responsible with handling the discourse and the ingredients. "Colombian cuisine is not including corozo[42] [and nothing else]". The decontextualized uses of ingredients, products and culinary wisdom, not only gives a wrong idea about Colombian cuisine, but blurs the work of those with whom cooks should be working with. For her, the point is to better understand the sense of protecting biodiversity to be able to cook in a wiser and consistent way that enhances the use of local products, without this implying that innovation is not possible and should not happen.

Julián Estrada considers that culinary vanguardism must be supported and substantiated by knowledge of tradition too. One has to "have been through the knowledge of what precedes in order to innovate with solid bases and a clear set of directions". He is not bothered by the fact that there are cooks creating new Colombian cuisine, however he does detect a trend of cooks being more concerned with the structure of the plate than by taste and aesthetics. Maybe, he thinks, "it is an effort to compensate for the element missing from traditional cuisine…"

Another way of understanding this tension is that of Mark Rausch's, for whom the discussion should not be a problem but an opportunity to evolve and expand gastronomic possibilities. He believes that both, tradition and innovation are needed and they can coexist as long as the recipes are well executed and done honestly. Nonetheless, he agrees that for contemporary cuisine to evolve in a country, the what and the how of local cuisine must be known. But for him, the best cooks do not make classic food but versions and interpretations of that food,

[42] Subtropical fruit native to the Andean valleys.

and Colombian cuisine can evolve to create recipes that will later become classics: "a lucuma tiramisu[43] was not traditionally made, however it could become a classic recipe some day and cooks must have the possibility to innovate and express themselves in that way".

The importance of honesty

From a different angle, Tomás Rueda, cook and co-owner of Don Ostia, Tabula and Calderon Restaurants in Bogotá, is not concerned or does not believes that said tension between tradition and innovation is an issue that determines his trade. He understands how it may be important for some cooks to seek to recover or study tradition and "stay there, or go to innovation". But he personally does not feel any anguish that Colombian cuisine will disappear (even if globalization is making it more permeable). He thinks such discourse is "far-fetched", unnatural and in some way, a marketing label without basis and has nothing to do with a genuine approach to cuisine. A contrasting but complementary opinion to this one, is that of Jorge Rausch, who thinks that the tension between tradition and innovation should be seen positively because it promotes gastronomical development, and contributes so that each cook can have the liberty to express his or her work however he or she wants. He thinks that criticizing concepts is not valid and should not be done even by gastronomical critics, who should evaluate food and not concepts. What must however be absent from his opinion is fundamentalism: "there has to be a way to disagree and be able to work together. The debate is valid as long as there are points of intersection between the most important things which, in this case, is precisely the development of Colombian gastronomy as tourism capital of the country, so that there is prosperity and common wellbeing".

In a similar manner, in the words of Alex Quessep – cook and researcher of culinary heritage with prior education in Architecture, and owner of Zaitun Restaurant in Barranquilla (with

[43] Subtropical fruit native to the Andean valleys.

locations in Sincelejo, Sucre and Bogotá) – the traditional perspective cannot depend on valuing the typical because of typical as such (i.e. because of idealizing or romanticizing traditional knowledge). "Because what is typical can be good, and can be everything. It is clear that the most famous cuisines in the world work with local conscience and based on truly respect and understanding of traditional culinary knowledge. The colors finally exist and each painter develops his or her technique, but the colors are there, and it is valid that each person and each cook develops his or her own style always with respect".

2.3 The Value of Pride and the Construction of a Culinary Identity

As many of these researchers and cooks argue, the ultimate interest in addressing traditional culinary knowledge, is to strengthen the connection with local producers and communities to protect native vegetal and animal species, to promote sustainable agriculture and to foster social justice. All this through the revitalization of local gastronomic expressions.

Revival and renewal

In words of anthropologist Esther Sánchez, this process of revitalization aims to resist processes of cultural homogenization and to consolidate differentiation through cultural expressions such as local, regional and national cuisines (Sánchez, n.d.). In reference to processes of globalization, the success with which some international franchises have settled in Colombia and the growth of the foodservice industry, she says that the incorporation of new culinary knowledge (both techniques and ingredients) has allowed local people to share and develop new tastes: "This activity, as a mental process, implies for example the adaptation to defined sizes and proportions proper of contemporary or cosmopolitan trends; the exaltation of colors and even textures inspired by the globalized product. They manifest the local resistance to

an uncritical incorporation of the globalized, unleashing very interesting self-affirmative responses of the autochthonous" (Sánchez, n.d.: 4-5).

However, as she also observes, in spite of the richness of local foods in Colombia and Latin America, these countries have lost the capacity to both internationally and regionally protect and transmit traditional culinary knowledges that would suppose a very powerful framework in regard to the configuration and consolidation of a cultural identity: "An interpretation of this widely spread phenomenon is the over-valuation of the foreign and the little pride with which the autochthonous gastronomic culture is born" (Sánchez, n.d.: 6). In the context of this discussion, Leonor Espinosa's perception of the gastronomic experience of foreign and national visitors from different regions in the country is that it is not satisfactory in general, because Colombia is not a gastronomic country yet, given that Colombians do not have an internal consciousness of what is theirs yet. This is on what she has focused in her main restaurant, Leo, where she works from what is traditional to biodiversity –understood as both a whole range of flavors and ingredients and a whole habitat – in an artistic context[44]: "Thanks to the constant search for promising biological species; to the passion for local foods; and to a deep admiration and respect for the traditional legacy, LEO manages to offer Colombian cuisine enhanced with values, feelings, art, and emotions - achieved from experience with communities. LEO's kitchen is the result of an investigation expressed through biodiversity, mountain life, wilderness, desert, valleys, plains, seas, islands, mangrove forest and rivers" (Restaurante Leo, 2016: b.). Leonor wants people to "fall in love with Colombian cuisine" and that is the direction on which she has aimed her last project, Misia, where she works with popular food, "*criolla food*". She feels that she has known the country and its cuisines since childhood, and in that sense what she does is not improvised but rather very honest,

[44] Before dedicating herself to cooking, Leonor Espinosa studied fine arts. She believes that what she does in the kitchen is mainly art focused on the subject of sustainable development.

heartfelt and lived. **Mixture and diversity**

With optimism, Alex Quessep thinks that Colombian cooks are more and increasingly uninhibited when mixing, "Race is like that (…) We have a very colorful cuisine, I would say, very joyful, filled with flavors that are also explosive, so to speak (…) Many times we could unconsciously say, and that unconscious is interesting… unconscious in mixing". What is interesting for him, is that this is possible because Colombian cuisine has not defined clear or predetermined parameters for a long time, but it is rather the result of an ancient cultural miscegenation. In his case, this "mestizo cuisine" is characterized by a very spontaneous emphasis on its Arab and Sucre roots, although he identifies with many styles: "I like very classic things but I also like vanguard. There are days when I want to eat classic and make asparagus sauce and dip that chicken that my aunts used to make, and those cheese soufflés, and those baked vegetable casseroles with white sauce and those gratins. It is delicious. However, there are days on which I want, as I say, to embark on a sensory trip and eat vanguard, and mix and be irreverent, or eat preparations of other colleagues who also make very cool things in that sense". Due to this same spontaneity and wealth, he does not feel that cooks have to save Colombian cuisine as if they were "super heroes". However, it is a fact for him that there is currently a certain polarization because globalization affects the permanence of what is local and because "as Colombians we lack consciousness of our identity, that we too are mestizo, that we own that entire range of colors of miscegenation, and that it is all part of the way in which we can develop a consistent cuisine".

With a similar tone, Harry Sasson considers that Colombian cuisine is just blurred or weakened when it tries to imitate foreign cuisines. The identity of his cuisine is based on professionalism and on his own way of making things in terms of cooking techniques and

ingredients, because therein really lies the space to improve and innovate. He uses, for example, sous-vide cooking but completes them in ovens or wooden grills. This implies respect for the ingredients – in addition to 100% of his suppliers or near there being local-, and therefore for what he wants to offer clients in terms of quality, flavor and efficiency. However, when he opened his first restaurant 21 years ago, Colombian clients had a certain generalized snobbish attitude, and they asked for raspberries, chocolates and mostly imported things. He believes this has changed through the years "partly [because] Colombia is now a gastronomical capital but also a place where executive and cultural tourism thrives and people want to try local products and cuisine; cooks must respond to that".

On her part, Luz Beatriz Vélez feels that Colombian cuisine has always existed but that only now are Colombian beginning to recognize it and be conscious of the thousands of cooks that maintain that cuisine: "in spite of that many young people are not following the trades of their fathers or mothers, there are many cases in which knowledge is preserved". Also, the media space to which certain cooks have access has made tubers such as *cubios, chuguas, guatila* ("poor man's potato"),[45] and many more, known across the social classes. Even other circles have begun consuming them: "the opportunity to tell what our cuisine is has been slowly opening. The sad thing, however, is all 'popular' cooks remain anonymous, not that I believe fame in itself is important, but it would be good that more people had access to their wisdom".

It is in this sense that Colombian cuisine contrasts with other world cuisines, in countries such as Perú, Thailand and México that have pride and a consolidated identity of their cuisines. Luz Beatriz says, "if we still feel shame in serving a tamal or a *cubio* at a restaurant, we are headed nowhere. Each of us has to feel the pride, the joy through cooking. And in this process, a

[45] Tubers grown in the Andes and eaten cooked or boiled as a potato in popular diets.

responsible media diffusion could be a great help".

Wellness and education

By contrast, Jorge Rausch, again, believes that Colombian gastronomy should be viewed as all that there is. What is offered and creates wellbeing, without giving too much thought to who makes it is good. Complementing this, his brother Mark believes that leaving egos aside, and working with the same goal of sustainable development, competition between cooks with different views is healthy: "the microclimates and the enormous diversity of products make us potentially very powerful, we could be the next most important cuisine after the boom of Perúvian cuisine". For him, insofar as we do not understand that what is important is to have the same purpose and not that all cooks are making the same type of cuisine, this is going to become more difficult. It is not about doing traditional cuisine exclusively, or innovating and leaving behind cultural heritage in seeking a renovated gastronomy, but about having as a common and main objective the construction of a sustainable and viable gastronomic setting (in terms of fair trade, cultural diversity, ecology and profit).

All this, without ignoring that in Colombia understanding the value of artisanal things is a pending issue as well as strengthening the connection between the countryside and the city, making emphasis on the quality of products beyond and in addition to preparations. "Because even if the *arepa* or *tamal* is positioned, how many people are going to do that in other cities? Not many… However, if we convince people that our products are valuable and worth buying, that could promote gastronomy with a greater impact". In the words of Julián Estrada, we lack knowledge, debate, reflection, "cantaleta" (nagging) and education, all necessary in order to build a solid development of Colombian cuisine and gastronomy. "We all must 'be' cooks in one way or another. If you ask a *paisa* about cuisine from La Guajira, or if you ask someone from Santander

or the Llanos about the Pacific cuisine, they usually do not know anything. That is why for Julián, to start with, there must be a pedagogical "crusade", so that Colombians are educated about their own foodways and what they mean in the broader socioeconomic panorama.

On the other hand, he worries about the risk of building this culinary identity based on exoticization because it begins with the folklore and typical categories, generally via tourism. The desire to find a representative dish and "typical" dishes reflects, in his opinion, a wrong approach in this sense. This, in addition to the so called "modern diner" that has more purchasing capacity, and that in his view is too influenced by the subject of nutrition, dietetics and food engineering; "this has gravely damaged sybaritism (…) establishing Anglo-Saxon parameters that generate criteria that are sometimes opposite to the availability of local food and traditional diets". Julián does not feel obsolete for thinking in this way; he considers himself open to changes and likes vanguardism as long as it is a consolidated innovation. This is, a vanguardism that is based on knowledge of traditions and local foodways to solidly grow out of the background and, moreover, recognize and value it.

Tomás Rueda resonates with this broader idea insofar as he considers that there should be further thought on how we understand territory based on two tools: popular cuisine and products. However, there is one missing pillar: that said subjective thought and personal choice – especially in the case of cooks who have a chance to do what they want –, that should be made with idiosyncrasy. Because of their power to shape taste, food preferences and manners, these personal choices must be shared and socialized in a smart way. Tomás considers cooks must take advantage of a positive conjuncture and that is how Ferran Adria[46] and various others have created a

[46] Ferran Adrià is one of the most important cooks presently, due to the gastronomical trends he has generated in contemporary cuisine, considered by many the best in the world and renowned for his vanguard cuisine that has been, among other things, defined as "molecular cuisine", "deconstructive cuisine", or "revolutionary cuisine".

magnetism that has made more people look "towards the kitchen" – people who have the time, money and space for that, of course –. He thinks that what needs to be done now is to make all those people reflect upon what they are eating, think about what is on their plate. As in the case of Eduardo Martínez, his position is based on finding his own expression: "we have our own elegance and we need to find it, because the aesthetic tools we have been using for centuries come from Europe and the northern countries". Even though he does not see anything wrong with the European restaurant industry scene, he knows that it is not Colombian, and that many service and elegance protocols have been acquired in the country without being analyzed in advance. Tomás personal journey as a cook is oriented in that direction: "I still do not understand what an honest cuisine is, but I would like to be able to serve it one day (…) The basic question is then 'What is mine?'. Therein lies how I provide Colombian service and how Colombians like to be served. Because customs have to feel natural. This is where we are…. And there we are".

In that same line, Eduardo Martínez and Antonuela Ariza want to create a "problem" for the client, in the sense of taking him or her out of his or her comfort zone. That the culinary exchange is a challenge for them as clients in terms of experience and reflection. This is why they have never wanted to make a "traditional" ajiaco. They believe there must be a rupture in one's expectation that makes everyone think, and that is why they believe the "gesture" must remain fresh. They wanted Minimal to be a reference point for Colombian cuisine with that orientation, and they feel it has fulfilled a dream because the restaurant has been a pioneer in those discussions, even when no one, or very few, were talking about the value and the identity of Colombian cuisine.[47] Eduardo's main concern from the standpoint of his work on sustainable development of the Colombian Pacific region, is the lack of pride and even shame many communities feel about

[47] Minimal opened in 2001, 6 years after Harry Sasson's first restaurant. Criterion, the first of the Rausch brothers, opens in 2003 and Leonor Espinosa's Leo Cocina y Cava in 2005.

their own customs and cuisines, and the fact that this is not a problem of only marginalized people, although in these cases it is evidently more dramatic. He feels that Colombians are immersed in circles of value parameters that create a constant cultural anxiety. “That is why what Minimal wants to help raise is a new building over what would be conceptually built of our notion of us as Colombians. It does not matter on what floor you are, it will always be superficial if tradition and our reality are not in mind”. Cuisine then is a building instrument for value references on identity, a social action instrument because it pertains to something primordial in life. It is finally “a bet on life over death”, because food reflects in essence that basic tension between life and death.

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From the perspective of the territory understood as a culinary nation or a multi-regional space; as a set of culinary typologies or thematic categories, or a cuisine type mainly defined by “mestizaje”; or as a compound of ecological environments, the definitions and positions expressed in these testimonials coincide overall in highlighting the value of Colombian products and ingredients, based on abundancy, enormity, geographical and ecological wealth (Colombia being the second most biodiverse country in the world).

In addition, the need to respect and comprehensively know the traditional wisdom and to reconstitute and recreate a sense of belonging to the territory, based on culinary authenticity, empowers the chefs to do more than just cook, feed and save recipes. They are creating new culinary artifacts out of old ones and exposing the richness and challenges of Colombian pantry. In this context, the legitimacy given to innovation and contemporary techniques to transform those cuisines is relative, and it seems to depend mostly in each case on factors such as upbringing, education, type of training in the culinary trade, travel or experiences in different

culinary regions (inside and outside the country), and previous foundations in other areas or disciplines.

As a natural outcome of cultural production, the tension between tradition and innovation takes particular forms, as every expression creation and action. In the Colombian case, the preeminent interest of valuing culinary traditions seems to imply better efforts to strengthen the interaction between producers and consumers, supporting artisanal processes and the acknowledgement and visibility of the so called "traditional cooks". However, the way in which this commitment takes actual place, varies depending on the concept of each restaurant, the training that chefs have received in the culinary realm and outside it, their personality and the extent to which their project is tied to broader socioeconomic processes.

There is a generalized insistence in preserving traditional techniques and recipes but depending on if these cooks were raised in the countryside or had more or less contact with the rural lifestyle, manners and flavors, their approach and culinary offer is different. It is for example the case of Luz Beatriz Vélez and Catalina Vélez. However, the aesthetic expression of this connection is different between the two because of their personal preferences and talents. In the case of Catalina, sophistication and attention to detail having as a base authenticity and the transmission of love and passion is fundamental. For Luz Beatriz, the simplicity and respect for the essence of each product and who grows it, connected to her love for feeding and transmitting love and care determines both, what she cooks and how she presents it.

That connection with tradition tends to come from childhood memories that includes visits to the farmer's market, to plantations, to relatives living in the countryside, contact with classical cookbooks, and family meals, even when the food made was not necessarily

Colombian. This is the case of chefs of Jewish origin but born in Colombia like Harry Sasson and Jorge and Mark and Jorge Rausch.

On the other hand, the form that takes the relation between tradition and innovation in the case of cooks like Leonor Espinosa, is determined by the fact that she has had simultaneously a close life experience with different peasant and indigenous communities of the Caribbean and Pacific Coasts of Colombia, and the inspiration to interpret this traditional knowledge in contemporary settings with cosmopolitan aesthetics, due to her formation as an artist and her interest in vanguardism and global trends.

Alex Quessep emphasizes the importance of mixture and cultural diversity to understand the nature and uniqueness of Colombian and Latin American cuisines, allowing the space for creativity and freedom of expression in the culinary realm, although his engagement with traditional cooks in the Caribbean region is an increasing priority.

Wellness and education are also current major motivations to work and think about the development of gastronomy in Colombia. Wellness in the sense of having a clearer sense of belonging to a place and education as better knowledge of local culinary traditions and why this knowledge matters now. Eduardo Martínez for example refers to the importance of better understanding the connection between the countryside and the city, and of asking the question of who we are and want to be from a culinary stance, guided by a set of ethical principles that resonates with The Slow Food Movement ideas. This is the case too for Tomás Rueda, who underscores the importance of searching for "lo propio"; for a culinary authenticity that helps to give flesh to the question of who Colombians are and want to be. Julián Estrada's opinions point to the same direction, emphasizing the importance of educating children, young and adults in the

knowledge of culinary traditions and working for the development of service and aesthetics to consolidate a solid local gastronomic offer.

As I mentioned before, broader values and emotional aspects accentuate as well how these cooks take ownership of the question of Colombian cuisine. Antonuela Ariza highlights the importance of joy in relation to cooking and of transmitting that through consciousness of the provenance of the ingredients, the type of foods that are prepared, the way of serving them, and proper recognition of the people whose knowledge to produce those food was important.

Many of these cooks base their work in the importance of love and independently of the setting and the culinary style, they argue Colombian cuisine should feel welcoming, comforting, vital and representative. Cooks like Tomás Rueda and Eduardo Martínez insist in the idea of honesty to signify their view of the construction of a national cuisine, implying that there should be a closer and more horizontal relationship with producers, but also that the way of cooking should be clean, authentic and committed.

No doubt, these are all cooks interested in the revitalization of culinary traditions and are betting on a local gastronomic project. But the process as a cultural movement is full of contradictions, challenges and questions. For example, the claim of having a more comprehensive and extensive knowledge of traditional culinary knowledge contrast with the number of tasks that these people have as cooks, owners of their business and sometimes entrepreneurships. There is an interest, and attitude, a discourse about the need of action, but the actual research many of them manage to do is symbolic or not as extensive in the end. Collaborative projects such as Association Fogón Colombia or intersectoral initiatives (between state offices, research centers, the culinary industry and international institutions), can be important to produce significant and continuous qualified information in relation to cultural heritage.

Even when both, the search for culinary authenticity and the appreciation of exotic, traditional and popular culinary and eating practices might give space to the democratization of food and cuisine, the fact that many of the restaurants interested in culinary heritage and in the development of an identifying cuisine, are unaffordable by the majority of Colombian socioeconomic groups, and the culinary codes and forms that take place in those spaces is still subject to cultural distinction and social differentiation. This fact makes the development of a gastronomic national or local identity a matter of contestation and a sensitive project, and a challenge in terms of social justice and the perdurability of the project itself over time. There seems to be a beautiful opportunity to create new senses, dimensions and spaces of commensality, communal goals, and stronger connections between dissimilar social sectors. But pervasive unequal opportunities of education and general welfare determines yet the scope and outreach of these initiatives and prospective scenarios.

On the other hand, the reassessment of the relationship between producers, intermediate stakeholders and consumers in favor of a sustainable cuisine is based on the idea of honesty and the consolidation of that what is "one's own" (lo propio). The extent to which the discourses attached to these endeavors are realistic and enduring is still uncertain, as it is the way in which different social groups would interpret and appropriate them over time. But it is a fact that these motivations and the sense of pride lost or diffused years and even centuries ago, have a leading role in the way in which culinary practices and discourses are being shaped by restaurateurs, cooks and state officers. Additionally, an attitude of reconciliation, renovation and solidarity is taking force in the midst of the peace process in Colombia. This particular historical circumstance gives momentum to cultural and social expressions like the culinary projects taking

place in the northwest corner of South America, even when it will not be enough by itself to consolidate and legitimize cuisine as a tool for social change.

3. Normative Frameworks

As I have described, the different interpretations of what is understood by the term traditional in restaurants and related events, have created an intricate culinary network with multiple edges, sociocultural planes, and vectors. But the network, even if unfinished and in some manners incongruous, exists thanks to the exertions of multiple principles and intentions towards a common purpose: forging senses of belonging in the midst of that dynamic process implied by cultural production (MacCannell 2008; Martín-Barbero 2002; Munasinghe 2001).

In such a context, it is said that the State has the duty to watch and protect both the conditions and the practices that are created by a community according to these conditions. One of the tools that governments have to perform these duties are public regulations and guidelines of action, as well as strategies to implement those prescriptions. With increasing interest and institutional projection, Governmental entities at the local and district level in Colombia contemplate the relation between cuisine and culture, and provide an important space in the public agenda for the subject of food and cuisine, with safeguarding cultural heritage as one of its conceptual and methodological pillars.

From the perspective of the National Government, the subject of cuisine involves two essential fields which are the right to food and cultural rights.[48] The first of these, the right to

[48] There are different governmental organizations in charge of different aspects and stages of the food production, preparation, distribution and consumption chain in Colombia: The Colombian Institute of Rural Development (INCODER), The Ministries of: Agriculture and Rural Development; Culture, National Education; Environmental Affairs and Sustainable Development; Finance and Public Credit; Health and Social Protection; Industry, Commerce and Tourism; The National Department of Planning (DNP), The National Institute of Surveillance of Medicines and Foods

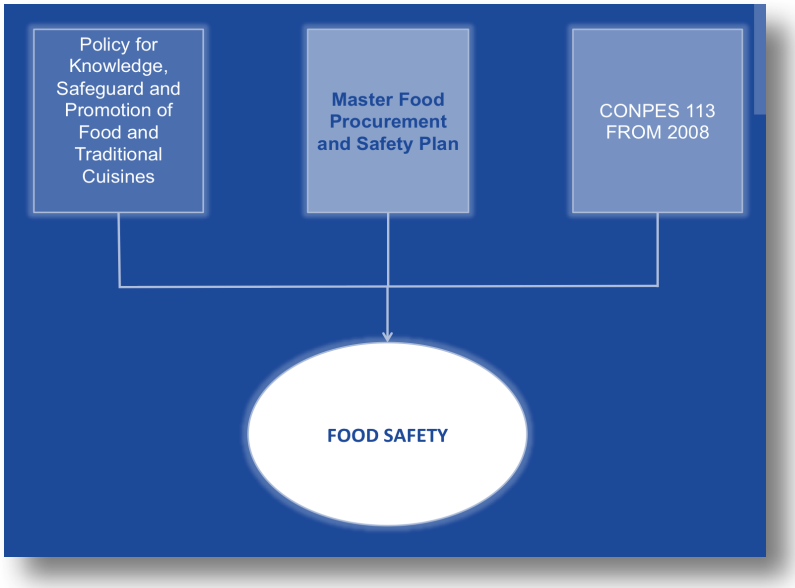
food, entails basic access to food which is sufficient, complete and appropriate food for the body to function properly. Guaranteeing this right must create equality, food safety and social wellbeing. In relation to cultural rights, traditional cuisines are associated with joy and satisfaction, not only understood as a pleasure of the sense and physiological taste, but as the wellbeing created by the fact that communities can express and reaffirm their local identities in all daily expressions that characterize those identities – among them, eating habits and other routines, customs and values associated with food and cooking. As I said previously, the corresponding regulatory frameworks in Colombia are rich and promissory, but also diffuse and somehow discontinuous. Currently, the most relevant documents in the matter are: District Cultural Policies (2004 – 2016), Master Food Procurement and Food Safety Plan (Bogotá Mayor's Office, 2006), The National Food Safety and Nutritional Policy CONPES 113 from 2008, The Cultural Tourism Policy (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 2007, Bogotá), The Cultural Ten-year Plan (Culture, Recreation and Sports Secretariat, Bogotá, 2011), The Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia, and The Strategic Plan for Promotion of National Gastronomical Tourism (2014-2018).[49]

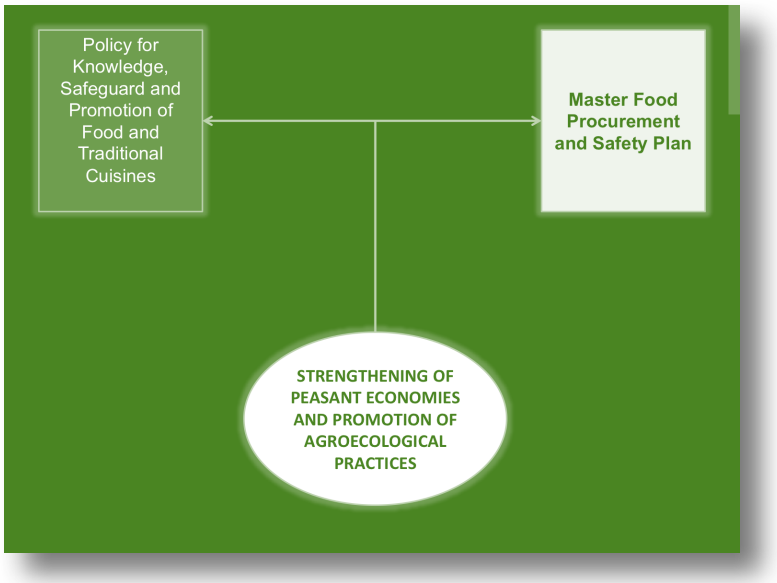
Many of the actors involved in culinary activities in Colombia are not even aware of these normative frameworks or have just a vague sense of them, knowing that such topics are "in the air". Part of the complexity of understanding Colombian food practices arises precisely

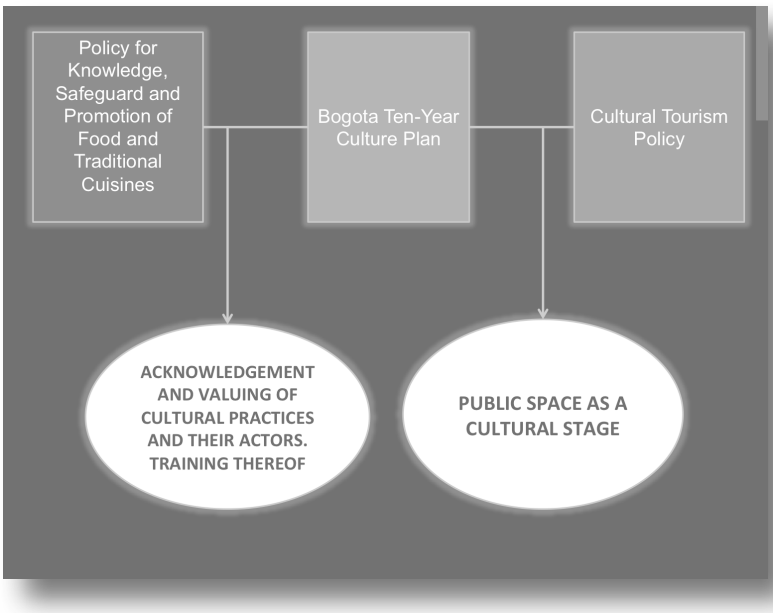
(INVIMA), The Colombian Agriculture Institute (ICA), The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) and The National Service of Learning (SENA).
As part of the same state apparatus, these offices are intended to work in an articulated and complementary way. The concept of food sovereignty is a combination of these dimensions and specialties and subsequently, it implies a synthetic and particular collaborative work between the agents in charge of these components and stages of the food chain.

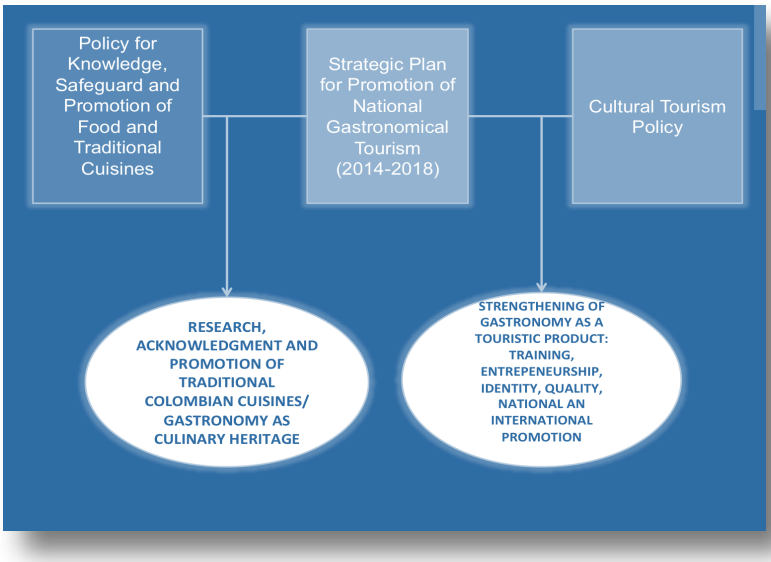
[49] See chapter 2 for a brief description of each of these normative documents. Some of them focus on food security and nutritional considerations, others on food safety, some others in positioning gastronomy as a major touristic attraction, and some more in the sociocultural value of food and cuisine.

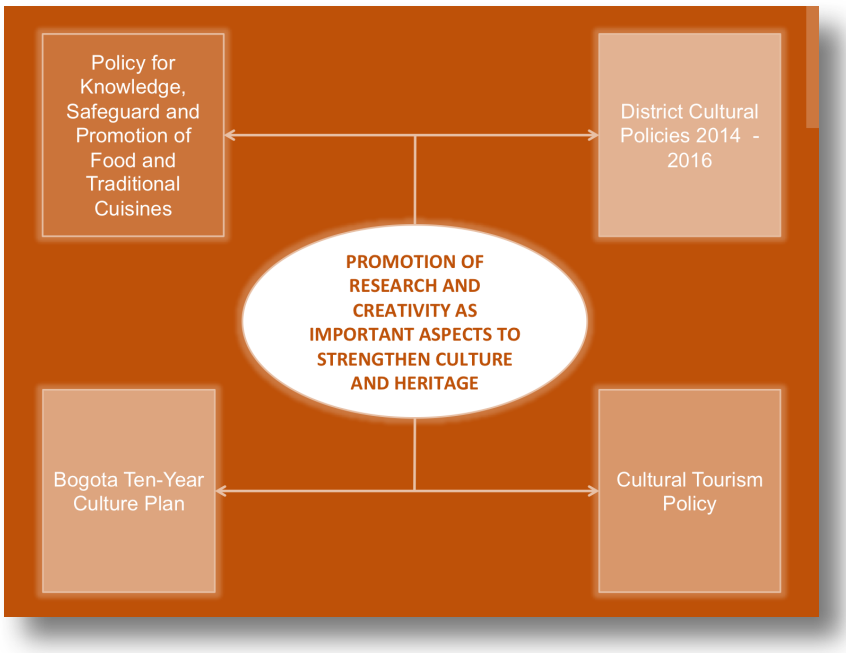
because of the disarticulation between perspectives from different fields, disciplines, trades and missionary duties (in the case of cooks, producers, restaurateurs, policy makers, marketers, consumers, scholars, etc.). Even when the positions are not irreconcilable and sometimes rather coincident, the lack of proper information and conversation between sectors makes smooth collaboration difficult. The fact that cultural expressions and actions are controversial by nature, while also being underestimated or even dismissed in a country in which postcolonial tensions, armed conflict, traffic dealing and inequality, has been the rule for many decades, poses a big challenge. Even when the culinary industry has been one of the forces of economic growth in the last two decades (see Chapter 2), the gap between the cultural approach and the touristic, business-oriented stance is still manifest. The following charts represent some connections between these guidelines and action plans, with respect to interpretative perspectives of Colombian traditional cuisines and cultural heritage.


Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines
Master Food Procurement and Safety Plan
CONPES 113 FROM 2008
FOOD SAFETY


Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines
Master Food Procurement and Safety Plan
STRENGTHENING OF PEASANT ECONOMIES AND PROMOTION OF AGROECOLOGICAL PRACTICES


Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines
Bogota Ten-Year Culture Plan
Cultural Tourism Policy
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND VALUING OF CULTURAL PRACTICES AND THEIR ACTORS. TRAINING THEREOF
PUBLIC SPACE AS A CULTURAL STAGE


Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines
Strategic Plan for Promotion of National Gastronomical Tourism (2014-2018)
Cultural Tourism Policy
RESEARCH, ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL COLOMBIAN CUISINES/ GASTRONOMY AS CULINARY HERITAGE
STRENGTHENING OF GASTRONOMY AS A TOURISTIC PRODUCT: TRAINING, ENTREPENEURSHIP, IDENTITY, QUALITY, NATIONAL AN INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION



The Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia

Public policy around cuisine falls within the responsibilities and mission of the Ministry of Culture through the Patrimony Directorate. Thus it has a more direct and explicit mandate to safeguard the culinary heritage of the country.[50] It addresses the food cultural and traditional culinary complex of different sub-regions in Colombia, that is, a set of customs, habits and values around food, as well as the social processes that help to the transmission and projection of culinary manifestations. A focus on the cultural aspects of food is something that was not directly addressed before in the state agenda. Therefore, this approach has opened up space for new discussions at the sociopolitical level, establishing a bridge between public prescriptions of action with the way in

[50] According to the written document, the policy synthetizes the conclusions reached at seminars, conferences, meetings and events about the urgency of having policy guidelines of Colombian foodways. Also, it synthetizes the information obtained by consulting experts and researchers, the analysis of several academic works on food studies, and the experience of governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, and the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Sustainable Development (MC, 2012:11).

which people actually experience and respond to political discourses around food. The written document, a 95-page handbook, was published in December of 2012 as part of a collection of 17 volumes titled "Biblioteca Básica de Cocinas Tradicionales de Colombia. This series contains a major portion of the bibliographic production of the last 30 years regarding traditional cuisines seen as a cultural phenomenon, and that is actually one of the strategies of disseminating and implementing the policy.[51] [52] Although as a public policy it "speaks" to all citizens and it is of public use for every community, it intends to be particularly helpful to the bearers of traditional foods and cuisines (i.e. traditional cooks, farmer families, artisanal vendors, local producers, etc.). Also, to cultural promoters and public officers working on these issues, and to researchers and social organizations interested in food studies and involved in projects of food safety and food sovereignty (MC, 2012: 69). The policy includes two main parts, the first of which offers an introduction to the overall discussion about food and cuisines, and a geographical and sociocultural context of Colombian traditional foodways. This part also presents the legal context for the formulation of the document and a brief description of its background. The second part elaborates on a "diagnosis" of the current condition of Colombian traditional cuisines, and presents the goals, principles and strategies for the implementation of the policy.

The opening states that the production, preparation and daily consumption of foods is one of the essential components of the nation's Intangible Cultural Heritage (MC, 2012: 9). It identifies

[51] The whole collection contents the handbook of the Policy, and introductory manual to the collection, several anthropological, historical, biological sociological and literary essays about food and traditional cuisines in Colombia, and also recipe books, and fragments of a culinary dictionary written by an important Colombian author –Lacydes Moreno Blanco—, that has for a long time written literary and journalistic pieces about Colombian cuisines.

[52] There is a similar collection issued in 1992 by the French National Council of Culinary Arts. The collection makes part of the projects of the manifestation called "Culinary Heritage of France" that makes part of the Inventory of Cultural Intangible Heritage of United Nations. The collection has 19 volumes divided by regions and is a collaborative work between the Ministries of Agriculture and Culture based on the information provided by regional councils. Each volume contains detailed information of regional products and traditional recipes.

traditional Colombian cuisines as an ideal field to understand why and how individuals generate bonds of identity and belonging with and within a community and a particular region (MC, 2012:10) through culinary knowledge and culinary practices. It also states that traditional cuisines reinforce collective processes of construction of a collective memory, and contribute to the "cultural welfare" of communities and individuals as such (MC, 2012:10).

Understood as a key articulating and synthetic stage of the food chain in relation to production, preparation and consumption, traditional cuisines have certain features that help characterize them as cultural heritage: first, they are the result of a large historical and collective process that creates a universe of knowledge that is transmitted from generation to generation. Second, these cuisines are essentially connected with an ecological and traditional way of food production. They depend entirely on the environmental context. Third, inasmuch as they generate feelings of identity, belonging and historical continuity, they have a cohesive function. By having this function, they become an ideal space to express and to reinforce values such as solidarity and generosity. They are also a substantial domain of feminine wisdom and a way of knowing, learning and passing on this knowledge even when cuisines as such are not seen as an exclusive domain of women. Finally, each culinary system refers to and signifies a "particular symbolic universe" and a "culinary order" that entails defining rules, behaviors, taboos and rituals (MC, 2012: 9-10). It is basically because of this conception of traditional cuisines as a cultural reference, that they should be considered a heritage in need to be recognized, transmitted and protected for future generations (MC, 2012: 22). Cuisines are thus defined in the document as a cultural fact, a set of traditions that are alive, given that they recreate themselves constantly by means of daily culinary practices, oral descriptions and continuous experiences of food consumption (MC, 2012: 21). The document's idea of artisanal cuisines reinforces this relationship. Family food businesses, street food and

farmers are a fundamental part of the "universe of traditional cuisine": "Given their scale, techniques, and idiosyncrasy, they have been called *cocinas artesanales*, an ambiguous concept which nevertheless does highlight the importance of 'making', of 'doing', and understands food as personal labor as well as a particular organization which merges cooks and family with apprentices" (MC, 2012: 25).

Regional culinary traditions are lowly valued given that they are usually seen as "rudimentary", in opposition to other food preparations that use "prestigious foods" and sophisticated preparations (MC, 2012: 65). Subsequently, one of the proposed guideline principles is that in order to safeguard the culinary heritage of Colombia is necessary to advocate for the recognition of cultural diversity and to raise awareness of the need to retrieve the sense of pride for local values (at a national, regional and communal levels) (MC, 2012: 74).[53] It is precisely in this sense that traditional cuisines should be seen as a complex framework – "entramado" – of social relationships (MC, 2012: 24). Moreover, the document states that it would be inappropriate to talk about a unique national cuisine or a single national dish (MC, 2012: 38). Rather, it is necessary to talk about diverse regional dishes and culinary manifestations that might coincide in their form, but that when examined closely show differences in terms of both ingredients and modes of preparations and techniques (MC, 2012: 38). They configure "regional archetypes" in which the utilization of food resources from local environments is predominant: "For example, in the Caribbean [part of Colombia], traditional *wayuu*[54] food it is easily differentiated, given that it corresponds to special ecologic and cultural

[53] The extent to which this aim is related to nationalistic discourses is not the scope of this project. However, it is important to mention that the sense of pride for local cuisines and local values -as the testimonies of some cooks exposed in section 2 of this chapter show-, is a key element in the different ways in which public and private agents and organizations are approaching the issue of food production and consumption in Colombia, in relation to discourses of economic development.

[54] *Wayuu* people are an indigenous ethnic group from the Province of La Guajira, in northern Colombia.

culinary particularities. Culinary traditions of Afro Colombians from the Pacific Coast, in spite of sharing many elements, present significant differences in the northern and southern regions." (MC, 2012: 39). This regional nature is also evident in the fact that even when they are traditional, they are not static. They constantly change depending on the influences of other culinary customs and simply with the passage of time.

Rurality is seen as another essential key future of traditional cuisines, even when urban life also helps to define them, in particular street food and Farmers' Markets that portrait what we usually understand as traditional reinforce the link between tradition and the country side. Farmers markets and street food also make part of "culinary circuits that recreates traditional foods" (MC, 2012: 38-39). A proper regionalization, an accurate register of the complexity and diversity of traditional cuisines and their manifestations, and a better characterization of the culinary heritage in Colombia emerge as the challenges for the sociocultural study of cuisines as well as a regional formulation of strategies for the implementation of the document's guidelines (MC, 2012: 39).

Some of the reasons that the policy states for the lack of a cultural diagnostic of traditional culinary systems in Colombia are:

• A generalized lack of knowledge of Colombian culinary heritage specially in regard to its diversity and richness. Very few restaurants offer traditional Colombian cuisines and although many cookbooks include Colombian recipes or touch upon Colombian cuisine in some sense or at some point, the regional cultural reference of local dishes and local traditional practices is absent from these descriptions or has been lost. (MC, 2012: 65).

• The fact is that regional culinary traditions are so lowly valued. They are usually seen as "rudimentary", not elaborated or too simple, or as "food for the poor", in opposition to foreign and industrialized foods that are seen as "prestigious foods" (MC, 2012: 65). This symbolic devaluation is treated in the policy as a result of cultural globalization, but also as a partial effect

of violence, forced displacement and social exclusion. The culinary realm, as other social contexts, is affected by these processes and it even becomes a space for symbolic and material expressions of them.

The low value given to traditional cuisines is also related to the phenomenon of urbanization and the change in the lifestyles of people that it implies. According to the document, what is more worrying about these changes is the "subtle, concealed imposition of food consumption models that favor industrialized and artificial methods and flavors to the detriment of more traditional foods and, sometimes, to the detriment of the nutritional quality of food as well" (MC, 2012: 66).

• The disruption in the generational continuity that usually allows the transmission of practical and symbolic knowledge about traditional cuisines (including recipes, ingredients, techniques, the history behind them, etc.). This disruption can also be caused by processes of violence, forced displacement and social exclusion, urbanization and a subsequent generalized lack of interest on the part of younger generations (MC, 2012: 66-67).

• A generalized crisis of rural and peasant economies due to agricultural policies that advocate for the homogenization of crops and agricultural technologies that overlook or replace traditional systems of food production. This crisis is also due to the concentration of rural property and to forced displacement (MC, 2012: 65).

• Given that there is a close link between traditional cuisines and a biological diversity, another key diagnostic element is the phenomenon of environmental deterioration and contamination, that directly threatens the nutritional potential associated with ecological diversity (MC, 2012: 65).

• There is also an increase in the number of state rules and dictates that advocate for the "formalization" and sanitation of artisanal foods and cuisines, and that tend to disregard their essential features and particularities (MC, 2012: 65).

All these elements led the Ministry to conclude that there are no effective mechanisms to protect and promote traditional cuisines in Colombia and that Colombian culinary heritage is at risk; this heritage is said to be in urgent need of being documented, rescued and promoted (MC, 2012: 67-8). In this sense, the overall goal of the policy is "to value and to safeguard the diversity and cultural richness of all the knowledge, practices and food products associated with traditional cuisines of Colombia, as fundamental factors of the identity, sense of belonging and welfare of its population" (MC, 2012: 77).

The five strategies and guidelines proposed in the Policy according to this diagnosis and the objective of the document are:

1. Recognize, value and teach cuisine capital and traditional food (MC, 2012:78)
2. Safeguard the cultural capital at risk through the loss of cuisines and traditional food (MC, 2012: 79)
3. Strengthen the organization and capacity of cultural management of bearers of traditions of food and cuisine (MC, 2012:80)
4. Promote knowledge and the use of biodiversity with food purposes (MC, 2012:81)
5. Institutional Adaptation (MC, 2012: 81-82)

According to all these, the policy recommends a series of actions as well: joint work with other divisions of the Ministry of Culture, intersectorial work with other governmental entities and departmental entities, promotion of academic research and strengthening of teaching of traditional cuisines and food, and development of articulated work with non-governmental organizations and similar organizations. Also, support to local cultural management initiatives in relation to the

subject of food and cuisines, promotion of productive entrepreneurial actions by communities, and dissemination events and festivals that honor the culinary wealth and diversity in Colombia.[55]

All these activities are geared towards knowing the culinary capital and strengthening the sense of belonging and pride of communities and their traditions (MS, 2012:83-90). Therefore, a very challenging question about this mission, is who and what are the subjects of state laws and how do they operate in daily life. Also, this involves discerning what helps government agents or distracts them from establishing an effective connection between formal prescriptions and real people with actual needs (Wedel et. al, 2005: 37; See also Schwegler 2008). Beyond the value and novelty of a public perspective on the issue of traditional food, this orientation has also become subject to debate because it can foster a space to potentially reify and exoticize local knowledge, as well as making assumptions about ideas of tradition and culinary authenticity (Camacho 2014. Also see for similar cases in other contexts: Leitch 2003; Lewis 1989; Lu and Fine 1995).

Anthropologist Patricia Aguirre's argument about what a policy should be resonates with this question: a coherent corpus of explicit ideas that are the result of a comprehensive diagnostic and that articulates actions with concrete goals and terms, in order to respond to a problem that has been *already* recognized by the society itself (Aguirre 2005: 226. Also see Wedel et. al, 2005). I will address this debate in the next chapter, in articulation with the topic of romantic commodification of traditional goods and cultural heritage (Varul 2008; Long 2004). If remains to be seen if in the long term the labor of cooks, state agents and of other crucial actors of the culinary world will be significant and it will still be a growing sector of the culture and economy of the country. For now, their agenda seem to be to consolidate a Colombian culinary identity

[55] So far, the Ministry of Culture has carried out 78 projects as part of this strategy, in 22 departments and 89 municipalities of the country, with an investment of more than Col $4.700 millions (MC 2016: a).

that is consequent with the food principles and values they are orientating their projects to now and to develop and strategy to visualize Colombian cuisine internationally.

4. Beyond action-reaction pairs and performative interpretations

Overall, the testimonials and documents presented in this chapter should serve as the base to think about how the risk of imposing innovation over traditional knowledge, or approaching tradition in a utilitarian fashion, is also likely to create social exclusion more so than forgetting a particular material culture. The main problem is not the emergence of new expressions, interpretations, versions of and alternatives to traditional cuisines, but whether those initiatives compete under unequal and unfair conditions with ancient practices or communities whose survival and identifying practices fully or mainly depend on that knowledge. At the base of culture devaluation resides a structural problem of exclusion and comprehensive poverty.

That is why the indiscriminate forgetfulness or replacement of traditional knowledge would be as dangerous as either romanticizing it or the utilitarian exploitation of evoking nostalgic feelings with which they are associated. The attention should now be focused on the latter, since the call to value traditional wisdom and the need to preserve the natural and cultural capital is already ideologically in the national agenda, and in the world agenda since the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Unesco (Unesco 2016: a.) as well as movements centered on food politics that have gained global momentum, such as Slow Food International. What should be examined more closely are the motivations and the reasons why that is the case, and if the prioritization of traditional wisdom is effectively reflected upon the quality of life of the various groups and persons that are part of the network of producers and consumers that the State and the other non-governmental organizations seek to protect and make visible.

In the following and last chapter, I propose a series of questions in relation to how and why, relying on discussions such as the one proposed by Johnston and Baumman about the tension between democratic inclusiveness and class distinction, and earlier on by Stephen Mennell (1996). Using analytical concepts such as culinary authenticity and exoticism as potential egalitarian criteria and ways of enacting social expectations an values can be helpful (Johnston and Baumman 2015: 35, 2007; Warde and Martens 2000; Lu and Fine 1995). In doing so, I address the discussion about tradition and innovation in the culinary realm, and the possibility of seeing diverse engagements with Colombian culinary background as invented or revitalized traditions, or an intricate combination of both, as part of the natural and rather paradoxical rhythm of cultural production (Varul 2008; Boden, Sharon and Simon Williams 2002; Campbell 1987; Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983). I also engage in several debates about culinary ideologies that look at the past in the construction of local and distinctive cuisines (Mac Cannell 2008; Appadurai 1986, 2008; Bourdieu 1984) and about the construction of culture through creative, interactive and contested understandings of social values (Sennett 2008; Calhoun and Sennett 2007; Veblen 1984; Bourdieu 1984).

When analyzing the value of traditional cuisines in the context of producing a new Colombian cuisine, I believe it pertinent to adopt a pragmatic posture that allows envisioning a dynamic relation, one that accepts change and permits updating between the past and the present (Mead 2002, 1981; Dewey 1973). I seek to establish as principles of action only those that work in practical life, and a hypothesis whose credibility does not necessarily emanate from a specific epistemological agreement about its veracity or falseness, but from the fact of living within a cultural-biological-environmental framework thanks to a specific relation with a group of individuals for whom a series of specific values works in a concrete fashion (James 2009). My

goal is to articulate this plausible reconciliation between theory, on one hand, and local discourses and practices, on the other, within the Colombian culinary scene, based on Richard Sennett's approach to cultural practice (Sennett 2007, 2008).

Chapter 4

Thinking a Culinary Reality

Practices around food and cuisine, and different approaches to the relation between production and consumption, allow us to see the nature of social expectations and what is given cultural value in specific historical and geographical contexts. In the case of Colombia's culinary scene, these principles revolve around the construction of what feels one's own ("lo propio"). Not only in terms of being different from foreign and globalized trends but to certain extent, as a claim to end a story of shame in relation to indigenous practices and to a deep rooted anxiety caused by a very stratified society.

This sense of belonging and pride is intended to be surpassed by better knowledge, protection, eventually recreating and giving proper worth to what is defined as traditional and heritage knowledge. As I have said in previous chapters, this call for recognition and respect in the context of the interpretation of a Colombian culinary past, is being carried on by actors such as the state, the culinary industry, the Academy, cooperative groups of production and commercialization and foreign and local food consumers. The process is branded by structural tensions that I intend to make evident in this chapter, through the concept of culinary authenticity and the exoticization of culinary traditions as analytical categories to understand processes of social differentiation, but also of democratization; of appropriation and inclusion, as well as of separation and individualization.

In order to understand the coexistence of these actions I turn to Richard Sennett's argument regarding resistance and ambiguity as processes of a practiced culture, and to the pragmatic

principles that focus the meaning and legitimacy of every theoretical discussion around the value of experience as action, and creating room for development of specific contents in relation to trades and the general human daily work.

1. Culinary ideologies

The interpretation of traditional cuisines results in the following paradox: traditional knowledge is transmitted spontaneously between generations. They are the uses and customs that constitute a habit that needs to be learned and practiced, but not remembered or decoded beyond their own rules and internal systematization. Why then does that knowledge need to be remembered? There is a transmission of culinary knowhow that often occurs without a great intentional disposition other than habits. On the other side, another discourse focuses around the need to protect that endangered, but which is based on a similarly risky idealization. They are focused on either a romantic reconstruction or on their exploitation. The discursive resources and the historical past that serves as a base to carry out this culinary interpretation in the case of Colombia, helps to explain how the paradox occurs and what makes it possible.

1.1. Between equality and differentiation: cultural authenticity

In the sociocultural studies of food, dining out and more strongly the existence of fine dining restaurants, have been analyzed as places that apart from being a means of subsistence, are also a form of entertainment and a way of displaying taste and signalizing social differentiation or class membership and cultural capital (Wright and Ramson 2005; Warde and Martens 2001). As an element for determining public identity or what Alan Fine calls “public taste” these venues display the values, aesthetics and artistic claims in the construction of cuisine.

As a marker of status, cuisines bring about problematic definitions of *Haute Cuisine* and fine dining. *Haute cuisine* is supposed to offer a unique dining experience—often "an expression of an auteur-chef"—that is in fact a function of the complex socioeconomic construct of status (Fine 1996: 141. See also Johnston and Baumann 2007). This idea, as well as the practice of fine dining, generates a challenging question regarding notions such as a developed palate through which some diners can gain cultural capital in the culinary realm (Fine 1996: 16, 44) and the issue of when chefs, entrepreneurs, customers, and other actors of the food industry can have "the right" to participate of a differentiated practice and why.

The connection made by these authors between social differentiation and food manners, is based on Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural consumption and Thorstein Veblen's theory of the leisure class. According to the first, cultural consumption has the function of legitimizing social differences. Cultural consumption is a channel for the capacity of judgment that we call taste, to express itself and for the power of aesthetic judgments to define social structures. This implies that the classification of cultural goods and, moreover, the way in which these goods are appropriated are a function of social classification. In this sense, cultural consumption is an act of deciphering and decoding given that we are trying to communicate with these cultural codes varies according to our relative position within a given social system; a position that we already occupy by virtue of birth and education or towards which we are willing to strive (Veblen 1984: 1-5, 64, 67). By making the meal a "social ceremony", the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of food habits come into play, shifting the question away from the primary functions of consumption. The prioritization of the formal aspects of food consumption over its material reality —intricately entailed in the modern cultural production and consumption—and this new whole morality of food habits

constitutes a powerful instrument of distinction (Bourdieu 1984: 68; see also Mennell 1985, and Carrier 2007).

Thorstein Veblen argues that the emergence of a leisure class coincides with the beginning of ownership (1934: 22), and later in the history of humanity, with pecuniary consumption. In this context, ethical values such as dignity, worth and honor are linked with the development of classes and of class distinctions (Veblen 1934: 15). The possession and accumulation of things and wealth becomes intrinsically honorable and confers social merit on the one that possesses them so that leisure becomes a means of gaining the respect of other as well: "conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure" (Veblen 1934: 75). But what happens when in addition to symbols of differentiation and exclusion, these spaces operate based on inclusive values, or at least they include them discursively?

Colombia's current culinary scene, as evidenced by the testimonials and normative frameworks exposed in the previous chapter, is identified by principles such as sustainable development, honesty, recognition and equality, and the need to appropriate and feel proud of what belongs to a group named "us". This change is not foreign to the trend in several other countries and regions, such as those where the Slow Food movement and claims to eat local, sustainable, organic or consciously—and a more widespread interest in food issues—portrays an even more complex picture. As Johnston and Baumann argues: "While food stratification has evolved into new, more complex forms, it is important to note that foodie culture has taken up other more democratic values —ecological sustainability, multiculturalism, and authenticity— (…) In short, the gourmet foodscape has an ever-evolving status-oriented element, but cannot be dismissed as *simply* an elitist pastime of upscale noshing and culinary bragging rights" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 13).

Also, as Peter Naccarato and Kathtleen Lebesco says, food practices serve to confer cultural authority, social status and dominant ideological discourses, as much as they serve to signal awareness of social inequalities and structural imbalances, in a way that shows us that practices can both reinforce and transgress cultural norms and values (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012: 12).

Therefore, on one hand, spaces such as fine dining and upscale restaurants are signifiers of distinction and exclusion. On the other hand, concrete culinary acts such as those represented by the proposals of some of these restaurants and the attitude of their owners, are based on inclusive discourses and reconnection with other social groups. This is observed in the testimonials of cooks, as well as through the diagnosis and actions lines of the normative documents on gastronomy and traditional cuisines in Colombia presented in the previous chapter. It is between these two extremes, in appearance irreconcilable, that the idea of cultural authenticity arises, more specifically, culinary authenticity. Given that authenticity is not a universal category of evaluation but rather a socially constructed criterion that operates according to the perceptions of food producers and consumers, it depends on individual everyday life choices but mostly on struggles and bargains in regard to codes of conduct in particular cultural contexts. And this exercise of negotiation serves as a discursive strategy for sociopolitical claims (Johnston and Baumann 2015; 2007; Lu and Fine).

The opinions of Colombian cooks coincide in identifying authenticity with honesty, with what "you" identify as "yours". This includes not only traditional culinary practices, but also expressions that use local ingredients but that turn mainly to cosmopolitan aesthetics, or that articulate vanguard trends while recreating what is traditional. Recognition and appreciation of tradition is common to these postures, and what is *really* considered Colombian, in the sense of

feeling natural, spontaneous and harmonious in the face of foreign ideals and codes that represent colonial thought models and the homogenizing attitudes of a globalized world.

Even when authenticity is always socially constructed and culturally delineated, there seems to be common features such as a geographic specificity, simplicity, personal connection, or a link to historical tradition and ethnic connection (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 62, 65-82). One of these subcriteria is explicitly identified with traditions as a determining element in defining what is authentic. They all coincide in granting this privileged place to traditional knowledge and culinary heritage. For example, the idea of what is simple in terms of culinary authenticity implies an indirect bond with pre-industrial food production logics and therefore with ancient knowledge: "'Simple' food is authentic because of the honesty and effortlessness it conveys, a trait that harkens back to the association between authenticity and individual (…). Not only does authenticity connote positive values like sincerity and truthfulness, but it also emphasizes food's distance from the complexities and manufactured quality of modern industrialized life. For this reason 'simple' food is commonly associated with small scale producers, 'fresh' unprocessed foods (…) and hand-made, artisanal foods" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 67). To determine authenticity, subcriteria such as simplicity are used to evaluate not just food itself but also the different environments in which it is produced and consumed, including the lifestyle of producers and the modes of production, etc.[56]

[56] Simplicity is associated with easiness even when it is much more less time efficient and more labor-intensive. This concept has been brought into the discussion precisely because it is not clear that simple—as opposed to sophisticated—is not equally valuable, and that artisanal repeatable or reproducible does not necessarily mean boring or not as special as an alleged "unique" dining or eating sophisticated experience (see Spittler 1999 and Pollan 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013). There is also the idea of that sometimes simple preparations can result in an original flavor that only the proper skill can reproduce (Revel 1982: 13).

Given that culinary proposals, self-representations and public precepts on which they are based are far from exposing a lineal, stable and fully consistent development, the criterion of authenticity and its associated ideas facilitates resolving at least some of the struggles, insofar as it connects different social groups and communities through transversal dynamics: "The dissolving of the traditional high-art/low-art divide is part of a broader decrease in the legitimacy of arbitrary discrimination in society and a movement towards omnivorous consumption (…) An emphasis of authentic culture facilitates this side of the tension. By valuing authentic foods, we are freed from the snobbish constraints (…) We can appreciate a more inclusive culinary repertoire, and we can also pursue a set of democratic social goals, including valuing the food cultures of marginalized groups, and helping to sustain small-scale and local food producers" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 83).

On the other hand, there is another dimension—complex enough in itself to be fully analyzed here—that can be associated with the value of authenticity to counterbalance social inequalities which is the tension between self and collective interests. As Charles Taylor argues in The Ethics of Authenticity (1992), cultural practices of the self, and the ontological condition of freedom at their base, imply an effort of self-understanding that is key in the construction of the modern subject. More concretely, Taylor addresses the question of the modern ideal of authenticity understood as self-fulfillment and the effort to be true to oneself (Taylor 1992: 15-16). In alignment with its moral nature, this ideal of self-fulfillment is related to what we ought to do as ethical subjects and not with what we would like to do (as is the case of the hedonist and narcissist subjects and the principle of self-indulgence that motivates their actions). It is true that the ideal of authenticity implies a displacement of its moral accent but just to the extent in which it implies a connection with an intuitive feeling of what is right and wrong. In this sense, he argues, at the

heart of the ethics of authenticity is the fact that the moral—authentic—intuitive act opens up the possibility to discover the self. This as long as that understanding is not "corrupted" by narcissist principles of action and can be reconnected with "horizons of significance" with communal objectives that guide individual choices (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 62; Taylor 1992: 39-40).

The necessity of authentic experiences—and of a whole ethic of authenticity—grows out of a "disenchantment" associated with a technological civilization and the modern emphasis on an instrumental reason. According to Taylor, the civilizing process has implied a disconnection of human beings from the earth and the rhythms of the past and, moreover, from themselves (Taylor 1992: 101-104). Besides an exercise of introspection on the part of the individual, the "act" of authenticity should connect the individual with a larger social order and an external whole through what he sees as processes of creativity and renovation in which a connection with the past and nature is recovered and strengthened (Taylor 1992: 91).

These ideas serve as an initial and primary way of connecting the culinary realm with the problem of authenticity, not only because culinary creations need to be assessed according to food rules and cooking principles, but because they are not merely elaborations of something new. They are rather the manifestation of something that was already there. In this case, it is not a simple preexisting natural order, but a whole arrangement of ancient and traditional cuisines. New culinary forms are always trying to reproduce these ancient culinary codes in the sense that their point of reference is always the way in which people from the past interpreted, reproduced and recreated that nature through the use of food and cooking. Moreover, authenticity as a social construct implies a tension between cultural expressions and the expectation that things are produced and reproduced, created and recreated in the right way—according to particular sets of

principles and social codes—recalling the debate about the relationship between practice and theory and tradition and innovation (Montanari 2006; Ferguson 2004; Sokolov 1991). As instances of human cultural production, food principles are not timeless claims or essential features of particular traditional culinary systems of knowledge or of concrete vanguardist culinary expressions. As potential self-interest and differentiated decisions in relation to the authentic, they are historical and constantly changing opportunities of collective and more inclusive signifiers as well.

In Colombia, traditional cuisines and food and cooking are indeed becoming signifiers of collective objectives of democratization and values such as solidarity, and reconciliation. This discourse goes beyond individual constructions of the self. Although individual constructions are a great part of the process and they reinforce class markers and social differentiation, culinary practices based on reflections about traditions have the potential to offer a different experience of social life challenging simplistic understandings of social structures and transgressing a rigid line between individual interest and collective goals.

On the other hand, in the context of the discussion about the construction of national and regional cuisines, it has been argued that the idea of authenticity only makes sense from the perspective of the "outsider" (see for example Abarca 2004 and Appadurai 1986). I find it rather hard to define an outsider in the Colombian scenario, apart from clear foreigners such as international tourists. Because Colombia is a country that has been largely socially defined by the 'mestizaje' resulting from the colonial encounter and, more recently, from processes of displacement and the massive migration caused by the rural and urban violence of the last sixty years, very few people have a sense of a single identity and way of life.

With so many actors in play and knowing that authenticity is always socially constructed, the question of what can be legitimately called authentic and why, is certainly challenging and open-ended. The picture is even more complex if we think that there is still a search for cosmopolitanism, encouraged by the variety of eating and cooking expressions that a globalized world offers. What seems plausible, as Richard Wilk notes in the case of Belizean cuisine to the alleged tendency of culinary homogenization of a globalized culture, is that local cuisines are flourishing instead of disappearing (2006: 182).

As part of that proliferation, culinary authenticity does indeed seem like a tool to smooth social tensions because it helps to blur class markers related with symbolic value without erasing them completely, because the price of dining out in general is not affordable by many – and does not decrease because of this search for authenticity –. All the more reason why the type of consumers that frequent fine dining or upscale restaurants does not vary. However, labor opportunities for other sectors of society such as producers, peasants, marginalized ethnic groups do seem to potentially vary due to new opportunities of employment and more support to small scale agricultural initiatives. If in the long run these initiatives can generate a significant change in Colombia socioeconomic structure, that is something this project cannot answer, nor can any quantitative or qualitative methodology on the matter. It does suggest some collective motivations and concerns, underlying tensions and ways in which different actors try to resolve or materialize them, to begin with, on concrete experiences of everyday life.

1.2. Between the past and present: the risk of exoticizing

Another way of understanding the inherent tensions in cultural production, and specifically those that arise from the relation between past and present, is what different authors have identified as exoticization, romantic commodification, essentialization and simplification.

In *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm aims to understand the role of what he calls "invented traditions" as key indicators of historical problems and developments of social phenomena, that more conventional data could not provide (Hobsbawm 1983: 12). According to Hobsbawm, invented traditions include traditions that have been constructed and formally instituted but also the ones that emerged recently – within a brief and dateable period. The concept is taken to mean "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). Also, as he argues, "it is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some part of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the 'invention of tradition' so interesting (…)" (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). In the culinary realm, the need to look for permanent threads of thought and experiences in a world of constant innovation and change, resolves itself in the use of ancient materials to construct a new invented culinary knowledge in function of novel challenges and purposes. In such a context, the process of inventing traditions might serve three different purposes: first, to establish or to symbolize social cohesion in real or artificial communities; second, to establish or to legitimize institutions, status or relations of authority; third, to socialize and inculcate value systems, beliefs and conventions of behavior (Hobsbawm 1983: 9).

In this way, invented traditions are a key tool to understand and continue building national and community histories without "major" explanation: "modern nations claim to be founded in the

remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so 'natural' as to require no definition other than self-assertion" (Hobsbawm 1983: 14). An interesting question in relation to this is then, how far "new traditions" can use old materials or symbolic language and force them to extend the old symbolic vocabulary or to invent new languages, symbolic objects and devices (Hobsbawm 1983: 7).[57]

The three purposes identified by Hobsbawn, are addressed in a different set by Johnston and Baumann (2015) when establishing a second principle –the first being authenticity – to understand the way in which contradictory or conflicting goals take place in the same food practices and discourses. This criterion is called exoticism. As culinary authenticity is defined by a set of subcriteria (geographic specificity, simplicity, personal connection, historic tradition and ethnic connection), exoticism is defined by social, by geographical and other sort of distances, and by norm breaking. In sum, as otherness and novelty (Johnson and Baumman 2015: 90-111). Thus exoticism is equally socially constructed as is authenticity, built "in the eye of the beholder." Johnson and Baumman argue that within contemporary food discourses, exoticism represents and reproduces both neo-colonial inequalities and a cosmopolitan interest in widening the culinary canon, shortening social class differences and forming intercultural connections (Johnston and Baumman 2015: 86-87).

As I affirm in previous chapters and in this discussion, in different interpretative actions of traditional knowledge in Colombia, exoticization is a constant risk, not only in relation to

[57] One of the main motivations of this project is to show some paradoxes inherent to the interpretative process of traditional culinary knowledge that seem to be a natural consequence of the rhythms of cultural production. Hobsbawn's ideas resonate with this claim. The strength and adaptability of what he calls "genuine traditions" should not be confused with the invented ones, given that "where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented" (Hobsbawm 1983: 8) as I have mentioned previously in this project. To what extent is it possible to differentiate between the two remains as a subject for further exploration as well. I will address once more this paradox in the final section of this chapter.

traditional cooks and culinary heritage, but also to other actors: cooks, state officers who design, channel or execute normative frameworks on the matter, researchers and diners. When interacting with traditional cuisines with the purpose of protecting, promoting, recreating or renewing them, these agents express their intention to shorten social and cultural distances. In the culinary schemes and profile backgrounds described in the previous two chapters the intention to widen the culinary spectrum is clear. This is done through culinary cosmopolitanism that incorporates foreign techniques and esthetics of classical and vanguard culinary movements from regions such as Europe, the United States and Asia. In turn, this intention to widen the culinary spectrum simultaneously moves in the opposite direction by looking to what is local, going back to the roots and revitalizing culinary traditions. These moves achieve the seemingly contradictory results of increasing cohesion and social inclusion while securing or reestablishing certain values, as Hobsbawn points out in his reflection of our relation to the past and the dynamics of *real* or *artificial* communities (how to distinguish them, again, is one of the complex questions).

On the other hand, since many actors who are the object of this discourse – peasants, small producers and traditional cooks – do not have the purchasing power or cultural capital to be a part of these experiences and of the environments where they occur, these culinary proposals are at constant risk of reproducing underlying neo-colonial inequalities to idealized conceptions of traditional knowhow when at the same time devaluating and excluding marginalized or disadvantaged groups, "romantically relishing the paradoxes" –to borrow Belasco's expression when referring to the motivations that gave birth to the counter-cuisine of the 60s in US (Belasco 1989: 43).[58] The tension between neo-colonial inequalities and the culinary cosmopolitanism that

[58] Although Johnston and Baumann study is about American food culture I think some of their arguments are valid for many other culinary scenarios. In relation to neo-colonial inequalities in the search for exotic culinary experiences "while not all food adventurers (…) are economic elites, it is virtually impossible for an impoverished and marginalized person to fully participate in foodie culture as a consumer and food adventurer, rather than as a

exoticization exposes are addressed in the same or similar terms by authors interested in examining social phenomena such as commodification of goods, food politics and culinary tourism. They help to illustrate the point.

In "Consuming the Campesino. Fair Trade Marketing Between Recognition and Romantic Commodification" (2008), the central thesis of Matthias Varul is that by focusing on assuring a fair price for Third World produce, fair trade "re-moralizes" global markets. Given that the gap between regular produce and fair-trade produce is justified by paternalistic motives and romanticized images of commodified agricultural and artisanal products, the higher price becomes a symbolic use value for fair trade products (Varul 2008: 654). In this process, romantic discourses of fair-trade revive colonialism, failing to generate "full equality and recognition" as is their original claim (Varul 2008: 654). Furthermore, the ethic underlying fair trade remains uncritical in the sense that it operates with unrevised definitions of what is fair in the end and why. To add symbolic value to these goods appears to be a solution to the dilemma of how to match price and labor value. The romanticization of the producers and their products is based on the idea that people consume images as much as material goods (Varul 2008: 658-59) (see also MacCannell 1999 and Campbell 1987).

In a different historical and geographical context, Jukka Gronow (2003) looks at the development of the Stakhanovite movement of the 1930s—supported and led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union— which supported the "new Soviet middle class" that was gradually emerging (Gronow 2003: 12). According to Gronow, there was a struggle to decide what kind of "novelties" should be produced to meet the requirements of a desired new luxury economy. The alternatives were to reinvent old products—labeled as "traditional" novelties—to import new

dishwasher in a fashionable restaurant, or a subsistence farmer harvesting cocoa beans for a gourmet chocolate bar" (Johnston and Baumman 2015: 92).

models from capitalist countries, or to create new novelties "inventing from scratch genuinely new, authentic 'Soviet' products" (Gronow 2003: 71-2). At the base of these struggles, there was a debate to define the nature of authentic Soviet objects and subjects, given that the goal, according to socialist values, was to produce and consume Soviet goods as much as possible. Additionally, as Gronow notes following Lynne Attwood (1999): "the new Soviet way of life was characterized by *kulturnost*, a special cultural consciousness (…) that included behaving in a well-mannered way, having appreciation of music, theatre and literature, taking an interest in one's appearance and displaying 'good taste' in clothes" (Gronow 2003: 147). This attitude was more an internalized unconscious disposition than a formal set of rules of etiquette, and also applied to the production of goods—among them foods—and the way in which they were consumed according to senses of individual and collective identity, nationhood and new cultural policies.

In the context of the debate about the necessity to rescue regional flavors and the role of nostalgia and of an idealized rural, simple life, Allison Leitch (2008) discusses food as a political symbol in a brief ethnography about Lardo di Colonnata in Italy. In doing so, she addresses both the question of the construction of national and regional cuisines, and the link between social distinction and food. As a symbol of European identity in relation to neo-liberal models of market and capitalist ideals, the promotion of ethnic foods and the development of national cuisines can be an expression of "nationalist sentiments" and of a "collective or contested national identity" (Leitch 2008: 383). Food consumption in the global economy of the late modernity is in stage in which the symbolic and aesthetic elements of commodities have become very significant in determining the organization of production (2008: 384). This not only ascribes new roles to the

consumers— "as international political actors"—but legitimates culture as a "favored idiom of political mobilization" (Leitch 2008: 385).

Leitch observes then a paradoxical consequence of the intervention of the Slow Food Movement to protect the identity of this local item: a basic element in the local diet of Colonnata such as Lardo, "has been reinvented and repackaged as an exotic item for gourmet consumption" (Leitch 2008: 388). In response to neo-liberal models of markets there has been a "commodification of rural and proletarian nostalgia" (2008: 395) and a politicization of pleasure that entails ideas such as the right to pleasure and moreover, moral imperatives in relation to enjoyment that displace it from a private domain to a political duty (Leitch 2008: 396).

In a similar vein, George Lewis' study of class and food consumption in "The Maine Lobster as Regional Icon: Competing Images Over Time and Social Class" (Lewis 1989) addresses the question of the commodification of rural and nostalgia of the popular as well. He identifies two main distinct cultural views of the lobster that operate as a function of the socioeconomic class level of different groups and of the relationship of this group to the cultural-geographic region. These views are, on the one hand, the one of the economically poor Maine local people and, on the other, the one of the wealthy summer foreign residents. Lobster is a symbol of a unique local taste that has been historically valued and validated by a cosmopolitan upper class in the US given that it has been symbolically associated with the romantic, rustic and simple life in the countryside (Lewis 1989: 309). In this way, it has been separated from its original image—as an authentic object—to become a symbol of something else, in this case, of "Maine-ness". These symbols have served to reinforce social class, to define cultural insiders and outsiders and to sell status and self-esteem in the marketplace (Lewis 2002: 315).

Roseberry provides another example in his analysis of the proliferation of specialty coffees in the United States and the so-called gourmet consumption of this beverage (Roseberry 2005). According to him, this change was made possible by a series of technological and commercial developments, but at the same time, the expansion of specialty coffees had coincided with a decline in the mass consumption of coffee since the beginning of the 1980s. At that time, the "quality" segment of coffee trade started to grow, abetted by an increasing concern in environmental, agricultural and social issues (Roseberry 2005: 129-30). As a result of this cluster of transformations, two new "modes of discrimination" appeared: the ideas of "styles" and "flavors" and with them the development of gourmet coffee beans and flavored coffees (Roseberry 2005:134).

Roseberry uses Appadurai's idea of "the fetishism of the consumer" that intends to impute agency to the consumer in order to explain the fact that—as with the history of the marketing and consumption specialty coffee—a revolution in consumption seems to have initiated a revolution in production. However, in spite of this "fetishism" that is well represented in the use by the coffee trade actors of crude categories such as class to set the marketing strategies, somehow these categories have to coincide with what is actually happening in the sense that they are trying to describe a social and cultural reality: "a complex relationship between class and food consumption is often remarked, first in the obvious sense that particular groups occupy differential market situations in terms of their ability to purchase certain foods, and second in the uses various groups make of foods and food preferences in marking themselves as distinctive from or in some sense like other groups" (Roseberry 2005: 140).

As with Leitch, Lewis and Roseberry, Susan Terrio (2005) is interested in analyzing the increasing demand of a specialty product, in this case, French artisanal chocolate. As we saw in

Chapter 2, local products that involve an artisanal elaboration with traditional culinary techniques are the object of new practices based on the search for a redefinition of the local, based on appreciation of unprivileged communities with simple, rustic lifestyles but in a modern – privileged – context. Terrio wants to explore the development of this good as a craft commodity and a symbol of national identity, contextualized in the process of formation of the European Community. In this new value given to traditional craft production – which is inscribed in the already prestigious French haute cuisine – and the intention to shape and to educate the consumers' taste, there is an interplay between a contemporary artisanal production and an "idealized, aestheticized" history of premodern France (Terrio 2005:147). This interaction is being largely capitalized on by French chefs and gastronomic entrepreneurs in the promotion of artisanal chocolatiers and the corresponding educated taste that the consumers are encouraged to pursue (ironically, artisanal chocolatiers purchase already manufactured blocks of chocolate to transform them "into a personalized line of goods") (Terrio 2005: 147).

Terrio addresses the issue of authenticity in relation to the pursuit of social distinction exercised through the consumption of certain goods and the way in which they are consumed. Connoisseurship, and interrelated notions such as the construction of a correct palate with appropriate techniques to consume artisanal chocolate, make up an essential part of this pursuit to accrue social value. The discussion around the authenticity of chocolate affirms how "the historicities of these goods, even if invented or altered, give them special value for both use and gift exchange. This is what makes them 'authentic' and distinguishes them from the 'fake' or 'inauthentic' chocolate made from identical materials" (Terrio 2005: 149).

Looking at the gastronomic phenomenon in the northern region of Italy—Tuscany and Umbria—that includes the publication of several cookbooks, TV shows and thematic culinary

schools, Janet Chrzan (2006) focuses on the new alternatives offered by the "Tuscan experience" to the "idealized self" of upper and middle-class Italians and tourists (Chrzan 2006). This idealized self aims to be constructed through the transformation of dietary habits and a health identity. Some of the key concepts that are at stake in this performance are a lifestyle management and what she describes as rituals around ideals and images of tradition and local communities (Chrzan 2006). There is a new idealized self and a lifestyle, based on new ideologies of food and nutrition and a conceptual contrast between a healthy Italian-Mediterranean lifestyle and the modern urban Western lifestyle that reifies "the Tuscan experience" and the people, landscapes and spaces that conform it (Chrzan 2006).

As a last example, in *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1999), Dean MacCannell sees the nostalgia for the past and the constant search for authenticity—in this case specifically in tourist experiences—as "the grounds of [a] unifying consciousness" characteristic of the spirit of modernity (MacCannell 1999: 3). There is an urge in the modern man to "cultivate" new people, new things and new ideas and to avoid repetition. In this context, tradition is recalled to give a sense of profundity to new inventions and modernity in general (MacCannell: 34).

In this sense, the issue of self-discovery through the exploration of the other it is central: "modern man has been condemned to look elsewhere, everywhere, for his authenticity, to see if he can catch a glimpse of it reflected in the simplicity, poverty, chastity or purity of others" (MacCannell 1999: 41). There is in this way a superficial approach to "the other" and mere curiosity for social minorities, but also the motivation of having a deeper engagement with society and culture: "differentiation [is] the origin of alternatives and the feeling of freedom in modern society (…) [and] the primary ground of the contradiction, conflict, violence, fragmentation, discontinuity and alienation that are such evident features of modern life" (MacCannell 1999, 11).

Through the process of cultural production people communicate a number of emotions and complex meanings and a cultural ground might be used to connect strangers in closeness and solidarity even where there is no an empirical proximity (MacCannell 1999, 32).

The features of the current culinary scene in Colombia, seems to resemble these phenomena in relation to some behaviors and principles: a romantization of the producers and their products and a remoralization of fair trade (without much clarity yet of what is fair) (Varul 2008); the creation of traditional novelties in the context of fine or upscale dining (Jukka Gronow 2003); the promotion of nostalgia and the idealization and commodification of peasant life (Leitch 2008; Lewis 1989); the stylization of flavor through the marketing of specialty products that enter to operate as a marker of distinction and differentiation (Roseberry 2005; Terrio 2005). Also, the idealization of the self is constructed through the transformation of eating habits, and food practices in general, that involves the consumption of local, organic, artisanal or in any case "specialty" products and specific morals (Chrzan 2006). Moreover, a new sort of social anxiety appears based on a nostalgia for the past represented in a constant search of cultural authenticity (MacCannell 1999).

There are certainly nuances in those patterns and, as I have discussed in this section, the concepts of authenticity and exoticization show themselves to be contradictory, or at least contain complex motivations and outcomes which is probably the case too for each of the cases just described. There is indeed a general concern on the part of the cooks interviewed for this project in producing authentic food, transmitting a genuine imprint in the work they do, and feeling honest and distinct although humble, in relation to their role in the culinary evolution of the country. In the midst of fashionable culinary trends around the world, the spread of spaces with cosmopolitan esthetics and the profusion of fusion cuisine worldwide, they want to emphasize their respect and

the value they give to traditional culinary knowledge and native products. They are also interested in working with small producers to strengthen the bonds between producers and consumers and between the city and the countryside in a rather small scale, but concrete way too.

For cooks like Antonuela Ariza, Eduardo Martínez and Catalina Vélez, the narrative of the menus and how restaurants tell their stories, can actually blur the real nature of local recipes and dishes, even if these menus are based on native ingredients and products (dishes and recipes that genetically connect someone with a particular place). For them, without a meaningful contact with the cuisine of a place, based on its origins and traditions, there is no way that their mission as cooks and their intentions to strength community bonds with other social groups can be possible. The chefs interviewed here hold the general idea that what is authentic should be exposed with self-confidence and pride. However, the consideration that what is produced in an honest and a genuine way, does not need to be acted as in a play (i.e. faked) and should be in a way imperceptible. It should feel spontaneous and real.

The cooks Alex Quessep and Julián Estrada believe that authenticity is something that one just feels and perceives. Something that people understand because of an intuition —a "smell"— that can be trained. In words of Estrada, "authenticity is a culinary spontaneous expression behind which can rely a great effort, but of which one can say 'is' or 'is not correct'. 'It tastes' or 'it doesn't taste'". In that sense, he is not worried about trends or fashions because there is always authenticity as a north star and as a reference mark. It is "the real path". As much as all these are real testimonies made by sincere people and are made visible by work in progress, Hobsbawn's question of what counts as invented or real here hangs over the product or event.

1.3 The focus of a cultural policy in traditional knowledge

Besides exemplifying similar phenomena in different regions and sociopolitical settings, these reflections also highlight one of the main issues at stake in interpretative processes of traditions: the construction of cultural policy. In Colombia there is an increasing interest on the part of the State to look at cultural culinary heritage in order to protect this heritage allegedly at risk, and to promote and make visible culinary traditions in order to develop Colombian gastronomy. However, it seems that that approach poses a risk of its own in exoticizing and commodifying those traditional goods.

Although policies are a tool for governments and entire communities to work on achieving a particular social order, they operate at many different levels, having an increasing role in defining individual rights as well as both the public and the private subject. In this sense, as an effective instrument in the dynamics of power in modern societies it is useful, and actually necessary to look at them not just in their "constraining", and even repressing dimension, but also at "how [they] fashion modern identities and ideas about what it means to be human" (Wedel et. al, 2005: 37).

The Policy for Knowledge, Safeguard and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia (adopted by the Ministry of Culture in 2012) focuses on the cultural aspects of food. In so doing, it opens up new discussions at the sociopolitical level, establishing a bridge between public prescriptions of action with the way in which people actually experience and respond to political discourses around food. By stating that through culinary knowledge and culinary practices people generate bonds of identity and belonging to a community and a particular region, and concluding from this construct that traditional ways of food production, preparation and consumption are an essential component of the nation's cultural heritage (MC 2012: 9-10), the policy is directly pointing to the cultural nature of food and culinary practices. The Food Policy document states that traditional cuisines contribute to the overall "cultural welfare" of families and

individuals (MC, 2012:10). What "cultural welfare" means here is not entirely clear. What it is clear is that the policy identifies what it considers an essential link between the cultural identity of a social group and the food practices specific to that group and the essential role of traditions. This is something that had not been addressed before in policy making in Colombia and in national political debates in general.

In "Una cocina exprés. Cómo se cocina una política pública de patrimonio culinario", Colombian anthropologist Juana Camacho addresses the relation between food, culture and politics (Camacho 2014). Although her analyzes is mainly focused on what she considers are some tensions and contradictions in the formulation of the policy[59], she also talks about how it reflects an intention on the part of the state to work in a more comprehensive and substantial way in regard to cultural perspectives of food issues in Colombia:

> (…) The proposal of a patrimonial policy for food and traditional cuisines of the Ministry of Culture is not without novel overtones. In the first place, because in food and nutritional policies, whose technical foci privilege the cost-benefit relationship, culture only appears rhetorically and as a matter of usage and consumption preferences. Therefore, public actions are geared towards nutritional education of the population to improve the quality of intake and nutrition. In second place, because within the current multicultural framework that governs national public management, culture has been associated mainly as a subject and attribute of ethnic minorities, for whom designing differential actions has been recommended, according to cultural, food and nutritional specificities, and to their condition of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity (Camacho 2014: 172).

[59] She is mainly arguing that the policy makes assumptions about the ideas of tradition and food and culinary authenticity, "naturalizing" these terms and obscuring the historical and current problematic about food and cuisines in Colombia (Camacho 2014: 172).

And even when Camacho bases her critical reading in the overall problematizing of the patrimonialization of culture that is operating as the main theoretical pillar of the policy, she also refers to the space that political discourses and public policies with new perspectives and distinct social aims, unfold in regard to debates about food. On the other hand, such discourses seem to offer a romantic or essentializing reconstruction of culinary traditional knowledge: "These perspectives privilege romantic, nostalgic, curious or festive aspects of food that appeal to feelings, morale and national and regional pride, and that leave little space for social and economic dimensions of gastro-politics[60]" (Camacho 2014: 179).[61]

This debate also exemplifies Hobsbawn's claim about a relationship with the past through invented traditions, serving the goal of establishing or legitimizing institutions and showing how policy making is also contributing to shape social life, cultural values and codes of behavior (1983: 9). But again, as these reflections intend to expose, this construction should not be seen as a basic equation of elites or governmental agencies or the ones in power wanting to take advantage of a culinary traditional repertoire that belongs to marginalized communities. Neither should be seen as a happy picture of inclusiveness and equal rights and access to opportunities for everyone, or thorough knowledge and proper respect for other communities' foodways. In the words of

[60] Term proposed by Appadurai (1981) to refer to food as a means to illustrate a socioeconomic conflict.

[61] The idea that there is something alien, imposed, ideological in the construction of peoples' identities in the design of state laws is a very important one today in the Humanities and Social Studies. In her ethnographic book *Cunning of Recognition* (2002), Povinelli addresses this question through the problem of what she calls a liberal moral recognition of Australian aborigines in the context of discourses of nationalism in Australia. In what she describes as an optimistic Australian multiculturalism and the country's laws about indigenous communities. As she shows, the nature of this liberal rationality and the pretension of perfectibility of the law are alienating the people of these communities. Australian multicultural laws seem to be a good example of the power of language to perform what Povinelli describes as a commodification of Australian indigenous culture. It is in this sense that she argues that in the understanding of these laws the indigenous becomes the melancholic object that symbolizes tradition: "the concept of the indigenous seems to be purifying and redeeming the ideal image of the nation" (2002: 26). This, in spite of the fact that national cohesion seems to be achieved precisely by a national collective will of aversion to the 'barbaric'; by a consensus of fear of contamination.

Johnston and Baumann referring to the foodie culture "[this] is not a simple story of snobbery or cultural liberation, but is fundamentally constituted by the tension between a pull of democratic inclusion, and the desire to erect boundaries of exclusivity, distinction, and social status" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 94).

1.4 The power of national pride

In a way, in the process of developing a Colombian gastronomy, professional cooks, usually owners of upscale and fine dining restaurants, and other actors involved such as governmental officials, seem to be having not just to highlight but also to exoticizie local ingredients, preparations, traditional cooks and the whole setting – including themselves – to feel it right and they own it.

Making it right overcomes the deep-rooted colonial mentality that has valued the foreign, not because it is new, novel and implies widening the cultural spectrum, but because it is transmitted, imposed and absorbed as both better and right.[62] The new gastronomy coincides with the beginning of the end of the armed conflict, a relatively stable economic growth in the last two decades, and a corresponding expansion of the culinary industry (see Chapter 1). In addition, the appearance and consolidation of food and political movements such as Slow Food and the Fair Trade approach have provided alternatives to trade principles based on an industrialization of the food chain and has bridged a gap between the producers and the consumers. Also, policy guidelines were oriented to protect cultural heritage and the protection of indigenous communities and other minority groups (e.g. Unesco convention for the safeguarding of cultural heritage and Law 13 about the right to freedom and equality of The Constitution of 1991 (Colombia)).

[62] An inverse process of valuing traditions because they are such—let's say just better and just right—is one of Hobsbawn's points.

On the other hand, there is the discussion of whether something as ephemeral as Colombian cuisine might exist to begin with. Although I will not address here the debate about the real possibility of defining national or regional cuisines, a Colombian one is seen by many of the cited Colombian cooks and some Colombian researches such as Julián Estrada, as the product of fusing regional cuisines without diminishing their unique richness and complexity: "The concept of 'regional cuisine' must overcome the narrow circle of recipe collections (…) [in order to] take into account and represent the different sources that gave rise to such cuisine, that is, its indigenous, African, and Spanish traces; its peasant-like, provincial and cosmopolitan style; its traditional features, as well as its modern and innovative ones" (Estrada 2003: 215).

Colombian anthropologist Esther Sánchez also advocates for a similar understanding of proper identification of a local culinary identity: "The closer to their origin these products are, the more capacity they have to define their true characteristics or their distance from that which is considered original. These really are Chilean empanadas! a Chilean would say, trained from small age to savor them. The local expressions are, therefore, part of a shared cultural knowledge that reaches to geographical points that make it possible to define limits and territories in which the autochthonous is recognized while, obviously, judging variations of the traditional model that allow or prevent an identification" (Sánchez, n.d: 8). This perspective of authenticity implies that the authentic manifests itself in a product that intends to represent it but that does not pretend to replicate it (Sánchez, n.d.: 12). The possibility of replication in those terms constitutes the foundation of a theoretical referent to work gastronomically in local structures that can be not only well defined but universalized (Sánchez, n.d: 13).

Arjun Appadurai looks at the emergence of a national cuisine in contemporary India, a cuisine that he describes as designed by and for the urban middle class and reproduced in

contemporary cookbooks (2008: 298). By looking at the particular structure and rhetoric of these books, he analyzes the interplay between two main elements of the cuisine that they portray: on the one hand, a regional and ethnic specialization, and on the other, the development of a "crosscutting" pan-Indian cuisine (2008: 305). He notes that these social actors belong to a "multiethnic", "multicaste" and "polyglot" class of consumers with Westernized tastes and an emerging culinary cosmopolitanism: "as in other modalities of identity and ideology in emergent nations, cosmopolitan and parochial expressions enrich and sharpen each other by dialectical interaction" (2008: 291-92, 304). A similar dialectical interaction between parochial practices and cosmopolitan expressions, and between regional or local and macro (or global) culinary practices—outside the country and inside Latin America but also beyond the continent—seems to be taking place and helping to construct Colombian gastronomy.

Referring to Perúvian cuisine, Ernesto Cabello, director of the documentary "De ollas y de sueños" (Cooking up Dreams), offers a provocative commentary in relation to the construction of a national cuisine:

> It's always intrigued me that with all the differences you can find in a country, there's one place where the whole nation feels in total harmony. In my country, Perú, it's not soccer, or music, let alone politics. That place is the kitchen. Throughout centuries of racial and ethnic mixing of encounters and lost connections, Perúvian cooking has become delectably integrating. In the kitchen, flavors, aromas and colors fight, negotiate and make peace with one another. Each one searches for its place and lives alongside the others. This documentary is an exploration to a place where all of one nation's peoples are represented. Where poor and rich people share the same spirit. (Asociación Guarango 2009).

There is certainly a similar generalized call for integration in Colombia through cooking, as a way of relieving chronic violence and pervasive social anxiety. The historical juncture in today's

Colombian political situation cannot be underestimated in regard to this call. Cook Eduardo Martínez defines cuisine as the difference between life and death, as a vessel for peace (see Chapter 3 p.29). Certainly, with a very challenging process of peace going on between the Colombian government and the oldest and most empowered guerrilla group of Latin America (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC–EP)), there is a desperate scream for peace in the country.

On October 11th, 2016, a group of cooks—some of the ones from whom I offer extracts of interviews in the previous chapter, and some more from Fogón Colombia[63]—organized a communal feeding activity in Plaza de Bolivar in front of the presidential house. Meals were offered to people from rural areas and different sectors of Colombian society, who went to the city capital to advocate for the urgent implementation of the peace agreement, in a public act called "Campamento por la paz". Although this was a relatively small scale act in terms of the percentage of the public and the amount of food that was shared (around two hundred people were fed), it was not small in its symbolism because of the historic changes that Colombia is going through, supported by the cooperative efforts of cooks and other key agents. This was a consequence of a dramatic result in the national plebiscite that took place on October 2nd, 2016 in which 50.2 % of voters voted against a peace deal between the Government and FARC rebels. This deal had been signed by the two parties on September 26th, 2016, after 4 years of negotiation and 52 years of armed conflict, and after more than 200.000 people were killed, thousands others are *desaparecidos* and almost 7 million people were displaced because of violent acts. In political terms however, it needed public validation. Therefore, a new version of the agreement was signed on November 24th, 2016, and after being approved by The Congress of the Republic, it is now in

[63] See chapter 2 for a brief description of this organization.

the first stage of implementation.

2. Applicable theories and felt experiences

The culinary scene in Colombian and the cultural production it implies is an example, among many, of how ideological discourses operate in tension between two extremes: the imposition of discriminatory social orders and the reproduction of a colonial bias based on a vertical interpretation of power, and the resistance to predetermined and unilateral orders imposed by privileged groups. In daily life, this tension is experienced in a complex range that involves divergent voices and different perspectives on the purpose of appropriating, validating and visualizing traditional culinary practices with a rustic accent in urban settings and by social groups with different economic possibilities and cultural backgrounds.

Michel De Certeau's study on social life focuses on the way in which people actually operate and make things in everyday life and in relationship to social rules and principles of action. He distinguishes between the production of cultural objects, images and social artifacts, and the work of postproduction interpretation made by the consumers. This distinction is based on a conceptual separation of the performative act—the cultural practice in itself—and the knowledge about the practice. Everyday life practices actualize and legitimize that knowledge in time and space. In the particular case of food and cuisine, De Certeau describes the distinction between production and postproduction in the following terms: "the art of cooking (…) simultaneously organizes a network or relations, poetic ways of 'making do' (*bricolage*), and a re-use of marketing structures" (De Certeau 1998: xv). What he calls tactics of consumption are ingenious ways in which marginalized or less empowered people gives sense to ideologies, conferring a political dimension to everyday practices (De Certeau 1998: xvii). This possibility implies the sociopolitical

potential of creativity and poses a material condition on the effectiveness of discourses, therefore subjected to actual experiences.

Although emphasizing the communal aspect and nature of concrete social practices, Charles Taylor also addresses the relation between ideals (ethical principles) and the way in which they are reflected in people's lives. There are struggles to enact significant modes of authentic cultural principles beyond the most "flatter" and "shallower" forms (Taylor 1992: 94). But there are also the actual ways in which people imagine their social existence: "The social imaginary is a common understanding that makes possible on its turn common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (Taylor 2004: 23).[64]

In this sense, my motivation to conclude this analysis by framing pragmatic questionings, such as those of Richard Sennett, is in its essence its optimistic nature or at least the fact that more space is given to the idea that the primordial voice about the truth and what is considered correct is a result, not of reason or emotion, or of objectivity or subjectivity, but about facts as experiences; the quality and potential of the experience in itself.[65] In this sense, my motivation to conclude this analysis framing it in pragmatic questionings, such as that of Richard Sennett, lies in essence in their optimistic nature or at least the fact that more space is given to the idea that the primordial

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[64] For a thoughtful discussion about the power of imagination in relation to cultural production and consumption that challenges the limited domain of conventional wisdom see *Northtrop Frye on Modern Culture* (Frye (Gorak ed.) 2003). Also, Sennett's idea of that material culture develops through the powers of imagination in a process in which experience articulates practice and theory, making and thinking, self-interest and human expression (Sennett 2008).

[65] Experience is a concept that for Sennett unifies all pragmatic perspectives: "a fuzzier word in English than in German, which divides it in two, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. The first names an event or relationship that makes an emotional inner impress, the second an event, action, or relationship that turns one outward and requires skill rather than sensitivity. Pragmatist thought has insisted that these two meanings should not be divided. William James believed, you may be trapped by means-and-ends thinking and acting; you may succumb to the vice of instrumentalism. You need constantly the inner monitor of Erlebnis, of "how it feels"" (Sennett 2008: 3078-79).

voice about the truth and what is considered correct is a result, not of reason or emotion, or of objectivity or subjectivity, but about facts as experiences; the quality and potential of the experience in itself.

The term pragmatism derives from the Greek word for 'praxis', meaning action, and from associated terms like 'practice' and 'practical' (James 2000: 25). Thus, it is a practical system of philosophical thought that deals with principles about human action and stands as a method more than a set of values or answers to problems. In this scenario, a living hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to those to whom it is proposed because that principle is believed by an individual or a group of people to be necessary for its vital benefits. This is what believing in something means: "the will to believe". Pragmatism considers that there is no hypothesis, nor real or false action principles in and of themselves (James 2000: 38; 1912 a: 3).

Following William James' principles of action and his interest in overcoming the abyss between thinking and making, Richard Sennett argues that pragmatism has sought to join philosophy to everyday life practices. What distinguishes it is to look for philosophical issues that arise in concrete experiences that do not tell a straight story of means-and-ends: "(…) we need to turn a fresh page. We can do so simply by asking—though the answers are anything but simple—what the process of making concrete things reveals to us about ourselves. Learning from things requires us to care about the qualities of cloth or the right way to poach fish; fine cloth or food cooked well enables us to imagine larger categories of 'good'" (Sennett 2000: 97).

There are some analytical tools guiding this train of thought such as the idea of resistance and ambiguity that I find helpful to continue unpacking concepts such as authenticity and exoticization and the tension between democratization and social distinction, and individualism and inclusiveness, that they imply. Sennett is inspired by John Dewey who uses the idea of

resistance to oppose Darwinian theories that competition is aimed at the victory of the fittest. From this perspective, the meaning of experiences is individual power: "society, they argue, was ruled by self-interest, absent any altruistic cooperation" (Sennett 2008: 2427). On the contrary, Dewey was a philosopher of cooperation working from the principle of recognition of one's own limits and of the power given to self-interest, emphasizing instead the necessity of understanding resistance and the benefits of dealing with it—instead of avoiding or fighting it—in a process of *vital engagement* (Sennett 2008: 2428, 2813-14).

On the other hand, the material production of goods and cultural practices in general, entails a process of negotiation of facts and lots of uncertainty in relation to conclusions and definite answers, that is based on a "liminal zone" between problem solving and problem finding (Sennett 2008: 3540). This negotiation, once more, takes places in the world of experiences and implies constant experiments of trying and improving but also failing. It implies recognizing the process as structurally ambiguous and open-ended.

I believe that the search –by different types of cooks, researchers and state actors – for culinary authenticity in traditional cuisines, as well as the romanticization suggested by that search, reflects struggling efforts by many, including traditional cooks, to decode and face the question of who they are and why and to substitute thinking with making something concrete. This is a process that implies acts of resistance to straightforward accounts, and ambiguity in the sense of having at hand rather imperfect explanations and understandings of cultural phenomena. Finding an answer in one of the forced tensions at stake in the interpretative process of cultural life in a specific community, as is the case here, could seem inaccurate and unfair. As James solemnly puts it: "in this real world of sweat and dirt (…) when a view of things is 'noble,' that ought to count as a

presumption against its truth (…)". Noble in the sense of not doing justice to the richness of the world, and not being helpful either, "inapt for humble service" (James 2000: 36).

Sennett argues that from its origins pragmatism addressed the quality of experience focusing on its techniques and the making of goods that actually shape the way in which we deal with other people:

> Both the difficulties and the possibilities of making things well apply to making human relationships. Material challenges like working with resistance or managing ambiguity are instructive in understanding the resistances people harbor to one another or the uncertain boundaries between people. I've stressed the positive, open role routine and practicing play in the work of crafting physical things; so too do people need to practice their relations with one another, learn the skills of anticipation and revision in order to improve these relations (Sennett 2008: 92-93).

This position is resistant to the idea of a binary classification of cultural expressions and ideological resources, and of values and codes, and social classes. A division of value arises between artists and artisans—professional or vanguard cooks and non-professional or traditional cooks in this case—, producers and consumers, discourses and experiences. Neither authenticity nor exoticism are just about self or selfish expression. Both are also about negotiation and most of all engagement—with different degrees of consciousness. Colombian cooks, and the main players in the culinary local scenario, are involved in constructing a Colombian cuisine. Their uncertainty is about the potential of this construct to symbolize cooperation and offer a refreshing historic sense of community, or mostly to express a niche dynamic, in which solidarity and collective work occurs but not to the point of overpowering the current stratified configuration of Colombian society.

In the end, the potentiality but also the uncertainty of practicing culture is what this is all about. Food politics and the multiple dimensions of foodways need to have as a fundamental

reference point prudence and balance between impulses and forces. In this case, between the temptation of staying nostalgic for a fixed idealization of traditions, and the tendency to letting go of the past for the excitement of novelty and newness. Between the two is the drive that leads us to give privilege to self-interest or too much emphasis on self-realization, and a well-intentioned – but not always successful – production of collective welfare.

The key point of this balance should be a simpler and sweeter enjoyment of food experiences. Unpretentious but probably more socially effective human prints made out of small and more conscious culinary events to start with. As a self-declared "happy eater" says: "The things that make food memorable are never about the accessories. They are so much more subtle, so much more emotional than that" (The Guardian 2016: a). I will add, things make food memorable because of their real possibility to create communal wellness.

Only the space we allow to for an interpretative process to proceed, such as the one taking place now in Colombia in regard to traditional cuisines, and the passage of time, will show whether it went beyond current conjunctures and accessory constructions of passing fads. If the transformative power of the revitalization of traditional culinary knowledge and the creation of innovative practices that are partially growing out of this knowledge, had a significant effect or not; if they were willingly and hearty embraced to help building a more equitable, cohesive Colombian society.

Epilogue

Culinary preservation and renewal as a prospect

"'What is your guiding intuition?'"
I replied on the spur of the moment, 'Making is thinking'"
(Sennett 2008: 12)

Both within and outside the foodways context, "the local" and that which feels like one's own, can be understood as a physical and geographical territory, but also as culture. As that imponderable element which we experience as a possible common heritage. The sense of belonging to, of making part of, a particular culinary context and someone's own identification with certain dietary habits is contingent on the sense of being part of a territory, but also of sharing those values which such mode of being implies.

That which is local often comprises tastes, habits, knowledge, inducements, appetites and expectations. Colombian cuisine, whether 'new', 'traditional', 'fusion', 'indigenous' or whatever it might be called, responds to a complex understanding of place making that implies different attitudes and motivations toward the role of traditional culinary knowledge in contemporary cooking expressions, and the reasons why it should be safeguarded, reinvented or evolved. All of the avant-garde chefs, "professional" and "traditional" cooks, restaurateurs, businessmen and women, entrepreneurs, thrive under this umbrella that covers time and space, and not only in the scenarios I have discussed, but in the myriad interpretations that each diner renders when facing any of the many versions of traditional cuisines.

The struggles of Colombians to define culinary expressions, from the early twentieth century onwards, that are different from a past identity but also different from foreign paradigms

lay in a deep and ongoing tension between past and present. One might think that there is an interest in exaggerating the indigenous and the autochthonous and in emphasizing the richness of local diversity in order to respond to the rhythm and the potential anonymity of a globalized world. In this sense, Colombian elites and the ascending middle class idealized themselves in an effort to construct a local identity defined by multiculturalism, while at the same time enacting cultural practices – such as the construction of a distinctive cuisine – at the base of which there is a statement of social differentiation and commodification of traditions. Also, although these discourses are produced by many sectors of Colombian society, farmers, peasants and indigenous groups can also idealize themselves in the process of finding new senses of belonging, in this case to an exercise of appropriation of what feels culturally authentic.

Exposing the ethnocentric attitude on bread in Old Regime France, "equally shared by the elites and popular cultures", Kaplan argues that "the French needed to look beyond their navel: for Americans, who ate cassava, plantains, bananas, and corn, bread was – in Simon-Nicholas-Henri Linguet's words – 'a delicacy and not a regular food' (…) A Copernican revolution away from the truth, the French had to strip away the sophistic rhetoric and see bread for what it really was: 'a tedious and costly compound, a nuisance in every sense' that was consumed exclusively and exceptionally in a 'little corner of the planet, ... our little Europe'" (Kaplan 1997: 4). In a way not lacking in irony, a peculiar version of this Copernican revolution is taking place in Colombia and Latin America, represented in the "ethnocentric" attitude and exotic spring that the claim to value creole-native cuisines entails. The call in this case, is not to look at cosmopolitan food models but towards indigenous pre-European or more local culinary forms to make sense of the world.

The spectrum of attitudes and ways of using this cultural power is broad and the attitudes, even in a single individual or the same culinary space may be contradictory and multifaceted as

we see in the testimonies of some chefs, the normative frameworks that the state is producing, and other relevant documentary information presented here. Consequently, I suggest a view of cuisine and cultural values attached to it as intrinsically temporary, unstable and ethereal. Not of cuisine as a practice that remains in time precisely because it transforms itself organically without the need to be frozen and reified. If it is idealized and instrumentalized it remains frozen in time, precisely because it loses all vital energy and meaning as a distinctive product of a community's daily life. If cooking is otherwise remembered and evoked in various spaces as an experience and not a discourse, it is updated or actualized thanks to the natural rhythm of culinary memories and habits. Such processes may happen, for example, in the habitual symbolic but always refreshed Sunday dinner; with an invitation that is extended spontaneously from a peasant family who opens the doors of their house to visitors from the city or their community. Another example might be the exhibition of local cuisines centered on flavors and esthetic traits, and the presentation of social meaning that characterizes them as being not a picturesque representation and the subject of a sort of spectacle or romantizacing performance, but a setting in which gastronomic manifestations are an end to themselves.

In a sense, the logic behind it is simple. How can we build otherwise than on the past and what is local? Under relatively stable sociopolitical and ecological circumstances, tradition is protected precisely for its permanence. Culinary knowledge that does not resist acts of recreation and actualization indicates that it is no longer useful to current needs. And if the ideological discourses of traditional knowledge are left aside to keep what that knowledge signify in lived experience for specific people, it would appear that the key is that traditions symbolize ways of life that tend to be excluded in a world of vertiginous change. Ignoring them presumes a lack of respect, not for the traditional knowledge itself, but to those who practice those traditions and for

whom they represent not a historic curiosity or a social cause, but a living. There is an engagement with social life in this search for culinary authenticity and potential spaces for social cohesion and democratization, but only if others sectors offer roles and opportunities to the less privileged groups and these groups in their turn exercise the agency that cultural expressions such as cuisine allow.

Thinking, understanding and acknowledging the territory as a set of creative constructions within a specific territory, implies conceiving it as a social product. That which is culinary genuine and ours's own, is also a question that points to the acknowledgment of diversity and respect for the socially unknown or different. Cuisine is a practice that facilitates the connection between different cultural and socioeconomic groups which otherwise lead to categorizing – often excluding – behaviors that emerge not only in relation to purchasing power, but to the codes associated with culinary techniques, ways of eating, and sets of characteristic dishes. The approach to these questions from the standpoint of sociocultural studies and interdisciplinarity[66], does emphasize the need to think of the idea of what is local in terms of diversity, parity, exclusion or segregation from a philosophical, historic, sociological, anthropological and psychological perspective. As a matter of space, time, objectives and scope, this research intend to point out and suggest the need for that correlation, complementarity and richness in the conceptual plan, as well as the always limited and restrictive focus of each discipline.

Researching food and cooking issues and tending to the underlying social problems is a transcendental exercise to understand the tasks and purposes and the destiny of the human race. I therefore believe it is important that in the evolution of culinary knowledge, the tension between

[66] I rely on the definition of interdisciplinarity provided in the research of the Center for Popular Research and Education – CINEP – about the nature of regional societies: "a great matrix of thematic, scientific, temporary and territorial inputs to generate a knowledge of regional multiplicity" (Zambrano, Fabio (Ed). 1998: 10).

tradition and innovation reflects an individual and collective life process that is full of opportunities for more equitable social configurations and the formation of new identity forms even if the process in itself is complex and often paradoxical. It is on the basis of this potential that theoretical questions should be asked. The path to their solution should be traced in order not to reify traditional culinary knowledge but rather to achieve an equilibrium between the space given to what must be protected because is meaningful and useful for a community, and to innovating trends equally potentially meaningful and useful. Construction of meaning will always be a non-linear process, and the possible incongruences in its development are the product of the natural tension between past and present. Any conceptual question and all research efforts built upon this relationship must therefore have a functional projection that respond to and contribute to the grand challenge of building more balanced, peaceful and equitable societies out of that tension between tradition and innovation. Such a challenge is evidenced in the practice of culinary expressions and practices such as those I had the honor of researching and analyzing in this project.

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