

Public Market Breakfast: a Food Tradition

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Abstract public markets are integral spaces in the history of cities and neighborhoods that preserve local culture, surrounding customs and attractive practices. This study aimed to characterize the traditional typical breakfast preparations of public market restaurants. Study with a qualitative approach, conducted in a public market, an historical and cultural heritage of a northeastern Brazilian capital, being a reference point in food and gastronomy, popularly frequented by residents of the region and tourists seeking to know the regional food. The daily demand for meals in this place starts at dawn, from 4:00 am, with varied breakfast options of typical dishes, such as rice couscous, corn couscous, tapioca, fried cake, panelada and cozidão. These typical dishes are made with fresh and/or minimally processed regional ingredients purchased on the market, contributing to the sustainability of the place. New ingredients were incorporated in meals preparations, with improvement in the way of cooking, directed to the cultural context. However, it is necessary to apply techniques that can improve the nutritional quality of typical breakfast meals. At the public market can be found typical meals preparations, who identify and preserve the habits, customs and traditions of the regional food culture.

Keywords: culture, culinary, symbolism, breakfast, food, collective feeding

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1. Introduction

Food is related to culture, education and changes in the behavior of the population of a given region and presents a diversity of functions, such as those concerning the nutrition of the individuals and the cultural identity of a population [1]. Food, transformed by social and cultural representations, correlates with geographical, environmental, economic and historical aspects and contributes to the differentiation between social groups [2,3].

Therefore, food is full of meanings [4], and translates into a cultural practice that reflects a context of ways and customs of a particular place [5], such as eating habits, types of food preparations, ingredients and condiments used, food preparation techniques and menu composition [6].

In Brazil, food diversity results from a cultural miscegenation of different populations, settlers and native Brazilians, with the formation of food and cooking habits with peculiar characteristics of each region [7].

In this context, public markets present themselves as places that predominantly offer typical regional products

and dishes, contributing to the valorization of native eating behaviors and the proper preparation techniques of a determinate region [8]. Considering that markets are attractive public spaces for regional cuisine and the dissemination of culture and knowledge, the aim of this study was to characterize the typical preparations of restaurants' breakfast menus at a public market in a northeastern Brazilian capital.

2. Materials and Methods

Descriptive cross-sectional, exploratory study with a qualitative approach, conducted in the restaurants of a public market in a northeastern Brazilian capital, in the second half of 2018, approved by the Research Ethics Committee, opinion no. 2139962. Article originated from Doctoral Thesis "Evaluation of Piauí's traditional culinary preparations: a diagnosis from the gastronomic approach, and food and nutritional security point of view in a public market", Federal University of Piauí, 2019.

The selection of the market was non-probabilistic and presented the following eligibility criteria, namely: to be

historical and cultural heritage, antiquity and to produce typical preparations of the region. To select the target population, restaurant permit holders, it was verified which restaurants elaborated typical breakfast meals.

It was observed that the selected market has a food court consisting of 22 restaurants and a permit holder at each restaurant. Of this total, 5 restaurants did not meet the inclusion criteria and 6 restaurants permit holders did not consent to participate in the study. Accordingly, after exposing the objectives of the research, the permit holders who voluntarily agreed and signed the free and informed consent form were interviewed.

This investigation was delineated through observations of the functioning routine of the dining sector, movement of breakfast consumers with notes in the field diary, semi-structured interviews and recordings with restaurant permit holders. In the speech analysis, there was saturation in the answers, so six interviews were fully transcribed, using the content analysis technique, which was composed of three phases: : preliminary evaluation, investigation of the content and treatment of the results through deduction and analysis [9].

The contents were detailed regarding the market meal consumer, typical breakfast preparations and meal preparation techniques, according to respondents reports, codenamed R1, R2, R3, R4, R5 and R6.

Hence, from the interviews and observations regarding the operation of the dining sector, it became possible to characterize the consumers and the typical breakfast preparations of market restaurants in a Brazilian northeastern capital.

3. Results

The public market was open daily, including public holidays, from 4:00 am to 3:00 pm, offering the most diverse food preparations every day. The place is attractive to tourists due to the tradition of its eating practices; however, the environment is frequented by workers daily and occasional visitors. In fact, it is worth mentioning that, at the present moment, with the expansion and modernity incorporated into the restaurants of this market, new possibilities of attractions enable the presence of social groups from various locations and regions.

In restaurants of the food sector of the market at stake, an average of 600 meals are produced and sold per day, where breakfasts, snacks and lunches are offered. Most consumers had only one meal at the venue, with breakfast being the second most frequently eaten meal, as observed by the researchers and information transmitted from respondents.

To know the profile of the restaurants customers, it was listened the report of the permit holders who revealed the various meanings that were established in the city through cooking, as the following statements:

“The market is frequented by simple and sophisticated people on weekends and early in the morning” (R1).

“Customers groups eat more in the market. On weekends there are more people, in general, people who are here after parties, families...! People come from Brasilia to eat the fried cake I make” (R2).

“All kinds of people eat at the market, the restaurant customers are captives... the food represents the city!” (R3).

“A lot of wealthy people come here on weekends after ballads... young and old people. Outsiders, even Japanese have come here!” (R4).

“The market attracts people by its tradition... the public is general, but young people go to the restaurant more” (R5).

“This is a traditional market, a lot of people come here from four in the morning” (R6).

Based on the reports, it was observed that the market is frequented throughout the day, even at dawn, by people from different social levels, from the simplest to the most sophisticated, thus showing the will and the identity of belonging of this public in relation to the place and the local gastronomy.

At the weekend, the usual public was mainly characterized by people with greater purchasing power, adults and young people who frequented the place with the intention of consuming typical food together with their partners, whether of friends or relatives. In the permit holders' perception, the market is a traditional place, which already has a captive clientele and is also configured as a tourist and gastronomic spot in the city, since it attracts people from other regions.

In view of this evidence, it was observed how much the local food cultural heritage in the city of Teresina has been involved around the diversity of cultural influences linked to the transmission of food heritage, thus seen, when the consumption of certain preparations was revealed, such as in the case of fried cake, mentioned by the interviewed subject (R2).

Regarding the breakfast menus, it was found there were similarities in the different restaurants in the preparations and ingredients used, with particularities related to the cooking way. Couscous (delicacy prepared with cereal paste moistened with water, which is subsequently steamed), fried cake (small hand-shaped cassava starch cake) and tapioca (simple or with various fillings such as sun-dried meat, egg and butter) are traditional dishes of the first meal of the day and were consumed with coffee and/or milk (Table 1).

Table 1. Typical preparations of public market breakfast menus

Preparation	Main Ingredients
Rice couscous	Rice flour
Corn couscous	Corn flour
Fried cake	Cassava starch
Tapioca (beiju)	Cassava starch
Panelada	Viscera (stomach, intestine and lung)
Cozidão	Fatty beef
Lamb in the sauce	Lamb
Chicken with brown gravy	Hillbilly chicken and blood
Sarapatel	Organs, viscera and blood

Another peculiarity of the breakfast was the food offer made with sauce as the panelada (a dish best known in Brazil as bent, "bucho" or gut), cozidão (made with beef from the front portion of the cow, cooked in the pressure cooker with or without vegetables), sarapatel (salty delicacy with a peculiar texture, given the presence

of boiled viscera cut into small pieces), lamb with gravy (preparation much appreciated due to its remarkable flavor) and chicken with brown gravy (where the chicken's blood is used). All these options were usually consumed with couscous or on the menu along with plain rice, pasta and mixed raw vegetable salad (lettuce, tomato and cucumber), according to information provided by restaurant permit holders and observations from field visits (Table 1).

The typical breakfast dishes had as main ingredients *in natura* or minimally processed foods, such as cereal flours (corn and rice), tubers (cassava starch), guts (stomach, intestine and lung) and meat from animals originating from the region (sheep and free-range chicken). It is worth highlighting the use of spices that enhance the flavor of the preparations, such as black pepper, cumin, paprika, garlic, bay leaf, cherry pepper, chive and coriander, among others. These foods are purchased on the market itself, contributing to the sustainability of the place and the menus produced, as well as to the preservation of the tradition and the appreciation of food that represents regional culture.

In the production of typical foods are used preparation techniques passed on between generations, enhanced with daily work practice. According to one of the permit holders, breakfast preparation follows a definite structure and is improving as a practice linked to tradition, as reported by R1:

"The couscous is northeastern. I started by making mistakes and getting it right, I learned to make couscous in a unique way. The secret is to do a well done meal, with quality, so that the customer eats, likes and comes back... The most famous couscous is the rice one, made with pasta and gum. The process was changing, I started using a small couscous pot, then I moved to a giant and handcrafted one, it can be cooked up to 140 portions. I also make corn and mixed couscous, called "mini-skirt", a layer of corn and a layer of rice" (R1).

R2, in turn, pointed out that he was also improving his practices, reporting the facts of how he was adjusting the ingredients and the way of cooking in order to define the proper breakfast way:

"When I started making the fried cake it was different. Today I mix powdered milk with gum, then I parboil it with liquid milk, add eggs and knead well. Then I roll each cake and put in cold fat. If I put it in hot fat, the cake sizzles. After the cake is fried, I dry it with paper towels, so the cake does not get greasy and the customer does not complain" (R2).

With the interviewees' reports, it is recognized that breakfast preparations involve knowledge, practices and techniques, which, although improved over time, still maintain their essence, thus being characterized as a symbol belonging to the Northeastern food culture that is perpetuated in the development of the local gastronomy, providing a list of regional cultural recipes, with their ingredients and ways of making reinvented every day.

4. Discussion

In Brazil, traditional dishes result from the incorporation and adaptation of the cultures' miscegenation of the peoples who colonized and inhabited this country, generating

distinct adapted menus historically distributed by unequal ways of living together with the culinary social stratification [10,11].

In the Northeastern region, the cuisine is very rich and diverse, resulting from the influence of Indigenous peoples, Portuguese, African, as well as Dutch, French and English [7]. This diversity of regional cuisine is well represented by the foods elaborated in public markets, popular places that are part of the daily lives of people who value the eating habits and techniques of preparing typical dishes of the region represented. [8]. The incentive to the consumption of regional foods also allows the rescue of fundamental aspects of the relationship between man and the environment [10].

The public market studied represents a popular place frequented by people from different economic and sociodemographic situations, as observed in the reports of permit holders. Thus, the market is consolidated as a democratic public space, where people seek to consume typical foods, as well as strengthen the intrapersonal coexistence.

It can be said that the public market represents a scenario with tourism potential, endowed with symbols that characterize the regional food culture, constituting one of the fundamental elements for the preservation of regionalism between generations. In this perspective, Cunha [12] states that food, as a cultural element, is loaded with symbolism and meaning. In this context, the public market produces menus characterized by local traditions and conservation of regional cuisine, consisting of several typical dishes, based on rice, corn, cassava, offal, fat cuts of beef, sheep, among others.

Public market cuisine is also distinguished by its richness in the context of its sensory attributes, offering typical food culture preparations with various dishes elaborated through peculiar techniques developed in the region. As an example, couscous is a worldwide known food preparation of African origin, and its popularity is attributed to some aspects, such as ease of preparation, versatility, convenience, taste and nutritional value [13].

Couscous was introduced in Brazil by the Portuguese at the time of colonization [14] and has its importance in the course of the country's history as a food component of slaves and people with less purchasing power, remaining as the basis of the diet of many individuals, including breakfast and other meals [15]. In the elaboration of this typical dish, cornmeal moistened with coconut milk is used and then placed in a couscous pot to be steamed. Couscous is widely accepted, with peculiarities in each region [14], for example, in northeastern Brazil it is made with flour (corn or rice), water, salt and milk [7], as occurs in the public market studied and in other regions.

A study conducted with a low-income population, living in northeastern Brazil, on eating behavior, revealed low consumption of typical foods, however, couscous, together with tapioca, were among the most preferred dishes of the analyzed [16]. Tapioca, known as beiju, is a typically Brazilian preparation, culturally accepted by the population, widely used in northern and northeastern Brazil. The consumption of this preparation is expanding in the various regions of the country, as it is considered an ideal food, made with traditional, healthy ingredients added to the cultural symbolism of the indigenous heritage [17].

Tapioca is made with cassava starch, a product widely consumed in Brazil and around the world [18] and popularly known as gum, added with salt and water. The moistened dough is placed in a preheated plate or pan to agglutinate. Once ready, it is greased with clear butter or stuffed (sun-dried meat, cheese, etc.), folded into a half-moon shape, looking like a dry pancake or crepe [10].

Clear butter is derived from cow's milk, which is obtained from the whipping of the cream until it becomes a homogeneous mass, then boiled over a low heat in a water bath for its transformation into liquid butter. This type of fat can be used in tapioca, sun-dried meat, among other preparations [7,19]. Already the traditional sun-dried meat, obtained by salting meat slices and drying in the shade, seems to have its origin from the indigenous habit as a technique of preservation of this food [11].

Another highlight of the northeastern regional cuisine refers to the production of stewed dishes, reminiscent of Portuguese stews [10]. According to Farias et al. [14], in the interior of Piauí, broth preparations can be consumed along with couscous. This eating behavior, a particularity of the analyzed public market, is a tradition characterized by the consumption of this delicacy at breakfast, along with preparations with sauce such as *cozidão*, chicken with brown gravy, lamb with gravy, *panelada* and *sarapatel*. This composition of dishes has explanation in customs of ancient times, in order to obtain the necessary energy for daily work.

Cozidão is a meal made with fatty beef (ribs, bone-in beef), clear butter, spices (garlic, salt, paprika, onion, tomato and pepper) and vegetables cut into large pieces. It can be served with "*pirão*" (cassava flour thickened broth), rice and vegetables. [20]. The use of spices such parsley, spring onion, coriander, onion and urucum dye are unique characteristics of typical regional foods, inheritances of the first Portuguese vegetable gardens introduced in Brazilian territory [21]. In the public market researched, besides serving as a side dish for couscous, the *cozidão* made up the menu with rice, vegetables and pasta, instead of *pirão*.

Typical northeastern dishes served in public markets include the hillbilly chicken, *panelada* and *sarapatel* [21]. The hillbilly chicken, known as chicken in brown gravy, is prepared with various seasonings and, after cooking, is added the "brown gravy", produced with the blood extracted from the chicken during its slaughter. This dish is a modification of a Portuguese dish known as "cabidela chicken" [7,19].

In turn, the *panelada* is made with bovine viscera (stomach and intestine), usually discarded during the slaughter of the animal, following a elaboration process that involves steps from pre-preparation of the ingredients to cooking, resembling the way described by Oliveira [22], in which the viscera is cleaned with water and lemon, removal of inedible parts, cutting, washing, salting, pre-cooking, addition of spices and cooking. Therefore, the public market studied is similar to other places in the Northeastern region, in relation to the ingredients, preparation method and consumption of the *panelada*.

Sarapatel, another widely consumed preparation, is prepared with edible parts, components that do not belong to the animal's carcass, including organs, viscera and cut curdled blood from porcine, caprine or ovine origin [21,23]. This delicacy, as well as the *panelada* and the

cozidão were brought by the Portuguese from India. Attempting to unravel the origins and ancestry of the eating habits of the Brazilian people, Marques [20] emphasized the intricacy of man's relations with his territorial conquests.

It is noteworthy that food has always been, and still is, closely related to the history of different peoples, as occurs in Brazilian cuisine based on Portuguese cuisine, with Indigenous and African influences, resulting in the diversification of dishes, ingredients, denominations and food combinations [7]. For that reason, the diversity of regional dishes results from the combination, throughout Brazilian history, of geographical, social and cultural characteristics. Public market foods are rich in sensory characteristics, symbolic and cultural representations, which affect the formation of cultural gastronomic identity [24].

As observed, in the production of meals from the studied market, regional dishes and spices are used to give special flavor to the preparations and express the cultural relationship rooted in the food identity of the Northeastern region. However, fruits, including regional fruits (*acerola*, *cajá* and *cashew*), did not make up the breakfast menu, a relevant fact given the importance for achieving a healthy and sustainable diet.

The typical dishes served in this public market are prepared with fresh and/or minimally processed regional ingredients of vegetable and animal origin, purchased in the market itself, contributing to environmental sustainability.

In contrast, the importance of regional dishes, characterized by the use of ingredients of plant origin, is relevant for the composition of healthy eating, disease prevention and health promotion. According to the Brazilian dietary guidelines [25], healthy eating transcends the nutritional value of food and also involves aspects concerning culinary preparations, ingredients combinations and preparation, as well as the act of eating, as these relate to identity, sense of autonomy, social belonging and welfare.

In this context, traditional food is characterized by the use of locally supplied food commodities and ingredients and different ways of cooking, as it can be influenced by interpretations and personal preferences [26]. Given the above, it is clear that other ingredients have been incorporated into typical restaurant preparations, as observed in the public market under study, with improvement in the way of preparation, focusing mainly on the preservation of food culture, without valuing the nutritional aspect of these preparations.

Regarding the food composition of the dishes traditionally served to the community, it is possible to verify that the preparations made with traditional animal ingredients, fatty meat and viscera and have a high fat and caloric content. This fact, together with the absence of healthy ingredients such as fruits, which are important components of breakfast menus, pose risks for the development of chronic diseases and consequently for consumer's health [25,27,28].

In this sense, it is necessary to adopt healthy practices, including the use of lean cuts of meat, discarding visible fat, as well as the introduction of fruits in the breakfast menus, aiming to improve the digestibility and nutritional quality of the typical dishes [29]. Considering that food represents heritage, identity, memory and affection, knowledge interchange, ways of living, elaboration processes and

nutrition, and also promotes health and quality of life [26], the aspects addressed in this study are fundamental for achieving healthy eating, and for the appreciation and preservation of the food and cultural identity of the northeastern region of Brazil.

Despite the vast information obtained in the present study, as a limitation can be considered, the lack of research involving regional food culture in northeastern Brazil, which made it difficult when comparing results. Therefore, studies on foods and typical dishes culturally referenced by the population need to be encouraged and developed, in order to know, promote and preserve these culinary traditions.

5. Conclusion

Breakfast is consumed by a diverse population, including people of different biosocial characteristics. The typical preparations of this meal are made with regional ingredients, with elaboration modes transmitted between generations and improved over time. Such characteristic has repercussions on a rich regional food in the sensorial context, covered with cultural and symbolic representations that shape the local culinary tradition.

However, it was observed that, even with the advances of science about the importance of nutrition related to health, tradition and typical local habits were predominant, valuing cultural aspects of food. Modernity has incorporated new eating behaviors, new ways of making and sharing preparations. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to raise awareness of the health issue in order to prevent chronic diseases.

Remarkably, the public market is the portrait of the culture of its people, where the present gastronomy becomes more attractive because it is related to the aspects corresponding to the tradition, the history and the way of living and acting of the natives of the represented northeastern Brazilian capital. Consequently, typical public market breakfast preparations express the identity and uniqueness of the food culture of this northeastern capital and, therefore, any modifications require parsimony and respect for traditions.

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