

LATI 166: The Criollo Kitchen: Ethnography of Latin American Cuisine [DRAFT VERSION, December 2024]

This course explores the culture and political economy of Latin American food staples beginning with their native origins and incorporates their stories into the genre of food blogging by use of historical and ethnographic methods. Latin (criollo) cuisine is a synthesis of Amerindian, African, and European peoples and cultures especially found in the region's rural territories – one that gives the continent its distinct character.

While we will focus more explicitly on Argentine cuisine, what Latin American food broadly shares across the continent is *movement*. And thus we will explore the culture of Latin American cuisine not only in the political boundaries (nation-states) of Latin America, but also in its diasporic communities within the United States, where some versions of Latin American cuisine have grown to be hegemonic: Mexican food in the Southwest; Cuban food in South Florida; Dominican food in New York.

A study of food is a study of land and labor. The course will not only explore practices in meaning-making around food (culture), but also explore its conditions of production: access to land, labor conditions, environmental consequences, etc. Because mass consumerism in the United States is reliant on cheap access to resources, most food products found in a grocery store can be argued to be “Latin foods.” Banana, Chocolate, Coffee, Sugar – these are things that cannot be grown anywhere in the United States due to climate. The American beef industry is built on the backs of Mexican workers who overrepresent labor in Midwest slaughterhouses. Thanksgiving dinner is not possible without the migrant farm labor from Mexico and Central America in California's Central Valley. In the dead of North American winter, grocery stores will have sales on summer fruits like melon, blueberry, and strawberry because they are oversupplied by the Chilean summer harvest. We all know Captain Morgan, but do we know about the origins of rum in Caribbean plantation slavery?

Learning Objectives:

1. To consume and produce food media in critical and thoughtful ways;
2. To demystify the extraction of food products and the exploitation of food industry labor;
3. To articulate how food (and various food media forms) reproduces power and categories of identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class
4. To critically evaluate connections and disjuncture between our food history and food present;
5. To communicate clearly, persuasively, and with polished prose in social media and writing assignments; to experiment with new forms of writing and to develop their own unique voice.
6. To expand taste horizons and think critically about consumption patterns.

Evaluation:

The course expands Latin American Studies' culture of multimodal knowledge production by encouraging historical methods, oral testimony, and visual ethnography.

Crowd-Sourced Social Media (Instagram) Account **60%**

Students will contribute **six** reels and/or slide sets to an Instagram account affiliated with the course. They will select one particular Argentine dish and document its history, meaning, and contemporary production-consumption in Buenos Aires. The six posts should vary in their form and content so that together they tell a story.

Here, students will engage with community members to co-produce knowledge surrounding the dish. What is the process of making the dish (recipes)? Where does it come from – not only the dish, but its ingredients? How do the ingredients get here? What meaning is ascribed to the dish by those who make/consume it? What are the political, economic, and social factors that have contributed to any shared local meaning? How is this meaning contested? How does understanding the past and present of the dish help us to better understand life in Buenos Aires and the interior?

Students will be evaluated on their ability to successfully use methodologies of visual ethnography and oral testimony, while grounding their project in history and social theory.

Some dishes to consider: chorizo, asado, zapallo (calabaza), pasta, pizza, milanesa, pacu, surubi, locro, gnocchi, wine (malbec, torrontes), vermut, beer, pastries,

Final Paper **40%**

Using at least 12 sources (6 course readings, 6 peer-reviewed, academic publications) students will historicize the dish in a **12 page – double-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman, MLA format – paper due during finals week**. What is the dish's origin? What is the political economy of its ingredients? What is the political economy of its production? How have the circumstances of its production and consumption *changed over time*?

Pre-Course Reading :

Sophie Coe, *America's First Cuisines*, 1994

Pietro Sorba, *Nueva Cocina Argentina*, 2020

Course Texts:

Rebekah E. Pite, *Creating a Common Table in Twentieth-Century Argentina*

Doña Petrona, Women, and Food, 2013

Richard Slatta, *Gauchos in the Vanishing Frontier*, 1983

Julia Sarreal, *Yerba Mate: The Drink that Shaped a Nation*, 2023

Week 1:

Tuesday:

Rebekah E. Pite, *Creating a Common Table in Twentieth-Century Argentina Doña Petrona, Women, and Food*, 2013 (First Half)

Rebekah E. Pite, “*La cocina criolla: A history of food and race in twentieth-century Argentina*,” In *Rethinking Race in Modern Argentina*, 2016

Diego Marinelli and Juan Marinelli, “A Fantastic Journey Through Our Native Cuisine: The legacy of the natives,” *Gustar*, 2024

Ligaya Mishan, “What We Write About When We Write About Food,” In *New York Times*, 2022

Thursday:

Diego Armus and Lisa Ubelaker Andrade, Introduction and “A Brief History of the Last Five Hundred Years,” In *The Buenos Aires Reader*, 2024

Briza Maldonado, “What the Food in Buenos Aires Taught Me About My Latina Identity,” In IFSA, 2024

Angelina de los Santos, “Women fight back as Milei’s government tries to starve their soup kitchens,” In *Open Democracy*, 2024

Josefina Salomon, “A disaster: A year into Javier Milei’s presidency, Argentina’s poverty hits a new high,” In *Al Jazeera*, 2024

Anthony Bourdain, “Don’t Eat Before Reading This,” In *New Yorker Magazine*, 1999

Week 2:

Tuesday:

Rebekah E. Pite, *Creating a Common Table in Twentieth-Century Argentina Doña Petrona, Women, and Food*, 2013 (Second Half)

Lisa Ubelaker Andrade and Diego Armus, "A Twenty-First Century Food Scene," In *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, 2002

Amanda Mull, "Instagram Food Is a Sad, Sparkly Lie," *Eater*, July 6, 2017.

Laura Shapiro, "Instagram Your Leftovers: History Depends on It," *The New York Times*, September 2, 2017.

Robin Caldwell, "A Hunger Not Found on Instagram," *Ark Republic*, December 18, 2017.

Katie Ayoub, "Instagram Moments: Developing Menu Items That Are Begging for a Close-Up Is a Smart Social Strategy," *Flavor & the Menu*, November 20, 2018

Tisha Dejmanee, "Food Porn" as Postfeminist Play: Digital Femininity and the Female Body on Food Blogs," In *Television & New Media*, 2016

Thursday:

Eduardo Elena, "Commodities and Consumption in "Golden Age" Argentina," In *Latin American History*, 2016

Elle Buchan, "What's behind Buenos Aires' unique Italian food culture?" In *National Geographic*, September 2020

Allie Lazar, "Buenos Aires Makes Some of the World's Best (and Weirdest) Pizza," In *Saveur*, 2016

Kevin Vaughn, "All Hail the Buenos Aires Bodegon," In *Serious Eats*, 2023

Anonymous and El Obrero, "Anarchist Pastries," In *The Buenos Aires Reader*, 2024
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.19724096>

David Sax, "How Years of Macho Food Marketing Is Killing Men," In *New York Magazine*, 2016

Week 3:

Tuesday:

Richard Slatta, *Gauchos in the Vanishing Frontier*, 1983 (First Half)

Richard Slatta, "Comparative Frontier Social Life: Western Saloons and Argentine Pulperias," In *Great Plains Quarterly*, 1987

Jonas Vargas, "Charque and Tasajo (Salt-Cured Beef) as an Atlantic Commodity in the 18th and 19th Centuries," In *Oxford Encyclopedia: Latin American History*, 2023

Thursday

Richard Slatta, *Gauchos in the Vanishing Frontier*, 1983 (Second Half)

Edward Brudney, “Manifest Destiny, the Frontier, and “El Indio” in Argentina’s Conquista del Desierto,” In *Journal of Global South Studies*, 2019

Ana Ines Cabral, “A century after the Napalpí massacre, Indigenous activists are driving reparations,” In *Buenos Aires Herald*, 2024

YesChef, *Chef Francis Mallmann’s Story: The Master of Fire*, 2024

Account: Francis Mallmann <https://www.instagram.com/francismallmann/?hl=en>

Week 4:

Tuesday:

Julia Sarreal, *Yerba Mate: The Drink that Shaped a Nation*, 2023 (First Half)

Alejandro Jasinski, Julieta Caggiano, Irana Sommer, and Matías Oberlin, “Whose Land Is It and What Is It For? An Unfinished Debate about Land Access in Argentina,” In *Tricontinental*, 2023 <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-65-argentina-land-access/>

Madison Davis, “The fallout from COVID-19, land grabs, and deforestation in Argentina’s Gran Chaco Forest region,” *International Food Policy Research Institute*, 2024 <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/fallout-covid-19-land-grabs-and-deforestation-argentinias-gran-chaco-forest-region/>

World Bank Group, “Reimagining Argentina's agriculture sector,” *World Bank*, 2024 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2024/06/04/agricultura-argentina-hacia-un-sector-agroalimentario-m-s-competitivo-inclusivo-y-resiliente>

Berta Reventós (text) & Natalia Favre (photos), “The indigenous groups fighting against the quest for 'white gold,’” In *BBC World: Latin America*, 2023 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-66520097>

Marlene Brito Millan, Et. Al., “No Comemos Baterías: Solidarity Science Against False Climate Change Solutions,” In *Science for the People*, 2018 <https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/vol22-1/agua-es-vida-solidarity-science-against-false-climate-change-solutions/>

Thursday:

Julia Sarreal, *Yerba Mate: The Drink that Shaped a Nation*, 2023 (Second Half)

Antonia Barreau, “Del Monte a la Cocina: Gathering Inspiration in Southern Chile,” In *Terralingua*, 2019

Jorge Varela, *Land, Community*, International Indigenous Women’s Forum, 2023
<https://tierra.fimi-iiwf.org/en/land-community.html>

Sean Sherman, “Its Time to Build More Native Restaurants,” October 2024

Sara Kay, “Yelp Reviewers’ Authenticity Fetish Is White Supremacy in Action,” In *NY Eater*, 2019

Week 5:

Tuesday:

Nancy Hanway, “Wine Country: The Vineyard as National Space in Nineteenth-Century Argentina,” In *Alcohol in Latin America: A Social and Cultural History*, 2014
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183p8bj>

Catena Wine Institute, “About,” 2024 <https://www.catenainstitute.com/>

El Pinchin, “Rules of the Barman,” In *Tragos Magicos*, 1955

Thursday:

Pablo Vigna, “A 20 años de diciembre de 2001: Saqueos,” *Television Publica*, 2021
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmT7cW-h9_I

Veronica Gago, “What are Popular Economies: Some Reflections from Argentina,” In *Radical Philosophy*, 2018

Despues de la Tormenta, “Argentina y la comida callejera,” On *Futurock FM*, 2024