

Rethinking Race in Modern Argentina

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107107632

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First published 2016

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Rethinking race in modern Argentina / Paulina L. Alberto and Eduardo Elena, eds.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-10763-2 (Hardcopy : alk. paper)

1. Argentina--Race relations. I. Alberto, Paulina L., 1975-- editor, author. II. Elena, Eduardo, 1972-- editor, author.

F3021.A1R48 2015

305.800982--dc23 2015028908

ISBN 978-1-107-10763-2 Hardback

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*La cocina criolla**A history of food and race in twentieth-century Argentina*

Rebekah E. Pite

In 1889, an Italian visitor to Santiago del Estero praised the liberal “progress” sweeping this Northwestern provincial capital. He celebrated the new market, buzzing commercial center, and renovated homes filled with products from Europe and Buenos Aires. He emphasized his appreciation for the renovated kitchens that, in his view, “reveal[ed] a step forward in the manner of eating.” Citing writer Brillat-Savarin’s famous aphorism ‘tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are,’ he argued that this new manner of cooking and eating among the *santiagueño* elite embodied “true progress.”¹ Even in this relatively sleepy city far from the national capital, cosmopolitan culinary practices had recently begun to have a marked impact. While our visitor did not specify the exact nature of the foods consumed, in Santiago, as in Buenos Aires and Córdoba, it was likely French fare or at least local dishes dressed up with French names and served at elegant, well-set tables.²

The question of who Argentines were as well as what and how they should eat received a considerable amount of attention during the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. Around the turn of the century, many Argentine scientists and politicians embraced a version of Lamarckian eugenics that held that changing a combination of biological and environmental factors, including people’s diets, would improve the population.³ Given the association of French cuisine with high civilization across the Americas, Argentine elites (like their counterparts in Mexico or Brazil) publicly embraced French dishes to cement their own respectability and that of their nation. At the same time, in more private, quotidian settings, they also enjoyed specialties with local ingredients and techniques.⁴

As massive numbers of immigrants – most from Italy and Spain – made their way to Argentina around the turn of the century, they shaped new ideas about what defined Argentine food. Even today, most urbanites describe Spanish and Italian influences as particularly prominent in the development of a national

cuisine. As one elderly gentleman of Italian descent explained to me in Buenos Aires in 2003, “Here the main influence [on food] is Spanish and Italian [...] After that there are evidently *other influences*.”⁵ Such notions about the roots of Argentine cuisine parallel racial ideologies that held that the massive wave of immigrants had displaced earlier Indo-Afro-Hispanic society and its legacies. And yet, while this discourse celebrated European contributions to Argentina’s foodways, these Southern European currents (like the immigrants who brought them) were not quite the “French” and Northern European influences to which some elites had aspired.

While the few works written on Argentine food explore the (mainly European) ethnic backgrounds of particular foods or the people who made them, race has not been a topic of analysis.⁶ Yet as historian Rebecca Earle has demonstrated, since the early colonial era, people in Latin America have imagined that the foods they eat (or avoid) shape not only their bodies but also their racial status.⁷ Mainstream discourses around food in twentieth-century Argentina expressed varying levels of anxiety about eating from the table of the “other,” but they have consistently downplayed the culinary contributions of nonwhites. This is despite the fact that cooks with indigenous and African roots played a significant role in creating what would come to be considered quintessentially “Argentine” dishes. Northwestern cooks with indigenous or mixed ancestry and *gauchos* [iconic Argentine cattle-hands who were frequently mixed-race but increasingly portrayed as white] were the early creators of what would become national dishes like *locro* [a traditional Andean stew made with hominy, squash, beans, potatoes, hot peppers, and sometimes, beef] and *asado* [beef barbecue]. Afro-Argentines, among the least recognized contributors, also played a key role in forging what would be considered classic local preparations like *mondongo* [stew made with tripe], *puré de zapallo* [pumpkin puree],⁸ and even *parrillada mixta* [mixed grill of beef].

By tracing shifting definitions of what counted as Argentina’s local cuisine or *cocina criolla* over the course of the twentieth century, this chapter seeks to contribute to our understanding of the racial and ethnic undertones of the idea of *criollo* culture in Argentina. It does so by analyzing a range of cookbooks as well as a sampling of advertisements, culinary festivals, and oral histories. Argentina’s wildly popular twentieth-century culinary expert, Doña Petrona C. de Gandulfo, merits special attention. Following her personal trajectory and that of other culinary figures who helped make certain foods emblematic of local cuisine, this chapter considers a variety of regional vantage points, especially Buenos Aires and the Central and Northwestern provinces, which became the principal regional inspirations for *cocina criolla*. Attention to region-specific ideas about food and identity helps reveal competing visions of the nation and varying racial or ethnic formations in different parts of the country.⁹ While Argentina’s unique version of *cocina criolla* in fact relied upon a diverse array of culinary contributions and cooks,¹⁰ the discourse surrounding this cuisine tended to homogenize those influences.

“LO CRIOLLO” IN ARGENTINA

Unlike many other Latin Americans, Argentines never widely adopted the term *mestizo* to describe people with mixed indigenous, European and/or African heritage or to celebrate these groups as emblems of a hybrid national “essence.” But the term “criollo,” with its wide range of meanings, sometimes played a similar role. As historian Florencia Guzmán explains, this was especially the case in the Northwestern provinces where, during the late colonial period and into the nineteenth century, the term “criollo” was deployed to convey the sense of mixture more directly referenced in the term “mestizo.”¹¹ Over the course of the national period, “criollo” became another way of saying that someone or something was local, though not necessarily native.¹² Using the term this way alluded to meanings that dated back to the colonial period, when subjects used “criollo” to refer to the white, American-born descendants of European parents, to people of African descent born in the New World, or even to animals and plants of European origin that thrived on American soil.

While “criollo” was generally not applied to those who preserved an indigenous identity, the categories were sometimes flexible. As historian Oscar Chamosa has shown, when early-twentieth-century state actors sought to construct a “white Argentina,” they did so in part by attempting to turn people indigenous to the Northwestern Calchaquí Valley from “Indians” into “criollos.”¹³ Although this process of re-labeling suggests that elites considered indigenous people capable of transformation, it also resulted in their being relegated to a kind of a second-class status within the nation, as anthropologist Claudia Briones notes. People of indigenous and mixed descent became nominally white, thus solidifying Argentina’s claims to whiteness, but they remained marked within this category through cultural, linguistic, and/or phenotypical differences.¹⁴

Who (and what) was considered criollo was profoundly shaped by region, class, politics, and the passage of time. During the early twentieth century, as nationalism began to manifest itself in new ways, urbanites disenchanted with the city used the term “criollo” as a flexible descriptor to refer primarily to rural people and traditions, including the gaucho and his idealized rough-and-tumble lifestyle on the countryside. They also used it to describe symbolically important urban cultural forms including the tango and popular literature. In claiming the gaucho, the tango, and criollo literature as their own, urban Argentines sought to distinguish themselves and their national culture from that of the recent wave of immigrants.¹⁵ In contrast, very few rural actors used the term “criollo” to self-identify, preferring other terms like *paisano* [from the country].¹⁶ Nevertheless, during the twentieth century “criollo” gained strength in urban areas to signal the presence of nonwhite and mestizo populations within Argentina.¹⁷ The porous category “criollo” thus provides important insights into the processes by which, as some scholars have recently argued, a sense of

Argentine homogeneity was laboriously and unevenly constructed from the nation's significant racial, ethnic, and regional heterogeneity.¹⁸

What can "cocina criolla" – with its simultaneous connotations of localism, ethno-regional difference, and melting-pot-style fusion – tell us about this process of racial construction? As we shall see, over the course of the twentieth century, there was a significant shift in urban Argentines' appreciation of provincial cooking and mixed-race culture as key elements of an authentic criollo Argentine identity, with the most explicit embrace occurring in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, if we shift our gaze to Northwestern Argentina, we can see a divergent and less explicit strand of criollismo that preceded Buenos Aires' belated admiration of "deep Argentina," and which had long taken for granted the Indo-Hispanic roots of local cuisine. In categorizing different ways of cooking and eating, urban and rural actors made ethno-racial claims about who and what was valued, local, and ultimately, Argentine.

PROVINCIAL FOODWAYS AND EARLY COOKBOOKS

There is perhaps no better embodiment of these trends than Argentina's unparalleled culinary celebrity and best-selling cookbook author, Doña Petrona Carrizo de Gandulfo (ca. 1896–1992). A woman from the provinces, Doña Petrona touted her European training and cuisine in the nation's capital beginning in the late 1920s, but by the 1960s she was emphasizing regional dishes like *empanadas* [hand-held savory pies] along with her Northwestern provincial roots.

Petrona Carrizo was born on the outskirts of the city of Santiago del Estero. Named Petrona after San Pedro, the saint who shared her birthday, she was the sixth of seven children (five girls and two boys). Her father Manuel was apparently of Spanish descent and her mother Clementina of Italian and indigenous heritage.¹⁹ During the early twentieth century, those with some indigenous ancestry (including Petrona's mother Clementina) who wished to present themselves as acculturated Argentines could do so by speaking Spanish, practicing Catholicism, living in urban environments, and eating European-influenced foods.²⁰ Still, even as the Carrizo family spoke both Spanish and Quechua (like many in Santiago del Estero),²¹ lived near the provincial capital, and were Catholic, they appear not to have been among the elite (described by our Italian visitor to that city) who ate fancy French foods prepared in renovated kitchens. Petrona's father died when she was just six years old, and some five years later her mother moved the family to the provincial capital and established a *pensión*, or boarding house. There, Petrona learned how to make *pastelitos de dulce* [quince-filled pastries], and delivered empanadas and other foods to the boarding house's male clientele with her younger brother.²²

Foods like empanadas and pastelitos, which drew from both indigenous and colonial-era Spanish foods and cooking methods, would eventually be

considered classic staples of cocina criolla in Argentina. Still, during the early twentieth century most provincial families like the Carrizos did not characterize the dishes they ate as “criollo.” In fact, historian Fernando Remedi explains that in the province of Córdoba it was the newer Italian and French foods that carried an explicit ethnic marker during the early twentieth century, and not the foods forged by natives and Spaniards during the colonial era (considered simply the local cuisine).²³ The same was true in Santiago del Estero and other Northern provinces. Indeed, while some South Americans began to label their dishes “criollo” around the turn of the century,²⁴ fewer seemed to do so regularly within Argentina. In 1890, the accomplished Argentine writer Juana Manuela Gorriti published *Cocina ecléctica* [Eclectic Cuisine], a cosmopolitan set of recipes compiled from the submissions of her Argentine, Peruvian, and Bolivian friends.²⁵ (Gorriti had been born into an elite political family in the Northwestern Argentine province of Salta and spent much of her life exiled in Bolivia and Peru). The few dishes that carried the name “criollo” in this compilation were from Peru and not Argentina.²⁶

That same year (1890), Susana Torres de Castex, a less-famous elite woman from Buenos Aires, also published the first edition of a cookbook. She titled it *La perfecta cocinera argentina* [The Perfect Argentine Cook], and authored it under the pseudonym Teófila Benavento. Like Gorriti, Torres de Castex suggested the Argentine cook learn a wide range of cosmopolitan recipes drawn from both Argentina and Europe, where she traveled regularly.²⁷ Both Gorriti and Torres de Castex’s approaches reflected the importance of local and international foodways in shaping cooking in Argentina, especially in urban areas like Buenos Aires. Unlike Gorriti, Torres de Castex suggested that the “the perfect Argentine cook” might wish to cook a few “criollo” dishes as well. She included seven recipes dubbed “*a la criolla*.” Tellingly, all but one (a dessert called “*ambrosia a la criolla*”) required beef or beef lard. By this point, most Argentines considered cattle, which had originally been imported from Europe during the sixteenth century, to be local rather than foreign. But this association between beef and criollo food remained tacit in Torres de Castex’s work, for even as she associated beef with local cuisine, only a minute fraction of her 628 original recipes earned the label “criollo.” Among the few other recipes for which she specified origins, most involved a particular region in Europe or Argentina, such as *salsa catalana* [Catalan sauce], *croquetas de bacalao francesas* [French cod croquettes], *empanadas mendocinas* [empanadas from Mendoza], and *chafaina cordobesa* [chafaina from Córdoba]. By contrast, a recipe for *humita en chala* – a preparation of creamed corn cooked in a husk, derived from pre-colonial indigenous Andean culinary traditions – was not labeled as criollo, indigenous, or Andean. This cookbook was more cosmopolitan and provincial than it was nationalist or criollo.

The first cookbook explicitly focused on cocina criolla was published in Argentina a couple of decades later. In 1914, Mercedes Cullen de Aldao, an elite woman from the province of Santa Fe, published *La cocinera criolla* under

the pseudonym Marta.²⁸ Like Susana Torres de Castex before her, Mercedes Cullen de Aldao, who “laid claim to two of the most exalted last names” in Santa Fe, hid her upper-class identity and instead conjured up an image of an everyday “*cocinera criolla* [criolla cook].”²⁹ This was a way not only of protecting herself from the social biases that relegated cooks and other servants to the bottom of the social hierarchy, but also of recognizing that non-elite women did most of the cooking (for their own and for other families) in early-twentieth-century Argentina.

Like *Cocina ecléctica* before it, *La cocinera criolla* was a cooperative and cosmopolitan effort – in this case the aim was to raise money for a chapel for a local hospital. Even though its author hailed from the province of Santa Fe, it was published in Barcelona, Spain, with a glossary that translated Argentine culinary terms for other Spanish-speaking audiences. Perhaps due to this desired external audience, it was the most local and self-consciously criollo cookbook published by an Argentine author to date. This approach reverberated with the growing nationalism of the times, which frequently manifested itself in Argentines’ attempts to embrace local cultural forms derived from an old Spanish heritage to distinguish national culture from that of newer immigrants. Cullen de Aldao explained that she sought to “create a publication that would conserve and perpetuate our healthy *cocina criolla* and reproduce the foreign ways [of cooking] that we have assimilated, incorporating them into *nuestra mesa* [literally, ‘our table,’ or figuratively, ‘our repertoire’].” In this spirit, she organized her cookbook by dividing it in two parts; the first focused on *cocina criolla* and the second on *cocina cosmopolita* [cosmopolitan cooking].

While dishes in both sections used ingredients native to the Americas and to Europe, Cullen de Aldao made more explicit than her predecessors the relationship between *cocina criolla* and *grasa vacuna* [beef lard]. Many Argentines used beef lard as their principal cooking fat, and it had become a key ingredient that distinguished local preparations from foreign ones. This was especially the case in a province like Santa Fe, where cattle predominated. For example, Cullen de Aldao’s recipes for *facturas* included in the *cocina criolla* section described pastries inspired by European techniques but made with beef lard instead of butter or pig’s lard. Other recipes for beef dominated the section on local foods. In contrast, the section on “*cocina cosmopolita*” presented recipes from Spain or Italy featuring fish or fowl but little beef. Echoing the dynamics in Córdoba and Santiago del Estero, this author from the province of Santa Fe reserved mention of specific ethnic and regional identities for Spanish and Italian recipes (referring to them as “*caldo gallego* [Galician soup]” or “*arroz a la milanesa* [Milan-style rice]”), thereby reinforcing the notion that “*cocina criolla*” was the regular – unmarked – Argentine fare.

One year later, in 1920, a congregation of nuns in the province of Tucumán published a second cookbook from the Argentine provinces. They adopted the generic title *El arte de cocinar* [The Art of Cooking], and combined recipes of

foods popular in Argentina with those inspired by diverse South American and European foodways. In contrast to *La cocinera criolla*'s broader audience, this cookbook seems to have been originally directed to people in Tucumán, and it was not a deliberate presentation of cocina criolla. *El arte de cocinar* featured Spanish techniques and ingredients in special sections dedicated to how to prepare *bacalao* [cod] and *croquetas* [croquettes], and reflected the influence of the local sugar industry with a large number of dessert recipes and advertisements. Tellingly, it was not until subsequent editions, including one published in 1974, that dishes were labeled "criollo," and the introduction to this latter edition belatedly recognized that the recipes in its collection were, in fact, "*cocina regional* [regional cooking]."³⁰ In other words, these recipes were "cocina criolla" that in the 1920s had not yet considered itself as such – it was simply "everyday cooking" in these regions.

As provincial cookbooks made their way to Buenos Aires (where they were usually printed and easiest to find), and as the number of provincial migrants to that city grew during the early twentieth century, Northern regional cooking began to gain an identity as cocina criolla in the capital city. A series of nine photos from 1936 in Argentina's National Archive showcase "*Cocina Gaucha* [Gaicho cooking]" and "*Comidas típicas criollas* [Typical creole cuisine]" for a presumably urban audience. The photographs seem eager to "class up" primarily rural fare by placing dishes including tamales, empanadas, carbonada, humitas, and asado, which were generally served in a more rustic manner, on a table with a white linen tablecloth, fancy plates, and a bottle of wine. Some three years later, the popular women's magazine *Para Ti* published recipes for a similar range of dishes. The article's author lamented, however, that "*la cocina criolla* does not occupy the place it should on daily menus." Instead, the magazine explained, in a likely reference to the tastes of *porteños* [residents of Buenos Aires], "there is a preference for French and Italian cooking."³¹

Despite the growing attention that cooks and magazine editors began to pay to cocina criolla in these years, it was not this kind of home cooking but rather the asado or beef barbecue associated with the rural gaicho that would become the most sought-after provincial preparation in early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires. An Afro-Argentine chef, Antonio Gonzaga, played a particularly important role in urbanizing the asado by bringing it to homes and white-linen restaurants of the capital. Known at the time as "*el negro Gonzaga* [black Gonzaga]," his nickname spoke to how his contemporaries understood his racial identity.³² Gonzaga had gained experience as a military cook before serving as chef for the Argentine Senate and moonlighting at other fine restaurants in Buenos Aires, including the Jockey Club's. He had achieved such esteem for his culinary talents that in 1929, when he was around eighty years old, he presented a sold-out live cooking show in the Palace Theater and received a standing ovation.³³



FIGURE 9 Photograph of tamales from series of culinary photographs titled “*Cocina Gaucha*” [Gaucho Cuisine] from July 1936. Source: *Archivo General de la Nación*, neg. B.119.116. Courtesy of *Archivo General de la Nación*.

Just one year earlier, Antonio Gonzaga had published his first cookbook, *La cocina argentina y francesa* [Argentine and French Cooking] in Buenos Aires. In this text, he included a brief biography in which he characterized himself as a proud patriot who had gone to great lengths to provide the military men he had served with the flavors of Buenos Aires (especially fresh bread) aboard Atlantic naval ships and on the Bolivian border. Such patriotic claims resonated with those of previous Afro-Porteño intellectuals of the late nineteenth century, who, as historian Lea Geler has shown, emphasized that their community's military service helped build the Republic and therefore made them (and other patriot soldiers) into full-blooded Argentines.³⁴ In this vein, in his biographical note Gonzaga also relayed an incident from 1900 in which the foreman of one of the first ships on which he served as a cook had referred to him as "el criollo" and "el negro." He explained that the latter description "did not affect me at all, as I would have experienced great pain if they had distorted or wanted me to give up my nationality." (If that had happened, he noted playfully, no one aboard would have eaten bread for the rest of the trip).³⁵ In other words, to Gonzaga, racial labels mattered less than his shipmates' ultimate respect for his Argentineness.

La cocina argentina y francesa was one of the most self-consciously nationalist cookbooks published in Argentina to date. Unlike Cullen de Aldao, Gonzaga did not divide sections into local and foreign cooking. Instead, the French influences manifested themselves primarily in recipes for sauces and sweets, while the Argentine influences and the meat-centric approach for which Gonzaga had become famous were more persistent throughout, flanked by local versions of Italian and Spanish preparations. Rather uniquely, Gonzaga affirmatively named several of his recipes "Argentine," including *Sopa argentina* [Argentine soup], *Asado con cuero tipo tradicional argentino* [traditional Argentine asado cooked in its own hide or "leather"], and *Macitas argentinas* [Argentine fine biscuits]. Drawing on what appears to have been his birthplace in the province of Corrientes, he also included a soup and stew from that region. But with this exception, Gonzaga, like other authors who included provincial preparations, did not identify the regional or (indigenous) ethnic origins of dishes like humita and *mazamorra*.

In contrast to previous cookbook authors who emphasized urban provenance primarily when the cities in question were European, Gonzaga associated recipes with specific Argentine cities. For example, the cities of Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata claimed recipes like *Salsa porteña a la jamón* and *Potage Mar del Plata*. Indeed, even though this cookbook included classic French recipes, its author ultimately seemed more interested in celebrating the culinary contributions of his own country. To this end, Gonzaga closed his biographical note with a plea to his fellow Argentines not to favor things from abroad as they had tended to do in the past but instead to embrace a "*nacionalismo sincero* [sincere nationalism]" that placed more value on local knowledge and accomplishments.³⁶

In 1931, Antonio Gonzaga published his second cookbook, *El cocinero práctico argentino: Nuevo tratado de economía doméstica, pastelería, repostería y helados* [The Practical Argentine Cook: A New Treatise on Home Economics, Pastries, Confectioneries, and Ice Creams]. Here Gonzaga presented himself in an opening photograph as a serious and respectable figure, with a crisp suit and a confident expression. In addition to providing a variety of tips and treats, this cookbook celebrated numerous ways to cook beef, including a recipe for “*asado con cuero moderno*.” This preparation referred to the large beef barbecues famously cooked by gauchos outside over an open fire with the cow’s skin still attached. In Gonzaga’s “modern” version, this delicacy could be cooked over a small *parrilla* [outdoor grill]. His recipe for an urban asado found an enthusiastic audience and continues to serve as a referent for the “proper” way to make an Argentine asado.³⁷ Likewise, his *parrillada* of the innards, ribs, sausage, and other cuts of beef, which he served in restaurants and included in this cookbook, drew from the popular classes’ tendencies to eat all parts of the cow.

While Gonzaga became best known for his recipes with beef, this cookbook, even more than his first one, also reflected the growing popularity of immigrant and regional foodways in the capital city. He recognized Italian immigrants’ major culinary contributions in chapters for pastas and pestos. Toward the end of his cookbook, he included a chapter titled “various dishes” that included several dubbed “criollo.” Preparations in this section tended to be inspired by the provinces, including, for example, a recipe for “*locro de provincia con porotos* [provincial stew with beans].” In contrast to earlier cookbook authors, Gonzaga did not label beef dishes as criollo, making beef “disappear” seamlessly into Argentine everyday cooking, which for him was primarily porteño. This culinary move echoes broader trends. As recent historiography has shown, because Afro-Argentines were deeply assimilated into porteño popular culture, their central roles in helping to forge quintessential Argentine cultural forms have tended to be taken for granted by their peers and overlooked by subsequent generations.³⁸

Cookbooks, like other books, were easier to find in Buenos Aires than in the countryside. But that did not mean that there were no cookbooks in the provinces. Elite provincial families, many of whom regularly traveled to Buenos Aires and Europe for business and leisure, also owned and expected their cooks to use cookbooks published abroad or in the capital.³⁹ But most non-elites continued to cook meals based on local and regional customs that they learned from family, neighbors, and friends. This started to change in the 1930s, when the growing mass media began to provide new, more accessible venues for a culinary education, and when, as a result, Doña Petrona C. de Gandulfo seized this potential to emerge as a star. Over the next several decades, the expansion of the media and of cookbook ownership would encourage more cosmopolitan cooking, and would eventually help foster a greater recognition of, and appreciation for, *cocina criolla*.

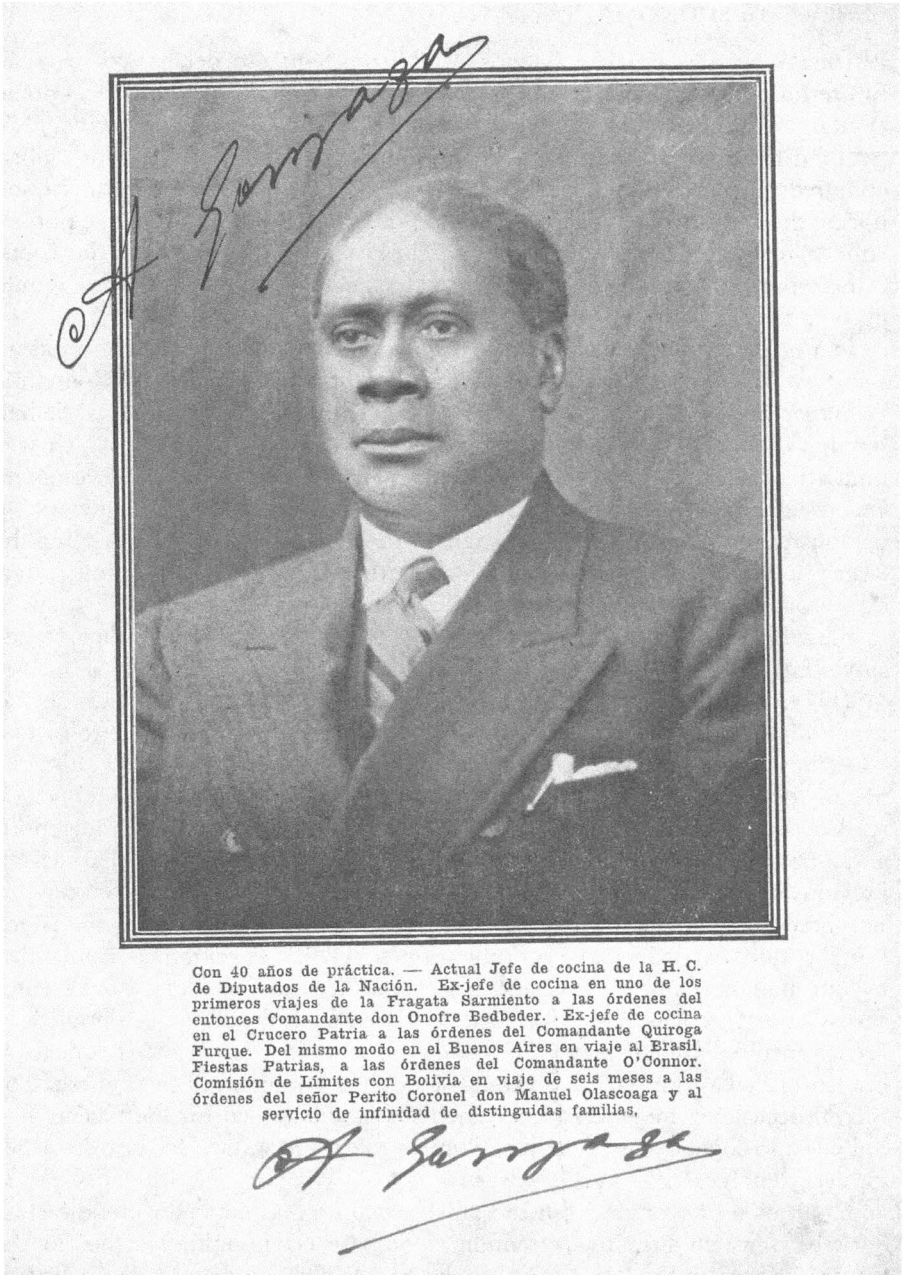


FIGURE 10 Photograph of Chef Antonio Gonzaga. Source: *El cocinero práctico argentino* (Buenos Aires: 1931).

ENTER THE ECÓNOMA

Petrona Carrizo arrived in Buenos Aires from Santiago del Estero with her future husband Oscar Gandulfo and his family around 1916. In the national capital, her identity shifted: Petrona was now perceived as a *santiagueña* [woman from the province of Santiago del Estero] and a *criolla*. Both labels conjured up rural settings, oral cultures, and lower social status in the capital during the early twentieth century.⁴⁰ Indeed, as Petrona began to carve out her culinary career, neither she nor her sponsors played up her provincial roots; rather, they downplayed the provincial origins of the woman who would become the public face of Argentine cuisine.

In 1928, Petrona C. de Gandulfo applied for and received a position as an *ecónoma* [corporate home economist] for the British gas company Compañía Primitiva de Gas. Primitiva sent her (along with the other *ecónomas* it had hired) to study at the French culinary academy Le Cordon Bleu, which was under the leadership of an Italian immigrant named Angel Baldi. The company encouraged its *ecónomas* to highlight French-inspired food in their cooking demonstrations for potential customers of their gas stoves. Acknowledging the large populations of first- and second-generation immigrants in the capital, they also provided instruction for many Italian- and Spanish-inspired dishes as well as a few British and provincial foods – all of which were tailored to the new gas stoves and the local palate.

This emphasis on creolized (but not explicitly *criollo*) European cuisine and technology was not only about class and the desire to sell products to status-conscious consumers; it also echoed latent racial and ethnic dynamics. Like the people themselves, the food typically consumed by European (or white) people tended to be associated with modernity and civilization, whereas indigenous and African people's food was associated with backwardness and barbarism. Previous generations of elites had enjoyed *criollo* fare like *puchero* [stew] at simply set tables, regularly sharing bowls, glasses, and spoons; but by the 1890s *porteño* elites sat at formally set tables – precisely the development applauded by our Italian visitor to Santiago del Estero around this time.⁴¹ Like elites across the Americas, well-off *porteños* embraced the status embodied in French-inspired *haute cuisine*. They sought out cooks from France or the local branch of Le Cordon Bleu who could serve their families and their guests. For special occasions, they dined on French dishes that called for ingredients like prawns and cognac, even as they continued to eat more standard *criollo* dishes for everyday meals.⁴²

Thousands of women from the newly wealthy and emerging middle class flocked to watch Primitiva's *ecónomas* prepare cosmopolitan dishes in the capital starting in the late 1920s. Ofelia F., the teenage daughter of a British homemaker and railroad manager, attended some of these early classes. She recalled that at seventeen years old she clipped an ad in the magazine *El Hogar* and went to watch Petrona and her fellow *ecónomas* prepare "elaborate

French-style dishes” including desserts and appetizers. She explained that the recipes presented at these sessions represented “all of the most useful foods.” To my question about whether they also learned how to make popular provincial dishes like empanadas and locro, she responded, “No, with Petrona we didn’t have any of that. How strange, if I think about it, because she was *provinciana* [from the provinces].”⁴³

From the outset Petrona and her sponsors seemed to realize that empanadas and locro were a lot less effective than French canapés and British-style cakes in establishing them and their products as useful in the capital city. Therefore, when Petrona C. de Gandulfo published the first edition of her cookbook *El libro de Doña Petrona* in 1934, she also emphasized French techniques and preparations for pastries like *vol-au-vents* and a variety of mousses and patés. Still, like Primitiva’s classes, her cookbook was not solely a treatise on French cooking. Although it featured more European-inspired recipes popular in the capital, she also included dishes inspired by provincial cooking. Echoing earlier cookbooks and migratory patterns to Buenos Aires from *both* Europe and Argentina’s “Interior,” Italian pastas and Spanish seafood dishes were joined by recipes for hominy-based locros and empanadas associated with specific Argentine provinces.⁴⁴ The few recipes that included the term “criollo/a” in this cookbook generally called for beef or a mixture of oil, vinegar, tomato, garlic, onion, and parsley, sometimes spiked with indigenous *ají* [chile pepper].⁴⁵

Doña Petrona’s cookbook recipes thus implicitly constructed Argentina as racially more white than “brown” by recognizing the Europeaness of its cuisine and downplaying (in part by not naming) the importance of Indigenous and African contributions.⁴⁶ Its imagery was even more forthright in conveying this message. For example, an illustration from the mid-1930s showed a pair of fair-skinned hands (meant to represent those of her readers) and included tips, presumably written by Petrona herself, for preserving their beauty by rubbing them with a mixture of sugar and lemon followed by a combination of sugar and olive oil. After applying both rubs, readers were told, “rinse, and you will see how your hands *quedan blancas* [are left white] and the skin velvety.”⁴⁷ A second color insert, an advertisement for a dairy company, also reveals this explicit preference for white skin by depicting a fair Petrona C. de Gandulfo educating a pale blond woman about the brand’s virtues.

Corporations did not use exclusively white women in an effort to sell their products in early-twentieth-century Argentina; a number also depicted black women. In contrast to white professionals or consumers, dark-skinned women were often cast as domestic servants. For example, an advertisement for the Argentine frozen meat company Sansinena, which branded its products under the name “*La Negra* [The Black Woman]” during the early twentieth century, showcased an elegant black woman holding sausages in what might have been a nostalgic reference to domestic slave servants (like Aunt Jemima in the US context), and to the historical association, in Argentina, between black women and the job of butchering and eviscerating beef. This depiction may have been

intended to remind homemakers of the emerging middle classes that they did not have help for these bloody and unpleasant tasks and that they should buy new frozen, pre-packaged products to compensate.⁴⁸ Likewise, a 1935 advertisement for Tulipán brand butter featured Doña Clarida, a smiling black woman wearing a servant's uniform and pronouncing, in a form of broken Spanish usually associated with the popular world, "*pa' mi no hay otra* [for me there's no other]."⁴⁹ This choice was likely meant to remind consumers of the predominant role that African-descended women had played as enslaved and free (but low-paid) cooks serving wealthier, lighter-skinned families; this longstanding association gave the black cook authority in recommending the product.

Neither Petrona C. de Gandulfo nor Primitiva, however, seemed interested in playing on the historical trope of black women's cooking. Instead, both continued to highlight European-style recipes and their urban modernity. Despite the nationalist turn in Argentina during the early-to-mid twentieth century, Doña Petrona and her contemporaries did not emphasize foods that would promote a regional or mestizo national identity, nor, like earlier cookbooks (or like cookbook authors in other Latin American countries), did they associate national authenticity with those kinds of foods.⁵⁰ Even as the Peronist government (1946–55) touted its ability to increase poor people's access to food and other consumer goods as evidence of its new nationalist political economy, government officials did not celebrate provincial, indigenous, African, or mestizo-inspired dishes as part of an authentic national cuisine. The Peronist government was more interested in emphasizing the class-based oppression of its followers and the possibility of including them in the privileges of a nation largely imagined as white than in highlighting their racial differences or race-based oppression.⁵¹

Indeed, instead of celebrating the criollo foods associated with poorer and darker-skinned people from the provinces, the Peronist government would highlight the beef and other prestigious foods that it enabled Buenos Aires' urban poor to enjoy. For example, in the opening celebration for a state-run home for single female workers, *El Hogar de la Empleada*, the menu included melon and prosciutto, crêpes filled with creamed corn and cheese, grilled entrecôte with French fries, and chocolate cake.⁵² This multi-course cosmopolitan feast echoed the culinary preferences of the porteño middle and upper classes. In fact, it was a menu that could easily have been inspired by a cookbook like *El libro de Doña Petrona*.

By the mid-twentieth century, porteños could sample provincial fare at the *peñas* or folkloric clubs popping up across Buenos Aires, and the nationalist government occasionally encouraged home cooking of traditional provincial dishes, but the state did not forcefully promote a nationalist cuisine. And even as beef consumption increased significantly for working-class families in Buenos Aires during the late 1940s, it remained relatively low in the Northern and Southern provinces.⁵³ With the harvest failures of the early 1950s, the Peronist government changed its tune about what and how people in central

Argentina should eat. But even then it did not push provincial fare very aggressively. Instead, it encouraged people to replace beef with other meats and “healthier” foods like dairy, fruits, and vegetables.⁵⁴

Ever-responsive to changing social dynamics, during the Peronist era Doña Petrona sought to make her recipes more accessible to upwardly mobile members of the working class. For example, in 1947 she added to *El libro de Doña Petrona* a less expensive version of the beloved Christmas sweet bread, *Pan dulce de navidad*, which called for replacing eggs with grated squash, and pine nuts or almonds with less expensive nuts like walnuts.⁵⁵ Still, she did not explicitly root these new dishes in a particular ethnic or racial identity that would speak to the often mixed-race background of Argentina’s poor. (Pan Dulce was, after all, much closer to an Italian panettone than to an indigenous-inspired mazamorra). During the 1940s and 1950s, Doña Petrona continued to emphasize European and increasingly US-style dishes, making them more affordable and, during the 1960s when more middle-class women entered the workforce, quicker to make.⁵⁶

Despite her emphasis on dishes that would speak to people in the capital, Doña Petrona’s status as a provinciana was unquestionable for those who saw her live performances. And more and more people had the opportunity to do so. In the 1950s, viewers from Buenos Aires watched her cook live on television with her assistant Juanita Bordoy, and by the 1960s she was on air in other urban areas.⁵⁷ On television Doña Petrona spoke with a santiagueñan accent and rhythm; she enunciated each word in a marked staccato. She became infamous for a linguistic tic, the “¿no?” she often included at the end of her statements. In 1969, when a journalist asked her if this stemmed from her santiagueñan heritage (along with her empanadas santiagueñas), she retorted, “Hold on a second; I don’t say it anymore.” She went on to explain, “They gave me such a hard time about it everywhere that I had to stop doing it.”⁵⁸ In a similar vein, journalists, along with many of the middle- and upper-class Argentines with whom I spoke, laughingly recalled how she would label an outstanding dish “un *puema*,” instead of “un poema,” as the word “poem” is spelled and generally pronounced in and around Buenos Aires. As with the “¿no?,” many in Buenos Aires associated this “mispronunciation” with Petrona’s provincial upbringing in Northern Argentina and lack of a higher education. This demonstrates one of the ways – in this case, modifiable – in which the combination of language, culture, and region could mark people within a supposedly uniformly “white” Argentina as ethnically different.⁵⁹ At some level, Doña Petrona seemed to recognize this phenomenon, seeking to retrain some of her “ways of being.”⁶⁰

But if Doña Petrona’s provincial status was immediately apparent to her contemporaries in her manner of speaking, it seems that her ethnic or racial identity remained either tacitly embedded in her provincial roots or insignificant. Many Argentines I spoke with were clearly attuned to Petrona’s provincial background, but they seemed genuinely confused by my questions about their

understanding of her (or her assistant Juanita's) racial or ethnic identity. When I asked about this, several of the people I interviewed simply stated that Doña Petrona was "provinciana" or "criolla," or did not answer at all. These responses suggest that race and ethnicity are not everyday categories that Argentines have consciously used to label others. This does not mean, however, that racial categories have not been at work. Indeed, such forms of difference might have been folded into terms like "provinciana" or "criolla." Like other Latin Americans, it seems plausible that some of the people I spoke with were regionalizing mestizo-ness in Argentina by locating it in the Northern provinces.⁶¹

The one person who answered most directly, an archeologist in her fifties named Marta, remarked that Doña Petrona's ethnic identity "was not anything, *estábamos muy mezclados* [we were very mixed]."⁶² This comment echoes the widespread acceptance of the ideology of Argentina as a *crisol de razas* [crucible of races], in which people of different ancestries, and particularly Europeans of different national origins, were believed to have combined to form racially unmarked Argentines. As historian Mónica Quijada has demonstrated, this vision of Argentina has emphasized distinct European contributions to this "crucible" but also allowed for the (less-specifically noted) integration of nonwhites.⁶³

Because political and social leaders generally succeeded in creating the idea that Argentina was a raceless nation by the early twentieth century, the racism experienced by poor people, who have often had darker skin and/or indigenous or African features, has been regularly overlooked, making it difficult to analyze and confront.⁶⁴ On a personal level, Marta made this point, recalling, "My mother always gets very mad when I say it, and she won't admit that she and her generation *eran racistas* [were racist]." Being identified as white, Marta explained, was best according to her mother's view. In contrast, if someone was from the Interior, a "*morochito* [dark person]," they "had to be clean."⁶⁵ Such a statement suggests, some three decades later, the continued resonance of the hand-washing advice from early editions of *El libro de Doña Petrona*, intended not only to clean – a modern, "civilized" practice – but also to whiten.

Discrimination extended beyond the perceived "dirtiness" of darker people from the provinces to a suspicion about the foods associated with them. As Marta explained, "Indigenous foods could be very tasty but they were not eaten [...] An empanada with a lot of spice wasn't good."⁶⁶ Eating in a properly "Argentine" manner mattered to the second- and third-generation immigrants living in her "middle-class" neighborhood in La Plata. Marta continued, "We lived in an Italian neighborhood and no one could say that they were Jewish or Spanish. Everyone wanted to be Argentine. People had to civilize themselves, to know how to eat." As this quote suggests, by the 1960s eating and being Italian had been thoroughly incorporated into eating and being Argentine in the urban centers of Argentina. But eating spicy foods associated with indigenous people

was not part of the assimilation (or “civilization”) plan for relatively recent immigrants from Spain or Eastern Europe in this region.

Still, some criollo foods were acceptable and even embraced by urbanites. Marta explained that “locro, as Doña Petrona would say, could pass.” This was not to say that this dish was “whitened,” but rather that it was “passable” provincial fare, or, in other words, locro occupied a respectable place within the diets of urban middle-class residents. Indeed, dishes like locro and (not too spicy) empanadas were not only acceptable, but also played important symbolic roles by distinguishing local fare from that of Europe.

CELEBRATING COCINA CRIOLLA

During the 1960s, culinary experts and media outlets would begin to celebrate a wider variety of provincial foods. In an early testament to this shift, the magazine *Mucho Gusto* published a cookbook in 1958 entitled *Especialidades de la cocina criolla* [Specialties of Criollo Cooking]. The editors explained that they had collected authentic recipes for cocina criolla, which they explicitly defined as having both indigenous and Spanish roots and hailing from Argentina and other parts of Latin America. While recognizing that their cookbook was not exhaustive, they claimed that the selection of recipes they offered represented “the most complete” treatment of cocina criolla available to “homemakers in the *países hermanos* [brother countries] of Central and South America.”⁶⁷ The editors of this relatively conservative magazine based in Buenos Aires positioned Argentina and its cuisine as part of the same family tree as other Latin American – as opposed to European – nations. As this move attests, Argentine nationalism drew not just from the Interior but also from broader Latin American referents.

In contrast to previous cookbooks published in Argentina, the recipes in *Especialidades de la cocina criolla* did not focus on dishes of Italian or French origin. Instead, the editors drew inspiration from across Latin America, presenting dishes like Mexican *enchiladas* and Brazilian *feijoada* alongside a number of local Argentine dishes, some featuring beef (like *asado*) and others not (such as *mazamorra*). The editors even included a small but notable number of Argentine recipes with indigenous terminology, including *mbaiipi de choclos*, which they explained (with an Italian metaphor they assumed to be more familiar to their readers) was “a type of polenta [...] typical of Corrientes.”⁶⁸

A couple of years later, Doña Petrona publicly stated for the first time her preference for cuisine from the Americas over the European cuisine with which she had begun her career. In so doing, Doña Petrona both reflected and tapped into new waves of Latin American regional pride and internationalism. When asked by food journalist and cook Marta Beines in 1960 about her favorite foods to prepare, she responded by saying that although she appreciated European cooking, she preferred “what is ours.” This was a sentiment that Beines and others clearly appreciated. Beines wrote:

As a professional [Petrona] has access to any secret of the diverse cuisines of the world, [still] what is more than true is that she is not, nor does she want to be, a European-style specialist. What is important is not what can be imitated. Doña Petrona is faithful to what is hers.⁶⁹

As this quote suggests, during this period a number of urban, middle-class Argentines began to appreciate provincial cultures, as opposed to Europeanized urban cultures, as sites of Argentine authenticity.⁷⁰

As a woman from Santiago del Estero, Doña Petrona was particularly well-situated to promote the latest, more provincial version of “faithfulness” to all things Argentine. In journalists’ hands, both Petrona and her empanadas came to embody the growing association of Argentine identity with its own rural roots rather than with Europe or Buenos Aires. For example, Beines included Petrona’s empanada recipe, along with a description of the sensory experience of eating one: “They have a native flavor: they are juicy, spicy enough to excite the palate without destroying it and they are seasoned with spices that perfume the filling without changing the taste of the meat and of the dough, [which is] light and golden.”⁷¹ As this description suggests, Doña Petrona had succeeded in marrying slightly spicy indigenous flavors with beef inside the empanada, a sensually “exciting” union whose outcome would not be “destroyed” by the native element, and which in any case was contained by the European-inspired “light and golden” crust. Through her characterization, Beines suggested such empanadas to be an apt metaphor for the latest, more indigenous-inflected (or “perfumed”) iteration of criollo identity in urban Argentina.

While Doña Petrona more actively celebrated provincial foods during the early 1960s, she also continued to present a broad range of cosmopolitan recipes as worthy of women’s attention. In contrast, during this same period, the well-known Argentine folk singer Margarita Palacios, a native of the Northwestern province of Catamarca, began to use her fame and her provincial culinary roots to promote *cocina criolla* exclusively. In January 1962, she opened a *peña* in Buenos Aires featuring “Northern foods.”⁷² Later that year she published a recipe pamphlet called “*Las comidas de mi pueblo* [The Foods of My People]” for the Argentine magazine *Folklore*. In 1963, she began her own television program, showing her viewers how to make dishes popular in Northern Argentina.⁷³

In future years, Doña Petrona paid greater attention to economizing (which was a more pressing concern for many of her urban middle-class fans) than to Northwestern recipes, yet she continued to address her provincial identity in a way she had not done previously. In 1969, the magazine *Gente* ran an article with a three-page spread featuring photographs in which Doña Petrona and her family (including her son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and assistant Juanita Bordoy) enjoyed empanadas around the traditional outdoor bread oven she had installed in her patio. In this article, Petrona commented, “empanadas should be eaten spicy and warm. ‘In the mouth of the oven,’ as they say in Santiago. [This is] a very old, and very wise Indian recipe.” It seems that by the

QUE PREFIEREN COMER LOS GRANDES GASTRONOMOS DOÑA PETRONA: EMPANADAS SANTIAGUEÑAS

No es necesario presentarla: es Petrona, Doña Petrona, la figura más conocida de nuestra gastronomía. Ella lo sabe y es justo que tenga conciencia de ello; a su público se ha dado con verdadero fervor de oficio. No se limitó a llegar a él a través de las páginas de su libro, uno de los "best-seller" de vida más prolongada, sino que hace años que sus admiradoras y discípulas pueden seguirla en sus clases por radiotelefonía y televisión. En sus conferencias sobre arte culinario se congrega un público adicto que alcanza a llenar salas de espectáculo con miles de butacas; es un público atento para no perder sus consejos técnicos y dispuesto a imitar su artesanía en el difícil arte de decorar. Doña Petrona confecciona tortas como juguetes encantados: golosinas que hacen soñar a los niños con soldaditos de caramelo y casas de mazapán, pero no es éste el aspecto más interesante de su capacidad. Como profesional no le es ajeno ningún secreto de las diversas cocinas del mundo, mas lo cierto es que ella no es ni quiere ser una especialista al estilo europeo. Lo importante no es lo que pueda imitarse. Santiagueña de origen, Doña Petrona tiene fidelidad por lo suyo.

Ante la pregunta sobre cuáles son sus preferencias dentro de su especialidad, manifiesta sin dudas que, aunque la entusiasmo mucho la cocina europea, prefiere lo nuestro, es decir lo suyo. Quien ha probado alguna de sus famosas empanadas sabe que ella posee el secreto de una manera de hacerlas que las hace diferentes. Tienen el sabor de lo autóctono; son jugosas, picantes para avivar el paladar sin destruirlo y están sazonadas con las especias que perfuman el relleno sin modificar el gusto de la carne y de la masa, ligera y dorada.

De todas las empanadas típicas de nuestras provincias, encuentra que las de la aya son las que más aceptación tienen. "Eso sí —dice sonriendo con picardía—: para tomarlas el gusto hay que comerlas al lado del horno y a mano, envueltas en una servilleta para no quemarse". Y agrega: "La empanada santiagueña no admite ser recaleñada; su sabor cambia y la grasa que contiene el relleno impregna la masa..."

Con su cordialidad y llaneza habituales se dispone a redactar una receta dedicada a los lectores de *La Nación*. Su secretaria se apresura a complacerla. Doña Petrona trabaja con un equipo organizado de colaboradoras; secretarías y ayudantas de cocina esperan sus órdenes para recopilar su nutrido fichero de recetas o poner en marcha su cocina experimental. Lo que es evidente es que Da. Petrona C. de Gandulfo ama la profesión



que ha elegido. Habla con entusiasmo sobre sus actividades; trata a sus colaboradoras y amigas que la acompañan

Doña Petrona C. de Gandulfo en su famoso laboratorio, donde se armonizan la tradición y la sorpresa

con afecto y se advierte en el ambiente donde ella trabaja que la labor se realiza con alegría y buena voluntad.

Maria Beines

EMPANADAS SANTIAGUEÑAS

Elementos para preparar 24 empanadas:

MASA: 600 gramos de harina, 1 cucharadita de sal fina, 125 gramos de grasa de vaca. Agua fría.

SALSA: 500 gramos de grasa de vaca, 600 gramos de cebolla, 1 cucharada de pimentón de buena calidad, 1 cucharada de ají molido, picante; 1 cucharada de agua y 1 cucharadita de sal fina.

RELLENO: ½ kilogramo de carnes de ternera, 1 cucharada al ras de comino molido, 1 cucharada de ají picante molido y sal fina a gusto.

PREPARACION: Para hacer la salsa hay que cocinar en la grasa la cebolla finamente picada y antes de que se dore agregarle el pimentón, el ají, el agua y la sal; dejar hervir un minuto, retirar en seguida y dejar enfriar.

Para hacer el relleno hay que cortar en pequeños daditos la carnesa, y una vez cortada, pasarla rápidamente por agua hirviendo, colocarla en un colador y después acomodarla en una fuente grande, bien desparramada, para que se enfríe. Una vez casi fría se condimenta con sal, comino molido y ají picante molido.

Para hacer la masa, colocar sobre una mesa la harina en forma de corona, poner en el medio la grasa y el agua con sal. Formar una masa algo dura, dejarla descansar un cuarto de hora, tapada con una servilleta; después sobarla bien, cortarla en pedacitos, amasar unos bolillos, estirarlos, dándoles forma redonda y dejarlos algo finos.

Tener listos tres huecos duros y pasas, a las que se habrá quitado las semillas.

Poner encima de cada masa una cucharada bien llena de carne, sobre ésta una cucharada de salsa y después un poco de hueso duro picado y algunas pasas. Humedecer los bordes de la masa y formar las empanadas con un buen repulgue.

Hornearlas en horno muy caliente; lo máximo que deben estar en el horno es doce minutos.

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FIGURE 11 Images from a newspaper article titled "What Gastronomy Experts Prefer to Eat: Doña Petrona: Empanadas from Santiago del Estero." Source: *La Nación*, 5 Jun. 1960. Courtesy of *La Nación*.

late 1960s, Petrona was proud of her regional (and perhaps even her indigenous) heritage, and rather than distancing herself from it as she did at the start of her career, she now seemed to embrace the notion of herself as a provincial woman even to the extent of calling the empanada – of primarily Spanish origin – indigenous. She remarked, “Things from the place you were born stay with you.”⁷⁴

Over the course of the 1970s, many of the provincial things people had been “born with” became increasingly important to a group of young, politicized middle-class people in urban areas. As historian Valeria Manzano has demonstrated, a burgeoning sense of pan-Latin Americanism and Third-Worldism manifested itself in new youthful patterns of cultural consumption that celebrated Argentina’s native and local culture over those of the United States and Europe.⁷⁵ This manifested itself in the growing consumption of “folkloric” goods at local fairs, as well as travel to and social work in the provinces. For one young man who traveled to Petrona’s native province of Santiago del Estero from the city of Mendoza, the differences were stark. “I could not believe that was also Argentina,” he wrote, “but *that* is the true Argentina.”⁷⁶

The “true Argentina” was a place one could not only see, but taste. In 1970 in the Northeastern province of Chaco, the provincial capital of Resistencia hosted the “first national festival of *cocina criolla*.” At this festival, men competed to make the best asado con cuero.⁷⁷ This festival clearly drew from the cooking practices and mythology surrounding the gaucho, who was the heralded originator of this preparation (and stood in stark contrast to more urbanized styles of cooking in which select cuts of trimmed meat were prepared on domestic grills).⁷⁸ This mythic connection between cowboys and beef was something recognized not only at local festivals; it also became a deliberate export. Some seven years prior to this festival, in 1963, E. Rodríguez Long and Jewel B. Groves published a bilingual cookbook (in Spanish and English) in Buenos Aires titled *El asado criollo*, which they translated both as “Roast Spit Barbecue” and, more nationalistically, “Argentine Spit Roast.” The authors explained to their desired English-language audience that asado was *the* national dish accepted across the country. They continued, “There is a deep tradition in this country that goes back for many years, from the time of the classic *asado* of the *gauchos* to the very sumptuous roast-on-the-spit *parrilla* of these days.”⁷⁹ While the practice itself had changed, the asado made on an outdoor grill had become a celebrated, national tradition.

Doña Petrona continued to refrain from making asado outdoors, explaining in 1973 that her husband Atilio was the “*asador de la casa* [griller of the house].”⁸⁰ This reflected her (and many of her contemporaries’) gender ideology as opposed to her lack of interest in *cocina criolla*. (The authors of *El asado criollo* also expected men to attend the grill).⁸¹ As she had started to do during the previous decade, during the 1970s Doña Petrona made available to her

magazine readership several Northwestern specialties.⁸² Likewise, *Mucho Gusto* more emphatically began to celebrate Argentina's provincial culinary heritage in this period. It titled the May 1972 issue of its magazine "*Cocina Criolla con Sabor a Independencia* [Creole Cooking with the Flavor of Independence]." In the introductory note, the editors explained, "This collection of recipes contains culinary secrets from various Argentine provinces offered especially to porteños, who are already tired of eating *fideos con salsa* [noodles and sauce]." Whether or not such boredom existed, the editors emphasized the predominance and monotony of Italian-style preparations in Buenos Aires. Striking a provincial patriotic note, they signed off "With all the flavor from *tierra adentro* ['inland,' but also a historical term for indigenous lands beyond the nation's borders] and the pride of possessing a native cuisine." As in earlier recipe books, beef lard was a key ingredient in many dishes *Mucho Gusto* characterized as "criollas," including empanadas and pastries. Locro was also present, but no other beef-dominant dishes were. Instead, corn, which was both indigenous to and a staple in Northwestern Argentina, played the starring role in recipes for humita, *tamales salteños* [Salta-style tamales], *torta de choclo criolla* [criollo corn tart] and *empanadas de choclo* [corn-filled empanadas]. While most of these recipes were drawn from the Northwestern and Central provinces, there was also a reference to the typical celebratory fare from the Southern part of Argentina (a recipe for *Chivito a la criolla* [criollo-style goat]) and another from the West (a recipe for *Empanadas mendocinas*).⁸³

As the provincial and criollo came to play a larger role in defining Argentine national identity, Doña Petrona pointed to her own provincial and mixed-race past more directly than before. In a 1976 interview, she proudly explained that she prided herself on being able to "speak *quechua* perfectly, read four newspapers a day [. . .and be] interested in politics, soccer, and other things in the world around us."⁸⁴ While she refused to publicly talk politics despite (or perhaps because of) the recent military coup, her claim that she was fluent in Quechua emphasized her mastery of an indigenous language widely spoken in her native province of Santiago del Estero.

For its part, the military dictatorship was eager to promote criollo nationalism, and it tapped into the tremendous symbolic nature of food. During the winter of 1976, the government joined forces with commercial interests and a children's charity to carry out what it deemed the first annual *Nacional Jornadas de Cocina Criolla* [National Conference of Criollo Cuisine]. (They made no reference to the event six years prior in Chaco). Doña Petrona was in attendance (with her husband and with fellow ecónoma Choly Berreteaga) and was even named "honorary president."⁸⁵ Other participants in the four-day-long conference included cooks, doctors, dietitians, and government officials from across Argentina. Dramatizing the links between the military government and commercial interests, Doña Petrona and Choly Berreteaga sat on a panel that judged the empanada competition along with Roberto Mitchell, Administrative Director of the Ministry of the Economy, and Héctor Adell, the marketing

director for a well-known liquor business.⁸⁶ The military government's organization of this conference suggests their interest in showing their government to be authentically Argentine, even criollo. This notion was replicated in the diet of military conscripts, who regularly ate what was by then considered quintessentially criollo fare like empanadas and locro.⁸⁷ Like previous political leaders, the military government's interest in female cooking (this was an empanada and not an asado competition after all) emphasized their broader idea that women's domestic duties played an important role in the national community and economy, as well as in sustaining their families.

During the late 1970s, urban men and women alike had come to embrace a new form of criollismo that incorporated indigenous and mestizo influences from Northern provinces. Indeed, the gauchos of the plains and criollos of the Northwest had become "quintessentially Argentine" to a much greater extent than their counterparts in Patagonia or Northeastern Argentina. This was reflected in both folklore and food.⁸⁸ For example, the authors of a 1978 cookbook titled *La cocina del gaucho* [The Gaucho Cookbook], explained,

... in love with *lo criollo*, aware of how national cosmopolitanism at times harms our traditions, respectful of the wise culinary base of the Inca period, admiring tasters of our original variety of ingredients, we believe it important to undertake this work of organization and of exegesis of the range of food inherited from our remote American ancestors.⁸⁹

As they suggested in this quote, some of the recipes did indeed draw from pre-colonial foodways and featured native Andean ingredients including corn and potato. However, dishes made with local ingredients from other regions, such as manioc from Northeastern Argentina, were notably absent. In addition, this cookbook, like other celebrations of *cocina criolla*, also reflected the profound impact of the Spanish introduction of cattle on what, by the twentieth century, had come to be considered uniquely Argentine culinary traditions. The authors of this text devoted entire chapters to celebrating and explaining how to prepare asado or *charqui* [jerky].

Doña Petrona became even more interested in promoting recipes for Northwestern provincial cooking during the 1980s. She shared with a journalist in 1985 that she had prepared a new cookbook focused on *cocina criolla*, or, as she also put it, "our traditional food," but that it was too expensive and difficult to find an editor.⁹⁰ The santiagueña who established herself as *the* premiere culinary expert in twentieth-century Argentina would publish over one hundred editions of her main cookbook *El libro de Doña Petrona*, along with more specialized cookbooks focused on decoration, economizing, and diet foods, but she would never publish a cookbook that featured the cooking of her native province and Northwestern Argentina. Indeed, it was not until the 1990s and beyond that the next generation of explicitly criollo and provincial cookbooks would be published. And since Doña Petrona died in 1992, such initiatives were left to be undertaken by others.

CONCLUSION

In early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires, “lo criollo” had been tightly linked with a local culture associated with the whitened gaucho and his celebrated open-air asados on the Pampas, idealized by nationalist segments of Argentine society in the face of waves of European immigration. Still, it was not asado criollo or cocina criolla that dominated the culinary ideal in Buenos Aires and other urban settings like Santiago del Estero during this era. Instead, for the Italian visitor to Santiago del Estero, the Compañía Primitiva de Gas, and its star “ecónoma” Doña Petrona, French and other European cuisine reigned supreme during the 1920s through the 1950s. During the 1960s and 1970s, as more urban youth looked to rural spaces for the “real” Argentina, Doña Petrona (like other urbanites) sought to publicly embrace her provincial roots and celebrate the spicy empanadas of Santiago del Estero. Until this point, local foods like these had remained ethnically unmarked in their regions of origin in contrast to “French” or “Italian” fare.

Echoing an earlier trend, ideas about national cuisine in Argentina have continued to be tightly associated with beef. In 2003, the Argentine Secretary of Culture formally inducted *asado de carne vacuna* [beef barbecue] as a “food and specific dish belonging to the Argentine cultural patrimony.”⁹¹ This was not just political grandstanding. Many Argentines had come to believe “that a meal without beef should not be called a meal,” and that a proper celebration called for an asado.⁹² In contrast to much of the world, where starchy grains (corn, rice, wheat) serve as the basis for most people’s diets, in central Argentina beef had become an expected staple of the diet and a defining element of local cuisine and identity.

By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, more and less beef-centric versions of cocina criolla had acquired a place at the national table and in the national imaginary. In urban centers, this trend can be seen most dramatically on national holidays when dishes like locro and empanadas enjoy a high-profile status. The growing appreciation for cocina criolla has also manifested itself in a slew of new cookbooks. In 2005, Choly Berreteaga (who had helped judge the 1976 empanada competition with Doña Petrona) published *La cocina de nuestra tierra* [The Cooking of Our Land]. In the prologue, she celebrated Argentina’s cocina criolla, which, she explained, had been forged by the “fusion between the Hispanic and indigenous worlds and the later migratory flows from Europe.”⁹³ In distinguishing a previous bedrock Argentine criollo identity from “later” migratory flows, Berreteaga echoed a new (post-2001 economic crisis) discourse about national formation.⁹⁴ Further, in contrast to previous generations who celebrated cocina criolla as essentially stemming from culinary traditions from the Northwest and the Central plains, Berreteaga presented a more inclusive version by including not just token recipes but entire chapters focused on dishes from the Northeast, Patagonia, and the mountainous Western region of Cuyo.

This more inclusive vision of Argentina's culinary map came in conjunction with other recent efforts to speak about and even celebrate Argentina's indigenous and mestizo past – efforts that have accelerated in the twenty-first century with Argentina's 2001 economic crisis and 2010 Bicentennial.⁹⁵ Still, in looking back at the twentieth century, it bears remembering that the emphasis on criollo culture has often erased or subsumed Argentina's histories of racial difference and mixture, keeping those processes deliberately opaque. Anthropologist Víctor Ramos suggests that even at the start of the twenty-first century, many people with indigenous backgrounds who migrate to urban areas “tend to negate their background and instead affirm their identity as ‘provincianos,’” leading to a loss of “particular cultural traits and ethnic traditions.”⁹⁶ While not directly mentioned in this scholarship, indigenous and Afro-Argentine culinary contributions are among the traditions that have been subsumed and are only recently starting to be recognized. Whereas eating foods inspired by Europe and the United States was considered modern throughout the twentieth century, eating *cocina criolla*, even when it was celebrated, was primarily associated with tradition and, at times, a hazy indigenous and mestizo heritage, decidedly located in the past.

Notes

I thank Paulina Alberto and Eduardo Elena for the thoughtful work they have put into this chapter, this volume, and the conference panels that preceded this book. I express my appreciation to my co-panelists and to members of the Grupo de Estudios Afrolatinoamericanos for useful feedback. I also thank Carina Perticone for sharing a rare edition of Antonio Gonzaga's first cookbook and the Argentines I interviewed for sharing their food-related memories.

1. Fazio, *Memoria*; Tasso, *Historia*, 60.
2. Losada, *La alta sociedad*, 204–08; Remedi, *Entre*, 141–52.
3. Stepan, *Hour*; Rodríguez, *Civilizing Argentina*.
4. Losada, *La alta sociedad*, 204–08; Remedi, *Entre*, 141–52.
5. Emilia S. and Livio S., interview by author, Buenos Aires, 6 Nov. 2003.
6. Arcondo, *Historia*; Caldo, *Mujeres cocineras*; Remedi, *Entre*.
7. Earle, *Conquistador*.
8. Schávelzon, *Historias*, 71–72.
9. This approach is inspired by Briones, *Cartografías*.
10. For a comparative study of *cocina criolla* in Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico, see Pilcher, “Eating.”
11. Guzmán, “Performatividad.”
12. Castro, *Afro-Argentine*, viii; Arrom, “Criollo,” 172–76.
13. Chamosa, “Indigenous.”
14. Briones, “Mestizaje.”
15. Prieto, *El discurso*; Bockelman, “Between.”
16. Chamosa, *Argentine Folklore*, especially 2 and 196 n. 36. See also Rodríguez, this volume.

17. Adamovksy, "La cuarta función."
18. Quijada et al., *Homogeneidad*; Briones, *Cartografías*; Adamovsky, "La cuarta función."
19. Olga C. G. and Olga A. G., interview by author, Santiago del Estero, 4 May 2004.
20. For colonial Latin American trends, see Bauer, *Goods*, especially 46–84.
21. Tasso, *Ferrocarril*, 219.
22. "Goyo" C., interview by author, Santiago del Estero, 6 May 2004.
23. Remedi, *Entre*.
24. For example, Tulio Febres Cordero, *Cocina criolla o guía del ama de casa* (Mérida, Venezuela: Tipografía El Lápiz, 1899).
25. Tobin, "Manly Acts," 53.
26. Pilcher, "Eating."
27. Arcondo, *Historia*, 227.
28. *La cocinera criolla por Marta* [pseudonym] (Barcelona: Luis Gili, 1914); Caldo, *Mujeres cocineras*, 136.
29. Caldo, *Mujeres cocineras*, 136.
30. Congregación de Hijas de María y de Santa Filomena de Tucumán, *El arte de cocinar* (Tucumán, Argentina: Imp. La Comercial de Aníbal L. Medina, 1920 [1st ed.]; 1974 [4th ed.]).
31. *Para Ti* (Buenos Aires), 23 May 1939, 66.
32. While the term "negro" in Argentina can also be used as a class descriptor, it seems that in this case it referred to Gonzaga's color, as he was also called "moreno" and "de color."
33. Antonio Gonzaga, *El cocinero práctico argentino* (Buenos Aires: 1931); www.lanacion.com.ar/1186416-la-cocina-del-negro-que-cautivo-buenos-aires (accessed 18 Apr. 2012).
34. Geler, "Afro-Porteños."
35. Antonio Gonzaga, *La cocina argentina y francesa* (Buenos Aires, 1928).
36. Gonzaga, *La cocina*, 270.
37. See, for example, www.carnesdelolo.wordpress.com/2012/05/01/asado-un-ritual/ (accessed 11 Feb. 2012).
38. Geler, *Andares* and "Afro-Porteños"; Karush, "Blackness."
39. Caldo, *Mujeres cocineras*, especially chapter 4.
40. Cara, "Poetics," 39.
41. Schávelzon, *Historias*, 54–69.
42. Losada, *La alta sociedad*, 204–08.
43. Ofelia F., interview by author, Buenos Aires, 31 Dec. 2003.
44. Petrona C. de Gandulfo, *El libro de Doña Petrona* (Buenos Aires, 1934 [editions through 1992]).
45. Gandulfo, *El libro*; Pilcher, "Eating," 10.
46. On ideas of brownness for the Argentine context, see Alberto, this volume.
47. Gandulfo, *El libro*, eds. 1–2(1934–35), inset before p. 9.
48. Luis Barrantes Molina, *Para mi hogar. Síntesis de economía y sociabilidad domésticas: Escrita expresamente para la Compañía Sansinena de carnes congeladas* (Buenos Aires: 1923), 16.
49. Advertisement for Tulipán, *El Hogar* (Buenos Aires) 5 Apr. 1935.
50. On Mexico, see Pilcher, *Tamales*.

51. See Elena, Adamovsky, this volume.
52. "Fueron habilitadas ayer las instalaciones del Hogar de la Empleada," *Democracia* (Buenos Aires) 20 Jan. 1950, as cited in Acha, "Dos estrategias," 167.
53. Milanese, "Food Politics," 86–88, 91.
54. For more analysis of Peronist food- and consumption-related initiatives see Billarou, "El ama"; Elena, *Dignifying* and "What the People Want"; Milanese, "Guardian"; and Pite, *Creating*.
55. Gandulfo, *El libro*, 23rd ed. (1947), 516.
56. For my analysis of these trends, see Pite, *Creating*.
57. For more analysis, see, Pite, "Entertaining Inequalities."
58. Mario Mactas, "Para comerte mejor," *Gente* (Buenos Aires), 25 Sep. 1969, 55.
59. For analysis of this trend, see Briones, "Mestizaje."
60. See Geler, this volume.
61. On the racialization of region in Latin America, see Weinstein, "Racializing"; Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters*; and Wade, *Blackness*.
62. Marta F., interview by author, La Plata, 4 Apr. 2004.
63. Quijada et al., *Homogeneidad*, 9–12.
64. Margulis and Urresti, *La segregación*. See also Geler, Gordillo, Rodríguez, this volume.
65. See Geler, this volume; Marta F., interview by author.
66. Marta F., interview by author.
67. *Especialidades de la cocina criolla: seleccionadas por el personal técnico de la revista Mucho Gusto* (Buenos Aires: Fabril Financiera, 1958), 8.
68. *Especialidades*, 63.
69. Marta Beines, "Qué prefieren comer los grandes gastrónomos, Doña Petrona: Empanadas Santiagueñas," *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 5 Jun. 1960.
70. On an earlier period, see Chamosa, *Argentine Folklore*.
71. Chamosa, *Argentine Folklore*.
72. "Guía de Peñas," *Folklore* (Buenos Aires), Jan. 1962, 63.
73. "Guía nativa: Radio y TV," *Radiolandia* (Buenos Aires), Sep. 1963, 72.
74. Mactas, "Para comerte mejor."
75. Manzano, "Making."
76. "Cartas," *Nuevo Hombre* (Buenos Aires) Mar. 1972, 12; Manzano, "Making." My emphasis.
77. Emmy de Molina, "Sabor y saber sobre la mesa: Exotismo en nuestro folklore gastronómico," *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 25 Nov. 1972, 2a.
78. On gauchos and "lo criollo," see, for example, Prieto, *El discurso*; Bockelman, "Between."
79. E. Rodríguez Long and Jewel B. Groves, *El asado criollo; Roast Spit Barbecue* (Buenos Aires: Artes Gráficas M.A.C.S., 1963), 10.
80. Elsa San Martín, "Petrona C. de Gandulfo: Una mujer positiva," *Mucho Gusto* (Buenos Aires), 12–25 Sep. 1973, 9.
81. Rodríguez Long and Groves, *El asado criollo*, 26–27.
82. Elsa San Martín, "Petrona C. de Gandulfo: Una mujer positiva," *Mucho Gusto*, 12–25 Sep. 1973, 9.
83. "Cocina criolla con sabor a independencia," *Mucho Gusto* 41, May 1972, 35–51.
84. "Cómo viven los argentinos: Petrona C. de Gandulfo: ¿el Gardel de las amas de casa?" *Clarín*, 11 Jun. 1976, n.p.

85. Choly Berreteaga, interview by author, 18 Jun. 2004, Buenos Aires.
86. "Sabor y saber sobre la mesa: La cocina criolla en jornadas," n.p., n.d., courtesy of the Association of Ecónomas.
87. Conversation with a former military conscript who served in 1983, Oct. 2011.
88. Chamosa, "Indigenous," 75.
89. *La cocina del gaucho* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Gastronómicas el Gato que Pesca, 1978).
90. "Doña Petrona a 50 años de su primer libro, habla con Emmy de Molina, su amiga y colega." *La Prensa*, 9 Apr. 1984, 4.
91. Osés, *Léxico de la carne*, 18.
92. Lovera, *Food Culture*, 37.
93. Choly Berreteaga, *La cocina de nuestra tierra* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 2005), 4.
94. Briones, "La Nación."
95. See also Alberto, Elena, Ko, this volume; Briones, "La Nación;" and Adamovsky, "El color."
96. Margulis and Urresti, *Racismo*.