



Memories and traditions of street food: Gastronomic practices on the streets of Pelotas

Paula Pinheiro Mussi^a;
Pedro Mascarenhas de Souza Pinheiro^b;
Grazielle Younan Soca^c;
Valéria Skupien Biachini^d.

ABSTRACT: The overall objective of this work is to carry out a survey on street gastronomy through the memories of residents and non-residents of the city of Pelotas, discovering which memories are most present in the respondent's imaginations, and to analyze which neighborhoods these foods were found in and the memories they evoke. A questionnaire was prepared, to which 103 participants responded. Based on the responses, it was concluded snacks are in the memory of most residents and non-residents alike, such as traditional sweets of the city, and that the downtown area was the location with the greatest presence of these services.

KEYWORDS

Street food
Taste memory
City food

Aceito 03/Out/2021
Publicado 20/Jun/2022

^aMasters Degree Student in Tourism and Hotel Management - UNIVALI
ppinheiro.mussi@gmail.com

^bPhD Candidate in Media Arts, Universidade Lusófona do Porto

^cTechnologist in Hotel Management, UFPel

^dStudent of Technology in Hotel Management, UFPel

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14210/at.v7n2.p35-42>

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INTRODUCTION

It is noted that the typical culinary preparations have been losing certain cultural and historic characteristics. The collective memory and knowledge of how to prepare these traditional delicacies is disappearing, largely due to the globalization of markets, the homogeneity of kitchens, cheaper and faster eating, and the fact that it is much easier to purchase items that are not part of the original culture (MULLER; AMARAL and REMOR, 2013). The tendency for gastronomic preparations to become mixed up, as a result of the rapid global growth, have led to growing interest in studying local cuisines. This study seeks, in particular, to identify the gastronomic memories and street food traditions of the city of Pelotas, to evaluate these memories, and to transform them into a cultural asset of the city and its people.

According to Gularte (2016), in modern times, with the fast pace of life that prompts us to eat quickly, and often outside the home, there is a tendency to search for a return to the origins, through contact with the past, which can be done in a very simple way. It is possible to evoke the past, even if only for a brief moment: all it takes is to go back to the kitchens, to the food ritual, and to the memories are pieces of our lives that we hold within ourselves, and that can be accessed through a simple mouthful. That said, traditional, or regional gastronomy, and everything related to it, is perceived as an ethnic marker, i.e. something that identifies a locality and results from a cultural alliance of formation, colonization or evolution. These are kitchens that perpetuate the influence of gastronomic culture in life and customs of the society, associated with people in particular, they constitute aspects of identity and become the symbolic key to the customs (MULLER; AMARAL and REMOR, 2013).

According to Flandrin and Montanari (1996), the kitchens and traditional foods are elements of appreciation of the regional culture; a form of perpetuating the culinary memory of families and often, a source of economic gains for industry as well as local commerce. Thus, it can be said that traditional gastronomy allows the symbolization of a culture. This paper aims to broaden research in the country on street food, and to provide strategies for creating new establishments in this attractive market. A survey was designed, to gather the memories of residents and non-residents of the city of Pelotas on the topic of street food, and to find out the most common memories. Besides helping to revive the street food history of the city, it will record the favorite street foods of the residents and non-residents, assess which street foods are/were consumed in the region, investigate which neighborhood sold the most street food, and analyze what is associated with the street food memory.

Theoretical Framework

The knowledge of food and gastronomy has transformed the act of eating, presenting various forms of differentiation mechanisms, integration and sharing. Thus, it is no longer a practice simply to "satisfy the hunger". Divided into chronological slices, this paper highlights aspects of Food and Culture, Food as a Cultural Manifestation, Taste Memory as Identity, Street Food, and Pelotas and its Sweets. It adopts the perspectives of different authors on the theme, further enriching the project.

Food and Culture

The meanings of food for societies cannot be viewed within an epistemology that encompasses only nutritional and biological markers. Food behavior reveals aspects of the culture of a society. Tradition, history, tastes, techniques and culinary practices all come together to generate the formation of regional cultures. For Beluzzo (2004), there is a tendency for societies to value the heritage of their kitchens, as well as the revival of traditional cuisine in many parts of the world, leading to a reevaluation of cultural roots. Garcia (1999) emphasizes the connection between gastronomy and regional identity, as food is a language related to regional culture through customs and behaviors of a people (MULLER; AMARAL and PELAEZ, 2013).

Beyond this representation, gastronomy will always be not only a provider of gustatory pleasures, but also a tradition that adds cultural knowledge and, thereafter, social status and the ability to coexist and relate to society. According to Flandrin and Montanari (1996), traditional food kitchens are elements that enhance the regional culture, giving perpetuity to a culinary memory or taste memory of families, and also providing a source of economic gains for industry and local commerce. The foods of traditional gastronomy are local specificities, and as such, are far removed from products and processes that tend to standardize food cultures. The use of native regional elements is observed, produced by the small producer, with their own geoclimatic peculiarities, in accordance with handmade standards. In the current context of food industrialization, flavors are becoming standardized, and the artisanal processes of preparing and conserving foods that give unique flavors to the final product are falling into disuse.

Globalization has affected various cultural fields, including art, music, literature, fashion and food. This has led to an increasing standardization of food. A result of this phenomenon is a subsequent resistance, which claims a unique identity, pure and unchangeable through its historical predecessors. But in this construction, which is linked to the historical predecessors, it was seen that certain memories were chosen to be



part of this identity, while others were denied, on the understanding that besides being experienced, it is socially constructed (STEFANUTTI; GREGORY and KLAUK, 2018). In approaches to the habits, behaviors and/or food practices, there is a tendency to treat these concepts with essentialism. The very definitions of traditional dishes are an example of this; but what, in fact, is a traditional dish? Does it represent an identity? How can we define it? Can we broaden the questions about why we eat what we eat? How can we answer this question while avoiding the tendency to essentialize? Why do we choose certain foods over others, the I and the Other (WOODWARD, 2000).

Food as a Cultural Manifestation

The meanings of food for societies cannot be seen within a world view that encompasses only nutritional and biological markers. Food behavior reveals aspects of the culture in which it is inserted. It is through human feeding that the structure of society is materialized; where social and socio environmental interactions are updated, as well as sociocultural representations of those who share the same culture. Tradition, history, tastes, techniques and culinary practices come together to generate the culture of a region. For Beluzzo (2004), there is a tendency for societies to value the heritage of their kitchens, and there is a revival of traditional cuisine in many parts of the world, with a revaluation of cultural roots. On this theme, Lody (2004) and Canesqui (2005) emphasize that eating is, above all, a symbolic act; a translator of signs, formal recognitions, colors, textures, temperatures and others. It consists in an act that unites memory, desire, hunger, meaning, sociability and rituality (MULLER; AMARAL and REMOR, 2013).

The cultural value of the act and the way food is eaten is increasingly being seen as heritage, because food is the translator of people, nations, civilizations, ethnic groups, communities and families. Understanding the culinary structure as a set of rules and norms related to eating, including the foods chosen, organizing the menu, the preparation techniques, and the condiments used, it is possible to identify the cuisine of a region or a nation as a cultural particularity, noting that from the preparation stage through to consumption, there are various cultural identity factors included (GARCIA, 1999). According to Hernandez and Grácia-Arnaiz (2005), each culture generates its own gastronomy with recipes, ingredients, aromas, preparation techniques, ways of serving and even eating, each with its own particular classifications and precise rules. These peculiarities are also seen not only in the way foods are prepared, but also how they are combined, as well as in the harvesting, production, conservation and consumption. Traditional preparations include not only the various different recipes, but also ingredients, methods, prepa-

rations, forms of sociability and systems of meanings that are based, above all, on experience. Therefore, studying the characteristics of a traditional gastronomy is a complex activity, given that it differs from one part of the country to another. In Brazil, for example, the origins, influences and culinary habits manifest themselves differently in each region.

Dishes and products cater for the needs of Cultural Tourism, which shows interest in corroborating the "local experience" of the tourists through the territorial peculiarities. Ginani (2005) claims that regional recipes are known and valued as part of the eating habits of the natives, being created using ingredients available in the region and prepared with techniques passed down from generation to generation. There is also a possibility of involving the local population in the production and commercialization of these products, since these are the people who are able to make them. Botelho (2006) emphasizes that once the conservation of recipes and eating rituals is ensured, all the social actors involved will be able to maintain their direct and indirect gains. Thus, using ingredients available in the region makes it easier to buy fresher and better quality products, because the food is made with the characteristics of a terroir. It also helps preserve the environment, as it prevents much of the cross-country transport of food.

Taste Memory as Identity

Social memory plays a fundamental role in the identity formation of a social group, as the past shared by its members influences the image that the group has of itself in the present. As the authors Weber and Pereira (2010) state: "The relationship between memory and identity is therefore based on the individual's belonging to a social group". Thus confirming the relationship between memory, identity and belonging to the social group. When referencing taste memory, Pollak (1992, page 140) complements the idea that memory: "...is a constituent element of the feeling of identity, both individual and collective, insofar as it is also an extremely important factor in the feeling of continuity and coherence of a person or a group in its reconstruction of itself".

Contact with another food culture can alter an individual's eating behavior. Cooking has a unique relationship between food and the individual, and the memories that result from this practice are evidence of this. Affective memories, food as a memory, and the consequent appreciation of homemade productions (STEFANUTTI; GREGORY and KLAUK, 2018). Eating habits can change completely once we have grown up, but the memory and impression of the first food learning, and some of the social forms learned through it, will remain, perhaps forever, in our



consciousness (MARINHO and ALBERTON, 2013). Culinary preference is a kind of bodily memory in two senses: the first is the body's response to food, shaped by social values and common experiences over time, for example, the shark fin is "haute cuisine" in China and the impression of "delight" when eating shark fin dishes can derive from its high monetary and social value and the second is the body's subjective response to food that can produce new meanings and change the value of food (CHEN, 2008).

Street Food

Traditions, values and customs are passed on from one generation to the next, and the memory of popcorn sold at the school door, or the bauru sandwiches sold from trailers on the streets of the city, can symbolize a cultural link. Street food cannot compare with meals served in a restaurant which it comes to hygiene, food safety, and food origin, as well as comfort and elegance of services. However, many of the establishments that serve street food are famously recognized for the quality of the product they serve. According to Leme and Campana (2004), the definition of street food can be understood as the "type of food prepared, cooked or finished and sold on the street, either from fixed points of sale (markets), mobile (carts), temporary or seasonal (typical fairs) and periodic temporary (tents)". However, this definition can also be expanded to include food that is presented in ready-made form, such as rapadura (sugar cane) peanuts, and candy floss, among others.

Street food is an easier and more financially viable option, with a great diversity and ready for immediate consumption. According to Poulain (2004), it has identity and identifying character. Thus, it can be seen that coming together around food creates a sense of belonging, of connection with the roots and identities of producers and consumers.

Pelotas and its Sweets

The Pelotas sweets, besides being widely recognized, are part of the culture of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. They have recently undergone two forms of valorization of gastronomic products that is occurring today in Brazil: Geographical Indication and recognition as Cultural Heritage of Brazil. The sweets were recognized as Intangible Heritage, which aims to recognize and value goods of an intangible nature, with a perspective of past and present in the construction of sweets (IPHAN, 2018). There are several types of sweets that have been registered by the Instituto Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional [National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage] as Tradições Doceiras da Região de Pelotas and Antiga Pelotas [Sweet Traditions of the Region of Pelotas and Old Pelotas]. Examples are the

bem casado, the marmalade, the quindim, the peach marmalade, the ninho, the camafeu, the fig in syrup, the shortbread, the stuffed plum, the candied pumpkin, the bolo de noiva and so many others. Due to these records, the region of Pelotas and Antiga Pelotas have become known as the land of sweets (IPHAN, 2018).

The identification of origin serves to differentiate and guarantee the original products, protecting the tradition and culture and giving exclusivity of the Pelotas sweets (IG, 2011). Recognition of the original product prevents there being dozens of imitators, a possibility of commercial success for real confectioners. Among the candy certified by IP, there are Portuguese candies made with eggs and sugar, such as quindim, ninho, papo de anjo, pastel de santa clara, among others. The sweets made with fruits that are certified are those with peach and fig in syrup. (IG, 2015).

The recognition of its value generates interest in protection through patrimonialization. These "ways of doing" are recognized and properly valued, enabling them to be perpetuated over time. Sweets can even provide a competitive advantage for destinations, leading tourists to visit Pelotas to taste the famous Pelotas sweets.

When a food of a region becomes traditional, it is because it is already part of its culture. Traditional gastronomy is specific to the local region, and therefore goes against the tendency for cultures to become homogeneous. Fagliari (2005) points out that traditional dishes and products are elements that can be easily worked on to make them tourist attractions. The use of these elements is in line with the demands of Cultural Tourism, which shows interest in corroborating the "local experience" of tourists, through territorial peculiarities. Ginani (2005) states that regional recipes are known and valued as part of the native eating habits, being made with ingredients available in the region and prepared using techniques passed down from generation to generation.

Fagliari (2005), corroborating Ginani (2005), considers that the profit generated by the acquisition of traditional dishes and products is interesting, especially considering the predominance of small local producers in the production and sale of this type of product (MULLER; AMARAL and REMOR, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives proposed in this project, it was necessary to use different investigation mechanisms. These included a literature review on subjects related to gastronomy, street food, city history, food history and data exploration. After identifying the related issues, it was necessary to use two methods: one of an exploratory quantitative nature, in order to adapt the measurement instrument to the reality of the con-

text - and the other of a descriptive quantitative nature, as its main purpose was to describe certain characteristics of relevant groups inherent to the research (MALHOTRA, 2006). This method makes it possible to establish correlations between variables (VERGARA, 2011).

The research instrument was created, resulting in a questionnaire with open and closed questions. The first part of the questionnaire, with closed structured questions, included questions about the respondent's profile – sex, age, neighborhood where they live, which street foods were sold in the city; which neighborhood they found these foods in. The second part, with open questions asked what time in their lives the food reminded them of, and what the food made them think of. The survey-type questionnaire was used to obtain data in the quantitative stage. After its application, the data were properly prepared and aligned in an appropriate format for analysis, as indicated by Malhotra (2006) and Hair et al., (2005). The data collection took place from May to the beginning of June, and the questionnaire was made available via the social networks, such as Instagram and some Facebook groups, such as 'Hotelaria UFPel', 'Turismo UFPel', 'Pelotas-Noticias', 'Classificados Pelotas e Região Sul' and 'UFPel'.

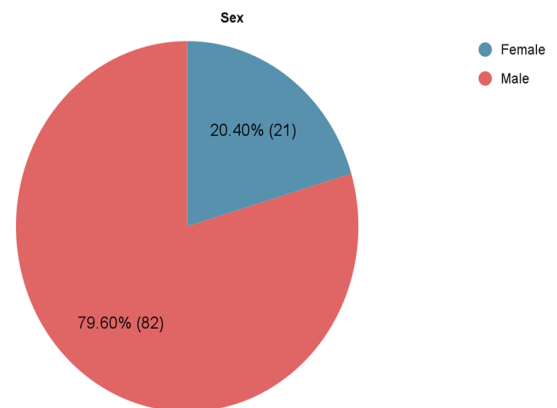
To start the research, a pre-test was carried out with the questionnaire. After preparing questionnaire, it was applied on May 23, 2021 as a pre-test. With the responses of ten participants, some changes were suggested to questions 3 and 4. Following the changes, the survey was applied. With the questionnaire approved and made available, it was answered by residents and non-residents of the city of Pelotas. After drawing up the results in the form of a table, the memories were analyzed. As stated by Oliveira (2006): "memory is probably the richest element in the writing of a text, itself containing a mass of data whose meaning is best reached when the researcher brings it back from the past, making it present in the act of writing".

To analyze the memories, word clouds and graphs were created. The word clouds show the street foods mentioned in the open-ended section of the questionnaire; the most frequently mentioned foods appear larger. According to Lunardi, Castro & Monat (2008), words clouds can have several uses, as a tool for learning or even for use in electronic sites. Graphs, meanwhile, were used to analyze the answers to closed questions. Graphs serve as a cultural tool, allowing to expand the ability to process and establish statistical information, obtaining relationships between different types of information (MONTEIRO and SELVA, 2001).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Seeking to answer the research objectives, this section presents the results of the methodological forms adopted. The questionnaire was applied in May and June 2021 and had 103 responses in total. Of the 103 respondents, 21 (20.04%) were male and 82 (79.6%) were female.

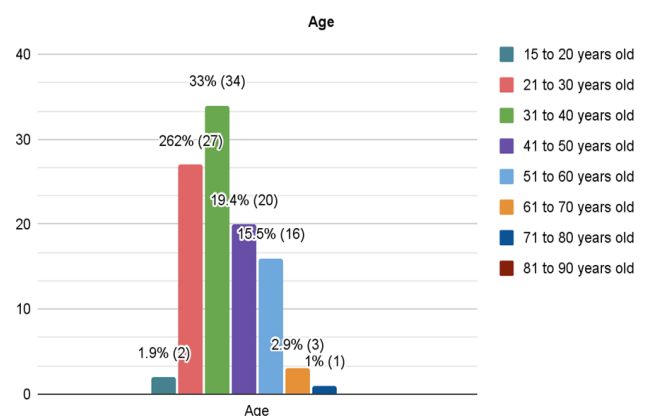
Graph 1: Sex



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

As regards the respondents' age, the highest prevalence was individuals aged between 31 and 40 years, 33% (34), followed by those aged between 21 and 30 years old, 26.2% (27), 41 to 50 years old, 19.4% (20) and 51 to 60 years old, 15.5% (16).

Graph 2: Age

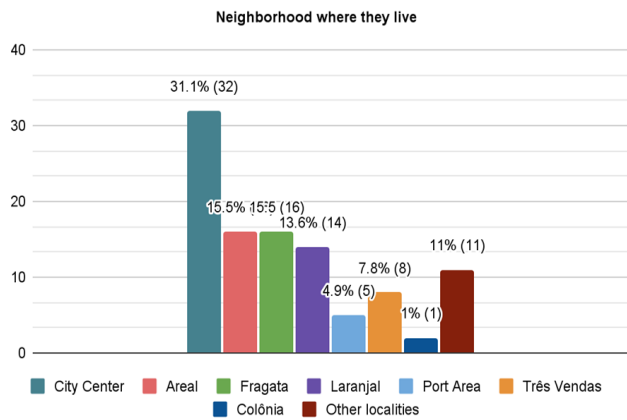


Source: Created by the authors (2021)

Regarding the neighborhood where they live, it was observed that 31.1% (32) live in the city center, 15.5% (16) in the Areal neighborhood, 15.5% (16) in the Frágata neighborhood and 13.6% (14) in the Laranjal neighborhood. The remaining answers varied between the regions of Três Vendas 7.8% (8), the Port area 4.9% (5), Colônia 1% (2) and other locations. Some of the respondents lived in the cities of São Lourenço, Porto

Alegre, Rio Grande, Florianópolis (SC), São José dos Pinhais (PR) and Pedro Osório, totaling 11% (11).

Graph 3: Neighborhood where they live



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

Among the favorite foods, the following stand out in the word cloud: bauru (20), hot dog (17), crepes (14), churros (10), pastel (9), churrasco (7), popcorn (6), xis (6), sweets (3) and others.

Image 1: Word Cloud - Favorite Foods



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

Regarding the street food found for sale, we can cite hot dog (49), churros (43), crepes (42), churrasquinho (41), popcorn (35), bauru (31), sweets (19), snacks (15), and candy floss (12), with french fries, pastel, xis, peanuts and others making up the remainder.

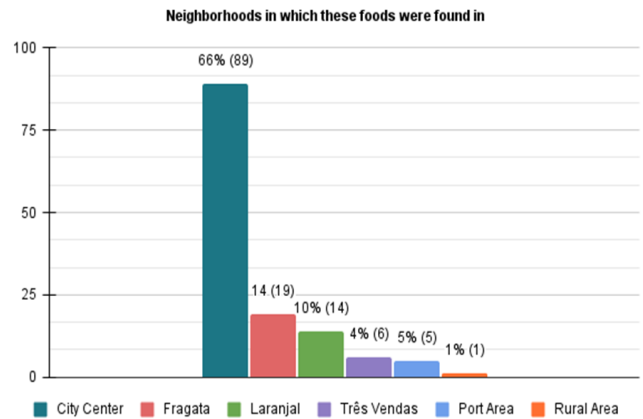
Image 2: Word Cloud - Street Food found for sale



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

As for the neighborhood in which the aforementioned foods were found in, the city center represents 66% (89), with Laranjal 10% (14), Três Vendas 4% (6), the Port area 5% (5), Areal 4% (2) and the rural area 1% (1).

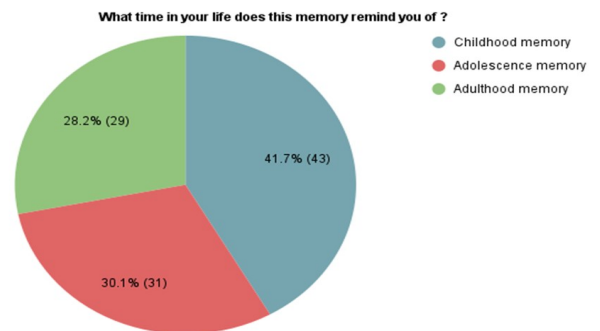
Graph 4: Neighborhoods in which these foods were found in?



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

When asked about the time in their lives the memory of the food reminded them of, the respondents said: childhood 41.7% (43), adolescence (30.1% (31) and adulthood 28.2% (29).

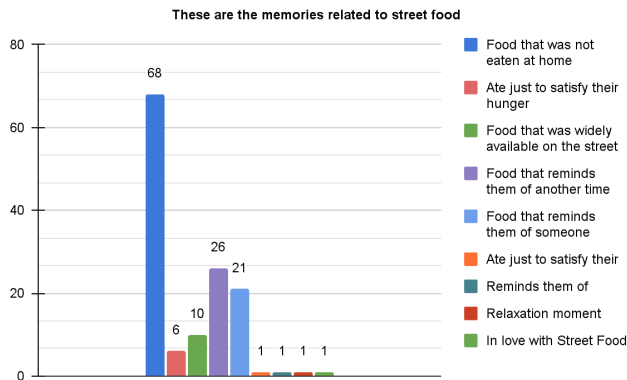
Graph 5: What time in your life does this memory remind you of?



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

Analyzing the graph to identify how memories are related to street food, we see that it was food that was not eaten at home, 64.1% (68), food that reminds them of another time (era), 25.2% (26), food that reminds them of someone, 20.4% (20), food that was widely available on the street, 9.7% (10), those who ate just to satisfy their hunger, 5.8% (6) and the others 4% mentioned are in other relation to their memory.

Graph 6: Memories related to street food



Source: Created by the authors (2021)

The results of this study identified that food awakens memories, allowing the reconstruction of moments and memories and making it possible to reestablish cultural identities. Even in the face of various transformations and new perspectives of consumption, symbolic expressions continue to prevail, such as the art of traditional street food in the city of Pelotas.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This paper aimed to study a field that is little explored, seeking to understand and deepen the gaps that exist in the literature regarding street food. The general objective of this research is to carry out a survey on street gastronomy through the memories of residents and non-residents of the city of Pelotas (RS), discovering which memories are most prevalent in the respondent's imaginations. Based on the data obtained, it was possible to identify the respondents' memories and their profile. Most were female (80%), and aged between 31 and 40 years (33%). Most of the respondents lived in the downtown area of the city.

To answer one of the specific objectives, which was to record which street foods are preferred by residents and non-residents, the word cloud used for the analysis highlighted bauru, possibly because it is a street food that is characteristic of the city; besides being famous for its sweets, Pelotas is also well-known as a city of snacks (UFPEl, 2017). Less marked were churrasco, popcorn, candy floss, crepes, and the sweets of the city of sweets.

When asked where these delicacies were found, we discovered that most of the food was bought in the downtown area of the city (66%), possibly because this area has a higher circulation of residents, as this is where they come to shop, pay bills and even look for specific street foods. Presenting the data on what time of their lives these foods reminded them of, the an-

swers were clearly divided between childhood, adolescence and adulthood. However, childhood (41.7%) refers more to this affective memory of the act of eating out. When associating the memory of the act of eating, most respondents said they did not eat these foods at home, but went out in search of them.

These results can help revive the city's street food history, and despite the difficulty in publicizing the project, as many people do not have access to the Internet, we managed to obtain knowledge about various foods consumed in the city. Based on this, we can carry out new research to delve deeper into the stories linked to the memories, with reports, recordings and interviews with consumers and even owners of establishments participating in the research.

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