

# I want you black, black feijoada

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## Abstract

Favorite and daily dish for Brazilians of all social classes, feijoada has become a popular, artistic and political jargon. Feijoada used to mean mixture, confusion, uneducated mob, the day-to-day, old habits, simpler and less sophisticated things. It could have also a sexual meaning – in this case, “to eat feijoada” could mean “to have sexual intercourse.” Although so popular, feijoada was accused of being indigestible and harmful to health, and was proscribed by hygienist ideas of the second half of the 19th century as a facilitator of yellow fever and cholera morbus. However, from the last two decades of this same century, the spread of new microbial ideas and the discovery of yellow fever transmission by the mosquito have cooled the population’s fear against the disease; and the yellow fever eradication in Rio de Janeiro, beginning in 1907, definitely rehabilitated the feijoada. Indeed, in 1900, one of the largest and most popular carnival societies of Rio de Janeiro, the *Democráticos*, reflecting the climate of revaluation of all that was Brazilian, introduced the “full feijoada” in their menu of pre-carnival festivities, and replaced champagne with cachaça. This “nationalist” initiative, which translated by the use of typical Brazilian dishes and drinks, became a trend and was, thereafter, copied by other carnival societies and sports clubs in their regular banquets. Finally, in 1911, at a lunch offered to the 8th Brazilian President of the Republic, Hermes da Fonseca, the main dishes were barbecue and feijoada. Since then, the ideological “national feijoada” was imposed in Rio de Janeiro as the mandatory dish of all festivities.

**Keywords:** Feijoada and Brazilian identity. Feijoada and “Brazilian” language. Feijoada, everyday life and classes sociability. Feijoada and carnival. Feijoada, nationalism and politics.

*Rio Gastronomia* (Gastronomy in Rio de Janeiro), in its first edition in 2011, would include, among other events, the *Concurso Feijoada Nota 10* (Grade 10 Feijoada Competition), which would choose which (club or dancing school) samba school would be preparing the city's best feijoada. Samba school and feijoada! Two great cultural symbols of the Brazilian city Rio de Janeiro gathered in a great gastronomic event, in which also participated important restaurants and their renowned chefs.

Certainly, this mixture of samba with feijoada sounds very pleasant to any carioca (demonym for natives of the city of Rio de Janeiro) and, we would venture to assert, to any Brazilian. It is enough to see how both often appear together, not only in the samba school yards in Rio de Janeiro, especially in the carnival festive season, but also in the Black Awareness Day celebrations throughout the Brazilian territory. Which is not surprising, since this union is centuries-old, that is, since the *Sociedade Carnavalesca Clube dos Democráticos* (Democrat Carnival Club Society) decided to give, in January 1900, on a pre-carnival Sunday party, a "colossal and pig-like feijoada,"<sup>1</sup> which was most likely accompanied by the rhythm of the maxixe dance (occasionally known as the Brazilian tango), as samba was not allowed yet in the club halls where the carioca elite would meet.

In fact, feijoada, in its simplest form of beans, jerky and bacon, or more exuberantly as a full feijoada, is so much a part of most Brazilians' everyday life from north to south, that no one wonders if it was ever different.

But it was not always so. Let us here follow the feijoada saga and find out how it was naturalized, not without setbacks, in the life of the population in Rio de Janeiro, being present every day on their tables, whether at home, whether in restaurants.<sup>2</sup> And that, despite the actions from hygienist authorities that criticized it, even accusing it of causing yellow fever and cholera morbus, and the stupidity of a certain pedantic elite, who believed to be increasing in value by eating, at least in public, French dishes, despising national cuisine, particularly feijoada.

Let us also see how feijoada has entered the vocabulary of cariocas and Brazilians in general, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, becoming an instrument to interpret their daily lives and their social and even political reality. In short, how it became one of the outstanding cultural traits of their identity.

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1 *O País*, 01/28/1900, issue 05592, Declarações, p. 3.

2 If you want to know more about the history of feijoada, you can read the book that I have authored, *A vitória da feijoada* (The victory of feijoada), Niterói: UFF publisher, 2012.

## Feijoada: a Brazilian craze

The classic feijoada, consisting primarily of black beans, bacon and jerky, invariably consumed every day, all year, in every house, whether rich or poor, was, in the first half of the nineteenth century, identified by foreigners coming to Brazil, or here living, as the national dish of Brazil.

In its most elaborate form, the “full feijoada” made with pork and beef trimmings, was, until the 1860s, a dish eaten on special occasions, however informal, such as family parties and picnics. It could even take the pig’s head, whole or in half, with the ears. It was then called “feijoada with pig’s head” or, more simply, “pig feijoada.” It was arguably Brazilians’ favorite dish, even though very greasy and difficult to digest.

In its classic and simpler design, feijoada had become so ubiquitous, indispensable and almost obligatory in Brazilians’ daily lives, as an essential part of their existence, that even the religious precepts of fasting required by the Catholic Church, the state religion until 1891, were tricked, particularly by the socially disadvantaged, but not only them. Commenting on the end of Lent, a journalist said:

*Cod and shrimp, propitiatory and elementary victims of all Lenten meals, along with mullet and badejo fish, flounder and haker fish, oysters, salmon and lobster, will have pleased a few stomachs to satiety. Others will be content with the very modest and providential cod, sardines, salty fish and seafood. **The more modest people will not be able to disregard the classic feijoada that is less greasy, less tasty and more covered by ashes from flour,**<sup>3</sup> but, in any case, our contemporaries, **all of us,** are infinitely less observant and less penitent with regard to observance and food than other modern peoples and other peoples of antiquity.<sup>4</sup>*

Eaten for dinner,<sup>5</sup> its leftovers were served for lunch the next day, after well boiled to kill bacteria and not likely to cause poisoning:

***Yesterday morning, in his home at 252 Frei Caneca Street, Rodrigo Augusto Faria had as lunch, in the company of his wife and children, a good feijoada that was a leftover from the previous dinner.***

*They all tasted the delicious dish and soon after the meal, his daughter Rita, 12 years old, and his sons Leopoldo and João began to feel ill with colic; therefore Rodrigo asked for help from the community health center.*

3 The words and phrases emphases in bold throughout this article are from its author.

4 *O País*, 04/07/1901, issue 06025, Páscoas, p. 1.

5 Throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, “dinner” was understood as the main meal, performed around noon.

*In a few moments [the doctor] was in the house with an ambulance [...] diagnosing a case of poisoning due to bad conditions of the cookware with which the food was prepared.*<sup>6</sup>

And it should be noted that lunch still meant, as was customary in the nineteenth century, the first “fork” morning meal. Thus, the journalist responsible for the section *Sensações da Semana* (Weekly sensational news) in the Brazilian *Fon-Fon* magazine, would comment in relation to the June 18, 1914 story: “[...] I have had no sensational news today! Understand... **I had lunched a feijoada at 9 am, and had to go back to bed and sleep again!**”<sup>7</sup>

The story of northern Brazilian citizen who, having been included in an infantry battalion in the capital city, used to send for the “food” in a guesthouse near the casern, was even told as real. One day, a note addressed to “Mr. Romualdo,” the innkeeper, was intercepted from him. It said:

*Send me a feijoada; if there isn't, steaks with potatoes; if there isn't, Bahia-style mincemeat; if there isn't, send me a feijoada (he had forgotten that he had already written feijoada); if there isn't, the Brazilian-style cod; if there isn't, roupa velha (Portuguese for “old clothes”; an elaborate meal from leftovers from the previous day) with cabbage; if there isn't, feijoada. [...].*

*He got two nicknames: “If there isn't” and “Feijoada.” But “If there isn't” was the favorite among his comrades.*<sup>8</sup>

And in such a way was feijoada part of life in Rio de Janeiro that police news, in order to make its accounts more attractive, would introduce it as a literary embellishment:

*José Coelho de Castro, on the afternoon of July 23, was walking down the Lavradio street, **digesting his hearty feijoada**, when before his eyes a temptation appeared: a box with eight flannel shirts, which was being exhibited at the door of a business house in that street.*<sup>9</sup>

Feijoada had become a nickname for many men, such as Antônio Rodrigues de Barros, **aka Feijoada**, who was arrested for possession of prohibited weapons, giving opportunity to the journalist to joke: “Feijoada... armed... only full”;<sup>10</sup> or “the celebrated **professor Feijoada**”<sup>11</sup>

6 *O País*, 01/16/1910, issue 09235, Mau almoço, p. 5.

7 *Fon-Fon*, 05/02/1914, issue 0019, Sensações da Semana, p. 23.

8 Leopoldo D. Amaral, *Fon-Fon*, 01/19/1929, issue 0003, O “Caso não haja,” p. 71-72.

9 *O País*, 11/25/1886, issue 00327, Tribuna, p. 2.

10 *O País*, 04/18/1894, issue B04272, Os gatunos, p. 2.

11 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 10/22/1882, issue 00294, Publicações a pedido, p. 2.

from the Medical School. And as many meanings were assigned, feijoada ended up entering the journalistic, theatrical and political jargons.

In the theater criticism environment, it meant everything that was simple, without much sophistication or elegance, but certainly able to please and satisfy most people. Thus, the theater critic of the *Revista Ilustrada* magazine said: “However, what seems to predominate in public taste is that last genre, **the operetta buffa, the parody, the feijoada**, as it is called by one of the entrepreneurs who provides it in his theater.”<sup>12</sup>

Another critic argued, about the return to the scene, in the *Recreio Dramático* theater, of the play *Castelo do Diabo* (Devil’s Castle): “The public wants the **black feijoada, with all its ingredients**: why would anyone insist on serving them the fine mayonnaise?”<sup>13</sup>

But feijoada could also mean something already seen, too trivial and uninteresting. Thus, commenting on the play *O crime do Porto* (The crime at the harbor) being revived, the journalist, troubled and amazed, said: “It seems incredible how anyone who **touched that headless feijoada...** would dare to stage it in a theater of our times.”<sup>14</sup>

And in 1894, the editorialist at *O País*, commenting the events of the week, already saturated by stories about the *Revolta da Armada* (The Brazilian Naval Revolts), including the alleged attempt to buy votes in the municipal assembly in Rio de Janeiro, said: “Newspapers minded much of the fact, as they were eager for a scandal to serve as a special dish to gluttony readers, already fatigued with the **mandatory menu of the revolt feijoada.**”<sup>15</sup>

It also meant something quite complete, such as a well illustrated and documented book. Upon publicizing the large volume of 450 pages of *A vida do duque de Caxias* (The life of the (army officer, politician and monarchist of the Empire of Brazil) Duke of Caxias), enriched with very numerous documents in addition to the portrait of the Duke made in Paris, *Livraria do Povo* ended up saying: “all this full feijoada by thousand (first official currency of Brazil) réis.”<sup>16</sup>

Feijoada, especially the full one, carried with it the idea of mess, muddle, tumult, mix. In his article called *Salada de frutas* (Fruit salad) about the organization of the National Population Census of the Brazilian Republic in 1890, a journalist commented: “The day after tomorrow, the National Population Census of the Republic will be carried out. Whether I am very mistaken or else it is going to be an inextricable and useless mess, **a feijoada to take our hats off.**”<sup>17</sup>

12 *Revista Ilustrada*, 08/26/1876, issue 00033, Resenha teatral, p. 3.

13 *O País*, 02/14/1885, issue 00044, Publicações, p. 2.

14 *O País*, 06/18/1890, issue B02077, O crime do Porto, p. 2.

15 *O País*, 06/11/1894, issue 04325, Notas da semana, p. 1.

16 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 05/05/1884, issue 00127, Anúncios, p. 4.

17 *O País*, 12/29/1890, issue 03170, Salada de frutas, p. 2.

Feijoada, however, could carry a very strong pejorative sense of being a bad thing, from social scums. Therefore, upon communicating the destruction of the famous *cortiço* house or ghetto *Cabeça de Porco* (Pig's head), *O País* would say: "Once upon a time there was a head/Of a pig – good-bye, **feijoada!** –/It may seem a lie/But there are no more **ghettos!**"<sup>18</sup>

But the feijoada was in fact, and not only theoretically, essential to Brazilian's life. In 1890, the year following the republican military coup d'état, the famine that ravaged the country bothered too much the new regime, still provisional. It was faced with not just a food crisis, but also a political crisis that had settled alongside a severe economic and foreign exchange crisis, inherited from the monarchy. And, moreover, there was a water supply crisis in the capital of the new Republic. Due to all this, the journalist of the magazine *Revista Ilustrada*, nicknamed Dominó Sobrinho, cleverly using puns that had to do with the moral positivist precepts by French philosopher Auguste Comte, such as probity and transparency, addressed the new rulers:

*We positively inquire if for the people there are more positive things than a "full feijoada."*

*As certainly honored positivists, and drawing inspiration from the beauty of their church, they will assert, with authority, that there is not as positive object such as a feijoada, and that without it, it will never be possible to live in the open and also there will not be Order and progress.*<sup>19</sup>

## The indigestible feijoada

Admittedly, however, the development of hygienist ideas in certain circles of the ruling elite had done much harm to the feijoada, especially the full one. The joyful and festive Rio de Janeiro society had been traumatized and dressed for mourning with the great and dreadful yellow fever epidemic that ravaged the city and much of the country since the end of 1849 and which remained endemic. And it was not yet used to its unwanted presence when, in 1855, it was surprised by the cholera morbus.

Was it a heavy hand divine punishment which came to punish the population in Rio de Janeiro? Many would believe so. The doctors said no, that it was a matter of hygiene and eating habits, besides the fetid emanations, the so-called miasmas. The swamps, the marshes, the excessive heat, the sudden cooling of the body, the heavy work (but sparing the slaves and the poor porters was never thought of), fruits, especially at night, including the so popular orange, were blamed, and even feijoada, because they were difficult to digest!

18 *O País*, 02/11/1893, issue 03933, *O Zoológico*, p. 3.

19 Dominó Sobrinho, *Revista Ilustrada*, 02/01/1890, issue 00576, *Pequenos ecos*, p. 3 e 6.

Since then, Brazilians' favorite dish, feijoada, was considered heavy, indigestible and not just bad, but terrible for health. It was even an object of derision, being presented, in a list of “foolproof recipes,” as the best “for indigestion.”<sup>20</sup> No one dared to say, but probably the harmless gases that it produced came to be seen by the “medical militia” as “dangerous miasmatic fumes”!

At the same time, the rich layers of Rio de Janeiro society, in their unbridled fury to imitate and import all that was European and in particular Parisian, went on to disdain, at least publicly, national or here naturalized dishes, such as stews or the “greasy and stodgy” feijoada, and to prefer the French delicacies.

Feijoada, as well as stews, were accused of being harmful and brutalizing. It was stated that an individual, after “eating for dinner a stew dish or a feijoada with pig’s head,”<sup>21</sup> would feel bored, sad, heavy-headed, with ideas confused and incapable of any more elaborate intellectual action.

Instead, the “food made with art, gently and simply – as the character Nicácio would say in *Os outros* (The others), by Brazilian writer Júlia Lopes de Almeida – not only gives us the perfect feel of its natural flavor, **as it makes us witty and healthy.**”<sup>22</sup>

Of course, the hand from mercantile interests, importing traders and wholesalers and their retail distributors, was behind the hygienist campaign! They were the most interested in making feijoada and other national dishes look as a devil’s thing to the richest strata of society, stimulating the taste and consumption of imported foodstuffs. And in this crusade against the national dishes, made with the country ingredients that were cheaper and more accessible, the mercantile interests relied on the snobs who wanted to stand out by the luxury consumption, the so-called “conspicuous consumption,” perhaps because they could not stand out by merit and culture. Nicácio’s friend tells us his drama:

*To imitate then I start to curb my appetite. No longer I accept the cassava flour stew with spicy shrimp stew; I pull away the tutu (refried beans) as if it were an enemy. Roupa velha, if it is served to me at lunch, makes me roar with anger. The whole family shudders. I demand Portuguese Ceylon crepes and Cairo mushrooms. They are unable to find such ingredients in our best grocery stores! I am disgusted at myself, ashamed of my inferiority. Nicácio is my role model, but I can not follow him, for I lack the means that he has in abundance.*<sup>23</sup>

20 *O País*, 07/03/1893, issue 04074, *Ecos de toda a parte*, p. 2.

21 *O País*, 04/08/1891, issue 03269, *Retalhos*, p. 1.

22 Julia Lopes de Almeida, *O País*, 03/01/1910, issue 09278, Nicácio up to date, p. 1.

23 Julia Lopes de Almeida, *O País*, 03/01/1910, issue 09278, Nicácio up to date, p. 1.

We could therefore say that the unforgivable campaign against feijoada, on behalf of science and hygiene, was founded on ignorance. And indeed, in a climate of terror where doctors precepts did nothing, or almost nothing, and the prayers and petitions by healers did much less, the ignorance of the true causes of the epidemics gave rise to all sorts of rumor, belief and healing. And over time... disbelief was widespread.

In 1877, when the serial story *Feijoadas* was published in the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, its author, França Júnior, knew that the choice of subject would not please the “aristocratic reader” nor the “elegant reader holding a fragrant cigar between the index and middle fingers, dressed in a luxury robe.”<sup>24</sup>

At that time, by the end of the century, at least publicly, a prejudice against feijoada prevailed in some wealthy environments. But only among the upper classes, those who could eat in French style in expensive restaurants or who were willing to pay a high price when purchasing, for example, a “30-year old man<sup>25</sup> who were a good oven and stove cook, **not only of French as of Portuguese-style dishes** [...],”<sup>26</sup> or hiring an expert “**white** oven and stove **cook**, who knew their place, for a **private and treatment home, cooking Italian-, French- and Portuguese-style dishes** [...]”<sup>27</sup>

Among the poor, they could only eat black beans with flour and be happy to add some bacon and a piece, albeit thin, of jerky. This is what is revealed by Murila Torres, in her *Conto Semanal* (Weekly tale) called *Miséria* (Hardship), in a fictitious dialogue between a lady and her laundry worker, mother of a seven-month old little boy that could barely take hold of his weak legs, inside the shack where they lived on a hill.

The lady, looking at the child’s “immense belly,” asks if he is sick. The answer: “It is that he has just had dinner as a grown-up. He has eaten more than me, the glutton!” And to the question: “*Porridge?*,” gets as a response: “No. The same as I eat: **flour, feijoada... That’s what there is to be eaten!**”<sup>28</sup>

But in intellectual circles, in their rhetoric, even if it were because of fashion, prejudice against the “indigestible feijoada” was established. A journalist at the magazine *Revista Ilustrada* in the late 1870s, criticizing the serial stories trend in the newspapers – that would deal with light subjects, sometimes as a chronicle, and where novels (some famous) were published in chapters – to become

24 França Junior, *Gazeta de Notícias*, 11/28/1877, issue 00329, Folhetim da Gazeta de Notícias, p. 1.

25 By young “man” and “woman” it was understood that they were young slaves. “Who knows their place” means an expert in their art. Treatment home meant high level homes.

26 *Jornal do Comércio*, 11/23/1871, Anúncios, p. 1.

27 *Jornal do Comércio*, 10/10/1871, Anúncios, p. 1.

28 *Fon-Fon*, 06/06/1925, issue 0023, Conto Semanal, p. 8.



a forum for discussion of “serious” social and political issues, would complain:

*And the serial stories, which were just delicate appetizers that newspapers offered their readers, became a juicy but indigestible feijoada.*

*It is the serial story – the jerky which today is given to us as a footnote, as a useful and realistic serial story.*

*Fortunately, in this environment of realism... Sic and Eleasar still remain, which are two protests against the frowning or mushy serial story.<sup>29</sup>*

In the early 1890s, Binóculo, codename of a theatrical commentator of this same magazine, without hiding the success of the play in reprise, in the most popular social environments, said with some contempt:

*At Recreio the unfailing reruns remain. Now he announces Remorso Vivo (Living remorse), this indigestible melodramatic feijoada that sixteen years ago delighted the São Pedro stage, the whole Saco do Alferes and all the population of Mata-porcos.<sup>30</sup>*

Police news followed this same trend. In the section *Retalhos* (Patchwork) in the newspaper *O País*, which had a bit of everything, the journalist responsible for the “*crônica do tabefe*” (slap chronicle), noting a decline in very serious physical assaults followed by death, and having to report only stabs, slashes or bottle assaults without dire consequences, commented:

*The “crônica do tabefe” is a succulent substance, of heavy digestion, similar to a feijoada with a pig’s head. It serves therefore for very strong stomachs and choleric temperaments. In our time, stomachs are more or less focused on French cuisine, so that, when some delicate snack is shown and leaves pleasant taste memories, the modest and rude cook who writes the chronicle just takes off the menu [...].<sup>31</sup>*

And even in 1912, when the population’s general attitude, in theory and in practice, had changed in favor of feijoada, a senator from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, referring to the Civil Code, said it was possible to classify it as a “**feijoada**, due to the seasonings that make it up to satisfy all tastes, and so many ingredients that will make this code **an indigestible and dangerous dish** [...]”<sup>32</sup>

29 *Revista Ilustrada*, 05/11/1878, issue 00111, Rio, May 11, 1878, p. 2.

30 *Revista Ilustrada*, 01/00/1891, issue 00612, Pelos teatros, p. 5.

31 *O País*, 12/22/1891, issue 03526, Anúncios, p. 2.

32 *O País*, 10/03/1912, issue 10224, Anúncios, p. 1.

## From an indigestible dish to a homeland symbol

There is no doubt that the Brazilian elite's relationship with feijoada was very contradictory. If its official rhetoric was one of denial of this dish, its everyday practice was for its acceptance or, if I quickly correct myself, for its preference.

Unconsciously, journalists, at least from the newspapers in Rio de Janeiro, would let transpire, behind the official hygienist discourse, we would say politically correct, their real penchant for feijoada.

At a bet among colleagues in the *Gazeta de Notícias* newsroom with the ones from *Revista Ilustrada* magazine, where the prize agreed upon was a dinner, the magazine journalists were the winners. One of them, codenamed Júnio & Cia., tells us how the collection of bets took place, i.e., the choice of dinner was decided:

*Tony, which is the house glutton, votes by a feijoada. Toby, with his recent lyricism, wants a country party. I must confess I would rather have my share in cash.*

*In any case, in order not to be a wet blanket like today's rain [...], go for the feijoada...<sup>33</sup>*

An avowedly anti-monarchist publication, this same magazine sent a correspondent to the Paris World's Fair in 1878. *The Esfinge* (Sphinx), as this journalist was known, met there Gaston d'Orléans, the Count of Eu, who was representing Brazil, and took his cue to criticize him and the Brazilian monarchy.

Reproducing, as a joke, the count's French accent, and making use of double meaning words, he explained his presence at the event: There he was to “**muck-up** in his country, which he adores, but by which he is not worshiped!” And the correspondent would swear that the count was not well-liked in his homeland because of “his exaggerated stinginess,” his pettiness: “You guys have already probably noticed by the newspapers that any little prince shows off in Paris: they appear in nice cars, attend parties, entertain once a week, etc., etc.”

But “our count” would not do any of this. He would ride in his father's, Prince Louis of Orléans, Duke of Nemours, carriage, staying at his father's hotel: “That's where he lives, and there he entertains his friends every Thursday, with a **Brazilian-style feijoada!** It is indigestible, say those who were there; but it comes cheap, he says.”<sup>34</sup>

33 Júnio & C., *Revista Ilustrada*, 09/07/1878, issue 00128, Ricochetes, p. 6.

34 A Esfinge, *Revista Ilustrada*, 07/21/1878, issue 00121, A Revista na exposição, p. 5.

Who would have thought that the Count of Eu, Dona Isabel's, the Princess Imperial, husband, future heir to the Brazilian crown, and father of other future heirs, as an ambassador to Brazil, would open his father's hotel halls<sup>35</sup> in Paris, none other than the Count of Nemours, to entertain friends and personalities every Thursday, with a feijoada! By stinginess, or by taste, it does not matter, but certainly because "the Brazilian feijoada," in addition to being tasty, symbolized an entire country!

Unfortunately, *A Esfinge*, taken by political concerns, failed to solve the amazing feijoada enigma, able to be present at the poor people's tables, the rich people's banquets and in the aristocratic salons of Paris...

But the contradicted and indigestible feijoada was also intentionally used in the comic strips of the same magazine as a symbol of Brazil, as published on March 17, 1877. There, not hiding his anti-clerical position, the cartoonist symbolized Brazil by feijoada and the Pope by pasta. In the captions, he said: "S. M. has taken the opportunity to, not despising the Pope's macaroni, assert **excellence and advantages of a good feijoada**". And in a following drawing sequence he claimed: "We are certain that S. M. will emphatically sustain **the superiority of a good feijoada**," adding in the last drawing sequence: "However, we prefer that **S. M. eat his beans** and let the unfailing wop enjoy his macaroni."<sup>36</sup>

And what could have been a real life fact (in its double meaning) became a symbolic fact: the Brazilian monarch, in his privacy, eating, like any Brazilian subject, "his beans," "a good feijoada."

It would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that the emperor ate feijoada like any Brazilian subject, that "he would feast up to placing his hands, enjoying, and then licking his fingers to the elbow."<sup>37</sup> But let us see what is shown in the report carried on board the *Gironde* steamboat, by the correspondent from *Gazeta de Notícias*, who accompanied the Imperial Majesties, Dom Pedro II and his wife in traveling to Europe in July 1887:

*The other day, as the following ones, passed without further news. Only on Day 5 there was some news at lunchtime: a Brazilian-style feijoada, made in honor of His Majesty – and to which His Majesty did the greatest honors.*<sup>38</sup>

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35 "Hotel here, clarified *A Esfinge*, indeed means hotel," so that the reader does not confuse hotel with "*hôtel particulier*," which in French means palace, and served as the town house to the aristocracy.

36 *Revista Ilustrada*, 03/17/1877, issue 00059, p. 2-3.

37 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 07/10/1885, issue 00191, Balas de estalo, p. 2.

38 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 07/24/1887, issue 000205, Suas Majestades Imperiais, p. 1.

As it turns out, to honor the emperor of Brazil, the commander of the French ship chose, not by chance, “the Brazilian-style feijoada”? Either due to being internationally considered the Brazilian dish par excellence, or else because he knew that the emperor was very fond of it. But what is particularly important here is the expression used by the journalist when saying that the monarch “did the greatest honors,” as if he were before a national symbol, such as the country flag.

In 1908, a fictitious interview, conducted by a *Fon-Fon* magazine journalist with a German subject living in Rio de Janeiro about the invitation by the kaiser to the Brazilian Minister of War, had the title “Feijoada and sauerkraut,” subtitled, “Maxixe and the polka.” There was no doubt that at the beginning of that century, food and music were already the main symbols of Brazilian nationality and corresponded to the typically carioca dish and rhythm.<sup>39</sup>

### Feijoada: from the pedantic rhetoric to the streets

From all that has been said so far, it is evident that there was a yawning gap between a certain official discourse of rejection of feijoada, which, no doubt, had been installed on the Rio de Janeiro population’s imaginary, identifying it with something nefarious and stodgy, and the population’s daily life.

It was a fact that the carioca, like most Brazilians, enjoyed the classic feijoada and drooled for the full one. It was therefore difficult to impose this official discourse, when only a few decades ago stomachs were “perfectly getting along with the daily feijoada, greasy with bacon and mixed with flour.”<sup>40</sup>

In fact, the feijoada was still served daily in every home, even at Nicácio’s, “a young man who strove in his looks” and would be satisfied “as any of these poor bourgeois who he laughs so much about, at the table in his own home, with the national and hulking feijoada dish.”<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the full feijoada would still be the festive dish par excellence. Here’s how a group of friends, calling themselves *Uns pândegos* (The rollicking ones) would warn, in verses, through the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, the fattening of a castrated pig: “*Arrelia* (The impatient one) is going to be fattened/In a pigsty that we have got ready/For the thick feijoada/Of which we have all treated.”<sup>42</sup>

39 *Fon-Fon*, 04/11/1908, issue 0017, Uma entrevista de atualidade, p. 25.

40 *O País*, 03/24/1892, issue 03618, Malhando, p.1.

41 Julia Lopes de Almeida, *O País*, 03/01/1910, issue 09278, Nicácio up to date, p. 1.

42 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 03/01/1877, issue 00060, Folhetim da Gazeta de Notícias, p. 1.

And in no time the restaurants in the city commercial center, as well as in the suburbs, had stopped offering national dishes. Conversely, in the 1880s, while the restaurants that provided foreign dishes proliferated, others specialized in regional food, especially from the Brazilian state of Bahia.

But the taste that the cariocas had for their full feijoada was such that even the European food restaurants, even those whose owners were foreigners, would offer on certain days of the week a full feijoada. The *Grand Restaurant de la Terrasse*, at the theater *Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara*, would serve on Thursdays a (traditional Provençal fish stew) *bouillabaisse* or a (Brazilian recipe based on salt water fish stew) *moqueca* for lunch, and a **special full feijoada** for dinner.<sup>43</sup> The *Restaurant Portuense*, specializing in “Portuguese– and French-style foods,” would offer **full feijoada every Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday**, and guarantee “**the good taste due to its owner being a great culinary artist** and having ingredients that were all top notch.”<sup>44</sup> The owners of *Hotel do Triunfo* put on their door “a couplet saying: (Brazilian dish) *angu de quitandeira – ravioli*”<sup>45</sup>, and served “**a good feijoada on Wednesdays**, ravioli on Thursdays and Sundays, *zorô*<sup>46</sup> on Fridays, quince soup every night” and *angu* on Sundays.<sup>47</sup> The very cosmopolitan restaurant *À la Chaumière*, would offer “*Sauerkraut mit Schweinefleisch, chicken kury, mayonnaise de homard, ravioli italiani, puchero español*, full feijoada.”<sup>48</sup> When in doubt, in order to not make mistakes, the customer, who only understood Portuguese, would order: “Please, a full feijoada.”

Thus, including the full feijoada on the menu had become a must. Hotel Gonçalves Dias, on a Saturday, would shamelessly announce: “Today **pig feijoada** for dinner.”<sup>49</sup> Likewise, *Hotel Luso-chinês*, which had full feijoada every Thursday, would warn, without any scruples, that on Saturdays there would be “**the great full feijoada with the competent pig’s head.**”<sup>50</sup>

And, just as in the commercial center of the imperial capital many small and average salaried jostled, many wealthy merchants and bankers, lawyers, doctors, journalists, senior civil servants, and deputies, there would also have “feijoada” for everyone and all pockets. *Restaurant Estelita*, willing to beat its opponents, would offer full meals “with 4 dishes to choose from, dessert, etc.” for 400 réis. Priced well below their competitors’, who charged 600 réis with half a bottle of wine,

43 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 08/11/1881, issue 00220, Avisos, p. 2.

44 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 01/18/1879, issue 00018, Anúncios, p. 3.

45 Ravioli, the same as (type of dumpling) ravioli.

46 Traditional Northern Brazil dish, prepared with shrimp, okra, olive oil and many condiments.

47 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 03/11/1879, issue 00069, Anúncios, p. 4.

48 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 01/20/1885, issue 00028, Avisos, p. 2.

49 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 02/12/1881, issue 00043, Anúncios, p. 6.

50 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 05/12/1883, issue 00132, Anúncios, p. 4.

and 500 réis without wine. Its “**very full**” **feijoada**,<sup>51</sup> which would cost the same 400 réis, was served on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, alternating **Rio de Janeiro-, Minas Gerais- and Bahia-style feijoadas** with other dishes: “Today for lunch, Bahia-style *angu*, made with great care, tomorrow the good and full feijoada.”<sup>52</sup>

Reflecting the trend toward appreciation of what was Brazilian, the fashion of Bahia food settled for good in Rio de Janeiro. *Restaurante Baiano*, on *Ourives* street, would excel in the typical cuisine with Bahia-style (Brazilian dish made from cow’s feet) *mocotó*, *angu*, the “real (dish of Portuguese origin) *sarapatel*,” the “true unripe cooked corn juice (white variety of corn dish) *canjica*”<sup>53</sup> and the Bahia-style full feijoada.

Following this same line, which shows the good acceptance of this cuisine in the 1880s, *A Casa Baiana*, on *Assembléia* street, on Wednesdays would warn the public: “(Brazilian creamy paste dish) *vatapá* and beans with coconut milk, cod with coconut milk, fried ingredients with coconut milk, fish and shrimp *moqueca*, today; tomorrow, *angu* and **full feijoada**.”<sup>54</sup> Confirming the predominance of the “very fluminense (from the state of Rio de Janeiro) fashion of eating feijoada on Thursdays.”<sup>55</sup>

In the 1890s, the trend of valuing what was Brazilian was marked by the labor movement’s ideas that reflected on the gastronomic environment, and invaded the restaurant field. There, it was possible to confuse “Brazilian cuisine” with “national labor.” This miscellaneous and true “full feijoada,” can be identified in the ad from the *Restaurante*<sup>56</sup> à *Baiana* (*Brazilian cuisine*):

*This restaurant has just completed the national staff for all the house work, thus being entitled to the title of the home, being enable to serve well its distinctive and numerous clients with any dish of Brazilian cuisine, especially from Bahia, with the famous vatapá, (Brazilian food made from okra, etc.) caruru, moquecas etc., etc.*

*For tomorrow – 30 special dishes, including the superb Bahia-style feijoada.*<sup>57</sup>

In fact, this Brazilian cuisine valuation movement concurrently gave insights into the microbial origin of diseases. In the 1890s, the suspicion that had been dragging on since mid-century was confirmed: it was a species of mosquito, the *Aedes aegypti*, which transmitted yellow fever.

51 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 08/05/1885, issue 00216, Anúncios, p. 6.

52 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 10/29/1885, issue 00302, Anúncios, p. 4.

53 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 12/30/1885, issue 00364, Anúncios, p. 4.

54 *Gazeta de Notícias*, 03/10/1886, issue 00068, Anúncios, p. 3.

55 *Revista Ilustrada*, 10/05/1880, issue 00204, Gazetilha, p. 2.

56 Consistent with its nationalist alignment, it had left behind the French spelling “*restaurant*.”

57 *O País*, 10/18/1894, issue 03670, Anúncios, p. 8.

These advances in science would call into question all the arguments hitherto touted by medicine as to the transmission of certain epidemiological diseases such as yellow fever, malaria, cholera, tuberculosis and others, by fetid fumes, the miasmas. We were in the era of microbes and microbiology. Those were the tiny bodies that were to be feared and persecuted.

Nevertheless, some hygienic measures, still contaminated by the “miasma” current, would turn against everything that was in a deteriorating state to counter the rise in 1895 of the cholera epidemic that had been spreading in Minas Gerais. In a note, *O País* announced that the hygiene commissioner from the federal capital had decided to discard in the market *Mercado da Candelária*, 210 pineapples, 112 watermelons, 318 oranges, 8 hampers of grugru palm (also macaúba palm, coyol palm, and macaw palm), 2 hampers of okra, 3 melons, ½ box with peaches, 5 jackfruits, 290 Bahia coconuts, 11 anchovies, 11 stingrays, 10 mullets, 7 hearts, 12 livers, 6 *Acestrorhynchus pantaneiro*, 3 hampers of sardines, 6 kilos of beef and 8 kilos of tripes.<sup>58</sup>

This fact, and the refusal from the Minas Gerais public health officer to accept that the disease that was raging the immigrants hostel in the Brazilian city of Juiz de Fora was cholera and therefore would not take the hygienic and prophylactic measures necessary to prevent its spread to the neighboring states, prompted the article published in the same newspaper that year, 1895, entitled, “*Gravíssimo. A irradiação do cólera*” (Very grave: cholera spreading). In it, in a mocking tone, the journalist criticized the medical and hygiene authorities who would not accept the new epidemiological theories and continued to accuse alcoholism and other habits of the population as their causes:

*[...] Finally in our Brazil we had the merit of a novelty in cholera etiology: the comma-shaped bacillus was set aside and certain medical luminaries made a new list, not finished yet, of efficient causes of the Indian morbus: unripe peaches, rotten chorizos (and, according to others, spicy sausages), horrible marshes, feijoada, pineapples, oyster (French for “windblown,” to describe its lightness; a small hollow case of puff pastry) vol-au-vent, etc., etc. [...].<sup>59</sup>*

Fortunately, the medical discourse adapted to advances in epidemiological science and the campaign against mosquitoes, triggered in Rio de Janeiro in the early years of the twentieth century and its eradication from 1907, once and for all released the guilty-free consumption of feijoada. It was already possible, from time to time, to hear a waiter, without scruples, “speaking up” the dish chosen by a customer: **“Prepare a full feijoada, with pig’s head** and all savory ingredients that the

58 *O País*, 01/01/1895, issue 03760, Gravíssimo, p. 2.

59 *O País*, 01/01/1895, issue 03760, Gravíssimo, p. 2.

customer is *massada*!”<sup>60</sup>.<sup>61</sup> And a journalist emphatically said that the Carnival partygoers of the *Clube dos Tenentes do Diabo* (The Devil’s Lieutenants club) had undertaken a “chewing party for **a truz (high quality) feijoada**”<sup>62</sup>, **one of those worth eating and enjoying with the hands.**”<sup>63</sup> And another one would warn, regarding the celebrations promoted by the group *Come Gente* (Eats people) and entertained by the Zeca Cavaquinho’s musical ensemble: “The party will start at 2 pm with the **washing of the nails so that the people can eat the juicy and greasy feijoada with their hands**, accompanied by high quality food and beverage.”<sup>64</sup>

Still more significant was the answer given in 1913 by the chronicler *K. T. Espero* from the newspaper *O País*, to a supporter of Prince Luís of Orléans-Braganza, exiled in France and who fought for the restoration of monarchy in Brazil. Let us not inquire here why so disrespectfully and unkindly the journalist called the heir of the former Brazilian imperial throne “Prince D. Maricas” or “Lulu Mariquinhas,” as this does not concern us. What indeed holds the attention is his proposal to tapping into a “genuine Brazilian duel – that is, the weapon is to be (Brazilian martial art) **capoeira**, a purely monarchical institution and supporter of the Conservative Party” of which the Prince was chief. And he completes:

*If it is not like that, I don’t want it. And I have to say that this would favor D. Lulu, proving that he **at least had a Brazilian side; he himself, who had not even yet eaten a feijoada, or a good vatapá**, rather eating *béccasse au canapé* and other French junk food [...].*<sup>65</sup>

In fact, his irreverence did not stop there. And we’re not sure why he continued attacking the “future prince” and told, using a subtle word play, which could only be a joke: That a certain soap maker had 400,000 portraits of the prince made, “having **on the back** the advertisement of **their business**: – Use the soap *Cuticure* –”<sup>66</sup>. And he concluded by saying: “It is some junk that has not entered nor will ever enter at *K. T. Espero*’s home.”<sup>67</sup> But that does not concern us either.

60 I have not found the meaning of the word “*massada*” in dictionaries. It seems to mean here “strong stomach.”

61 *O País*, 01/29/1912, issue 09976, Angu de caroço, p. 4.

62 *Truz* means, according to Lello Universal dictionary, of first order, excellent, magnificent.

63 *O País*, 01/23/1906, issue 07777, Carnaval, p. 4.

64 *A Noite*, 09/21/1912, issue 00371, Os que se divertem, p. 4.

65 *K. T. Espero*, *O País*, 01/06/1913, issue 10319, A tal restauração, p. 2.

66 This joke refers to another, contemporary to it, told by (Brazilian writer) Pedro Nava in his book *Chão de Ferro* (Iron floor). This is about poetry verses attributed to Brazilian poet Emílio de Meneses, who would have written them at the request from an apothecary inventor of a wonderful soap for the skin, the *Cuticura*: “When Emílio de Meneses/Wakes up with a hard-on./ He says, jerking off./ Only Cuticura soap...”

67 *O País*, 01/06/1913, issue 10319, A tal restauração, p. 2.



What concerns us here is the choice made by the Republican columnist to identify themselves as Brazilian: the “criminal, barbaric and African” **capoeira** of the razor slashes, the **vatapá** from Bahia and the **Brazilian feijoada**.

This nationalist vogue was confirmed in the Portuguese expression *Cardápio da Semana* (Week menu) – and not in the French word “*menu*” – published by the *Fon-Fon* magazine in 1914:

*Chicken soup. Black beans broth and rice. Very pulled mocotó. Vatapá. Sarará (multiracial) with pepper. Baicuru (Statice brasiliensis) with heart of palm. Full feijoada. Pig loin from Minas Gerais. Pig ears with white beans. Moqueca. Turkey with (toasted cassava flour mixture) farofa. Roast beef. Rio Grande-style barbecue. Açai palm. Acarajé (dish made from peeled beans) cakes.*<sup>68</sup>

### The triumphant return of feijoada

Indeed, long before the war on mosquitoes was declared, Rio’s population no longer believed the official medical discourse. It had remained skeptical in the face of so many words and so few results. It no longer believed in their prophylactic recommendations nor would get carried away by their gloomy terrorist threats which wanted to end their pleasures:

*The population who cheerfully mocks a 35-centigrade heat at dances that only finish in the morning; consuming, despite a thousand hygienic pieces of advice, as much sour fruits as appear on the market; waltzing and drinking cold soda; panting and dripping, it does not miss a horse race – it can not rightly be reprimanded for having had any fears of falling ill.*<sup>69</sup>

Until the last year of the nineteenth century, the carnival societies of Rio de Janeiro would celebrate carnival shaking, spinning and lately dancing *maxixe* in splendid costume balls, in their luxurious, fantastically well decorated and lavishly illuminated halls. In the richest clubs, these dances were always accompanied by a great feast washed down with champagne, provided by one of the greatest pastry shops of the city, which was offered to members.

In that year of 1900, the “*Grupo dos Pensionistas*” (Group of pensioners) of the *Democráticos* club, one of the largest carnival societies in Rio, decided to innovate by introducing, on the menu of their pre-carnival festivities, the “full feijoada” and replace the champagne for Parati cachaça.

68 *Fon-Fon*, 05/02/1914, issue 0019, Cardápio da semana, p. 32.

69 C. de L., *O País*, 03/07/1889, issue 01612, Microcosmo, p. 1.

If it was out of economic necessity, due to the financial crisis that the country was going through, or for Brazilianness ideological issues, it does not matter. The fact is that by introducing typically Brazilian dish and drink in their sumptuous feasts, the *Democráticos* originated a new trend. Here their advertisement: “*Democráticos* Club. Today, Sunday at 3, colossal and pig-like.”<sup>70</sup>

The fashion caught on, and the elite sporting clubs – of regattas, soccer, rowing, motorcycling and others – started to celebrate by getting together around a full feijoada with plenty of the Parati drink, the “domestic champagne.”

Since then, the full feijoada, which always required adjectives to differentiate from the classic and simple everyday feijoada, became a superlative by revelers. It was perhaps the way found to admit it in select rooms. Thus, the “pig feijoada” turned into a “colossal and pig-like feijoada.” And to wash it down, just a “legitimate, fine and unmixed Parati.”<sup>71</sup>

It was therefore natural that in the carnival environment, so select and aristocratic, feijoada, until it were finally accepted, had to be masked and costumed with adjectives and superlatives. Therefore, in the first five years of the twentieth century, at the carnival clubs, it was always said, sometimes sarcastically, that it was superb, congestive, ultra gastronomic, Pantagruelian, etc. From 1906 to 1912, the degree of adjectives decreases: it is especially delicious, juicy, appetizing, spicy, good, fat, thick, steaming, great, stupendous. Few times is it full of adjectives and magnificent, and in very rare cases it gets to be called very great. From 1917, it tends to be, albeit with some relapses, simply “full feijoada” or just “feijoada”: it had been definitely naturalized.

As in the 1840s, when the feijoada was a pretext for any and all (Brazilian style of music, a subgenre of Samba) *pagode*, to the point of being synonymous with junket in 1915, over 60 years later, the carnival partygoers of the *Clube dos Excêntricos* (the Eccentric Ones Club) warned they would throw “a large ball, **which is specially intended to operate the digestion of the juicy feijoada** that will be eaten at 6 pm.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, the full feijoada – now simply called “feijoada,” as the monarchs who are called by their names and do not need to use surnames – was not only celebrated in restaurants and clubs of the Rio’s elite, but also in the high circles of society and politics.

At the beginning of that century, the Brazilian elite would no longer hide its preference for this dish. It would consume it with a pleasure that was not only sensual and gustatory, but also political and ideological, expressed in the term “national.”

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70 *O País*, 01/28/1900, issue 05592, Declarações, p. 3.

71 *O País*, 02/18/1903, issue 06707, Crônica, p. 2.

72 *O País*, 02/06/1915, issue 11079, Carnaval, p. 6.

In the male's section of the column *Reportagens íntimas* (Intimate reports) of the *Fon-Fon* magazine, to the question, "What do your taste buds prefer?," a former deputy from Bahia answered: "All that fits in the curve described by a pendulum oscillating from the **fantastic national full feijoada** to the latest culinary creation to be made by the finest French Vatel (François Vatel, majordomo of Nicolas Fouquet and prince Louis II de Bourbon-Condé)."<sup>73</sup> The "national full feijoada" would be placed at the level of the most exquisite international cuisine.

In the aristocratic Brazilian city of Petrópolis, where previously there was a place only for the European cuisine, especially French, even in their picnics, as at the external space of *Crémérie Buisson*, the board at *Clube dos Diários* (Journals Club) decided to innovate: together with the chicken soup, bass fish mayonnaise, *pâte de lièvre truffée*, *dinde*, *poulet*, *jambon*, *roast-beef*, *pâté de chasse*, Chateaubriand, *pommes robe de chambre*, *haricots verts*, include the *asado con cuero*, which was like the barbecue from the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul.

And in the midst of so many foreign tastes, it was the gaúcho barbecue, or, if you prefer, the *asado con cuero*, which "caused more curiosity," perhaps because it was "prepared under the immediate supervision of the famous federalist warlord Laurentino Pinto."<sup>74</sup>

But certainly it was feijoada the dish that pervaded the entire Brazilian culture, and a farmer, "a hillbilly from the farther areas of Brazilian states São Paulo and Mato Grosso," which was dropped in Paris, back in the 1920s, "ended up speaking French, a horrible French, a murdered French, **smelling like feijoada with Parati...**"<sup>75</sup>

## Feijoada and politics

However, while the nationalist movement was blowing across the country, regionalisms were becoming aggravated and identifying around some dishes of its cuisine. Feijoada, reflecting national politics, was also taking regional characteristics. Therefore, seeing a picture of a *Largo do Arouche* square farmer's market stand in São Paulo, where jerky, bacon, *fiambre*, *mortadella*, *paio*, sausage, *chorizo* and lard were together, the commentator, in his article entitled, "Tell me what you eat, I will tell you who you are," would vent: "It is even possible to think of a good **Rio de Janeiro-style feijoada...** as they say in São Paulo."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Fon-Fon*, 12/08/1917, issue 0049, Reportagens Íntimas, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> *O País*, 02/24/1902, issue 06348, Estado do Rio. Notícias de Petrópolis, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Fon-Fon*, 07/05/1919, issue 0027, Parisianas, p. 46.

<sup>76</sup> *Fon-Fon*, 05/23/1953, issue 2405, Dize-me o que comes, eu direi quem és, p. 6.

In 1908, *Fon-Fon* magazine would report on the overall result of the *Grande concurso culinário* (*Great culinary competition*)!<sup>77</sup> The best national dishes were presented. The fictitious, unlikely and impossible 496,392,625 votes already received by the magazine from its readers had been distributed in the following proportions:

<i>Mineiro com botas</i> (Minas Gerais citizen wearing boots).....	223,694,320
<i>Viradinho paulista</i> (São Paulo-style refried beans).....	220,563,200
<i>Vatapá</i> .....	161,116,207
<i>Feijoada</i> .....	102,116,207

This imaginary contest, held in the first decade of the twentieth century, reflected the real struggle for power among groups of interests of the different country states. And among the many cultural traits representative of the different regions, the journalist probably chose the one that, for his readership, best symbolized them: the food. Not coincidentally, the full feijoada, the national dish, represented the state of Rio de Janeiro and the capital of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the undisputed cultural center of the country.

In 1912, the *Sociedade Teuto Sul-americana* (South-American German Society), installed in their own building, subsidized by the Brazilian government, exposed its activities from the last year, especially the advertising of Brazilian products, particularly in Germany.

The society had among its many activities not only 15 conferences held in its halls, and the Brazilian minister posted in Berlin, Brazílio Itiberê da Cunha, had honored with his presence several of them, as well as the visit from senator Lauro Müller, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil. And in a separate paragraph, he would remind that: “**As in previous years, also in 1911** the society brought together its members for a **good Brazilian feijoada**, of which also took part the Minister Dr. Itiberê da Cunha and the military attaché Lt. Col. Julien.”<sup>78</sup>

It seems that German businessmen, with their keen commercial noses, even before Brazilian politicians, had already discovered the symbolic, political, and even gustatory importance of the “Brazilian feijoada.”

<sup>77</sup> *Fon-Fon*, 04/11/1908, issue 0029, Grande concurso culinário, p. 16.

<sup>78</sup> *O País*, 05/11/1912, issue 10079, Sociedade Teuto Sul-americana, p. 7.

The food had become, in effect, an important instrument of the Republican political and populist game. And it was not without reason that in Rio that year, at a time when the labor movement was growing and getting organized, on his first visit to the workers' residency facility, still under construction, "lunch, which consisted of **feijoada and barbecue**, served in the workers' restaurant" was offered to the 8th Brazilian President of the Republic, Hermes da Fonseca, and his entourage.<sup>79</sup> How much symbolism!: The Brazilian nation, represented by the feijoada (which in turn was already considered the typical dish from Rio de Janeiro), at the same table with the rebellious state of Rio Grande do Sul, represented by barbecue; and all together in a working class restaurant!

And in 1935, already under the constitutional government of the gaucho 14th and 17th President of Brazil Getúlio Vargas, Brazil's greatest populist president, at a reconciliation lunch among senior military officers, the desired political and territorial Brazilian unity was once again clearly manifested in the menu offered: "[...] **a truly gaucho barbecue together with a violently northern feijoada, all washed down with a draught beer and Rio guaraná soft drink.**"<sup>80</sup> As it is possible to see, the European beer and the soft drink from the Amazon rain forest had been naturalized as from Rio. In turn, feijoada, according to the political moment, could be from Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Bahia, Pernambuco, Northern, etc. It was undoubtedly a chameleon-like dish serving all ideological interests. And if it was black, it was because it would absorb all wavelengths of the political spectrum.

Feijoada, whether it had a Brazilian or regional taste, it didn't matter. It would officially participate as a main course at the table of the high bourgeoisie and the Presidency of the Republic, even if it were at a working-class restaurant. Since then, it has been seeing a red carpet extended to its feet.

In 1920, one of the members of the select *Clube Motociclista Nacional* (National Bikers Club), on an excursion to Santa Cruz, in the west of Rio de Janeiro, "offered a **splendid feijoada that was savored with all the honors of a genuinely national sublime dish.**"<sup>81</sup>

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79 *O País*, 12/15/1911, issue 09931, Visita presidencial, p. 1.

80 *Fon-Fon*, 03/30/1935, issue 0013, Festa no parque do Hotel Tijuca, p. 37.

81 *O País*, 05/18/1920, issue 13004, Sports, p. 12.

## Feijoada and the republican sociability

In 1910, a columnist would comment:

*We can not understand how our Rio de Janeiro, so familiar in other times, that Rio of alleys, cul-de-sacs, roasted peanuts and “smelly lard,” that erstwhile Rio, dirty and gossipy [...], could turn so quickly into a modern city of flamboyant and intense life!*<sup>82</sup>

And indeed, that Rio, “where the people would peacefully stroll at four o’clock in the afternoon, after an overindulging dinner,” going to friends’ homes “to delve into the neighborhood ills,” had been quickly left behind.

“A lot had collapsed, the putting all down was great, but habits are not transformed as buildings are reconstructed,” wistfully remarked the chronicler, adding: “Here we are, the living tradition of the clog and the warm corn cake sold under the blanket that served as a cover to the hairy seller’s sleep. Our character can not be changed.” And he would nostalgically remember, “**the good times of feijoada with Parati** and coconut candy due to the culinary skills of the *sinhá dona* who would crochet at her free time from homemaking [...]”<sup>83</sup>

The Republican Rio de Janeiro of the twentieth century – rushed by the activities of a large and dynamic population dedicated to business, whose prosperous middle class would not only make money, but have fun too – was looking for an identity.

The sociability and kinship ties of these new social sectors and classes were built in the clubs, in their games and competitions, in their meetings and parties, as well as in cafés and pastry shops, where politicians, journalists, businessmen, senior civil servants and self-employed professionals, but also the small traders would meet; and more closely in the celebrations among family and friends in their homes to celebrate baptisms, weddings and anniversaries. This Republican sociability would invariably take place around a bountiful table with many drinks or a simple coffee.

## Feijoada and social identity

Since the early twentieth century, full feijoada became an emblematic and unavoidable dish of those times. Certainly its taste, ingrained in all the population for more than a century, would be enough to explain such preference. But the way its presence was required and courted, and

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82 *Fon-Fon*, 09/24/1910, issue 0039, Entre o Pudor e a Verdade (Mirada Retrospectiva), p. 22.

83 *Fon-Fon*, 09/24/1910, issue 0039, Entre o Pudor e a Verdade (Mirada Retrospectiva), p. 22.

almost compulsively reiterated, could only be explained by reasons of ideology.

*Tijuca Tênis Club*, a 16-year old club and always frequented “by the finest society of the neighborhood,” would inaugurate in 1931 its new headquarters, the “stately palace on *Conde do Bonfim* street” with one of the great attractions of the club: a “large and white swimming pool measuring 10 m x 25 m and completely covered with tiles.” The lunch, served at “a large T-shaped table in the large hall of the gym,” was “**a full feijoada, with Parati and oranges.**”<sup>84</sup> But... there were also speeches: by Dr. Herbert Moses, **president of the Brazilian Press Association**, on behalf of the journalists honored; by Dr. José Manoel Fernandes, **on behalf of the club’s “capitalist members.”** And everything was documented by photos...

Ah! Photography! It could freeze time, details, plump ladies in elegant costumes, laid back and still thin and pretty young ladies, the men – very few wearing a hat -, the table set but not served, the still empty glasses. All waiting for the “black stew.”

It was a photo that captured in 1924, “A cheerful feijoada promoted by the group *Você vai!*” (You go!),<sup>85</sup> all equally in costumes at the table, and the feijoada served in many small cast iron cookware sets. Another capture, taken in 1947, of the farewell of the “ambassador of music from Mexico,”<sup>86</sup> Elvira Rios, celebrated with “a Brazilian-style full feijoada,” **served with rice** (and no longer with cassava flour) **and accompanied by beer.** Purposely, the bottle had the label facing the camera: it was the *Brahma Chopp* Brazilian brand.

And since the full feijoada was consumed in the most disparate environments, the place, drinks and other dishes, the guests and their garments, and the table on which it was served, served as parameters of social measure.

*Fon-Fon* magazine chronicler Leo Fabio, on a candid voyeuristic attitude, from his apartment would watch “unintentionally, on a Sunday afternoon at lunch, the classic dinner by some traveling salesmen,” and would socially classify them:

*The traveling salesmen sat all noisily in shirtsleeves, humming a couplet from the Forrobodó operetta or something similar: they have devoured a cooked broth soup, a large plate of côculo plant noodle, a full feijoada, two cabidela chickens and other entrées that would come and go, accompanied by Alvaralhão<sup>87</sup>, or any other similar dye of... eggs; they have smoked cigarettes and cigars, exchanged bits of life experience, familiarly touching the maid’s hips, etc., etc....*<sup>88</sup>

84 *Fon-Fon*, 09/05/1931, issue 0030, A nova sede do Tijuca Tênis Club, p. 28.

85 *Fon-Fon*, 03/05/1924, issue 0011, Ecos do Carnaval, p. 88.

86 *Fon-Fon*, 06/07/1947, issue 2096, A despedida de Elvira Rios, p. 23.

87 *Alvaralhão*: Portuguese grape variety and red wine made from it.

88 *Fon-Fon*, 07/19/1930, issue 0029, Girandola, p. 58.

In another neighborhood, the owners of *The Elegant Garçonnière*, two “**very esteemed young men**,” offered to a group of friends “a succulent feijoada,” incidentally accompanied by **top quality wines**. “Some representatives of the fair sex had also been invited, so that at the table there was everything that delights in life: **women, flowers, perfumes**, and even – oh wonder – the splendor of dawn.”<sup>89</sup>

*Fon-Fon* magazine chronicler Luciano de Rosal, in the commercial center of the city, caught in the act some writers who did not resist the appeal of a feijoada and transgressed the etiquette:

*After having an aperitif at the nearby tavern, we went to sit down at a small table in the back of the room, where a helpful valet would take the hats from the gentlemen who entered. Close to us, Brazilian writer Humberto Campos and Brazilian poet Alberto de Oliveira were **quietly and happily devouring a lush feijoada**, and answered to our greetings in a **vague gesture of barely veiled embarrassment**.<sup>90</sup>*

It was in “**a caring and cordial atmosphere**” that, in 1956, a “**Rio-style juicy feijoada**” was offered to celebrate the anniversary of the famous “César de Alencar Program” at *Rádio Nacional*.<sup>91</sup>

However, the popular and much loved Brazilian singer Ângela Maria was not equally lucky to have her birthday reported by columnist Jeanette Adib, from the *Rádio Onda* section in the *Fon-Fon* magazine. Perhaps out of spite for not having been invited, the journalist did not forgive her and released this: “[...] the **succulent feijoada** that, as I heard, left many people “out in the cold,” because **the ingredients were too strong**.”<sup>92</sup> And since a word to the wise is enough, this meant that the singer had not been able yet to break free from her humble background and her rude and coarse tastes.

However, ten years earlier, in the same magazine, in the social column by *Miss N.*, next to the Rio high-life couple “enthusiastically telling about their *château*,” a great apartment that they had bought in Ipanema, “Tina Vitta, who was celebrating her 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, would be inviting her friends for **a full feijoada, one of those ones!**...”<sup>93</sup> The simple expression “one of those ones!” said it all and more when it was from a person with such *très chic* name like Tina Vitta. Certainly, her full feijoada would be seasoned just right and served accompanied by top quality wines to people of her same social level. In all cases, quite different from that offered by former proletarian

89 Trepador, *Fon-Fon*, 07/14/1917, issue 0028, Trepações, p. 33.

90 Luciano de Rosal, *Fon-Fon*, 07/19/1924, issue 0029, Um prato novo, p. 36.

91 *Fon-Fon*, 08/04/1956, issue 2574, O 11º Aniversário do “Programa César de Alencar,” p.11.

92 Jeanette Adib, *Fon-Fon*, 06/05/1957, issue 2609, Rádio Onda, p.36.

93 *Miss N.*, *Fon-Fon*, 04/05/1947, issue 2087, Sob a grande marquise, p. 36.



Angela Maria (born Abelim Maria da Cunha) to her relatives and friends of humble origin, who had been accompanied by some “celebratory sips.” It was enough to read their names... a word to the wise is enough.

Perhaps because of it, i.e., to prevent the guests from remaining “out in the cold,” the newspapers columns about cooking proliferated. Indeed, the years of the second postwar were of upward mobility for many Brazilians of humble origin. Coming from rural areas to big cities and especially from the proletariat ranks, many were promoted to the industrial development of the country with repercussions throughout the economy.

And indeed, newspaper columns and pages dedicated to cooking in the 1950s, such as *A Culinária de Bom Gosto* (The tasteful cuisine) in the *Fon-Fon* magazine, would present again and again recipes of national dishes, including “The National Dish – Feijoada,”<sup>94</sup> as if willing to enhance the taste of the new emerging social classes.

More than that, the Brazilian food, with the “national feijoada” in the spotlight, had become a subject of debate in newspapers, giving opportunity to many women to express themselves “politically” by using their household knowledge. A reader from *Fon-Fon*, Marisa Lima was her pen name, claimed the creative capacity of the Brazilian woman:

*Why this constant mimicking? French model, American and Canadian dishes? Is it that Brazilian women have no ability to create their own fashion? They have no capable hands to make delicious “Bahia-style refried beans,” “Gaúcho-style barbecue,” “cornbread broas,” stews and feijoada? Let us improve what is ours. [...]”*<sup>95</sup>

## Feijoada and Brazilian women

In 1910, a journalist who had the pen name Carmen Dolores, criticizing the new model of woman who one wanted to impose to the Rio society, wrote in the section *A Semana* (The week) at *O País*:

*Marthe Régnier came, saw and conquered throughout, with her graceful features, her youth, her smart, edgy and modern talent, her coil-like thinness, a body shape the smart people from Rio would like to have nowadays... A poet told me, shaking his inspired mane and pulling his wrists: “These rounded contours, just for the old ladies. In young women, a thin body is a preference, of a perverse weakness, the androgynous narrow breast, white and transparent hands, disturbing, flowering in rare rings, always loose, dancing on the child phalanges...*

94 *Fon-Fon*, 09/13/1952, issue 2370, *Culinária de Bom Gosto*, p. 65.

95 *Fon-Fon*, 07/05/1952, issue 2360, *Coluna dos leitores*, p. 52.

*I would laugh by listening to him, and evoke a kind of genderless skeleton, inarticulate on walking, pointy shoulder blades not allowing the triumphant neckline stripping, and whose bony fingers, without the soft rounded meat, would always let roll bizarre and hopelessly wide rings... In the bloodless little skeleton, covered by beauty water, the wound of the mouth enlivened by carmine or vinegar opens...*

*Isn't that the body type now devised among us by worldly convention? Thinness! Thinness! No body curves!... **Just as the Brazilian women have them, generally more (Flemish Baroque painter) Rubens than (Greek terracotta figurines) Tanagra in their body shapes of daughters of a hot country, where one eats feijoada and drinks lots of water, practically since birth [...].***<sup>96</sup>

Thin women, too thin, or curvaceous? This same year, in the section *As nossas patrícias* (Our compatriots) in *Fon-Fon*, the picture of “Miss Nenen de Mello Nogueira, 1<sup>st</sup> winner of the 1909 Beauty Award and the 1910 Elegance Award of the magazine *Revista Moderna de São Paulo*,” left no doubt: Brazilian female beauty is defined by the body shape of those who “eat feijoada and drink lots of water.”

Either way, women in the upper classes continued to be worshiped for their beauty and seduction capacity and served mainly to be displayed or to attract public. In 1930, the advertisement for the beginning of the carnival celebrations at the *Beira Mar Casino* would remind that, in order to highlight its luster, it had the “women’s competition – to whom the board dedicates this party – and thus they are exempt from paying admission tickets.”<sup>97</sup> But, as one might say: There is no free feijoada. Therefore...

However, Yves, the *Fon-Fon* magazine dating consultant responsible for the column *Saibam todos...* (May all know), who did not mince words, would warn:

*Do not forget that the cute woman who nonetheless is hollow, mindless, and spiritless, can please only in the first and second times... It's like chocolate candy: you quickly get bored. The ugly but intelligent woman is like **the Brazilian feijoada: she is unattractive and inelegant, but she nourishes and satisfies; she is bearable all year long...** (Sorry about the clumsy comparison...).*<sup>98</sup>

The relationship among party, sex, woman and food is evoked that same year with the arrival of the carnival holidays. The journalist who signed *Arrebiros*, in a word play, crisscrossing dishes and women, said:

96 Carmen Dolores, *O País*, 07/17/1910, issue 09416, A Semana, p. 1.

97 *O País*, 01/29/1930, issue 16537, Artes e artistas, p. 5.

98 *Fon-Fon*, 10/14/1933, issue 0041, Saibam todos, p. 14.

*Over idyll prevails the requirement of the “ball”<sup>99</sup>, eating well and little prayer, that was the Trojan dilemma! Just for that, the Sunday parties have angu and feijoadas, **beautiful, playful women, tasty macaroni**. Others **maintain stews, delicious fish dishes**, and in a string of know-it-alls they want cod dishes!<sup>100</sup>*

And he would add: “Quite different menus to fatten revelers, even the most intransigent ones, with **food to chew and big fish**.”

Later that year, samba composer Milton Amaral would offer to the carnival partygoers group “*Você vai*” his official song, called “*Reparem só*” (Just observe). His words, which should be sung by cheerful crowds, said: “Life is funny. Women’s love grows when their men beat them.”<sup>101</sup>

Still within this perspective, Yves himself, from *Fon-Fon*, to a question from a reader, who signed as Snow White (Brazilian state of Alagoas): “How will I make peace with the desired love?,” he advises: “In two ways: behaving, in order to not upset the husband, or if he assaults you with a broom handle, do no yell too much. Peace also arises from the silence – says Mr. Dr. Calino...”<sup>102</sup>

And, when answering to the same reader on the concept of happiness in love, since he could not be sufficiently clear and straightforward when referring to sexual relations in marriage, he used metaphors. Therefore, “eating feijoada” meant “having sex,” and “dish boycotted by the cook” meant that the maid refused to have sex, in the case, with the bosses’ son; “the spouse who gives you beans” meant “the spouse who provides sex.” As to the meaning of “the ones who like Portuguese-style **cosido**<sup>103</sup> ... we leave the interpretation to the reader.

Here is Yves’s complete answer:

*It depends. It depends on the concept of happiness in love. There are people who marry only to eat feijoada – when at their parents’ home this dish is boycotted by the cook... If the husband gives her beans, she is happy. There are others who like the Portuguese-style **cosido**... As you can see, happiness, in this case, depends on the appetite and the cuisine...<sup>104</sup>*

99 Ball, the same as food. Big fish, the same as beautiful women. Cod dishes, the same as blows. As for the possible double meaning of the word “*cozido*” (stew, in Portuguese), it could be confused with its homophone “*cosido*” (sewn), see note n on the next page footnote.

100 Arrebiros, *O País*, 02/24/1930, issue 16563-16564, Aproxima-se o reinado de Momo, p. 8.

101 *O País*, 01/17/1930, issue 16525, Artes e artistas, p. 6.

102 Yves, *Fon-Fon*, 02/17/1939, issue 0007, Saibam todos, p. 9.

103 The correct would have been “*cozido*” (stew), past participle, with an adjective value, of the verb *cozer* (to cook). Had he purposely written “*cosido*” (sewn) with an “s,” in the past participle, with an adjective value, of the verb *coser* (sew)? Almost certainly yes. In this case, according to the *Lello Universal* dictionary, it could mean: very close, leaning. That is, in today’s jargon, enjoying “*cosido*” would mean enjoying “petting.”

104 Yves, *Fon-Fon*, 02/17/1939, issue 0007, Saibam todos, p. 9.

Another time, the same Yves, shrewd as always, responding to another reader who asked him: “Why is the soul insatiable?,” advised her “to provide him with a vast Brazilian-style menu, where a **full feijoada** is served, accompanied by a **good Vinho Verde from dear Portugal**.” (The name literally means “green wine,” but translates as “young wine”) And if your soul still remains insatiable, you should give him, “**above all a cosido, rich in vegetables**. It is true that there will be a serious danger of indigestion. But the insatiability will be overcome for sure.” And he would conclude by saying: “I apologize for this **culinary** advice, much worthy for the pages of *A Cozinheira* (The cook) than for the pages of the *Saibam todos*...”<sup>105</sup>

### Feijoada: a national passion

In short, in Rio de Janeiro feijoada was always associated with the lives of the locals in all their manifestations and, therefore, it took on multiple meanings, for it served everything and everyone. Hence its strong symbolism.

This symbolic importance of feijoada and its broad spectrum, national and classist, did not escape the advertising environment, and in the 1950s the most popular cigarette brand in the country announced: “As **the tasty and nutritious feijoada**, *Continental* **is a national preference** – it is the best-selling classy cigarette in Brazil!”<sup>106</sup>

Indeed, the “black stew” could be eaten in the living room or in the kitchen, with the hands up to the elbow, licking the fingers; with cachaça, wine or beer. Simple, it was the everyday dish; full, it was the favorite dish; and with the pig’s head... it was a feast! For the insatiable, it could be accompanied by a stew. Everything depended... on the feijoada, “on the appetite or the cuisine” or, as chronicler Alter would say: “Everything depends on the intention with which it is eaten.”<sup>107</sup>

Black, I want you, I want you black.

105 Yves, *Fon-Fon*, 09/24/1932, issue 0013, *Saibam todos*, p. 8.

106 *Fon-Fon*, 11/24/1951, issue 2328, *Qualidades de liderança*, p. 18.

107 Alter, *Revista Ilustrada*, 05/21/1881, issue 00248, *Crônica fluminense*, p. 2.

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