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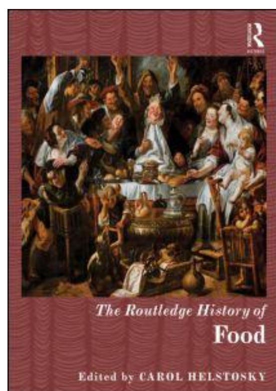

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Part II

1700–1900

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5

FOOD SHORTAGE IN COLONIAL MEXICO

Maize, food policies and the construction of a modern political culture, 1785–1807

Sarah Bak-Geller Corona

Each year, the inhabitants of the viceroyalty of New Spain anxiously waited for the day of the Holy Cross, *Santa Cruz*, to watch the first rains of the season fall. On May 3, 1785, however, not even a drop of rain appeared, nor was there a cloud in the sky. Days and weeks then passed with no sign of water, thus ushering in a drought that would bring devastation to much of the territory. The situation worsened with a freeze in September, which ended up destroying crops and leaving residents without their principal sustenance: maize. The scenario was characterized by colonists as the worst famine in the history of the realm.

Recent quantitative studies have downplayed the catastrophic consequences of the 1785–7 famine, showing that while this agrarian crisis affected many regions of New Spain, it did not inflict significantly more damage than did earlier famines.[1] While this may indeed be the case, the greater significance of this famine has to do with the responses to the crisis, which were symptomatic of profound cultural and political transformations in New Spain at the end of the eighteenth century. These responses consisted of a series of innovative measures by colonial elites to confront food shortages. Of particular interest are the recipes and cooking advice published in the viceroyalty's principal daily newspaper, *La Gazeta de México*. The purpose of these articles was to teach the population different ways of recreating the country's most popular dishes by replacing maize – the main ingredient of colonial cuisine – with more accessible ingredients. Beyond the creativity and originality of this cooking advice, the relevance of these recipes has to do with the appearance of the first inventory of New Spain's foodways. After the maize shortage, the authors undertook the task of identifying, systematizing and classifying the ingredients, tastes, textures, techniques and kitchenware that characterized the local cuisine. Although the main objective was to assure the consumption of traditional dishes in unfavorable conditions, the typification of New Spain's cuisine introduced new experiences related to the habitual cooking practices. Within this context of creating a repertory of New Spain's foodways arose the notion of cooking "in the style of the country."

Through the alimentary strategies and programs undertaken by intellectual elites to confront the crisis of famine, we can more clearly define a fundamental moment of transformation for key concepts of colonial political thought such as community, *patria*, territory and citizenship. The phenomenon of the 1785–7 famine was the scene of one of the first

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experiences of political modernity in Hispanic America, the lineaments, dilemmas and contradictions of which we will explore during the two years of alimentary penury.

Cooks and patriots: forging a new representation of community

It was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that a famine spread with such virulence throughout the viceroyalty of New Spain. The terrible famine of 1692 had caused a bloody confrontation between indigenous groups and the Spaniards in Mexico City. The former, desperate from the scarcity of food as well as colonial authorities' indifference to the tragic situation, set fire to the viceroy's palace and took up arms with a shout, "Death to the *gachupines* [Spaniards] who are eating our corn!"[2] The viceroy's response to the Indian uprising was characterized by firm resolve and brutality and he ordered those who rose up in rebellion on that night to be publicly hung.

Close to a century later, the 1785–7 crisis would again provoke popular discontent, although this time, the reactions by the colonial authorities were quite different. Viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez, conscious of repercussions from a popular revolt like that of the long-ago night of June 8, decided not to respond like his predecessor. This meant actively participating in a search for solutions to discourage a massive migration of beggars who threatened to occupy the capital city. With this idea in mind, Viceroy Gálvez established a program of public works and schooling for the impoverished classes. The goal was to employ and occupy the hundreds of poor who were otherwise susceptible, the viceroy thought, of provoking disturbances in the city.[3] The most energetic and decisive efforts, however, came from the viceroyalty's elites, who sought new ways of facing a social crisis. Attempts to receive divine aid via processions, entreaties and prayers to the Virgin of Guadalupe were replaced by enlightened measures that were considered to be rational, useful and effective. These measures, denoted "patriotic," were aimed at alleviating the neediness of the affected population. At the same time, these measures attempted to convince residents of the realm to adopt the necessary ideals and customs for building a "modern" society. Society was to become more homogenous and productive, with thriving commerce and industry. Elites hoped that the successful implementation of these conditions would help them face future crises.

The concept of "patriotism" in this program of social regeneration acquired new meaning. The existing and accepted definition of patriotism could be summarized by the quote "where we were born."[4] Added to this generalized definition was the demand for individual sacrifice and the subordination of particular, individual interests to the common interest or good. The terms "public good" and "public utility" were employed in political speeches as new synonyms for patriotic sentiment, at the same time that ideals of productivity, prosperity and abundance were becoming more commonplace. This notion of patriotism was based upon interpretations that the elites had made of the writings of French physiocrats and Italian economists[5] of the second half of the eighteenth century. From this exposure to philosophers of the European Enlightenment, "useful sciences" (mathematics, natural history, physics, mineralogy, metallurgy) and the predominance of experience over speculation, viceregal elites derived their ideas for combating famine and pursuing progress in society. Nor was religion excluded from this new conception of patriotism. Christian values such as faith and charity emphasized the idea of individual sacrifice and lent a spiritual dimension to patriotic discourse that sought to turn vassals into modern citizens.

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The notion of "patria," the origin of which dates back to ancient Rome, formed part of the political language of the Hispanic monarchy. From the sixteenth century on, uses of *patria* in New Spain reflected the concept's polysemy: on the one hand, *patria* as the community shared by all subjects of the Crown and on the other, *patria* as birthplace, homeland.[6] These two meanings would coexist throughout the centuries. Towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, *patria*, assimilated into the transatlantic monarchy as a whole, was also associated with the concept of nation: "Love of *patria* is of the nation and this is the moral juncture for the diverse and distant peoples and individuals who compose it"[7] wrote journalist and critic José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, from Mexico City.

At the same time, the concept of *patria* continued to be identified with the cities. These populations or small "republics" constituted the basis for a social, cultural and jurisdictional dynamic within the Catholic monarchy, a fact explained in part by the absence or ineffectiveness of intermediate powers between cities and colonial governments.[8] The patriotism that was linked to cities excluded other rationales for local relevance in the American world, particularly with reference to indigenous communities, which were frequently associated with a wild and rustic life in harsh places, "cold mountains and uncomfortable *xacales*."[9]

In a broader context, where the concept of *patria* was omnipresent in political language, the authors of recipes and kitchen tips attempted to combat famine by insisting that their alimentary proposals were also patriotic. Yet the *patria* to which they alluded in their speech and actions corresponded neither to the shared realm of the monarch nor to the local "republics" of the cities. Recipes created to face the maize shortage evoked a different reality, referring to the complex of villages and cities within New Spain's viceroyalty affected by the agricultural crisis, a space which was at the same time different from the rest of the monarch's territories in America. This third image of *patria*, of an intermediate character between monarchy and cities, was indistinguishable from the food shortage crisis. The authors of the recipes "in the style of the country" introduced a new element of cohesion between inhabitants who were now not only related by language, religion or king, but by practices, techniques and utensils of a culinary culture based upon maize.

Among the exponents and promoters of patriotic ideals in New Spain at the end of the eighteenth century two characters stood out: José Antonio Alzate, from the Valle de México (Ozumba, 1737–Mexico City, 1799), and José Pérez Calama, born on the Iberian peninsula (Extremadura, 1740–93). The two promoted their food treatises – *Consejos útiles para socorrer a la necesidad en tiempos que escasean los comestibles* ('Useful Advice for Relief in Times of Food Scarcity') and *Teología politico-caritativa* ('Political-Charitable Theology') – to "offer the country some useful discoveries,"[10] designed to combat food shortages.

The invention of cooking "in the style of the country"

Systematizing what is native

The scarcity of maize revealed the attachment, beyond any social or ethnic distinction, residents of New Spain shared for dishes based upon that cereal. In the autumn of 1785, when it was evident that there would not be sufficient maize to feed the entire realm, some members of the intellectual elite (religious figures, lawyers, military men and some landowners) published cooking recipes to teach their readers how to make substitutions for the native grain in the most popular dishes, essentially tortillas, tamales, *atoles* and *pinoles*. With products rarely used in cooking but easily accessible in times of drought (wild roots,

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herbs and grasses, cactus) the authors of these recipes hoped to assure the creation and consumption of traditional foods in times of maize shortage. For their authors, these recipes had the double advantage of effectively combating famine while guaranteeing acceptance by all sectors of the population, since they were cooking "in the style of the country." It was the first time that the culinary culture of the Viceroyalty seemed represented in terms of unity and coherence. Recipes in the "style of the country" created strategic culinary practices that affirmed and reproduced a shared sense of community vis-à-vis the "other".

The image of a cuisine unique and common to inhabitants of New Spain, based on the same "style" of eating, represented something new in the colonial discourse on alimentation. Since the sixteenth century, at the start of the colonial regime, food had become one of the principal demarcation lines between indigenous and European populations. While the Indian was identified with maize and tortillas, the Spaniard was associated with wheat bread.[11] The "style of our country" transcended ethnic, social and regional culinary variations, for the first time making the culture of maize a cuisine representative of coasts and mountains, Spanish and Indians, festive food and ordinary food, of the rich table and the poor (though the distinction between "poor tastes" and "delicate palates" persisted[12]). This "style of our *patria*" cuisine immediately became a common social and territorial indicator which until then had not existed in the political and geographic imagination of New Spain's inhabitants.

The idea of a unique culinary "style" representative of New Spain appears to have been formulated for the first time in the work of José Antonio Alzate, in his *Consejos, útiles para socorrer a la necesidad en tiempos que escasean los comestibles* published in 1785. Theologian, journalist, philosopher and scientist, Alzate devoted most of his life to writing about progress in the arts and sciences in other parts of the world. A member of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris and corresponding member of Madrid's Royal Botanical Garden, Alzate was recognized within Spanish monarchical lands and beyond as an inventor of devices, techniques and projects to "assist the needy" and contribute to the "public utility."[13]

The *Consejos* consisted of a group of recipes promoting the preparation of food that was economical and "useful" for times of widespread hunger. In these recipes, efforts were made to distinguish "foodstuffs from this country"[14] from those not originating in New Spain. The "style of the country,"[15] however, was not conceived only as a repertoire of native ingredients.

The classification and valuation of local food in *Consejos útiles* provides some idea of the double pedagogic dimension of this document, which consists not only in showing how to cook local ingredients in times of famine, but also instructing "people who appreciate the foreign more than their own"[16] to value local products. One example is the recommendation to use native pepper, known as Tabasco pepper, in place of peppers imported from other parts of the world.

Other criteria for "the style of the country" may also be defined as being less related to originality in cooking and ingredients than to the author's claim to construct a new field of rational knowledge, methodical and systematic, beginning with local culinary know-how. To carry out this operation, Alzate acknowledged a basis in European encyclopedias, like the *Encyclopédie économique* (1770–1)[17] and other treatises published in France and Switzerland.[18] Alzate openly admired philosophers and the "pragmatic individuals"[19] who had years before invented recipes to resist food crises. Moreover, Alzate proposed copying some of these formulae in his manual, not without first "translating, commenting upon and adapting them"[20] to "our language" and "patria"[21] so the American public might take advantage of them. Adaptation of the encyclopedic material meant, however, something more than a simple appropriation of foreign recipes. Alzate matched culinary ingredients

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and techniques in the original texts with local tastes and resources, in such a way as to favor the latter over the former. In the case of Swiss recipes requiring ground rice, for example, instead of a mortar and pestle Alzate recommended the *metate*, a thick rectangular stone used in New Spain for crushing maize, chilies and cacao. Alzate also modified recipes based on millet, wheat and barley, arguing that those cereals "[were] virtually unknown here,"[22] or, rather, were only used for medicinal purposes in New Spain. The *criollo* (Mexican of Spanish descent) also dismissed recipes based on maize offered by the *Encyclopédie économique*, because he considered local preparations to be preferable; particularly *atole*, the popular drink made from ground and toasted maize.[23]

Alzate implemented the logic and structure of European encyclopedic works, where intuitive and traditional kitchen lore was transformed into a group of rational and systematic skills.[24] Still, he adapted the content of the recipes in such a way so as to end up differentiating them from the original versions. Thus, the *criollo* took ancient culinary resources, many of them in use since the pre-colonial era (Tabasco pepper, the *metate*, *atoles* …) and turned them into components of a new alimentary system characterized by originality as well as the rigorousness and coherence of its own rules and applications. The most representative dishes, ingredients, tools and techniques of the realm thus came to build the image of a country's own "style," both versatile and rational.

Typifying a "style of the country" modified the way of conceiving and representing colonial culinary culture. As Alzate himself said, his *Consejos útiles* was so successful that it was necessary to reprint it just a few months later. What was then a small, simple folder received a larger printing and greater circulation upon being printed in a newspaper edited by Alzate, the *Gaceta de literatura de México*.[25]

Methods, standards and tastes as borderlines

Inspired by Alzate's *Consejos útiles*, a group of clergy, landowners and other notables at the beginning of 1786 began developing their own experiments for recreating tortillas, tamales, *atole* and *pinole* with ingredients that could partially or completely substitute for corn, such as rice, oats, sweet potato, *maguey* cactus, plantain, *biznaga* (fruit from a particular cactus), or wheat germ.[26] Chief among the enthusiastic followers of the *Consejos útiles*, a document now released under the title of *Consejos politico-caritativos* (Political-Charitable Advice), was José Pérez Calama, parish priest in Valladolid (today's Morelia), Michoacán.

The priest stood out during his residency in New Spain as one of the most notable promoters of enlightened ideas. Some years before famine broke out in the viceroyalty, Pérez Calama had been rector of the Colegio Palafoxiano in the city of Puebla, where he modernized teaching methods. The energetic priest also planned, unsuccessfully, the foundation of an Academy of Political-Christian Letters for the study of Latin and oratory arts, as well as the construction of four schools for young ladies in which disciples would receive lessons in home economics and applied arts.[27]

Alzate and Pérez Calama's varied proposals were related to policies for social, political, economic and education reform that came from Spain through the *Real Sociedad Vascongada de Amigos del País* (Royal Basque Society of Friends of the Country), the first economic-patriotic association founded in Metropole, and to which the two thinkers belonged.[28] In Valladolid, Michoacán in 1784, Pérez Calama tried to create the first *Sociedad de Amigos del País* (Society of Friends of the Country) in New Spain, the second outside Spain itself (the first having been founded a year before in Santiago, Cuba).[29] In 1785, the creation of the

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Society of Valladolid[30] was authorized by order of King Carlos III, with the objective of invigorating industry, sciences and arts in the Crown's principal possession in America. The unexpected 1785 agricultural crisis dramatically changed those plans, leaving the projected Patriotic Society of Valladolid unformed. Despite a defunct Patriotic Society, its members' patriotic thought intensified in the context of the famine.

Pérez Calama, "after having read the *Consejos útiles politicos-caritativos* published by Don Joseph Antonio Alzate," joined the pioneering efforts to typify and standardize alimentary customs in New Spain. To this effect he took on the task of cataloguing the realm's most usual dishes as well as the techniques, utensils and *savoir-faire* related with these foods. The religious man decided to prepare one of those dishes for times of corn shortage, and offered it to the poor who arrived, destitute, at his church: "[Calama] has arranged to give cooked rice to the poor, whose numbers could reach as many as a hundred, and he also gave each two or three tortillas."[31] The *Gazeta* article goes on to describe the personal touch Pérez Calama added to the recipe, which consisted of "adding a sufficient quantity of chile to make [the dish] tastier for the poor people." With this "sufficient quantity of chile" the priest aimed to satisfy popular taste, while also participating in the project of defining "the style of the country," by identifying chili as one more component of the local food system.

During mass in the Valladolid cathedral on October 17, 1785, Pérez Calama exhorted other priests of his region to improvise in the kitchen and invent more useful recipes for times of food crisis. Missives with the same instructions were sent right away to Pátzcuaro and other nearby parishes in central-western New Spain. The call was successful and the first results were published in the realm's principal newspaper, the *Gazeta de México*, starting in March of 1786.

With the diffusion of new recipes, there arose a kind of fervor for experimenting with strange ingredients and mixtures. Parish priests of the Michoacán diocese exchanged their discoveries in the pages of the *Gazeta de México*: between March and June of 1786 one could read various ingenious recipes for cooking customary meals without the American grain. These recipes to combat hunger, devised with rather unusual ingredients, were nevertheless bound to traditional techniques (slow and prolonged cooking, grinding on a *metate*, steaming food or cooking it on a *comal*[32]) and the essential characteristics of shape, color and texture of the original dishes: in the form of soft crepes like tortillas; as dough wrapped in some kind of leaf, like tamales; powdered like *pinole*; or in thick liquid like *atole*.

The newspaper's pages highlighted achievements made by authors of recipes in their respective cities. In Acuitcio, a correspondent related, "one poor person experienced making tortillas from dough of only well-ground corncobs, without mixing in any maize nor anything else, and they came out very well, and others continue to follow his example";[33] in Sahuayo, tamales from maguey plants tasted very good;[34] in Apatzingán, barely-ripe plantains "are used to make agreeable and tasty *tortillas*, providing safe and solid sustenance."[35] From Valladolid, Pénjamo, San Pedro Paracho, Xirosto, Pizándaro, San Luis Potosí, San Miguel el Grande and many other cities, recipes arrived at the newspaper; all aiming to contribute to the same patriotic cause.

In his well-known work, Benedict Anderson analyzed the importance of the press for patriotic manifestations in New Spain at the end of the eighteenth century, and its impact on a rising *criollo* nationalism.[36] While Anderson's arguments have been questioned by more recent historiography,[37] the notion he proposed of "imagined community" is relevant for understanding the role of the press in forming alimentary strategies conceived in terms

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of "public good" and a modern political culture. Editors, writers, correspondents and readers of the *Gazeta* were progressively building a new geographic and social archetype that transcended more immediate realities, like those of the village, city or parish.[38] Exchanging recipes allowed elites to recognize themselves as members of the same community, united by the same concerns and complicit in efforts to transform the destiny of a realm threatened by the maize shortage.

Systemization of a cuisine "in the style of the country" was not the only characteristic for this new phase of mobilizing the elites against the problem of famine. Tortillas, tamales, *atoles* and *pinoles*, dishes of popular and ancestral dominance, became in the hands of the promoters of "patriotic" recipes expressions of a strictly codified and regulated knowledge, which relegated the subjective, experiential and anecdotal dimension of traditional ways, nearly always oral, of transmitting culinary know-how.[39]

Recipes were supported exclusively by their authors' precise instructions, which guaranteed their ostensible success as well as re-establishment of societal order and well-being. For example, the recipe for making tortillas from oats, while "simple," had to "follow the proper method, in the manner described"; a similar warning was issued along with the priest Texeda's recipe for making tortillas with ground corncobs: "[the *tortillas*] come out tough if the exact method isn't followed. Thus Priest-Examiner Dr. Texeda from Pénjamo assures us in his letter of March second of this year. Distribute copies to nearby parishes."[40]

In the month of June 1786, a group of individuals committed to inventing useful recipes sent results of their culinary experiments to the viceroy. Colonial authorities approved the recipes and ordered that one in particular, for oatmeal tortillas, be published in the *Gazeta de México*. Oats, considered a food exclusively for cattle, were now presented as "inoffensive, healthy and very nutritious"[41] cereal. The instructions were simple, clear and detailed so that any reader might reproduce them in their own home. Their preparation was furthermore similar to that for preparing maize tortillas: with the *metate* to grind the grain and the *comal* for cooking the final product. The publication of recipes under the auspices of the viceroy began a new phase in the patriotic food program. This stage was characterized by prescription and imposition of alimentary norms by the highest levels in the viceregal hierarchy. The transitory and experimental character of measures for confronting the food shortage was supplanted by an ambitious alimentary policy that made food an instrument for reforming colonial society. The idea of patriotism, as well as the "public good," was considerably transformed. Food programs arising toward the end of the 1785–7 crisis would remain distinct from the Christian value of charity as well as the crisis conditions that originally motivated them. In their place, new parameters were instituted to codify and regularize the culinary practices of colonial society, with the goal of turning inhabitants into rational, useful and productive citizens.

The food shortage as a catalyst for the first public food policies

At the end of the food shortage, colonial authorities drew upon the idea of a unique cuisine common to New Spain, to carry out important reforms for modernizing the viceroyalty. This time it had nothing to do with facing the components of a local crisis, but with inducing profound changes to the organization and workings of colonial society. In their attempt to optimize time, effort and productivity for the realm's inhabitants,

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promoters of the public food campaigns proposed, at the end of the eighteenth century, substituting bread for *tortillas*.

The famine had revealed the importance of maize for New Spain's diet. Still, some members of the realm's intellectual and political elite would argue for its benefits and delve into new ways of consuming this cereal. If on the one hand the American grain – easy to grow, with abundant yields and versatile as a cooking ingredient – represented America's natural riches and the originality of cooking "in the style of the country," on the other the prestige of bread-civilizations progressively imposed themselves upon tortilla culture, characterized as archaic and irrational, and associated with the indigenous population. The debate over corn in fact entailed another more important issue regarding the construction of an ideal society and new identity referents.

Chemical theory and European domestic economy were great influences on the tortilla's detractors.[42] For medical science in the eighteenth century, fermentation constituted one of the principal chemical processes necessary for good digestion.[43] In this framework the tortilla, whose means of preparation involved no fermentation process, was considered a disadvantageous food, while bread was yeast-based. Considered a "gross, dense and viscose mass,"[44] the tortilla was considered inappropriate for sick people, in particular, who might have digestive complications. Excessive consumption of tortillas was seen as causing such stomach ailments as "indigestion and distension," symptoms "very common among the Indians,"[45] in the opinion of one doctor.

Discussions about ways of preparing the cereal versus its qualities, led to a new culinary experience, which linked the American grain's benefits and advantages of bread-making methods to meet the demands of modernity. Thus promoters (doctors, journalists, functionaries) of a new food regimen began thinking about mass manufacture of corn-based bread. In 1786 the *Gazeta de México* wrote about the first experiments, but it was not until the spring of 1807 that the newspaper announced the successful manufacture of bread that was three parts wheat and one part corn. The results were presented with all honors before Viceroy José de Iturrigaray and his advisors, who ruled "unanimously" in favor of the bread. The *Diario de México* promised its readers it would reveal the recipe for the new bread, whose composition it proclaimed to be "healthier than that of wheat alone."[46] The viceroy participated fully in promoting this bread, certifying the recipe, decreeing that it be distributed throughout the rest of North America and ordering construction of a bakery in Mexico City that would be exclusively dedicated to making and distributing this product throughout the region.[47] The first loaves were handed out in orphanages, hospitals and schools where, according to the press, the product was well-received: "all ate it with gusto and asked for more."[48]

After announcing the first successes for the corn bread campaign, newspaper pages abruptly interrupted news of the project. Looking back from the present allows us to suppose, according to current evidence – like the high consumption of *tortillas* and absence of corn bread in Mexico – that elite efforts to civilize the "plebeians," entreating them to eat corn in the form of bread, failed. However, beyond the success or failure of the project, it is interesting to recall the food policy arising from the 1785–7 famine, and the possibilities the crisis had opened within the project of political and social regeneration of colonial society, driven by the realm's elites.

The first rains of summer 1787 ended the droughts of prior years. Still, the famine had left its mark on colonial society: a mass exodus from the countryside to the cities, evidence of the inequitable colonial agrarian structure and, above all, a new consciousness among elites of the predominance of maize in viceregal culinary habits, and its symbolic value as a

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cohesive element among inhabitants in the context of society's political reconfiguration. Recipes to combat the 1785–7 famine revealed for the first time how corn shortage affected all colonial society equally. Recognition of an alimentary culture – or "in the style of the country" – shared by residents from different social sectors, transformed meanings for the concept of *patria*, and ways of conceiving New Spain's collective identity. The idea of a "style of the country" broke social and geographic barriers that until then had defined the notion of community. At the same time, it served to create new identity links between groups and regions that had been isolated, and even antagonistic, but which inhabited the same territorial jurisdiction: the viceroyalty of New Spain.

The first Hispanic American experience of formalization, systematization and typification of local culinary knowledge was undertaken by enlightened figures from the eighteenth century like José Antonio Alzate and José Pérez Calama, who went beyond the elements of the crisis that had motivated it. The 1807 invention of a corn bread recipe, that combined benefits of the American grain with techniques of bread baking (including fermentation), were inscribed in some manner upon the thought on crisis that had risen from the famine: corn bread would lend continuity to efforts toward unifying and regulating society's alimentary habits and would help prevent future situations of food scarcity. Involvement by the viceroy in the process of validating and distributing corn bread revealed at the same time a new concept of food as an instrument of control and social transformation. The appearance and consolidation of New Spain's first food policies, borne of the 1785–7 famine, open a chapter that, while little-explored, is fundamental for understanding the relationship between food, power and society in Hispanic America.

Notes

1 For a general vision of agricultural crises in New Spain: Virginia García Acosta, "Las catástrofes agrícolas y sus efectos en la alimentación, escasez y carestía de maíz, trigo y carne en el México central a fines de la época colonial," in Shoko Doode and Emma Paulina Pérez, eds, *Sociedad, economía y cultura alimentaria*, Mexico City: Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo-CIESAS, 1994; and América Molina del Villar, *Por voluntad divina: escasez, epidemias y otras calamidades en la Ciudad de México, 1700–1762*, Mexico City: CIESAS, 1996.

2 Cited by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *Relaciones históricas*, Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1992, p. 130.

3 Rodolfo Pastor, "Introducción," in Enrique Florescano, ed., *Fuentes para la historia de la crisis agrícola de 1785–1786*, Mexico City: Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 1, 1981, p. 32.

4 Fernández de Lizardi, *El Pensador Mexicano*, vol. IV, "Sobre el amor de la patria," Mexico City: Centro de estudios de historia de México Condumex, 1987, ed. facsimil (Imprenta de doña María Fernández de Jáuregui, 1812–14), p. 6.

5 While the "patriotic" recipes were aimed at the entire colonial population, we can assume by the comments of some of the authors that there were different audiences. Some examples are the allusion to "soft", "juicy" and "exquisite" dishes, or the comparison with the taste of a refined nougat or expensive almonds brought from Spain. *Gazeta de México*, February 14, 1786; June 27, 1786.

6 François-Xavier Guerra, "The Implosion of the Spanish Empire: Emerging Statehood and Collective Identities," in Luis Roniger and Tamar Herzog, eds, *The Collective and the Public in Latin America: Culture Identities and Political Order*, East Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2000; Cristóbal Aljovín de Losada, "Ciudadano y vecino en Iberoamérica, 1750–1850: Monarquía o República," in Javier Fernández Sebastián, ed., *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano. La era de las revoluciones, 1750–1850*, t.1, Madrid: Fundación Carolina-Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales-Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2009.

7 De Lizardi, *El Pensador Mexicano*, p. 7. Benito Jerónimo Feijoo (1676–1764) was one of the most-read authors in the Spanish empire, he defined the concept of *patria* as an entity formed by those

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living under the same laws and government, independent of their places of birth. Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, "Amor de la patria y pasión nacional," *Teatro crítico universal*, t. III, Madrid: Joaquim Ibarra, Impresor de cámara de S.M., 1779 [1726–1739].

8 François-Xavier Guerra, "Una modernidad alternativa," in *Modernidad e independencias. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas*, 3rd edn, Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica-Mapfre, 2000, pp. 67–72; Annick Lempérière, *Entre Dieu et le Roi, la République. Mexico, XVIe-XIXe siècles*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2005.

9 De Lizardi, *El Pensador Mexicano*, p. 6. *Xacales* are a type of rustic cabin.

10 José Antonio Alzate Ramírez, *Consejos útiles*. Consulted in *Gacetas de Literatura de México, por José Antonio Alzate Ramírez, socio correspondiente de la Real Academia de las ciencias de París, del Real Jardín botánico de Madrid, y de la sociedad bascongada*, t. II, Puebla: Reimpresa en la oficina del hospital de San Pedro, a cargo del ciudadano Manuel Buen Abad, 1831 [1790–2], p. 332. From here on, referred to as *Consejos útiles*.

11 See for example Solange Alberro, *Del gachupin al criollo*, México: El Colegio de México, 1992; James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992. Chronicles from the Indies and other descriptions of the colonial era were wont to include observations about this alimentary demarcation.

12 *Gazeta de México*, February 14, 1786.

13 *Consejos útiles*, p. 55.

14 *Consejos útiles*, p. 177.

15 *Consejos útiles*, p. 182.

16 *Consejos útiles*, p. 179.

17 Referring to the *Encyclopédie économique ou Système général d'économie rustique, d'économie domestique, d'économie politique*, printed by members of the Bern Economic Society in Yverdon, 1770–1. *Consejos útiles*, p. 177.

18 The author of these recipes, as Alzate himself mentions, is one "Monsieur Recolin," of whom we have no further information. This work was written during the 1747 famine caused by England's blockade of the port of Bordeaux.

19 *Consejos útiles*, p. 177.

20 *Consejos útiles*, p. 182.

21 *Consejos útiles*, p. 184.

22 *Consejos útiles*, pp. 183–4.

23 *Consejos útiles*.

24 For treatment of cooking by Enlightenment philosophers, see Jean Claude Bonnet, "Le réseau culinaire dans l'Encyclopédie," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 31(5), 1976, pp. 891–914.

25 *Gazeta de México*, April 18, 1786.

26 Germán Cardozo, *Michoacán en el siglo de las luces*, Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1973, pp. 34–47.

27 The *Vascongada* Society was created in 1764, though the majority of such societies appeared between 1775 and 1784, with state support. For a more detailed description of the functions of these societies see François-Xavier Guerra, "Una modernidad alternativa," in *Modernidad e independencias. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas*, 3rd edn, Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica-Mapfre, 2000, pp. 85–113.

28 Guerra, "Una modernidad alternativa," p. 104.

29 Cardozo, *Michoacán en el siglo de las luces*, p. 48.

30 *Gazeta de México*, February 14, 1786.

31 *Gazeta de México*, February 14, 1786.

32 From the nahuatl, *comalli*. A round flat instrument made of clay, for cooking and toasting.

33 *Gazeta de México*, April 18, 1786.

34 *Gazeta de México*, April 18, 1786.

35 *Gazeta de México*, April 18, 1786.

36 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, London and New York: Verso, 1991, p. 19.

37 Cf. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds, *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nations in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

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38 The *Gazeta* could be bought at newsstands, the principal shops and other establishments along the streets of the main cities. In smaller towns subscribers paid on an installment plan to receive the news in print, in more or less timely fashion, and it was read or shared with many other people on the farms, at inns, in taverns and cafés, to mention just a few meeting places. Nancy Vogeley, "Mexican Newspaper Culture on the Eve of Mexican Independence," *Ideologies and Literature*, 17(IV), 1983, 359.

39 The experience of Pérez Calama during the 1785–7 famine was decisive for the priest's career in other regions of the Spanish empire. As a reward for his good work during those years, Carlos III named him Bishop of Quito in 1788. There Pérez Calama applied alimentary measures similar to those he developed in New Spain. Known as a "many-faceted and very practical man, [who] didn't like philosophical speculations but useful things," Pérez Calama promoted industrious, methodical and systematic practices for baking wheat bread. The priest offered a prize of 50 pesos to the baker who made bread according to his recipe, insisting on the precision and exactitude of the technique; that is, that the bread "form internal 'eyes' [and] the cooked dough break up easily into very small crumbs without any caking." He then sent to the printer a lesson which showed techniques for building ovens for a bakery in Mexico: "The ovens should be of bricks in the form of a vault, with the floor built of quarter-thick stones, well fitted one to the other (so heat cannot escape) and seated upon a mix of limestone and sand." Rodolfo Pérez Pimentel, *Diccionario biográfico del Ecuador*, t. VII, Litografía e Imp. de la Universidad de Guayaquil, 1987, 23 volumes, pp. 265–72.

40 *Gazeta de México*, March 28, 1786.

41 *Gazeta de México*, June 27, 1786.

42 The authors of an article published in the *Gazeta de México* of September 26, 1786 quoted the article "Bread" from the *Dictionnaire de Chimie*, as well as note 7, chapter 3, part 1 of *La Médecine Domestique*. Sources have not been found to corroborate this information.

43 Theories of the benefits of fermented foods began to revolutionize medical science by the middle of the sixteenth century, Rachel Laudan, "Birth of the Modern Diet," *Scientific American*, 283(2), August 2000, 65. Allen G. Debus, *The French Paracelsians: The Chemical Challenge to Medical and Scientific Tradition in Early Modern France*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. For an anthropological study of the phenomenon of fermentation in different historical and cultural contexts, see Dominique Fournier and Salvatore D'Onofrio, eds, *Le ferment divin*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1991.

44 *Gazeta de México*, September 26, 1786.

45 *Gazeta de México*, September 26, 1786.

46 *Diario de México*, April 30, 1807.

47 *Diario de México*, April 30, 1807.

48 *Diario de México*, April 30, 1807.