ASADO AND ARGENTINE IDENTITY

Representations of the Argentine Roast Tradition in Historical Perspective

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Eva Verhaert
1964658
Master thesis
Colonial and Global History
Leiden University
Supervisor: Dr. Pablo Isla Monsalve
Leiden, November 2018

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INTRODUCTION

When thinking of Argentine cuisine, a large steak of roasted beef crosses the mind right away. In Argentina a meal without beef is not a meal. Argentines are renowned meat lovers and with 38.6 kilograms per capita in 2016, they are accordingly the biggest consumers of beef worldwide next to Uruguay. Argentine steakhouses (*parrilladas*), nationally and internationally proudly broadcast this reputation as they both their typical 'gaucho' styling and menu refer to Argentine 'cowboys' who in earlier days inhabited the Pampas and lived on beef and beef alone. Roasted beef is king in Argentine cuisine and *asado* is Argentina's most iconic beef dish. The word *asado* derives from the Spanish verb *asar*, meaning 'to grill' or 'to roast'. This Argentine version of barbeque, evolves around larges cuts of beef, cooked on a grill (*parrilla*) or an open fire and is celebrated by national folkloric festivities such as the *Día Nacional de Asado con Cuero* (National day of asado with skin), organized every year by the city of Viale. Furthermore, asado includes specific social and gender roles and is *the* social and culinary weekend activity often taking place in backyards. Guests are invited to join and conversations held, like the meat can be on fire. Not surprisingly, almost every Argentine household owns a place to grill, no matter how fancy, simple or improvised. Asado seems to be linked to Argentine society to such extent that Argentina's military dictatorial regime (1976-1983) used its terms to communicate on military torture techniques and the expression 'to have an asado' explicitly referred to burning the victims' bodies. So asado in Argentina seems to be more than just food but actually linked to Argentine vocabulary, mentality and possibly identity.

In fact, Argentine identity is already a research topic on its own. Argentina, is a nation with identity questions that has been looking towards the European continent to define its national character (Craanen: 2016). Culturally, Argentina identifies as a Latin-American country on the one hand, but on the other considers itself different because of its European, white and Western appearance (Larraín: 2000). Exactly this discrepancy has been studied extensively by scholars especially from the 1980's onwards. Where Jelin (1994) focussed on collective memories of the violent military past, Bastia and vom Hau (2014) and Bletz (2010) proposed European migration as possible explanation for the Argentine identity awkwardness. Others, intrigued by the identification dilemma like anthropologist Archetti (1999) pictured cultural expressions such as music, dance and sport as topics of interest. This is, with great national symbols such as the tango, of course no surprise. Archetti connected the hybridity of Argentine national character to cultural notions of masculinity. Masculine dominance is, even in current days of emancipation, still highly relevant in understanding Argentine society.

However, food practices have been underrepresented in academic research of Argentine identity. Food and culinary traditions as cultural expressions, are relevant in understanding cultures since they imply a wide range of ingredients, flavours, recipes, preparation techniques, utensils and social roles while growing, buying, preparing and consuming food. Food is not only a universal habit in human history, it is also a great part of

people's everyday life and is the motor for human energy, growth and health. Foodstuffs literally determine physical identity. Therefore, food history has become more recognized in the historical field and scholars such as Gabbacia (1998) increasingly acknowledge food as influential and representative to collective identity. Following thinking of Appadurai (1988) on Indian cuisine, cookbooks were progressively considered relevant in constructing national cuisines. In the Latin-American context, Earle (2012) was one of the first to connect food to the colonial project and to focus on how notions of food shaped racial status in the Spanish-American colonies. Goucher (2014) held recipes important sources to study Caribbean foodways from a global and comparative perspective and argued that Caribbean culinary practices provide historians with crucial lexicons for the study of global historical processes, patterns and interactions. Pilcher earlier attended to the importance of *Food in world history* (2006) and the shifting appreciations of *cocina criolla* (creole cuisine) in Cuba, Mexico and most relevantly Argentina (2012). From colonial times, the question of who Argentines are and what they should eat has been a point of discussion and Pite (2016) continues to write on the roots of Argentine cuisine with special attention to gender and ethnicity. In an earlier study (2013) Pite narrated the story of Doña Petrona, Argentina's culinary expert of the 20th century, thereby illustrating the role of food on gender divisions and national identity in Argentina. The asado practice itself has only been studied extensively from an anthropological perspective by Tobin (1998) who approached asado through ethnographic fieldwork and considered asado together with the tango and football as site of Argentine masculinity.

Yet asado's place in Argentine identity explicitly has not been studied so far. Also, asado as a *tradition* instead of merely a food practice, is not studied in dept up to now and is therefore an objective of this research. Moreover, studying Argentine foodways specifically in relation to global processes such as colonization, migration and globalisation has not been done extensively. This research consequently takes a kaleidoscopic approach and attends asado as an interaction on the local, regional, national and global level. Identifying the origin and changing historical and symbolical meaning of the asado tradition to the Argentine collective, is the central aim of this thesis. Taking into account that traditions and collective identities are dynamic concepts, it aspires to reveal representations of the roast tradition in relation to Argentine identity rather than to define its authenticity. Accordingly, the main research question is as follows: to which extent is the asado tradition represented as an authentic component of Argentine identity? In order to form an answer, multiple questions should be considered. First of all, what is the relation between traditions, specifically food traditions or cuisine and collective identity? Then, how should Argentine identity be approached and which processes actually formed Argentine foodways, cuisine and thinking of food? Further, how did the asado tradition come into being, along with its specific material and social aspects, and how has this been reproduced in written sources? As component of Argentine identity? In exposing the connection of the asado tradition to the Argentine community, this study is supported by three theoretical approaches: *invented traditions* by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Anderson's *imagined communities* (1983) and *cultural materialism* by Harris (1985), all examined in the first chapter. Where the first two concepts offer understanding to the role of traditions in establishing collective identity, the approach

of *cultural materialism* assists in analysing the success of certain food practices in cultures. This chapter also mentions existing ideas on the significance of food and cuisine in world history (Pilcher) and discourses in national identity-making such as folklore (Isla Monsalve). The second chapter further presents multiple processes and levels of collective consciousness interacting with Argentine identity. In addition, this chapter analyses evolutions in Argentine cuisine, from local and native foodways, to colonial interference and from global culinary trends to nationalist culinary discourses, which together illustrate the historical, political and social background wherein traditional asado was rooted. Chapter three consequently examines representations of asado in primary written sources such as literature and cookbooks to discover asado's place in Argentine society. By focussing on bibliographical sources from approximately 1870 to 1970, the way asado has been presented in connection to Argentine identity can be detected, along with why especially asado instead of other dishes from this period has become served as 'authentic' Argentine aliment. Herein, the method of food genealogy is applied and along these lines, the origin and historical development of the Argentine roast tradition is traced. Altogether this thesis is an extensive study of the asado tradition and by placing the asado meal on the table, it offers a tasting of Argentina from a historical and socio-cultural perspective.

CHAPTER ONE
Tradition as Construction?

In order to understand different representations of culinary traditions and their implications for national identity, it is important to interpret different theories and relevant terms in the study of tradition, collective identities and food history. What are traditions and what is their role in a collective identity or consciousness? How is collective identity even established? Does food or the socio-cultural practice of eating play any role in this? By presenting the theories on *tradition*, (imagined) *collective communities* and *food customs*, this chapter serves the main theoretical ingredients relevant in understanding the Argentine asado tradition.

1.1 Traditions and Authenticity

The word 'tradition' comes from the Latin noun *traditio*, deriving from the verb *tradere*, which literally means 'to transmit', 'to hand over' (Congar, 2004: 9). The concept has been studied in multiple sciences as anthropology and biology but has become universally accepted as: anything that is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present (Shils, 1981: 12). However, tradition makes no statement about what is handed down nor whether it is a physical object or a cultural construction. Neither does the word imply for how long it has been handed down, nor in which form, oral or written (Ibid.). Also, the term is not specific about the degree of evidence or reliability of the tradition neither does it make any difference who are the authors or creators to whether it is a tradition or not. The decisive criterion is then, that it must be created through human actions, through thought and imagination, and that it is handed down from one generation to the next (Ibid.). Often, the word 'traditional' is used in relation to a specific genre, performance or cultural practice such as music. In the performance of a traditional genre, the pre-existing values are of greater value than individual tastes and the performance itself establishes a connection between the present group and their predecessors (Green, 1997: 800). This way, tradition is important in creating continuity, linking the present with the past as a form of identity making (Ibid.). Traditions invoke questions of authenticity and the term 'authentic' is used to say what is the strong sense of being 'of undisputed origin or authorship', 'truly oneself' or in line with one's own personality, spirit or character despite external influences (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014). It also contains a certain ideal and in historical, social and political thinking it involves investigating historical and philosophical sources (Ibid.). Processes of modernity such as industrialization, globalization and assimilation are held to endanger tradition and to cause a 'loss of traditional identity' (McIntosh, 2005: 40). So, how should traditions be studied? And when does a cultural practice, like preparing or eating a specific food, becomes a tradition considered authentic and exclusively for a collective?

Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) must have asked themselves these questions as well as they differentiated *invented traditions* from authenticity.

1.2 The Invention of Tradition

Indeed, Hobsbawm and Ranger presented 'tradition' as a product. Traditions which appear to be old are often recent in origin or sometimes even invented:

> 'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly of tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (Hobsbawm & Ranger,1983: 1).

This means that certain cultural practices can be inserted into the historical past and gain the establishment and appearance for being historically rooted. However, since they are 'invented traditions', the continuity implied is mostly factitious: "In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (Ibid.: 2). This phenomenon of 'invented traditions', suites the period after the French Revolution, the long 19th century, wherein the constant change and innovation of this modern period made it necessary to structure social life and to place a collective past into this context. The collective past, even if invented, could serve a source for legitimacy in times of great changes. Moreover, traditions clearly distinct from customs. Customs do not preclude innovation or change and therefore, unlike traditions, are not historical. There is also a difference between traditions and conventions or routines since the latter have no significant ritual or symbolic function. When turned into a habit, they become an automatic procedure and they acquire invariance. Even though traditions and conventions can be interrelated, the 'invention of tradition' is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization. Invented traditions refer to the past, but only by *imposing* repetition. Traditions therefore can deliberately be constructed, appropriated or institutionalized and when done by a single or official initiator, this process is likely to be documented. But when invented traditions take place in the private sphere or are spread over a long period of time, the invention is less traceable. Moreover, 'invention of tradition' can be expected to occur after rapid and large transformations in society and when old traditions and patterns have come to be questioned.

Furthermore, traditions can be invented in different ways. First, is the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes. New traditions in this case are grafted onto old ones, by borrowing specific features and thereby placing it in a new context. Second is the invention-method to modify, ritualize and institutionalize existing customary traditional practices for new (national) purposes. Hereof,

the tradition of the Highland kilt in Scottish history is an example.[1] As it happens, the "traditional" Highland costume to which Scottish ascribe great antiquity, is actually a creation of later 18th and early 19th processual appropriation. At first the kilt, actually an English invention, became a medium for social differentiation and accordingly acquired social meaning. Next, the costume was rediscovered by the Scottish upper and middle classes who turned the Highland dress into a status symbol. The legitimation of the tradition continued when Highland nobleman and intellectuals presented the dress as ancient, original and authentically Scottish. The kilt was place into Scottish history by imposing historical continuity and repetition and the kilt was further institutionalized when it became the official dress. Manufactures with commercial objectives next stimulated the imagined kilt-wearing tradition. The final inventing-stage, the reconstruction and extension of the reality, was accomplished by literary works narrating and glorifying the history of Highland dress (Ibid.: 36). At last, the popularized history of the clan kilt was taken up by the tartan industry and has been canon of Scottish national identity ever since. So, even though traditions sometimes appear historically rooted, one must keep in mind that they are nevertheless constructed and invented. Additionally, there are three overlapping types of traditions:

A. Those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership or groups, real or artificial communities
B. Those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations or authority
C. Those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviours (Ibid.: 9).

Inventions of type A, which imply sense of identification with or belonging to a community and/or institution representing, expressing or symbolising it, such as nations, are most interesting in the case of Argentine asado and identity. These 'communitarian' invented traditions, can serve as a community's foundation and link the cultural practice to collective identity. Nations for example, can adopt the pedagogic role of stimulating a sense of community among its citizens in order to exert cultural control (Guibernau, 2007: 27). Another important feature of invented practices is that they, unlike old practices which are specific and strongly binding social practices, tend to be quite unspecific and vague to the nature of the values, rights and obligations of the group membership they inculcate. In order to include as much people as possible in the multi-faceted society, all-embracing communities, like nations and counties, keep demarcations vague (Ibid.: 10). Concludingly, the study of tradition throws a considerable light on the human relation to the past. Traditions can stimulate the formation of collective identities and especially for modern nations, this effect is highly valuable since they depend upon symbols and links to the past in order claim legitimation and historical respectability (Ibid.: 13-14).

[1] For more details about the Scottish kilt tradition, see chapter two, 'The Highland Tradition of Scotland' by Hugh Trevor-Roper in Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983).

1.3 Imagined Communities

The next question is then accordingly how these imaginary traditions relate to collective identities? Are national communities as we know them consequently also imagined? And if so, how is a collective consciousness created and which role do traditions and cultural artefacts play in this process? Benedict Andersons ideas on collective identities were clearly inspired by invented traditions and are subsequently consulted.

1.3.1 The Rise of National Consciousness

At first Anderson (1983) examined the concepts of nation and nationalism and this point of departure immediately resonates the question of authenticity in *invented traditions*:

> … is that nationality or, […] nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways meanings have changed over time, and why today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy (1983: 4).

Anderson states that the nation, as a political *imagined community*, became the most accepted form of socio-political order after the Enlightenment. Also, the nation is interpreted as an *imagined*, *created,* and *limited community*. Moreover, different cultural artefacts played a large role in arousing attachment and social meaning to the concept of the nation (Ibid.: 4). The nation is the best example for analysing imagined communities, because it is *fabricated or created* since members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each of them lives the images of their communion (Ibid.: 5-6). In fact, all communities larger than small villages with few face-to-face contacts, are *imagined*. The imagined community of the nation is *limited* because even though the boundaries of the nation are elastic, beyond them, lie other nations (Ibid.: 7). Also, the nation is imagined as a *community* because, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Ibid.).

1.3.2 Space, Time and Literature

So, national consciousness is the most obvious form of an imagined community. However, in order to have a shared consciousness, a sense of *simultaneity* and *parallelism* is essential. In accordance with *invented traditions*, Anderson held great changes to cause renewed thinking of time and past, and with that the notion of national identity. The 18th century introduced a new conception of time and space and the idea of society as a: "sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (Ibid.: 26). Cultural artefacts and innovations like print and capitalism, as well contributed in clearing the way for nations as new imagined communities. Especially novels and newspapers

possess the ability to create inclusion, an idea of a homogenous group of individuals who simultaneously have a communal activity while they don't know each other but are confident of a solid community (Ibid.: 27). Anderson calls this the *simultaneity of experiences*, when we as part of an imagined community, are aware that others are performing the same practice precisely when and as we are, even though we do not really know them (Ibid.:26). Newspapers are exceptionally efficient in creating an imagined linkage to a collective body of readers since they are 'consumed' daily and on a mass-scale, creating a simultaneous consumption among its readers (Ibid.: 35). Since the ceremony of reading the newspaper is being repeated daily, it gets rooted into daily life. *Parallelism*, a way of understanding space and time, implies a connection within and between imagined communities. This was especially interesting in the colonial Americas where the colonies understood themselves as parallel to those of other substantial groups of people, if never meeting, yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory (Ibid.: 188).

1.3.3 Creating National Identity

Additionally, nations can create attachment among the society. When this process of producing a national feeling of comradeship is actively stimulated by nations, we speak of official nationalism or nation-building: propagandizing nationalist ideology through different mass media and policies (Ibid.: 97-101). To affirm the national identity, the nation has become a strategy for inclusion for those considered part of the community and exclusion for those outside. According to Anderson, census, maps and museums together shape this national framework, in which the nation's thinking about its domain and members, is contained. Thus, they enable the creation of a nation and the people inhabiting that country to be the nation's citizens. Also, national memory can be a source for national legitimation and existence. Through the discipline of history, traditions can be embedded or "invented" into national consciousness in order to give the national identity historical dept. But because the 'birth' of this national identity, unlike the identity of a human being, is not a fixed moment and has no clear beginning or ending, it could not truly be "remembered" (Ibid.: 204). For this reason, national biographies must be imagined and narrated, or as Hobsbawm would have expressed it: *invented*.

1.4 Good to Eat

Yet how do culinary traditions relate to collective and national consciousness? What decides in a culture what is eaten and how do food habits in a community even come into being? Based on his great interest for *Cultural Materialism* and the origin and evolution of human culture and food habits, anthropologist Marvin Harris searched in *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (1985) for practical explanations to the question why specific food preferences and avoidances are found in one culture and not in another (Harris, 1985: 14). The concept of *cultural materialism* was first introduced by Harris in 1968 and suggests that all aspects of

natural life are a result of material interactions.[2] His censorious approach is compatible to the critical spirit of Hobsbawm and Anderson and goes against the structuralist conception that food habits either come from mental codes, a vast realm of symbolism and beliefs (religions) or are largely arbitrary. Hence, Harris researched food taboos and dietary traditions and challenged the fashionable premise that "foodways are accidents of history which express or convey messages derived from essentially arbitrary values or inexplicable religious beliefs" (Harris, 1985: 14).

1.4.1 The Weighing Scale of Food

Some substances are perfectly edible from a biological point of view, yet human beings in specific cultures abominate them. So what factors actually decide what is eaten in cultures? Following materialism, the explanation for most gastronomic traditions and customs is rather practical, instead of hooked by symbolic or cultural meanings:

> Food must nourish the collective stomach before it can feed the collective mind… Preferred food (good to eat) are foods that have a more favourable balance of practical benefits over costs than food that are avoided (bad to eat) (Harris, 1985: 15).

Different cost and benefits are to be detected such as nutrition, the time and effort needed to produce them or the adverse environmental effects on soil, animal or plant life. This balance of practical cost and benefits is not always a simple sum and especially in market economies, good to eat may mean 'good to sell', regardless of the nutritional consequences (Ibid.: 16). It is also important to bear in mind that the balance is not always shared equally by all members of society and that food is often a source of wealth and power for the few as well as of nourishment for the many (Ibid.).

1.4.2 Meat Hunger

Cultural materialism firstly proposes that animal foods are traditionally eaten in all societies since they contain more proteins and minerals then plant foods (Ibid.: 22-36). Secondly, the sharing of animal flesh is a way of reinforcing the social ties that binds communities together:

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[2] This theory is based on Marx's and Engels' macrosocial system of the categories *superstructure* and *base* and explains cultural evolution and ecology from a materialist perspective. In short, cultural materialism argues that the *infrastructure:* modes of production, exploitation and population, thus society's relation to the environment, in almost all circumstances determine the evolution of a culture (Harris, 1979: 54). The *structure* and *superstructure* (both behavioural as mental), embodying social relations and symbolic, ideological aspects of a society are less significant in the evolution of culture. Politics are part of the first category and rituals and beliefs are examples of the latter. Considering practical limits, there is not space to extensively explain the philosophical term Materialism and the overlap between Harris' thoughts and Marx' and Engels'. For more information, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* and *Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* by Harris are recommended.

> Far more often than plant foods, animal products must be shared reciprocally between producers and consumers. Meat eating is the quintessential social occasion […] Individuals and families rarely share their plantains and other crops, but they never consume a hunter's catch without cutting it up into portions and distributing it to all the important men in the village, who in turn make further distributions to the women and children (Harris, 1985: 27).

By distributing the meat, a web of mutual obligation is created, the person with whom one shares will in turn share when he has some meat, this way the fear or preoccupation with meat is reduced. But in times of meat scarcity or when villages get bigger and the meat has to be shared by more, and when portions shrink, this web is disturbed and problems may occur. Harris argues that animal foodways play a crucial role in the nutritional physiology of our species and therefore in history of human societies. Materialistically speaking, eating meat has more benefits, like contributing to increasing life expectancy. Countries whose citizens have the highest life expectancies have undergone dietary changes with an increased consumption of animal food and decreased consumption of grains. Subsequently, the model of materialism conveys that fatty meats are traditionally more desirable than lean meat, because it is converted into protein instead of energy. Harris defends the universal human 'Meat Hunger' by declaring that it will never be in the best interest of any country to eat less animal food (as distinct from less animal fat and cholesterol) as a health measure. But if meat is so nutritious, why is it then that in many countries some types of animal flesh are not good to eat? And why become certain meats more in flavour than others?

1.4.3 Beef Lovers and Haters

Surprisingly enough, cows, which are perfectly suited to domesticate and use for the production of milk and beef, are regarded sacred and not eaten in Hindu India. In the case of densely populated India, the beef-eating taboo, originates from the fact that the food for the cattle (wheat) became too costly to compete with humans for food. Considering Harris' materialism, the cow simply was more valuable alive then when butchered for its beef. The cow became India's best companion because of its versality, resistance to diseases and efficiency: it can thrive in both wet and dry weather, needs relatively few foods and produces favourable by-products such as milk and fertilizers. Furthermore, cattle eat many things and most importantly they are perfectly big and strong enough, even in a semi-starved condition, to pull the ploughs and work on agriculture until they literally drop dead. On the balance of materialism, the "irrational" Hindu food culture of banning slaughter and consumption of cow meat, thus actually makes sense considering the society's circumstances.

Harris thus rejects the "dead hand of tradition", the claim that food habits are part of culture and change most slowly. He presented the countertheory that foodways are instead an interplay between nature and culture. Food traditions, in the spirit of cultural materialism, adapt to nutritional, ecological, economic and political conditions rather than remaining fixed and unresponsive as an arbitrary heritage passed on from the remote past (Ibid.: 129).

1.5 Food Constructing Identities

In 1862, the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach wrote the well-known statement "*Der Mensch ist, was er iβt"*, connecting food to identity.[3] Feuerbach's statement can be interpreted various ways, but in essence stated that the food one eats equals the 'being' (Cherno, 1963: 404). Feuerbach observed the human body from a pragmatic lens and because food becomes blood, running through the heart and brain, it literally becomes food for thought and feelings. Healthy food providing material and spiritual nutrition was the basis for human development and therefore he held food able to improve one's being. To Feuerbach, man not only is what he eats, but also *man eats what he is*: the food one eats, reveals one's self-image, one's awareness of his essential nature (Ibid.: 405).

1.5.1 Sharing Food, Sharing Identities

But since the practice of eating is not merely an individual affair in human live, food is not only relevant in relation to the individual identity but also in collective identities. The gathering, preparing, dividing and consuming of foods have played a role in forming collective relations and identities since the beginning of human history. And however monotonous traditional food habits may seem on the daily basis, food habits reflect the evolution of culture in course of world history (Pilcher, 2006: 1). Therefore, Jeffrey Picher, food historian and expert in Latin-American cuisine, classifies food as crucial in shaping human societies. First of all, food is a universal concept: "Every human being requires the same basic nutrients -proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals- yet human societies have adopted wildly different approaches to satisfy these physiological needs" (Ibid.: 1). The perishability and (limited) availability of food ingredients thus stresses the material constrains of foodways, which shows overlap with a cultural materialistic approach. Apart from its material nature, food also accommodate beliefs and practices. Food, therefore, contains social meaning as well. And even though social meanings of specific foods can diverge from one society to another, some social aspects of food remain universal to mankind. For example, commensality and sharing of food and drinks, generally help to establish bonds of group identity: "Daily meals shared around the family hearth accumulate intimate and enduring social ties. Metaphors also link food to sexuality, further cementing the foundations of family life" (Ibid.: 2). Communal eating enforces a *simultaneity of experiences* and has exceptional social meaning when containing meat, as proposed earlier by Anderson and Harris. Moreover, communal meals served at ceremonial feasts encourage creation of political ties between rulers and subjects. Therefore, the production and allocation of food can be tools

[3] "Der Mensch ist, was er iβt", literally translated into English means, "The human being is what it eats". In *Das Geheimnis des Opfers oder Der Mensch ist, was er* ißt (1862) Feuerbach wrote an extensive essay about the practice of sacrifice, food and human "being". Since then, scholars have understood his sentence in multiple ways. For more information about the context and the controversy of Feuerbach's thoughts, see *Feuerbach's "Man is what He Eats": A Rectification* by Melvin Cherno. Also, Donna Gabbacia's (1998) *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans,* is recommended.

for power or authority. Especially newly formed nations, have tried to win allegiance by assuring subjects to be adequately fed, thereby fostering national cuisines (Ibid.: 4-5).

Likewise, interestingly is, how food habits can help to define social identities of class, gender or ethnicity. Food distribution and consumption function as a media of wealth and class distinction (Ibid.: 4). Already in ancient societies, noblemen and elite had a better diet with greater access to protein, hence, better physical health than their subjects. When in modern times food supplies were more secured, rare species and other refined and exotic products provided new ways for exclusion and class-distinction (Ibid.). Food habits also enforce gender identities through the different male and female roles in the division of labour in the preparation and consumption of food:

> Patriarchal societies tend to assign women the task of everyday feeding. When men do cook, they usually prepare high status dishes, large cuts of roast meat, elaborate haute cuisine, or ritual food for the gods. Men also generally claim larger portions and leave less-prized foods to women and children. Yet however devalued women's work may be within a society, their mundane tasks of daily cooking convey forms of power within the family (Ibid.: 4).

Aside from class and gender relations, ethnic identities can be forged when cultural groups share meals and personal relationships become interlinked. Thus, food as part of everyday life is of great significance to social relationships and communal eating, as a *simultaneous experience,* in (imagined) communities can create multiple social ties and reinforce collective identities.

It was exactly this competence to stimulate collective identity that could satisfy the appetite for national consciousness starting from the 18th century. As known from Anderson, in this period the sense of nations as most dominant form of communities sharing a common culture was accepted. Different cultural artefacts such as literature, anthems and dress, instrumented for constructing national identities. Yet, of all cultural symbols few have deeper affective roots then childhood foods (Ibid.: 64). In other words, the emergence of national cuisine at first in 18th century France, fitted into the larger process of folkloric nation-building. To that end, just as nations can be culturally or politically imagined or created, so can be national cuisines:

> But just as nations have been described as "imagined communities," one could question whether national cuisines exist except as artificial collections of foods eaten by people living within arbitrary political boundaries. Culinary practices invariably differ from one region to the next, so for national cuisines to exist at all, they must likewise be imagined from diverse local foods (Pilcher, 2006: 64).

1.5.2 Food, Nationalist Discourse and Folklore

All scholars above are convinced that traditions should not be taken for granted. Cultural practices themselves do not randomly become traditions, there are always underlying practical reasons, either political, economic, ecological or social. In the case of dietary traditions, concrete environmental or social factors like productivity, population and market

competition are more acceptable than recognizing that they are simply arbitrary coincidences of human history. Cultural artefacts such as food habits, can obtain the status of tradition while they actually have practical explanations or serve objectives of dominant and powerful groups in society. Nations are the best example of authorities appropriating and propagandizing traditions in discourses of constructing unity: national identity.

In interpreting traditions in national discourse, the concept of folklore is crucial. Folklore is the oscillation between cosmopolitanism and the localism in which the state acts a principal agent (Isla Monsalve, 2017: 4). In folklore, cultural and symbolic products are resources to create identification and legitimation of a national spirit. Elements of heritage become cultural hallmarks and through folklore become absorbed into the "deeper" identity of the nation. This way, folklore is not only a means to obtain political centrism, but it is also a way to create national emotional unity. Regional and rural-ancestral icons can be invoked and together form a collection of symbols of authenticity which serve national merchandising (Ibid: 4). Traditional customs such as craftsmanship and music thus can be incorporated into national cultural identity. Especially the local agrarian culture can be presented as bastion of "authentic" national identity and is romanticized as counterpart of industrialisation, globalisation and immigration all endangering this traditional way of life.

1.6 Conclusion

All theorical approaches up till now have indicated that collective activities can create a communal consciousness within a group of individuals. When these practices are perceived as traditions, they establish linkages with the past, whether legitimate or not, and they can become a strategy for "inventing", stimulating or shaping collective identity. When placed into a national discourse, traditions can serve to construct feeling of unity: national identity. Regardless of historical reliability and even if the community itself is imagined, traditions are powerful tools for (emotional) identification and identity construction. Differences in world cuisines have come into being because of combinations of conditions in nature and society. Many factors, especially practical or material ones, can contribute to the failure or success of a collective tradition. Therefore, it is effective to take both a material, as a cultural and social approach when studying cultural practices such as food habits. Furthermore, because of the universal importance of food, culinary customs are the quintessential cultural tradition to study constructions of collective identities. Studying food culture gives great historical insight in social interactions and (national) cultural evolutions. In fact, cuisines can be imagined as 'national' despite differences in region, class, gender or ethnicity. So, when nations become hungry for national consciousness, food culture is one of the first fields to be appropriated. Above all, cuisine and food traditions prove to be the starch to bind the nation together.

CHAPTER TWO
A Taste of Argentine Identity

Before examining the importance of asado to Argentine identity, it is important to map the historical and cultural setting into which this tradition rooted. How should one approach Latin-American identity in general and Argentine identity in particular? Moreover, which culinary traditions are native to the territory of modern-day Argentina? Further, how did Argentine ideas on food and cuisine evolve, and did this correspond with the thinking of collective identity? This chapter addresses these questions and along Anderson's thoughts on collective consciousness, the most fundamental concepts and conditions to Argentine identity are firstly examined. Thereafter, this chapter takes a look into the Argentine kitchen and discovers changing trends in Argentine culinary history.

2.1 Building Latin-American Identity

In the colonial period, Latin America was mainly a subject of European interest from which was rarely heard directly. The Americas, or the "New World", understood itself in relation to the Iberian Peninsula, the "Old World". Regions and societies outside the walls of colonial territory, despite having a powerful attraction of exoticism, represented an barbaric Otherness (Isla Monsalve, 2017: 2). Along with slaves and lower castes, natives embodied the internal enemy, and thus were considered unsuitable to represent Latin-American identity. Yet, from the late 18th century onwards, collective consciousness emerged among Spanish-American elites, whereby perceptions of *simultaneity* and *parallelism* were essential. Especially the colonial administration and introduction of the first American newspapers, created a sense of localism with grand stretch (Anderson, 1983: 62). And although these newspapers focussed on the colonial provinces individually, they were at the same time fully aware of provincials in worlds parallel to their own: "The newspaper-readers of Mexico City, Buenos Aires and Bogota, even if they did not read each other's newspapers, were nonetheless quite conscious of their existence" (Ibid.: 62). As a consequence, Spanish-American colonies perceived themselves as parallel and connected to other substantial groups of people part of the same imagined community: "It became conceivable to dwell on the pampas of Argentina, and yet feel connected to certain regions or communities like the Iberian Peninsula, thousands of miles away" (Ibid.: 188).

2.1.1 Creole Consciousness[4]

The collective consciousness of this imagined community of Spanish-Americans led in the 18th century to the rise of Spanish-American nationalism which eventually developed into *criollo* consciousness, expanding because of the growing *criollo* community. 18th century racial ideology subordinated *criollo* functionaries to European metropolitans, *peninsulares*, since they were born in a savage hemisphere and inferior climate (Ibid.: 60). However, with the growing *criollo* community, progressively self-conscious and wealthy, racial distinctions became more complicated to justify and provoked *criollo* patriotism and nationalism. In this spirit, *criollo* revolutionaries increasingly saw themselves culturally and politically parallel and eventually independent to the European metropole (Ibid.: 188-192). So, remarkable in this Spanish-American experience is that, in contrast to Europe, it first discovered nationalism before nations were created. During independence movements from the 1810's, Spanish-American *criollo* nationalists proclaimed ideas of a joint America, *nuestra América*. But due to the wide stretch of the former Spanish-American Empire, imagining a Spanish-American community as a whole proved too difficult (Ibid.: 63-64). Pan-American projects and collective *criollo* bonds as *Gran Colombia* and *United Provinces of Rio de la Plata* did not hold and the boundaries of collective consciousness narrowed down to the national level. In Latin-American, the nation became the new framework for elitist *criollo* consciousness after all.

2.1.2 National Consciousness

The New World had looked towards itself through the reflection of the European mirror for over three centuries. Consequently, after independence the new Latin-American nations suffered an identity deficit. Latin-American identity discourse had evolved into an *ex negativo* discourse, it identified itself by what it was not: not European, not white, not modern, not Western (Isla Monsalve: 3). In search for essential Latin-American identity, Enlightened intellectuals struggled with an awkward awareness: Latin-America could only be defined as a consequence of external processes or as reproduction and imitation of European modernity (Ibid.: 5). The continent overrated the external European culture and underrated and neglected native and local cultures. However, in the early 19th century, *criollo* intellectuals began to reimagine their identity and appropriated their identity as unique and distinct from European culture (Ibid.: 6). In was in this same period that republican elites consolidated constitutional order in the newly formed nations and through nationalist tools such as official national history, the concept of national belonging was added. Scholars in the field, have accepted Latin-American identity as the result of a long process of discursive construction wherein inculcation and diffusion of national indoctrination was highly proficient (Ibid.: 1).

[4] The term *creole* or *criollo* derives from the Spanish verb, "criar", meaning "to raise". It is generally used to indicate a person of (at least theoretically) pure European descendance but bore in the Americas (and later, anywhere outside Europe), see Anderson (1983) chapter 'Creole Pioneers' or Pilcher, 'Eating à la Criolla' (2012). Even though the words *creole* and *criollo* are not completely interchangeable, the term *creole* is accepted as an English translation of the Spanish/Portuguese "criollo/crioulo". This thesis will follow the example of Picher, and from now on constantly use the term *criollo*. This since both social, ethnic categories and related denotations of foodstuffs and styles are best indicated in the original context and language.

And because the project of creating collective belonging was carried out by states, Latin-American identity is evidently interwoven with national identities. Nonetheless, next to the separate political national projects, Latin-American countries still co-identify on the regional level because of common cultural substrates (Ibid.: 2).

2.1.3 Ethnic Consciousness

The turn of the century again denoted great changes in Latin-American societies. Responding to modernity and industrialization, nostalgic, folkloric sentiments emerged in Latin-American nations. In independent Latin America, the meaning of *criollo* had shifted from collective Spanish-American identity and came to indicate 'national' or 'local', regardless of its origins and connotations also differed across countries (Pilcher, 2012: 2). In general, what was *criollo*, was either romanticized and idealized or considered backward and interfering with progress (Cara, 2003: 39). In *criollismo* of early 20th century Latin America, the image of the *criollo* as innocent, picturesque or poor, was progressively promoted to create popular and emotional national identity (Isla Monsalve: 4). By idealizing local traditions, Latin-American nations actively stimulated national conscious and unity and in the 1920's and 1930's, increasingly adopted strategies to embrace and value all ethic components of the nation as part of *mesticismo*. *Mesticismo* proclaimed a celebration of biological and cultural mixing of all ethnic groups that composed the nation (Chamosa, 2010: 5). Latin-America's ethnicity of mixed peoples and cultures (thus identity), before perceived as a burden to progress and modernity, now had become a uniqueness and quality (Ibid.: 5). In this intellectual milieu, the ideologies of *hispanismo* and *indigenismo*, praising either 17th century Spain or Pre-Colombian civilizations as sources for national character, gained influence (Ibid.). *Indigenismo* placed the native Indian or peasant at the centre of attention. Along *indigenismo* discourse, Latin America rediscovered and appropriated indigenous heritages, heroes and traditions and popularized and mystified them as folkloric symbols of national identity. Interestingly, in Argentina, *mesticismo* and *indigenismo* lacked the hegemonic power and agency it carried out in other Latin-American countries. Although Argentine nationalist participated in these ethnic trends, Argentina moved along its own assimilationist ideology (Ibid.: 6).

2.2 National Identity in Argentina

So, because of common cultural, social and political experiences, Latin-American countries historically share a consciousness of Latin-American identity alongside the national identities. However, this does not imply that each Latin-American country has followed the same track towards the consideration of its national identity. In fact, Argentina's answer to the question of national identity is rather exceptional. Argentina has long considered itself the most 'European' of Latin America and is to be classified as 'European America' (Larraín, 2000: 4). Regarding national identity, Argentines swing between Latin-America and Europe: on the one hand it profiles itself as a white Western nation, on the other hand it categorizes itself among the other Latin-American countries, with whom a history of Spanish rule, common

language and religion is shared. Numerous of scholars have been written on Argentina's identity struggle and most speak of an uneasiness or ambivalence in Argentina's self-image, cultivated as 'European' and cosmopolitan, whereby stressing a uniqueness and distinction from other Latin-American counties.[5]

2.2.1 Civilization and Barbarism

This tension and awkwardness around Argentina national identity also concerned the Generation of 1830, a group of intellectuals among which writer Esteban Echevarría of *El matadero* (written in 1830's but first published in 1871) and president Domingo Fausto Sarmiento (1868-1874). Sarmiento described Argentina's identity problem as a conflict between *civilization and barbarism* in his literary works such as *Facundo* (1845). According to Sarmiento, Argentina was split by a dichotomy of European ideas and values, present in the cities, and barbarism, present on the grassy Pampa countryside and with local gauchos (Pilcher, 2012: 6). Not only gauchos were considered a threat for Argentine progress, also older generations of *criollos* and Italian and Spanish immigrants were looked down upon as backward and poor (Ibid.). Throughout the 19th century, the clash between cosmopolitanism and local culture remained an issue in the identity discourse and continued to determine Argentina's social distinctions and hierarchies. Argentine politicians even initiated military campaigns to conquest parts of the southern Pampas and northern Patagonia from indigenous peoples, at first in 1833 during the Rosas administration and next in the 1870's and 1880's under General Roca, leaving Argentine lands highly underpopulated.

2.2.2 European Migration

In the 1850's Argentine national thinking shifted to aspirations for a new national race and character, i.e. *census*. Intellectuals increasingly reckoned that populating Argentine lands by foreign immigration was crucial to the country's modernization and progression. Encouraging European immigration was expected to be the ultimate solution to reorganize and institutionalize national identity and would counterbalance and absorb the remaining indigenous, mestizos and *criollos* into the national body (Bletz, 2010: 53). Inspired by the opinion *gobernar es poblar* (to govern is to populate), Argentina's 1853 Constitution consequently promoted an open immigration policy towards Europe (Ibid.: 53-54).

Still, Argentine identity would not be regenerated by just any immigrant. Argentine elites aspired to attract 'superior', 'white', Anglo-Saxon immigrants from Northern Europe, or at least from Basque country, all associated with hard work and respect for authority (Bastia & Vom Hau: 478). During this period, Social Darwinism linked Argentine thinking of national identity to race and initiatives to eliminate and Europeanize negative or "lower"

[5] Since it is not the purpose nor in the ability of this thesis to form a complete overview of Argentine identity, this paragraph focusses on the aspects national identity mostly related to the population, ethnicity and ultimately food traditions. Also, the starting point for this description is the period of the Generation of 1830, marking a tipping point in the thinking of modern Argentina. For more extensive overview of Argentine national identity history see the works of Elizabeth Jelin, Oscar Chamosa or May E. Bletz.

components of society, would improve Argentine identity (Ibid.).[6] Encouraged by Argentine propagandist policy as pull factor and difficult circumstances in the home countries as push factor, two-and-one-half million immigrants were attracted to Argentina. This made Argentina the biggest receiver of European migration after the United States. As a result, the country radically transformed and by 1914 over 30 percent of the population was foreign born (Baily, 1978: 323). Particularly the city of Buenos Aires, whose population had grown from 664,000 in 1895 to over one-and-one-half million in 1914, changed into a booming, cosmopolitan capital (Ibid.). Because of this immigration, Argentina continuously presented itself as 'European', however no longer exclusively meaning 'of Spanish descent' but rather referring to its new identity as a 'white' and cosmopolitan nation. Yet, when boats loaded with migrants kept anchoring at Buenos Aires' harbours, the project was progressively viewed negatively. Accordingly, attitudes towards immigration as the solution for the national identity dilemma started to change.

First of all, the types of migrants actually coming to Argentina were not of the desired Northern European ancestry. Despite hopes, the majority of immigrants turned out to be Spaniards or Italians, and the latter represented by 1914, 12.5 percent of the total population (Ibid.). Many others were of eastern or "Oriental" origin (Syrian, Lebanese or Russian – often meaning Jewish) (Bletz: 56). Presumably because of cultural and religious similarities, most Northern European migrants preferred North America as their destination over Latin America since it rather resembled Southern European instead of Northern European culture.[7] Secondly, the increasing disintegration of Buenos Aires with the rest of Argentina troubled establishing a national identity. The demographical change cosmopolitanized life in the cities (through architecture, civic life and entertainment e.g.) and especially Buenos Aires distanced itself from the colonial past and culture of the country's inferior that had remained isolated and predominantly mestizo or *criollo* (Chamosa: 2). With Paris' boulevards, London's department stores, Milan's theatres and Madrid's cafes, Buenos Aires was "closer to Paris than it is to Chilvilcoy or Salta" as some critics expressed (Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, 1971 in Chamosa: 2). Culturally, the country was split in two, with the city and *porteño* culture resembling Europe and the countryside resembling South-American nature, so it became difficult to imagine Argentina as uniform.[8] Thirdly, the way

[6] For more information on the racial motives of mass migration to Argentina, see F.J. Devoto, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina* (2003) or '*Para qué la inmigración? Ideología y política inmigratoria en la Argentina (1810-1914)*', in *El espejo de la historia: problemas argentinos y perspectivas latinoamericanas* by T. Halperín Donghi (ed.) (1987).

[7] There can be many different reasons for a group, family or an individual to migrate. Also, sometimes the decision to migrate and settle in a specific region is not even consciously made but rather a coincidence. As Boyden, Krabbendam and Vandenbussche illustrate with migrant letters in, *Tales of Transit: Narrative Migrant Spaces in Atlantic Perspective, 1850-1950* (2013), is that the decision-making should be understood as an ongoing process based on social ties and networks. It is not always as an act made at one point in time nor necessarily prior to departure. So, the final destination of migrants depends on many factors. Chapter 6 handles the case of Scandinavian migrants to Argentina, who predominantly went to Argentina "off the beaten track" or for personal reasons considering that the majority of the Scandinavian migrants travelled to North America.

[8] The Spanish word *porteño* is refers to a person from or living in a port city. Sine the port of Buenos Aires was the largest in Argentina, the word is commonly specifically applied to people from the city of Buenos Aires. People from the Province of Buenos Aires are referred to as *bonaerenses*. Administratively, the city of Buenos Aires is not part of the province of Buenos Aires.

migrants assimilated and integrated into the imagined community of Argentina proved problematic. This since *how* nation identity was imagined, had changed by the 20th century. Before immigration, the Argentine nation was imagined as a community which had yet to take shape. However, which the growing society, thinking on national identity was led by the idea of a stable, essentialist, unified national identity that supposedly absorbs, refines and neutralizes difference but remains itself unchanged by those differences (Bletz: 54). Therefore, "the immigrant was no longer received in an empty space, but in a national typology that was being destroyed" and migrant communities were progressively held to endanger the national body (Ibid.: 56-57). In the 1920's this complex and contrasting image of the nation, troubled imagining Argentina as a whole and along with racism and xenophobia, foreign immigrant cultures increasingly became received as threatening true *argentinidad* (Ibid.: 57).[9]

2.2.3 Argentine *Criollismo*

Argentina found itself once more in internal conflict. Yet barbarism was now identified with the urban foreigners who had come to take over the Argentine cities. As a response, intellectuals nostalgically looked at the countryside and pre-immigrant Argentina as a renewed purveyor of civilization. From then on, rural *criollo* culture returned to the centre of representing Argentine nationality (Chamosa: 2). And with rising folklore in the 1910's and 1920's, the Hispanic, *criollo* and gaucho were rediscovered as the country's foundation and cure for the urban, internationalized and immigrant culture. Others, like the poet José Hernández had proclaimed the value of local culture decades earlier, as his epic poem *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) had nostalgically portrayed the gaucho way of life. Anyhow, *criollismo* in Argentina really took off from the 1910's onwards and was associated with the rustic gaucho society, now representing the lost values of traditional Argentine life (Pilcher, 2012: 2). The gaucho figure evolved into the pure, rough and brave personification of Argentine identity and its history, spirit and traditions were the main topic of Argentine folkloric canonization. Concerning food, folklore also evoked renewed attention to what rural and local traditions had to offer culinarily. Hereby, cuisine became more and more connected to social distinctions between recent immigrants and *criollos* as some believed that local Argentines and their ancestors had grown strong on a diet of beef, unlike the ill-fed immigrants from the southern European countryside who had settled in cities and were mocked for being the product of "three generations of Galician tuna pies" (Moya, 1998: 372 in Pilcher: 6). Nevertheless, 19th and early 20th century Argentine culinary discourse continued to be European and cosmopolitan focussed and it would take time for *criollo* and local flavours to be fully enjoyed in the Argentine kitchen.

[9] *Argentinidad* translated to English means, 'Argentiness' or Argentine national identity.

2.3 Argentine Food Traditions

Ideas on Argentine identity thus have been evolving through different processes, such as colonisation, independence and migration and these fluctuations accelerated in the late 19th century. Also, ideas about Argentina's supposedly position between Europe and Latin America, national race, ethnicity and culture changed in course of the 19th and 20th century and were essential to construction of national identity. Food culture became an increasingly important topic as it grew into a medium for social demarcations. But how did Argentine cuisine evolve in this renewed thinking about national identity, and what did this mean for the asado tradition? Before turning to these questions, it is important to place the Argentine foodways in a global context and to discover key concepts and trends of global food history.

2.3.1 Global Ingredients of Change

Already in Ancient societies, cuisine served to create inclusion and exclusion. Throughout history, access to foods, particularly luxury foods, had made it an indicator of social and cultural statuses and hierarchies (Pilcher, 2006: 9-11). Likewise, interactions and processes of long-distance trade or migration have been important to global food history. In the history of world cuisines, certain interactions have proven crucial to the global food market, and with that Argentine cuisine. Firstly, the colonization of the Americas meant a fundamental transformation in the eating habits of all humans (Ibid.: 19). The encounter of the New and Old World and consequently the Colombian Exchange caused dramatic changes on the plates of both hemispheres. Where the introduction of new crops like the potato drastically changed European diets, the livestock brought by imperialists led to unpreceded ecological, demographic and culinary transformations in the Americas. Hereby, colonization had started a process of cultural blending and indicated the first steps towards global culinary fusion. The founding of plantations in the Americas was even a greater innovation to the global dinner table. Highly productive goods from the New World, like coffee and sugar, provided the energy for Europe's modernization and population growth (Ibid.: 5). Starting from the 18th century, industrialisation and growing mass-industry transformed food production and consumption globally. Food began to be transported by railroads and steamships around the world and turned into interchangeable commodities, thereby losing connection to its place of origin (Ibid.: 55-56). The grasslands of Australia, Argentina, Canada, and the United States provided foodstuffs for the growing working-class in European factories and together with new methods of preservation accelerated the pace of culinary diffusion and globalization (Ibid.). Especially the meatpacking industry and refrigeration innovations changed the international meat production as fresh meat could be preserved easier and therefore became more accessible to urban consumers (Ibid.: 60).

Yet, with the industrialisation of foods, nations also started to pay closer attention to the foods and cuisines that helped shaping their collective identities (Ibid.: 62). When nations became the widespread accepted form for collective cultural communities, nationalist elites, at first in France but eventually globally, increasingly used cuisine to gain allegiance of the

people they claimed to represent (Ibid.: 63-64). The creation of national cuisines, proved perfect for national-building but generally involved forging a unified identity at cost of regional cooking (Ibid. 65). Along with growing *bourgeoisie*, the early 19th century announced the golden age of *'haute cuisine'*. French cuisine dominated international upper- and middle-class households and this new field of gastronomy came with codified rules for sophisticated eating including the concept of restaurants. French standards were actually not exclusive to the culinary context but also were adopted to ideas of vigour and social hygiene. With the growing industrial proletariat, suspicion and discrimination towards indigenous, provincial and working-class people's health and sanitary customs increasingly became part of elite discourse. These social categories and their foods were often associated with "dirtiness" and teaching them to be civilized and "how to eat" came to be a national matter (Pite, 2016:114).

In the 20th century, industrialization and globalization of food continued but two World Wars, undermining food security predominately in the West, made new food politics necessary. With the shift from state to multinational corporations as food providers, also came new fears of traditional food habits being replaced by bland and unhealthy foods served by chains such as McDonalds (Pilcher, 2006: 6). Concludingly, the internationalisation of food culture has been ongoing for centuries. Multiple interactions such as trade, colonization and modernization have transformed global food history and subsequently national cuisines. Food offers great historical insight to identity-studies as it provided energy for the development of peoples, communities, nations and cultures throughout history.

2.3.2 Native South-American Menu[10]

But what did shifts in global history mean on the Argentine dinner table? How did culinary traditions native to the Argentine region, and then particularly meat-eating, transform by global processes of colonization and internationalisation? Multiple indigenous societies populated regions of present-day Argentina, among which the Quechua, Guaraní, Charrúa and Mapuche, were the main ethnic groups (Lovera, 2005: 4). The Quechua populated large parts of the Andes (north-western Argentina) and apart from potatoes and corn, they cultivated quinoa, squash and fruits such as melons and sweet potatoes.[11] The Guaraní, inhabiting the north-east of current Argentina and adjacent Paraguay and Uruguay, were hunter gathers with a basic, nomadic lifestyle. They lived from manioc, cassava, corn, honey, beans, peanuts and the wild game they could collect by hunting and fishing. The semi-nomadic Charrúa people lived in the Southern Cone region (present-day in the border region of Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil) and also relied mostly on hunting and gathering (Ibid.: 4). Locally produced vegetables and grains nourished the Patagonian Mapuche people of Chile and Argentina, who were later driven away by Spanish cattle, causing internal

[10] It is not an easy task to describe the cuisine of the indigenous population of South America. This region covers great territory stretching from the Colombian border with the Panama up to its most southern point, the Chilean-Argentinean archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. Also, writing food history of *all* Pre-Colombian civilizations would be to extensive to do here. Therefore, this paragraph focusses on the general products and customs of South-American societies overlapping with territories of contemporary Argentina.

[11] For more info on the history of the potato and its twin, the sweet potato, see Lovera pages 43-44.

conflicts and drastically transforming Patagonian lands. The Argentine plains, part of the Pampas zone, bordering Brazil and Uruguay, were not peopled during Pre-Hispanic times. And so, since this region was not home to any tribe or civilization, it did not have food characteristics yet (Ibid.: xii).

In general, Latin-American cuisine is maize-based. The 'golden' corn is used to make nutrients as *arepas* or *tortillas* and is considered 'the wheat of Latin America'.[12] Between 1400 and 900 B.C corn was first cultivated at the northern mountain range of Argentina and it was also around this time that the other famous South-American staple-food arrived in Argentinian territories: the potato (Ibid.: xv). The potato originates from modern-day Peru and Bolivia from where it spread over the South-American continent, and continued to feed eaters all over the world ever since. The South-American soil is rich and fruitful and has been the breeding ground for foods such as fruits, avocados, coffee and chocolate, today all hugely popular products. Additionally, the majority of indigenous societies depended mostly on gathering and harvesting staple-foods such as corn and potatoes and less on animal domestication (Ibid.: 25). In order to obtain animal protein, the indigenous populations consumed almost all animals they could find: from insects to reptiles, and from dogs, to weasels (Earle, 2012: 118). Also, worms, ticks, spiders, bees, toads and rodents (namely guinea pigs), were all eaten by natives (Ibid.). Traditionally, meat of camelid animals such as llamas, guanacos, alpacas and vicuñas was eaten in Andean and southern regions of South America, and in Amazonia serpent, crocodile and caiman flesh too were considered edible (Lovera: 25-28). Up to the arrival of European colonists, the Amerindian diet contained many different foodstuffs.[13] Maize and tubers (manioc, cassava and (sweet) potatoes) were the starting point for a South-American dietary tradition, supplemented by crops, fruits, nuts and animal foods available through hunting, gathering and basic agriculture. Besides the domestication of smaller animals such as dogs, guinea pigs, ducks and turkeys, the continent's civilizations were unfamiliar with stock farming (Ibid.).

2.3.3 Food, Meat and the Colonial Body

This all changed with Christopher Columbus' legendary "discovery of the New World" in 1492. When the famous conquistador returned in 1493, he did however another remarkable discovery: none of the original thirty-eight man he had left on the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola to guard the newly founded Spanish colony was still alive (Earle: 1). For Columbus there was only one explanation: European bodies simply were not made for the New World's climate, environment and above all food. The conquistadores accordingly believed that bringing European foods would not only nourish the European stomachs but would also bring civilization to the heathen Indians (Ibid.: 149). As for meat, none of the New World's

[12] *Arepas* and *tortillas* are popular Latin-American maize-based foods are mostly eaten in Colombia and Venezuela while tortillas are a speciality of Mexican cuisine.

[13] The term 'Amerindian', it short for the indigenous peoples of the Americas. It thus refers to pre-Colombian peoples and their descendants. In colonial order, the term was used as a social category of physical appearance, to differentiate the Europeans from the indigenous population of the New World. Later, the term got 'racialized' when Europeans began to view the world in terms of race, and believed that certain physical and cultural characteristics were fixed in the body. See the introduction and chapter 6 of Earle (2012).

animal-meats they encountered met their tastes and all 'proper' and edible animals except turkeys were absent. The local alternatives were not good to eat and especially the native Amerindian consumption of insects revealed their underlying bestiality (Ibid.:119.). Most alarming however was their food practice of eating human flesh. Despite the fact that human flesh historically had been eaten all over the world, cannibalism quickly became associated with the New World:

> The expectation of meeting cannibals was such that when a party of Spaniards captured in Patagonia were prodded, by their captors, they immediately assumed that the Indians intended to eat them, and were gathering information about how their flesh would taste (Earle, 2012: 122).

In European eyes, cannibalism proved Amerindian barbarism and backwardness and legitimated European imposition of (food) culture and the colonial project as a whole. Nevertheless, some native American foods were a pleasant surprise. Products such as, potatoes, tomatoes and chili peppers spread across the Spanish Empire and found eaters across the Atlantic. Some were so popular that they were even cultivated in Spain and achieved a place in the Iberian diet itself (Ibid.: 137-139). Still, New-World foods were ought to be eaten only occasionally and merely supplementing prescribed Spanish ingredients.

Another way to Europeanize American foodways, was by importing European livestock. From 1492 onwards, pigs, sheep, goats and cattle were brought to the Americas in order to stimulate the cultivation of wheat and food security for future colonists (Ibid.: 73). As a result, old-world animals entered and thrived in the South-American environment. In only a few decades, the European livestock multiplied, especially at the great open plains of the Pampas, which proved to be the perfect ambiance. Unfortunately, the introduction of European livestock had striking consequences for the South-American biodiversity, wildlife and societies inhabiting these lands. Together with European diseases, the consumption of European foods, meat in particular, caused a massive decline of the Amerindian population (Ibid.:173-174).

With the arrival of Spanish conquistadores also new ideas about food, the body and identity entered the American continent. According to the Spanish, food did not only determine one's identity in terms of physical appearance and corporality, it also influenced character (Ibid.: 2-3). *Humoralism* provided the framework for this early modern Spanish ideology and understood the human body as fluid and constantly responding to external conditions.[14] Food was of crucial influence and could shape and improve a person's body and thus identity. Therefore, social differentiations between 'Indians' and 'Spaniard' were also fluid and depending on the adoption of European or Spanish cultural practices such as clothing and food habits (Ibid.: 6,7). If Indians adopted the wholesome Spanish diet, they could acquire European complexion and consequently become more 'European'. This dynamic conception of identity raised however more and more questions. Because if Indians could become European, how could colonization then possibly be justified? As the mixing of

[14] For more information on the concept of *Humoralism*, see Earle (2012) chapter 'Humoralism and the colonial body', pp. 19-53.

food culture continued, European concerns about the integrity and degeneration of the body grew, and the colonial order became harder to justify (Earle: 213-216). Eventually, through culinary exchanges, sharp colonial divisions between the local, native American foods and the European, global and imperial faded and social and racial connotations along with it changed over time. However, the hierarchy of ingredients, food habits and practices settled in the colonial period, left a heavy mark on thinking of food in the Americas and even persisted long after political independence from European conquerors.

2.4 The Changing Flavours of Argentina

Tensions between the global and the local culture has been a recurring theme in Argentine history. In colonial Argentina food of European origin received greater prestige than the local foodstuffs and colonization also introduced European ideas about food and identity which for centuries served as justification for social hierarchies. In independent Argentina of the 19th and 20th century too, the question of who Argentines were and what and how they should eat received considerable attention (Pite, 2016: 100). Along with massive immigration and growing trade, Argentine cuisine and especially gastronomy in Buenos Aires, once again was exposed to foreign condiments. But how did this affect national cuisine in Argentina and ideas of *argentinidad?*

2.4.1 The Perfect Cosmopolitan Cook

Cosmopolitan and European-influenced eating defined Latin-American, but especially Argentine, food fashion from the late 19th century. In Argentina, French cuisine symbolized civilization and was increasingly popular. At first cosmopolitan eating practices were taken up in cities but later also reached the Argentine countryside. Local elites dinned with French fares at elegant, well-set tables and the superiority of French cuisine and culinary sophistication served as model for elitist national cuisine (Ibid.: 99). As creole elites replaced previous favourable Iberian-styled dishes for French banquets, they demonstrated their wealth and elegance at exclusive restaurants in order to distinguish themselves from the unsophisticated mass (Pilcher, 2006: 66). The idealization of French and European culture was also interlinked with racialist thinking and nutritional discourse whereby local foods were perceived to be the cause of disappointing national development (Ibid.: 67). With more and more immigrants arriving in Argentina, new ideas and expressions about what Argentines should eat entered the national stage and specifically cookbooks developed into a popular and far-reaching medium for culinary literature.

Despite most chefs in renowned restaurants were male, most of Argentina's culinary writers and readers were women. Therefore, cooking books, not only in Argentina but globally, are important in woman's history and histories of the growing middle-class in 19th and 20th century (Appadurai, 1988). The earliest Argentine cooking books offered a wide range of cosmopolitan recipes, like Juana Manuela Gorriti's *Cocina ecléctica* (1890) and *La*

perfecta cocinera argentina (1890) by Susana Torres de Castex.[15] But even though these first cooks made some references to local dishes, Argentina's first cooking books were rather cosmopolitan or provincial focussed than constructing a national or *criollo* cuisine. Nevertheless, Torres de Castex suggested that the "perfect Argentine cook" should be able to cook at least some dishes "*a la criolla*" but the few dished that carried the name '*criollo*' were actually from Peru and not from Argentine regions (Pite: 103). The term '*criollo'* in Argentine culinary vocabulary remained vague and her beef-recipes were associated with local cuisine instead of *criollo* cuisine (Ibid.). Interestingly, at this point in history, Argentines thus had accepted cattle, and accordingly beef, as local to Argentina rather than foreign. Though, this was only the start of the national weightiness of Argentine beef.

2.4.2 La *Cocina Criolla*

In course of the 20th century, the term '*criollo'* in Argentina obtained different meaning of someone or something that was local, regardless of its descendance and not necessarily native. The first cook book that explicitly referred to *cocina criolla* was published in 1914 by Mercedes Cullen de Aldao.[16] The timing of accentuating *criollo* elements, however, is not a complete coincidence. As the First World War raged over Europe, the continent's prominent image of civilization and progress lost credibility and Latin-American intellectuals searched for new inspirations which they found in the indigenous and "national" past. Along with the process of *criollismo*, there was a shift in Argentine appreciation of provincial cooking and the foodways of the mixed-race culture mostly associated with the gauchos. But what is interesting in Argentina, is that this was not completely true in the case of food practices. Although local food was valorised for being *criollo*, cosmopolitan cuisines and global foods remained most persistent in Argentine culinary identity. Unlike other Latin-American cuisines, it took Argentina until the 1960's, 1970's to fully embrace *cocina criolla* as authentic representation of Argentine identity (Pite: 115-118).

2.4.3 Nationalist Cuisine

This does not mean that Argentina did not pay any attention to *cocina criolla* in the meantime. In the afterwar period, currents of *mesticismo, hispanismo, indigenismo* and *criollismo* all provided inspiration for nationalist claims in Latin America of which *criollismo* mostly appealed to Argentine discursive objectives. Moreover, the popularization of French food had started to inspire nationalist chefs to turn to local cookery and evoked renewed thinking

[15] *Cocina ecléctica* [Eclectic Cuisine] was published by the accomplished Argentine writer Juana Manuela Gorriti in 1890 in Buenos Aires. *La perfecta cocinera argentina* [The Perfect Argentine Cook] was published by the less-famous elite women Susana Torres de Castex under the pseudonym Teófila Benavento. The Spanish word *cocina* literally means 'kitchen', 'stove'. But like the French 'cuisine', it is in general also applied to describe a 'way of cooking'.

[16] Mercedes Cullen de Aldao published *La cocina criolla* in 1914 under the pseudonym Marta. This to, like Susana Torres de Castex, hide her upper-class status and in order to establish an image of her book to be every-day cooking book by an ordinary cook.

of what was 'good to eat'. All over Latin America, this meant a rediscovery of the local and native cuisines:

> French cuisine also began to fade from public banquets in Buenos Aires, Lima, and Santiago, increasingly replaced by Creole specialties, the abundant roast meats of Argentine *churrasco*, the fresh seafood of Peruvian *ceviche*, and the chicken, corn, and olives of Chilean *pastel de choclo* (Pilcher, 2006: 67).

And so, at the start of the 20th century, culinary practices became useful to political discourses and the concept of a 'national cuisine' became a significant tool in creating national-belonging. In Argentina, it was Afro-Argentine chef Antonio Gonzaga who in the 1920's took the lead in constructing a canonical national Argentine cuisine. After his carrier as military cook, Gonzaga had worked for several restaurants in Buenos Aires and from 1910 onwards, his plates were highly wanted at *porteño* upper-class parties. In 1928, 'el negro Gonzaga' published *La cocina argentina y francesa* [Argentine and French Cooking] which was up to that date Argentina's most self-consciousness nationalist cookbook (Pite: 105-107). Various recipes were explicitly marked 'local', 'Argentine' or were associated with specific Argentine cities like his *Salsa porteña al jamón* (Ibid.). Herein, Gonzaga differed from predecessors who had predominantly focussed on European cities or regions (Ibid.). Indeed, Gonzaga seemed more interested in praising the culinary traditions of his own country and in his second book, *El cocinero práctico argentino* (1931), Gonzaga explicitly referred to gauchos and asado as he presented the "proper" way to make *Argentine* [emphasis added] asado (Pite: 108).[17] Despite the popularity of Gonzaga and his national drift, most elites carried on eating primarily cosmopolitan foods and most non-elites continued to cook meals based on local and regional customs (Ibid.). Yet, the 1930's introduced Argentina to mass media and presented *the* star in Argentine culinary history: Doña Petrona.

2.4.4 Serving out European Argentina

Doña Petrona C. de Gandulfo (1896-1992) was born in the north-western province of Santiago del Estero and was of indigenous, Italian and Spanish descent (Pite, 2013: 5). After she moved to Buenos Aires, she worked as demonstrator of gas stoves for small crowds (Ibid.). In 1928 Petrona was sent to study at the French culinary academy 'Le Cordon Blue' where she became acquainted with cooking European-styled fares. Her carrier as culinary expert really took off once she got her own magazine column, national radio program and a first cook book: *El libro de Doña Petrona* (1934) (Ibid.). Petrona became the first to cook live on Argentine television in 1951 making her Argentina's culinary face of the 20th century. Petrona enjoyed tremendous popularity, established her name as a multimedia empire and her book became a top-three best-selling book, only the Bible and *Martín Fierro* were better sold in Argentina (Ibid.: 4). In the first part of her carrier Doña Petrona stuck to

[17] The full title of the book is: *El cocinero práctico argentino: Nuevo tratado de economía doméstica, pastelería, repostería y helados*. [The Practical Argentine Cook: A New Treatise on Home Economics, Pastries, Confectioneries and Ice Creams].

cosmopolitan cooking and by offering European-styled dishes and techniques, she emphasized the Europeanness of Argentine cuisine: "Doña Petrona's cookbook recipes thus implicitly constructed Argentina as racially more white than "brown" by recognizing the Europeanness of its cuisine and downplaying (in part by not naming) the importance of indigenous and African contributions" (Pite, 2016: 111).[18] Again surprisingly, despite the turn to nationalism and *criollismo* in Argentina in the first decades of the 20th century, Doña Petrona nor her contemporaries promoted local, regional or *criollo* dishes as happened in other Latin-American countries (Ibid.: 112). Even though Argentina in this period was politically instable due to new populist tendencies, there do not seem to have been notable culinary reactions to these changes in society (Pilcher, 2012: 11).

2.4.5 Political Cuisine

The following years meant the rise of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955 and 1973-1974) and along with Peronism, ideas of proper Argentine foods and cuisine were nationalized. The government promoted beef as provision for the working-class masses thereby focussing on masculine participants in Argentine society (Ibid.: 12). From the 19th century, stationary ranch ventures (*estancias*) had begun to arise in the Pampas (Salvatore and Newland, 2003: 26-33). Cattle that had wandered freely around the plains, became cultivated property of rich private landowners whose farms spread over great territories. By the 1850's Argentine beef industry had gained international importance and approximately half of Argentina's beef production was sold overseas (Winsberg, 1970: 187). Beef that before had only been a welcome bonus of the leather industry now became good sell, especially in Europe and Great Britain. Yet the beef industry was not in complete Argentine control but was rather influenced by foreign and particularly European and British input. During the first half of the 20th century, over 90 percent of the Argentine beef was controlled by Great Britain, where it provided protein for the urban working class (Ibid.: 189). All the more, via the import of European breeds and subsequently herd refinement, Argentine cattle was customized for European and British tastes from 1865 onwards (Ibid.: 187-188). As from the 1930's onwards, when British and European living conditions improved which invoked an appetite for leaner beef, Argentine beef got out of fashion (Ibid.). The Argentine cattle industry beef was not capable to adapt to the global change of taste and was left with low-priced, fatty beef. Though, Peronist food politics reacted calculatingly and saw the social and cultural connotations of beef and asado as major contribution to their nationalist claims. And from the beginning of Peronist administration, the promotion of national beef consumption was significant in official policy and propaganda (Milanesio, 2010: 75-85). Unfortunately for the populist policies, harvest failure harmed the livestock industry and troubled beef consumption for the common Argentine. Due to this, populists had to come up with other foodstuffs and ideas about what and how people in Argentina should eat (Pite, 2016: 113). *Criollo* alternatives, and 'healthier' foods such as fish and vegetables were promoted but they

[18] For more general information about Petrona's life, carrier and legacy in Argentina, *Creating a Common Table in Twentieth Century Argentina: Doña Petrona, Women & Food* (2013) by Rebekah E. Pite is recommended.

could not compete with the increasingly popular cosmopolitan cuisine of Doña Petrona. The cooking star herself sought to make her recipes more and more accessible and affordable for the working and middle-class woman who in the 1940's and 1950's progressively entered the work field (Ibid.: 113). In course of time, some *criollo* elements and provincial foods such as *locro* (beef stew) and not too spicy *empanadas* (turnovers) were tolerated and slowly found their place on the plates of the urban middle-class for being an exceptional alternative to the customary European diet (Ibid.: 115).

2.4.6 'Authentic' Argentine Cuisine

In the 1960's and 1970's Argentine cuisine, rediscovered the varieties and specialities of provincial and *criolla* kitchen. Inspiration was found in Latin-American cuisines with indigenous and Spanish roots instead of French or Italian recipes. As opposed to the Europeanized urban dishes, provincial customs were now sites of Argentine authenticity and even Doña Petrona admitted her preference of Latin-American cuisine over the European (Pite, 2016: 115). This Argentine tendency fitted into the larger sense of regional pride along the Latin-American urban youth celebrating and consuming 'folkloric' goods and local fares (Pite: 115-118). As Doña Petrona came to embody the growing acceptance of culinary *criollo* identity, so did Argentina: "As the provincial and *criollo* came to play a larger role in defining Argentine national identity, Doña Petrona pointed to her own provincial and mixed-race past more directly than before" (Ibid.: 119). The Argentine media came to celebrate provincial culinary heritage as an authentic alternative for the monotone Italian dishes with had long been predominant in Buenos Aires. Also, the military government dictating Argentina from 1976 till 1983, saw political potential in *criollismo* and used the symbolic value of *cocina criolla* to its interests by promoting *criollo* dishes as *empanadas* and *locro*, together with its own authority to be authentically Argentine. In 1976, the government presented the first annual National Conference of Criollo Cuisine where Doña Petrona was panel member of the *empanada* competition (Pite: 119). Along with commercial interest, the conference and *cocina criolla*, served the food politics of the militaries eager to establish a firm and authentically Argentine national community. In the late 1970's and through the 1980's, beef obtained a central place on the national table which it up to today still enjoys. This beef-centric version of *cocina criolla* has become leading in the national culinary imaginary, and is specifically trending in urban centres and during national holidays (Pite: 121). That is, many present-day Argentines still believe that a meal is not a meal without beef (Lovera: 37). Also, in Argentina, the Spanish word for meat 'carne' is exclusively used when referring to beef.

2.5 Conclusion

Argentine folklore with food-folklore in particular payed much more attention to the North-western or Pampas culture that other rural regions with similar indigenous, mestizo and *criollo* influences such as the Northeast and Patagonia (Pite: 120). Especially *criollo* foods from the gauchos of North-western Argentina, received the label of 'quintessentially' or

'authentically' Argentine (Ibid.). Through politics, literature, cooking books, magazines and blogs, urban families have become familiar with the 'authentic' asado tradition which is presented as a pre-colonial and native cultural practice. Ever since, *criollo* dishes and asado above all, have been accepted as 'quintessentially Argentine'. But exactly this labelling raises questions. To which extent is the asado tradition actually native or exclusively Argentine? And how did this beef-roasting tradition obtain its symbolic meaning, is it perhaps a matter of invention? The next chapter takes a closer took to Argentina's most famous dish, thereby displaying the changing representations of the asado tradition in Argentine society. In asado terms, the table is set, the fire is started, and the Argentine barbecue tradition itself is ready to be grilled on the *parrilla*.

CHAPTER THREE
Asado on the Grill

3.1 Following the Asado Recipe

Like baking the "perfect" pizza in Italy and abroad, what makes the perfect asado is a controversial topic. Asado preferences differ across the Argentine regions, generations and classes and every *asador* (the person in charge of the asado) has its own style. Still, there are a few "golden" rules or principles of which every asado-lover takes notice. Numerous of books and articles are written about how to make the "perfect Argentine asado" and all proclaim asado to represent true Argentine identity. Also, online blogs and documentaries, such as *Todo sobre el asado* by Mariano Cohn and Gastón Duprat (2016), have asado internationally put forward as authentic Argentine meal. But to which extent does asado actually reflect Argentine identity? This chapter analyses *how* asado grew into the national culinary symbol it nowadays is.

In order to trace the roots of asado, the technique of genealogy is consulted. Traditionally, genealogy is used to study family relations or descendance. However, the method of genealogy is also helpful to track the origin of certain cultural products like food practices. Food genealogy not only looks at the origin of ingredients but traces the development of a food habit. Therein, it aims to include as much aspects contributing to certain foodstuff and practices possible. Along food genealogy, this chapter examines material, cultural and social components of the asado tradition, from its main ingredients beef till the social customs involved in the food practice.

For this purpose, this chapter traces the shifting representations of asado in Argentine society in the period between 1870's and 1970's and discovers to which extent the asado tradition has been part of a process of construction of even invention when placed in relation with Argentine identity. The following paragraphs correspond with different Argentine asado "rules", steps or preferences that are alternately tested to the theories of *cultural materialism*, *invention of traditions* and *imagined communities*. For doing so, many blogs have been studied and six general steps in the asado-recipe have been indicated. While attending to a guideline or asado principle, each paragraph analyses both materials as cultural explanations through primary sources such as literature and cookbooks.

Written sources such as literature and cooking books therefore are the focus of this research. Literature historically has been the main medium for the spread of cultural observations and information. Moreover, literature is considered and important actor in constructing imagined identities. For literary references and representations of asado, this chapter appeals to early modern writings from travellers such as the Spaniard Concolorcorvo. Hereafter, the way Argentine prose such as *El matadero* and *El gaucho Martín Fierro* introduced and valued beef-eating and gaucho asado is examined. Next to literature, cookbooks are correspondingly relevant when studying constructions of national

cuisine, especially in the period from the late 19th century. With the model of Appadurai (1988) about the labelling and categorization of recipes, in mind, this chapter additionally exposes the presentation of asado in a few of Argentina's cookbooks. To do so, Gorriti's *Cocina ecléctica* (1890), the recipes of chef Gonzaga (1928, 1931) and blockbuster *El libro de doña Petrona* (1934) are consulted. Along these steps, this chapters explores the roots of this social and culinary practice and provides an understanding of asado within Argentine identity. So, sit back, have a glass of Malbec wine and get ready to enjoy the Argentine asado meal: ¡*Buen provecho*!

3.2 Purest Argentine Cooking

Step 1 Start a Fire

Prepare a slow-burning fire in an outdoor space by using only wood and some charcoal. Once hot, spread the coals evenly from left to right and lower the grill over the smouldering embers to cook the meat cuts

3.2.1 Roots of the Outdoor Grill

Argentine asado blogs, articles and books all agree on one thing: asado is an artform and gauchos are the authentic asado artists. Asado is considered prototype-Argentine and grilling skills have metaphorically become part of national DNA. Specific elements make asado quintessential Argentine, with in the first place the setting. The roast traditionally takes place outdoors, as gauchos originally prepared their freshly obtained meat directly above an open fire. Despite the gaucho heydays have long gone, asados today continue to take place outdoors. Albeit different then on open grasslands, contemporary asados are arranged everywhere: in the backyard, terrace or park. In urban settings, balconies and restaurants have become popular locations and some buildings even have built-in barbecue areas for rent to host asado. In this manner, the outdoor-prototype asado still is essential to modern-day asados which actively maintain this image. Secondly, to have an Argentine roast in the most authentic and purest form, means to have time, patience and to use the right type of material. Argentine asado traditionally is cooked on quebracho wood (*Anacardiaceae* or *Apocynaceae* depending on the type) (González: 2015). When not available, wood of the carob (*algarrobo, Ceratonia siliqua*) or lapacho tree is used (*Tabebuia impetiginosa*). Nowadays and especially in urban areas, charcoal is alternatively used but electric or gas-fuelled barbecues or briquettes are strictly not done, since true *asadores* cooked on natural fire. Regarding the grill, traditional guidelines are less strict. Different types of grills can be used but the "asado-inventors" grilled large cuts of meat for hours on a wooden spit, standing vertically along the fire. Gauchos simply cut the meat from the spit with sharp knives and ate it by bringing the knifes directly to their mouths (Lovera, 2005: 108). This mode of grilling and consuming is still the way to have asado, yet, modern times replaced wooden spits by metal roasts and the meat is normally presented on trays or plates and eaten by using cutlery.

3.2.2 Roots of Gaucho cuisine

But is this gaucho cuisine then unique to Argentina? First to consider when referring to gaucho traditions is that they are not exclusively part of Argentine history. Gauchos inhabited parts of Argentina as well as parts of Paraguay, Uruguay and southern Brazil. You can even argue that gauchos are more part of Uruguay's national culture since they inhabited the whole of Uruguay while they only lived in the parts of Argentina (Tobin, 2005: 212). But in fact, gaucho culture including food does not correspond with a single nation state. Actually, one could even argue that asado among other gauchos' traditions rather represents the *Rioplatense* culture instead of locating it on the national level.[19] Nonetheless, asado became an effective national culinary symbol where the Argentine side of Río de la Plata and its adjacent grasslands dominated Argentina's other local cultures. Hence, it is the quintessential meal of Argentina as a nation including all other regions like the tropical, mountainous and arid that have no history with gauchos, cattle nor asado (Ibid.: 212).

3.2.3 Roots of 'Argentine' Barbecue

But then the technique of roasting on spits must be original to the gauchos of Río de la Plata? Unfortunately, gauchos were not the inventors of grilling meat on an open fire either. Humans have been grilling whatever foods they were able to catch and gather for centuries and archaeologists estimate its origin somewhere between 800.000 and 1,2 million years ago (Miller: 2014, 8). Globally, grilling had been the way to cook meat and for ages and roasting meat by suspending it above a fire while cooking, using metal skewers, ropes or wooden or metal racks has been historically common worldwide (Ibid.). Besides, the origin of "barbecue" is associated with indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean, the *Taino*, whose custom of cooking a wooden rack (*barbacoa*) became diffused throughout Latin America after the Columbian exchange (Ibid.). So technically, the *Taino* are the original *asadores* on Latin-American grounds.

What's more, from a practical perspective, it is clear that gauchos used this preparation method simply because it was convenient to them and not because of ulterior symbolic motives. Quebracho wood was suitable because its density and aroma produced little smoke, making it perfect for a slow-burning-fire (González: 2015). Once gauchos had been able to obtain sufficient meat and wood to cook, the quickest and easiest way to prepare it was by making fire and roasting the meat in whole parts, sometimes even with the skin still on it. This is how '*asado con cuero'* came into being.[20] Chronicler John Miers also was familiarized with the gaucho's pragmatism during his visit to Argentina in 1818:

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[19] *Rioplatense* literally means of Río de la Plata, and refers to the culture of this region where Argentine territory meets the Uruguayan, along the estuary of the Paraná river and the Atlantic Ocean. Gauchos inhabited this region among others.

[20] '*Asado con cuero'* translated into English means 'roast with skin'. Every year, the town Viale in the province of Entre Ríos hosts the folkloric '*Fiesta Nacional del Asado con Cuero*' celebrating this food practice. Viale is

> Es uno de los procedimientos favoritos de cocinar y se llama asado; de cualquier modo es muy bueno porque la rapidez de la operación evita la pérdida del jugo que queda dentro de la carne. No retiran el espetón del fuego, y a medida que se va asando cada uno corta tajadas o bocados bastante grandes, directamente del trozo. Se ponen en cuclillas alrededor del fuego, cada uno desenvaina el cuchillo que invariablemente lleva encima día y noche, y se sirve a su gusto sin añadirle pan, sal o pimienta. Hicimos una excelente comida con el asado (Miers, 1819-1824).[21]

So, asado is not unique to Argentina since it is shared with other Latin-American cuisines. Gauchos neither invented the roasting style but rather based their customs and preferences on antecedent cuisines and techniques. Therefore, "traditional Argentine asado" came into being because it practically suited the gaucho's preferences instead of being native or rooted into Argentine culture. That asado became Argentina's quintessential cooking practice is among other things the result of beef-supremacy in dominant *Rioplantense* cuisine as well as a construct of global historical and cultural mixings.

3.3 Beef: Best to Eat

Step 2 It is all about the Beef

Choose a variation of different cuts such as flank (vacío) or short ribs (asado de tira). Count about 500 grams of beef per person, this sounds extreme but to be short on beef is unacceptable in Argentina

In Argentina, a meal is not a meal without meat. However, Argentine cuisine and asado in particular, is not just meat-centric but actually beef-centric. Even though vegetables and other meats can be grilled at asado, beef is the main ingredient. But what explains this beef-supremacy and is beef originally Argentine? As a matter of fact, livestock is not native to Argentine soil but was only added to the Argentine assortment after the Colombian exchange. The Spanish abominated the native Argentine animals and as part of the colonial project, the Argentine diet had to be Europeanized in order to change the population and therewith identity, to European standards. Therefore, the majority of meat-based recipes have Spanish roots or are Pre-Colombian recipes that have evolved by European influences (Lovera: 107). Thus, there was no beef-eating tradition in Argentina before the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1536 as the country was unfamiliar with cattle. On these grounds,

considered national capital of *asado con cuero* and its festival is Argentina's biggest. Similar festivals are held throughout the year and country and also in Uruguay.

[21] Own translation: *One of the favourite cooking procedures is called asado: in any way it is good because the speed of the preparation avoids losing juice of the meat. They don't take the spit from the fire and have the custom to grill every cut slice or somewhat big part directly. They come to sit along the fire, every one of them holding a knife which they keep with them permanently, day and night, and they serve themselves without adding bread, salt or pepper. Here we have the excellent asado meal.* (Miers, *El Viaja de la Plata 1819-1824* in La Nación, 'Asado argentino: una historia', October 4, 2016).

Argentine asado at its earliest originates from the late 16th century and its conception was only possible because of Spanish contributions. But if beef is not native Argentine, why did it then become Argentina's star on the grill?

3.3.1 Cattle Conquest

Multiple material factors explain beef-supremacy in Argentina. At first, colonial cattle took over the plains to such extent that it became omnipresent. In colonial times, many cows had escaped from the estates which were difficult to enclose (Lovera: 29). As a consequence, maroon cattle lived freely on the Pampas where it reproduced to milliards. Moreover, the cow integrated effortlessly into the Argentine environment, whose semiarid climate and lack of competitive animals or predators, proved perfect. Indeed, cattle did not just thrive on Argentine plains, it ruled the countryside and completely took over indigenous biodiversity (Ibid.). In other American regions, especially those with dense forests, pigs were animal food number one (Harris: 113). However, in Argentina, the cow became the king of the plains. Smaller animals like goats and sheep which do best on smaller pasture, were no competition either on the extensive Pampas. Additionally, its thoroughness and strength made the cow capable to contribute in agriculture, especially wheat cultivation, better than pigs or native animals could. Horses, also brought by Spaniards were neither of any competition. Even though horsemeat is sweeter and leaner that beef, horses burn calories faster than cattle and thus require more food. Also, the milk is not as good to drink as cowmilk (Harris: 91-93). Plus, the eating of horsemeat traditionally has been a taboo in cultures where horses were important in warfare (Ibid.). In colonial America, horse ownership had conducted ethnic and class hierarchies and therefore were considered not to eat (Lovera: 29). During and after the Argentine Independence movements (1810-1818), horses continued to have social and political functions and remained an important resource for human mobility on the deserted Argentina lands. Especially for gauchos, horses were their transport and most loyal companions, so it was unthinkable to eat them. At last, beef turned out best to eat on the Argentine plains.

3.3.2 Abundance and Scarcity

Subsequently, the abundance of cattle made beef ending up the table of the common Argentine. During colonial and republican times, beef was never an expensive product and in the long run, having a meat-based diet became an Argentine food habit which prevails even today (Lovera: 36). So, despite its Spanish roots, cattle and beef quickly conquered Argentine lands and stomachs. Above all, in course of time, beef also nourished the collective minds and even was assumed to be truly Argentine. How could this 'beef takeover' in the collective Argentine imagination be understood? First of all, cattle and beef were increasingly resourceful to Argentine society. Already in colonial ages cattle had been important to Argentina's export. Apart from beef, it also produced favourable by-products, such as milk and leather which other livestock, like indigenous animals or pigs, lacked. From the 16th century, cows were domesticated merely as a resource for leather '*cuero*' (Arcondo, 2002:

63-68). This Argentine richness and even excess of cows, leather and beef firstly appeared in writings of Spanish traveller Concolorcorvo, who expressed his astonishment:

> La carne está en tanta abundancia que se lleva en cuartos a carretadas a la plaza, y si por accidente se resbala, como he visto yo, un cuarto entero, no se baja el carretero a recogerle, aunque se le advierta, y aunque por casualidad pase un mendigo, no le lleva a su casa porque no le cueste el trabajo de cargarlo. A la oración se da muchas veces carne de balde, como en los mataderos, porque todos los días se matan muchas reses, más de las que necesita el pueblo, sólo por el interés del cuero (Concolorcorvo, 1773: 48).[22]

In Concolorcorvo's observations, beef is omnipresent at the Argentine scene and had become part of the landscape and everyday life to such a degree that Argentines turned indifferent to it. Since only leather was a profitable export product at the time, Argentines took the abundantly available beef for granted. This way, beef had unconsciously become part of Argentine mentality and had conquered a place into the imagined body of Argentines just as cattle had conquered its place on the field.

Concolorcorvo was actually not the only one who saw beef intertwined with Argentine routine. Writer Esteban Echevarría followed his example and not surprisingly, cattle play the leading role in Argentina's first work of romantic prose, *El matadero*.[23] The text expressed Echevarría's worries about Argentine identity, which he believed was troubled by the brutal and despotic reign of president Rosas (1835-1852). *El matadero*, presents beef in relation to Argentine collective consciousness to an Argentine audience and the concepts of beef and even asado entail various symbolic meanings.[24] Primarily, the violent

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[22] Own translation: *The meat is so abundant that they bring it in carloads to the square, and if by accident some slips through, as I have seen happening for a whole part, they don't stop the waggon, even if they notice it. Even the occasional beggar passing by does not take the part with him because he does not bother dragging it with him. For prayer, they often offer buckets of meat like in slaughterhouses, because every day they kill so much cattle, more that the people need, only for the interest of the leather*.
The chronicle '*Lazarillo de ciegos y caminantes desde Buenos Aires hasta Lima*' was written under the pseudonym Concolorcorvo by the Spanish writer and traveller Alonso Carrió de la Vandera. It was first published in 1773 in Gijón and circulated through Latin America after the publication in Lima in 1775. The document is one of the first writing describing the society and meat culture of Argentina and other South-American countries. The consulted edition was published by Solar in Buenos Aires in 1942 and is available through *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel Cervantes.*

[23] *El matadero* (*The Slaughter Yard*) was written in between 1838 and 1840 during Echeverría's exile from Rosas' Federalist regime (1835-1852) but remained unpublished until 1871. The Spanish version consulted was published by the Argentine Biblioteca Virtual Universal in 2003. For the English quotes, the first English version by Angel Flores (1942) is used. The text one of the most studied text in Latin-American literature and is therefore of great significance in understanding the economic, political and social situation of Argentina under Rosas. This period was characterized by the internal war between the dictatorial, Federalist who wanted independent Argentina to be a federation of independent provinces and opponents the *Unitarios*, who fought for a centralized unitary State.

[24] Echevarría starts his story with: *Although the following narrative is historical, I shall not begin it with Noah's ark and the genealogy of his forbears as was wont once to be done by the ancient Spanish historians of America who should be our models* (Echevarría in Flores, 1942: 389). *El matadero* hereby refers to Spanish-American commonalities, and addresses to a sense of simultaneity and parallelism of Spanish-American consciousness and thereby appeals to a greater public of Spanish-Americans instead of merely Argentines. On the other hand, the space of the story is limited to the city of Buenos Aires. Therefore, it perhaps rather creates an imagined community of *porteños* or *rioplatenses*. Nonetheless, considering its widespread significance and political message for the whole of

and destructive character of Argentine society was caused by a collective "beef hunger". In the story, the city of Buenos Aires is isolated and consequently, has run out of beef. The absence of beef is the worst-case-scenario for the community of Buenos Aires whose bodies have become depended on eating sufficient amounts of beef:

> Algunos médicos opinaron que si la carencia de careo continuaba, medio pueblo caería en síncope por estar los estómagos acostumbrados a su corroborante jugo; [...] Se originó de aquí una especie de guerra intestina entre los estómagos y las conciencias, atizada por el inexorable apetito[...] (Echevarría: 567).[25]

The collective longing for beef, is a metaphor for Argentina's beef-centric identity as it brings out worst in the Argentine people, who are driven by 'bestial' and 'carnal' instincts. Their indifference or even pleasure regarding violence too, demonstrates Echevarría's conception of Argentine carnivorous nature. Beef-centrism symbolizes barbaric components of Argentine identity and is clearly disapproved and rejected by Echevarría. Secondly, beef and asado symbolize power. In times of scarcity, only the elite has access to beef asado, here explicitly connected to Rosas "as asado-lover": "El primer novillo que se mató fue todo entero de regalo al Restaurador, hombre muy amigo del asado" (Echevarría: 5).[26] By associating asado with the despotic and cruel ruler, beef is associated with power, a power with negative effects on the collective community. Therefore, beef and asado are illustrated as negative components to the Argentine identity. Finally, beef is related to gender and masculinity. For a start, the bull, his fertility and resistance, refer to masculine bravery.[27] Most relevantly, beef symbolizes male dominance. It is after all men and not women who capture, slaughter, control and divide beef. Focalizing on gender identities, the male hunt and appropriation of animal flesh (beef) can be observed as an analogy for the male pursuit for female flesh: sexual relations or even rape. In other words, the slaughtering and consumption of beef symbolically becomes associated with sexual consumption and male action to obtain female flesh sexually.[28]

Argentina, not just the political capital of Buenos Aires, the imagined body of readers was and remains predominantly Argentine. *El matadero* accordingly helped establishing an imagined community of Argentina.

[25] Translation: *Some physicians were of the opinion that if the shortage of meat continued, half the town would fall in fainting fits, since their stomachs were accustomed to the stimulating meat juice; […] Therefore a sort of intestinal war between stomachs and consciences began, stirred by an inexorable appetite […]* (Echevarría in Flores: 392).

[26] Translation: *The first steer butchered was sent as a gift to the Restorer, who was exceedingly fond of roasts* (Echevarría in Flores: 393).

[27] It is accepted that *El matadero*, proclaims a crisis of masculinity. Multiple members of the Generation 1837, such as Juan Bautista Alberdi, considered Argentina's national sterility and incapability to procreate and engender legitimate heirs to protect the national patrimony and possessions, problematic for the national identity. Where Alberdi saw resolution in replacing the nation's men with suitable European males to marry Argentine women, Echevarría expressed his concerns through his prose. For more information on Echevarría and masculinity see, *Male Anxiety and Sacrificial Masculinity: The Case of Echeverria* by David T. Haberly (2005).

[28] In *El matadero*, it is male figure who is threatened with penetration. However, the danger of penetration in general feminizes a character, when ether male or female (Haberly: 303-304). Multiple scholars have attended to the way cultural images of butchering and sexual violence have been intertwined. For general information, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* by Carol J. Adams (1990) is recommended. For details on the gender semantics of beef, see *Manly acts: Buenos Aires, 24 March 1996* by Jeffrey Tobin (1998).

To conclude, *El matadero* did present beef-eating and asado as an authentic component of Argentine identity. Its imagined Argentine community was characterized, even obsessed by an appetite for beef which could also be interpreted sexually. Beef and asado however are valued as negative and disturbing elements of national identity since they embody despotic, male power, collective ignorance and barbarism. Surprisingly, *El matadero* did not link beef nor asado to gaucho culture which is not mentioned once. Thereupon, is it likely to assume that Echevarría did not associate beef-eating or asado exclusively to gauchos but rather considered it part of general Argentine or at least *porteño* culture. By presenting beef in everyday Argentine life, this text contributed to imagine a community of beef-centric Argentines thereby stimulating the construction of the asado tradition as authentically Argentine.

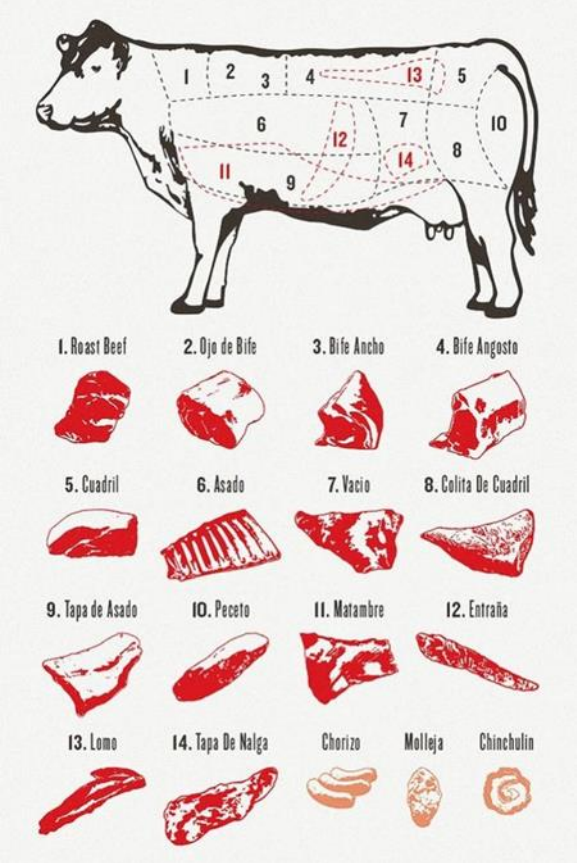
3.3.3 'Argentine' Beef: Good to Sell

Apart from literature establishing an image Argentine beef-centric food culture, commercial objectives of Argentine beef industry too supported the dominance of beef in Argentine ethos. Especially the industrialization and growing resourcefulness of cattle industry encouraged the popularity and celebrity of beef on the national level. When in the late 19th century Argentine beef became more wanted across oversees, beef emerged as exceptionally good to sell. Accordingly, Argentines continuously discovered the commercial value of their four-footed-protein-supplier and with this the cow's esteem flourished. Nevertheless, cattle were still not fully Argentina's authority. Not only was the industry controlled by British and European markets, the cattle itself was even 'Europeanized'. On the one hand this affects arguments of beef being authentically *Argentine* and representing *Argentine* collective. Yet, even though the beef industry was not genuine national, one can argue that the European breeds which modified Argentine cattle shows similarity or parallelism to how European immigration in the same period changed Argentine population. Herein, beef actually does correspond with Argentine identity, as it evolved along the same track as the Argentine population: that of Spanish origin with newly added European flavours.

3.3.4 Beef: Good to Promote

Thus, the extraordinarily good to sell Argentine beef secured economic progress in Argentina. Yet question remains, how did beef become so important to the collective minds of Argentines? Shown here is that the presence of beef in Argentine identification was further stimulated by political objectives. To wit, exactly when the fatty Argentine beef was no longer considered good to eat in Europe and the industry suffered with great surpluses, Argentine political discourse stepped in. During this period the Argentine government began to actively promote national beef consumption and to profile beef as prototype national food. Under the flag of economic self-determination and independence from Britain, the Peronist government (first term, 1946-1955) from 1946 onwards actively stimulated national consumption of beef (Milanesio, 2010: 78-88). To deal with the problematic export,

Peronism prioritized the domestic market over the external and where in 1919 57.3 percent of Argentine beef was exported, in 1949 it was only 23.3 percent (Ibid.: 83). In reality, the timing was perfect. What started as an economic and political intervention, developed into constructive nationalist discourse. Namely, promoting beef as fundament of the national diet, also served to create social cohesion and obtain political legitimation. Because of population growth, immigration and urbanisation, beef had become inaccessible for most of the Argentine working-class and by promising beef, Peronism gained political support (Ibid.: 85-88). Herein, the promise of beef was held to appeal to all Argentines, not just those living in regions home to cattle industry. Correspondingly, Peronist food politics used historical and symbolic rhetoric of beef and associated it with the physical strength and masculinity of the gauchos (Ibid.: 84). Imposing a historical continuity, Peronism publicly idealized the era of the gauchos' asado, when beef scarcity was no issue (Ibid.: 87). Peronism likewise presented beef as a luxury which traditionally should be accessible to all Argentines, hereby linking beef and asado to the foundation of Argentine identity. As Peronist food politics appropriated and institutionalized gaucho beef cuisine for its own commercial and political objectives, it contributed to the invention of the asado tradition. And so, beef asado had not only become good to eat and sell but eventually also proved good to promote.



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3.4 Asado: A Matter of Taste

Step 3 Salt and Patience

Prepare all the cuts to be grilled. Season the meat with a lot of salt, and salt only. Maintain the fire and have patience. The meats should be cooked low, slow and ultimately well done.

Concerning the seasoning, rules of authentic Argentine asado are clear: meat must not be seasoned and only salt is added. How much salt and when it is added, differs per *asador* but in general it is a lot. Unlike other barbecue cuisines, Argentine roasted meat is not accompanied by many sauces. *Chimichurri* (made of parsley, oregano, garlic, onion, pepper, vinegar, and oil) or *salsa criollo* (of red bell pepper, tomato, onion, olive oil) are the two sauces likely to be found on the table but traditionally, meat is eaten without many side

dishes. If entremets are served it are probably *empanadas*, breads or salads, eaten as appetizers. While waiting for the thickest meats to roast, Argentines normally enjoy a good glass of Malbec wine and *choripán* or sometimes vegetables, firstly ready on the grill. Moreover, Argentines like their meats well done. The best way to grill to Argentine taste is low and slow and while there is no accounting about taste, it almost impossible to overcook meat in Argentina.

Also, Argentines eat all parts of the cow, from the flank (*vacío*) and skirt (*entraña*) to intestines (*chinchulines*) and sweetbreads (*mollejas*) which are considered a delicacy for special events and fancy restaurants (Enríquez: 2017). Even the blood and leftovers end up in *morcilla* or *chorizo* sausages, mostly eaten on sandwiches (*choripán)* (Ibid.).[29] But what are the roots of these customs and preferences and are they exclusive to gauchos, the supposedly original Argentine *asadores*? Furthermore, what do they tell about Argentine identity?

3.4.1 Savoury Cravings

First off, when looking at the leading role of salt at Argentine asado, multiple explanations come across. Against odds, salt was not prominent in most South-American indigenous cuisines. In regions where salt was available, it was merely used in small quantities and rather to complement foods that it was an actual ingredient (Lovera: 48). Notwithstanding, salt was ubiquitously used in Iberian dishes (Ibid.: 10). Reasonable then, is that the usage of salt in some Latin-American cultures uncovers amalgamation with Spanish cuisine from colonial times onwards. Yet, in the gaucho's case, the lack of vegetation and agriculture, troubled their access to other spices, herbs or seasonings and salt was simply what they had on hand. Moreover, salt was especially convenient as preservation tool. Because gauchos did not want to waste asado-leftovers and modern preservation techniques as refrigeration were not available, they again looked towards previous techniques and cuisines for inspiration. As it happens, in other indigenous Latin-American cuisines it was common to dry llama meat, '*Ch'arki*' in order to preserve it (Ibid.: 25). In colonial times, this technique, which the Spanish adopted as '*charqui*' had come out useful to dry leftover-beef produced by the leather industry. Ultimately for gauchos, the possibility to salt, contain and transport leftover-meats for provision during long journeys or in between asados, proved exceptionally proficient (Arcondo: 145). Still, the dried and salted cuts had to be desalted and cooked or fried extensively before consumption in order to avoid sickness (Lovera: 64). And as a result, beef in all traditional Argentine preparations, both at asado, when cooked slow and low, as the leftovers, never turned out juicy or reddish (Ibid.). This culinary preference, although not exclusively 'Argentine', took root in such extent that it still explains why Argentines prefer their meats both salty and well done.

[29] For more information on butchery, different parts of the cow, and Argentine asado in general, the documentary *Todo sobre el asado* (2016) by Mariano Cohn and Gastón Duprat is highly recommended.

3.4.2 All Ends Up the Gaucho's Grill

As mentioned, Argentines find a place on the grill for almost every part of the cow. But what lays behind this frugality and somewhat greediness? Is this because of the instinctive Argentine beef-hunger, *El matadero* proclaimed? Most obviously and materialistically, this sparing might have its origin in the gaucho's diet, which was almost exclusively beef-based. Gauchos simply could not leave any part to waist. On top of that, they had the custom of consuming their catch right away instead of letting it aerate or dry first (common in other beef-based cuisines) thereby preventing it from exposure to heath, wind, insects or predators (Arcondo: 141-142). Yet, *El gaucho Martín Fierro*, offers another explanation. Unlike Echevarría, Hernández clearly was inspired by gaucho culture forasmuch as his epic poem was part of the *gauchesco* genre appreciating gaucho contributions to the development of Argentina's national identity.[30] The story is about ultimate gaucho *Martín Fierro* and especially his approach to food, hunting and meat scarcity, offers interesting insights to some asado peculiarities:

En semejante ejercicio
se hace diestro el cazador;
cai el piche engordador,
cai el pájaro que trina;
todo vicho que camina
va á parar al asador
[...]
El que vive de la caza
a cualquier vicho se atreve
que pluma ó cáscara lleve,
pues cuando la hambre se siente
el hombre le clava el diente
a todo lo que se mueve [*sic*].[31]

In fact, '*todo bicho que camina va a parar al asador*' evolved into one of most cited phrases of the poem. It imprints the reader that every good gaucho especially in times of scarcity eats

[30] Considering the poem's popularity, there are numerous versions of the text available in both physical and online libraries. For the purpose of translated citations, this thesis consults the bilingual edition of *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* by C. E Ward (1967) with attached English translations. This version, includes both the first part of the poem, *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879). This paragraph presents the original Spanish verses with the English translation appended in footnotes. This because it is preferable to read quotes first in the original language, with the original meaning and subsequently have a corresponding, native English translation. Because of practical limits, this thesis does not cover the entire plot but rather focusses on the paragraphs in the text explicitly referring to asado or terms linked to this concept such as *cuero* (leather/skin), *carne* (meat), *parrilla* (spit) and *asador* (grill). Moreover, it is not the purpose of this thesis to outline and anatomize the content and significance of Hernández work, but rather to expose Hernández's representation of asado in an approach to understand the way his literature has contributed to development of the asado tradition. For a more extensive analysis of *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*, the work of Jorge Luis Borges (1953) is recommended.

[31] Translation: *A hunter grows skilful sharpening his wits that way: the tasty armadillo -- any bird that pipes a note -- every creature that walks the earth ends up on the spit. […] If your life depends on hunting, you'll go for any beast whether it's got feathers or a shell -- because when hunger stirs a man will get his teeth into any animal that moves.* (Hernández in Ward, Spanish, p. 210, English, p. 211).

every part of every animal with no exception (Silió: 2010). With the growing fame and glory of *Martín Fierro*, this message took root in Argentine mindset in such extent that it developed into the Argentine saying: true Argentines eat all meats and leave nothing to waist. The poem likewise contributed to the nostalgic imagination of gauchos as brave, strong men who survived on the rough Pampas because of their natural capabilities. Accordingly, it contributed to the belief of asado as a masculine affair. After all, this sentence can be interpreted sexually, where "every creature" indirectly refers to "every woman". Every female that passes by a male gaucho descendent, that could be attended, should be attended. Like in *El matadero*, beef performs as symbol for the female body, to be conquered and consumed by male action. In this manner, the asado practice proclaimed in *Martín Fierro* has become a masculine stereotype and symbol for Argentine machismo.

3.5 Asado Hierarchies

Step 4 The Order of the Grill

Place the first meats on the grill and serve them in the order that they are ready. In the meantime, serve side dishes such as salads while waiting for the thickest meats to roast

The patriarchy of beef is also visible in the way asado is served out. At most asados there is a specific order of grilling whereby the juicier meats like *chorizo* or *morcilla* sausages are served at first along with side dishes and grilled *provoleta*, cheese of Italian descent. Other starter options are *chinchulines* or *mollejas* which neither are counted as main course. As main, different cuts of beef are served continuously in the order that they are ready. The cooking time of the meat thus determines the hierarchy whereby specifically thicker, fattier and heavier beefs which take longest and are normally hardest to prepare, receive most appreciation. For example, short ribs (*tira de asado*), can be served as ultimate course and they literally have become that irreplaceable and essential on Argentine *parrillas* that they are even named after the asado practice altogether. Not surprisingly, the method and quality of grilling the prestigious cuts can make or break the *asador*'s reputation. This however raises the question of how the grilling of beef did become elevated to an almost worshiped expertise? What explains the (emotional) esteem and hierarchy around the asado tradition?

3.5.1 Gaucho Asado Expertise

First and foremost, traditional asado is based on beef and beef only. Gauchos did not have much else on hand and the ribs roasted on the spit were their main and singular nutrition. Most of the side dishes such as salads, sauces and processed meats like sausages where added later to the asado menu and were additionally prepared by women, hence considered

less prominent. A second answers can again be found in *Martín Fierro*'s representation of asado:[32]

Yo no sé porque el Gobierno
nos manda aquí á la frontera
gringada que ni siquiera
se sabe atracar á un pingo.
¡Si crerá al mandar un gringo
que nos manda alguna fiera!

No hacen mas que dar trabajo
pues no saben ni ensillar;
no sirven ni pa carniar:
y yo he visto muchas veces
que ni voltiadas las reses
se les querian arrimar.

Y lo pasan sus mercedes
lengüetiando pico a pico
hasta que viene un milico
a servirles al asao ...
y eso sí, en lo delicaos,
parecen hijos de rico [*sic*][33]

What stands out in these couplets, is that *Martín Fierro* like *El matadero*, pictures asado as a menu reserved for the upper-class, rich and powerful. Asado is served on the table of the privileged *gringos*, in this context referring to immigrants of most likely Italian, British or German origin (Ward, 1967: 25). Different however is that gauchos, who are their subjects in class and submissively serve out asado, are here portrayed in a more positive light. Their ethnic gaucho/*criollo* identity entitles them to know asado best, which is here considered a valuable and respectable skill. The gaucho and thus 'native' Argentine expertise of beef and

[32] Technically, Hernández uses the word 'asao' instead of asado. Multiple studies have devoted to the linguistic components of Hernández' *gauchesque* literature. Some Argentine literary scholars argue that Hernández, through the voice of Martín Fierro, intended to present the language of the gauchos. Others assume that by phonetically transcribing the text in gaucho idiom, Hernández accentuated the rudeness and vulgarity of the rural gauchos. The usage of this popular gaucho slang can also be understood as a tool used by Hernández for appropriation and obtaining legitimacy for his message regarding gaucho-identity in national discourse. In any case, it is agreed that in *Martín Fierro*, in most words ending with *-ado*, the *d* is not pronounced and therefore not written. The style in which Hernández wrote this masterpiece resembles the *Payada* genre. *Payadas* are ballads sung by gauchos in Argentina, Uruguay or Brazil, in which they would express their feelings and worries. For more information about the linguistic peculiarities of the gaucho language and the contribution of *Martín Fierro* to its development, see *La lengua gauchesca en sus orígenes* (2010) by José Luis Moure.

[33] Translation: *I don't know why the Government sends us, out here to the frontier, these gringos that don't even know how to handle a horse – when they send a gringo, you'd think it was some kind of a wild animal. They do nothing but make more work – they can't even put a saddle on. They're no use even for cutting up carcasses, and I've often seen that even when the steers were down, they wouldn't go up to them. And their worships spend their time clucking away, noses together, till one of the recruits comes along to serve them their roast meat – and then it's true, they're so dainty they look like rich men's sons* (Hernández in Ward, Spanish p.68, English p.69).

asado is actually elevated to a quality, a traditional craft, in sharp contrast to *El matadero*, where carnivorous Argentina was rejected. The skilful and independent gauchos possess natural knowledge, unlike the incompetent and spoiled immigrants. This casting suits larger tendencies of *criollismo*, where gaucho culture in general was approved as valuable traditional component of Argentine identity. Asado in particular became, recognized as an honourable competence which offered the possibility to obtain prestige, despite social or ethnic biases. Eventually, *Martín Fierro*'s asado became absorbed into a canonical and folkloric discourse which prevails in present-day Argentina.

3.5.2 The High Class Asado Recipe

Argentina's first cookbooks were likewise contributing factors in asado's growing canonical status and respectability. Although cookbooks remained luxury products and *Cocina ecléctica* (1890), it rather a set of cosmopolitan South-American recipes from predominantly Argentina, Peru and Bolivia, then it is an actual representation of Argentine cuisine of the time, it does include interesting literary representations of asado (Tobin, 1998: 53). While extensive information on the procedure and origin of asado is absent, Carmen G. de Vela from Buenos Aires, introduced traditional asado as a dish to consider on the upper-class Argentine dinner table. Most interestingly, de Vela firstly acknowledged to have learned the asado expertise from a famous male chef: "Para la carne [asado], un célebre cocinero hame obsequiado la receta de una, que la dá cualidades esquisitas en olor, color y sabor" [*sic*].[34] Additionally, as characteristic asado recipe, she selected '*asado con cuero'* and referred directly to the gaucho cuisine:

> Después, extraida la carne, con las mismas precauciones de limpieza que fuera enterrada, sazonándola ligeramente con sal, fué llevada á la pira donde la aguardaban dos gauchos, pontífices en aquella ceremonia, que apoderándose de ella, la asaron, *saliéndoles* -como ellos dijeron- la carne con cuero mas esquisita que en su vida habian comido. De esta opinión fuimos todos [*sic*].[35]

Notable is the admirative tone with regard to the male chef and gauchos who master the preparation skills of this traditional dish. Asado is suggested as a complex dish requiring precaution, sufficient time, space, tools, (historical) knowledge and *male* experience. Moreover, serving asado at an upper-class dinner enforced reputation and prestige: "Desde entonces, renovada cada tres días la provisión de tierra, mi mesa tiene la alta reputación de sus exquisitos asados, de cuyo secreto se ha apoderado el cocinero, que, con culpable

[34] Own translation: *For the meat* [asado], *a famous chef has given me a recipe for one, which offers an exquisite quality in smell, colour and taste* (Carmen G. de Vela in Gorriti (1890) p. 281).
[35] Own translation: *After I extracted the meat, with the same precaution as it was buried, seasoning it lightly with salt, and I placed it on the spit, similar to where the gauchos placed it after the sacred ceremony of seizing, grilling and fulfilling – as they would call it – the most exquisite meat with skin which they had ever eaten in their lives. We are all formed by this opinion* (Carmen G. de Vela in Gorriti (1890) p. 284).

egoísmo quisiera guardarlo".[36] This way, asado is presented and co-invented as status symbol. The gaucho's traditional asado meal hereby emerged as good to eat for urban upper-class Argentines as well. By presenting historical continuity, asado is served as a tradition proclaiming authentic culinary Argentine identity. However, this tradition was not part of the culinary repertoire of the female author nor her female readers. Its 'secret' still laid with men. In sum, asado here did symbolize authentic Argentine identity, yet exclusively belonging to male gauchos and chefs. Women could appeal to this identity via asado, but only because of male role models.

3.5.3 Gonzaga's Nationalist Asado

To that end, it was culinary and male role model Antonio 'El Negro' Gonzaga who next popularized and nationalized asado in Argentina. In his cookbooks, Gonzaga included "typical Argentine" recipes and referred to gaucho beef barbecue and presented the "proper" way to make Argentine asado (Pite, 2016: 105-108). His preparation of '*Asado con cuero tipo tradicional argentino'* placed asado in a national context and enforce the idea of asado being a traditional and above all *national* dish. In 1929, Gonzaga cooked live at the Palace Theatre where he surprised the upper-class spectators with local, *criollo* plates like *asado* whereby he contributed to the growing acceptance of asado into the high-class cosmopolitan menu (Navia, 2009). Further, his '*asado con cuero moderno'*, offered a renewed and alternative preparation model to traditional asado. For 'El Negro's' asado recipe it was no longer necessary to have an open space, fire, spit nor much experience. Beef could simply be cooked on a modern grill, making it possible to prepare it in urban settings, yet still enact to traditional Argentine asado. Hereby, Gonzaga lifted asado from the culinary gaucho skill it had been in *Martín Fierro*, as well as elite surprise it was in *Cocina ecléctica.* Asado suddenly became accessible to a greater Argentine audience and by promoting asado as *Argentine* dish, Gonzaga reacted to the overrepresentation of cosmopolitan and European recipes. Herewith, Gonzaga was an important initiator in diffusing *cocina criolla* in Argentina as he openly preferred local contributions in Argentine gastronomy (Pite: 108).

Furthermore, Gonzaga's labelling and presentation of plates in nationalist discourse, contributed to the construction of national Argentine cuisine, despite that his audience remained relatively restricted to the city of Buenos Aires.[37] The chef brought asado to the homes and restaurants of Buenos Aires and was a visible actor in the process of constructing, facilitating, popularizing and urbanizing the asado tradition. Even so, Gonzaga's

[36] Own translation: *After three days of restoring the supplies of the earth, my dinner table had built up a reputation of serving exquisite asados of the secret and famous chef, whose name I, egoistically would like to keep to myself*. (Carmen G. de Vela in Gorriti (1890) p. 285).

[37] See Appadurai, 'How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India', on how cookbooks help constructing national cuisines. Importantly, cookbooks were easier to get by in Buenos Aires than in other parts of the country. While elite provincials could afford to travel to the city, most non-elites did not have this opportunity and continued to cook their meals based on local and regional customs. This way, Gonzaga's readers and restaurant guests, remained predominantly elite and/or from Buenos Aires. But, even though his cuisine probably rather represented *porteño* identity then it covered Argentine identity, it took the first important steps towards a national Argentine cuisine. See Pite, 'La cocina criolla, A history of food and race in twentieth century Argentina', for more context on Gonzaga and *cocina criolla*.

helping hand in placing asado into Argentine national cuisine was overshadowed by Argentina's new culinary star Doña Petrona.

3.6 The Common Table of Asado

Step 5 Asado: The Social Event of the Week

Asado is not just a traditional barbecue, it is as much about the social gathering as the food. Asado typically takes place on weekends or at special occasions and can last for hours

Today, asado is more than hungry Argentines eating their grilled beef while imagining themselves gauchos on the Pampas. Asado is the social event which Argentines take seriously. Most roasts are organized during weekends or holidays as they take time to be prepared and enjoyed. But what do social customs and relations reveal about asado's place on the national table? First of all, asado implies specific social divisions between hosts and guests. The house hosting asado, makes sure there is plenty of beef for everyone and does the cooking. Invited guests, friends and family, normally bring a bottle of Malbec wine or side dishes such as salads. However, they are expected to just sit down, relax and enjoy asado as their foods are served by the host. In a sense, this creates unequal social relations where the host as 'subject' submissively provides guests of their foods. On the other hand, the host is in charge of the distribution and the asado goes by his tastes. This grants him power and authority, enforcing hierarchical relations. Nevertheless, asado is a social gathering evolving about *sharing* meat. As known from Harris and Pilcher, shared consumption of animal flesh in particular reinforces social ties and binds communities together. When meat eating is the quintessential social occasion, asado is meat eating par excellence. At asado, large amounts of beef are shared among all eaters among the table which creates a shared collective identity. Moreover, asado's are mostly organized in turns whereby participants one week are hosts but at the next are guests. By passing round the task, but also honour, of organizing asado, a social web is formed. After receiving an asado, a feeling of mutual obligation and comradeship is stimulated and the participant is likely to share his or her next asado in return with the previous host. In other words, asado establishes social bonds of reciprocity.

3.6.1 Simultaneous Asado

The social relations embedded in asado are equally effective on the national level. Since asado is a communal meal, most weekend, holidays and special occasions include asado. Because it is performed regularly throughout the year, asado, despite not being a daily meal, does become part of the weekly or monthly food routine and by that established on the Argentine calendar. It consequently becomes connected to Argentine mindset. Moreover, Argentines can experience a feeling of simultaneity with other members of the community and thus feel related to Argentine cultural identity as a whole. Even though most asados takes place in private spaces, in groups yet still in the private sphere, participants can be aware that this culinary ceremony is imitated and repeated by millions of other Argentines in

more or less the same manner. This way, having an asado implies parallelism, wherein Argentines can imagine themselves linked to others in the collective body of asado-eaters, although they do not really know about their existence. The social experience of asado thus has the ability to create inclusion, establish the idea of a homogenous group of individuals who simultaneously enjoy the asado event. The experience even becomes an integral component of the collective identity as a whole when Argentines continue to "live up" to this image of national culinary identity by organizing or attending an asado. Through repetition, the Argentine community itself reinforces traditional asado separately yet imagined collectively.

3.6.2 Sacred Asado

Apart from inclusion to the collective community, asado still betokens more in Argentina. Asado is a way of life, almost like a religion. How should this worship and mystification of the asado tradition be understood from a socio-cultural perspective? Socially, asado is *the* meal connected to most important events in Argentine life. At the asado table, Argentines spend quality time and celebrate life with friends and family. When ether it is a birthday celebration or a family reunion, asado is involved. Plus, asado often takes place on Sundays, traditionally a day for contemplation and spending time with family in catholic societies, and it is therefore no surprise that exactly this meal achieved ritual importance. Besides religious affiliation, *Martín Fierro* once more offers relevant cultural interpretations:

Eran los dias del apuro
y alboroto pa el hembraje,
pa preparar los potajes
y osequiar bien á la gente,
y ansi, pues, muy grandemente
pasaba siempre el gauchaje

Venia la carne con cuero,
la sabrosa carbonada,
mazamorra bien pisada,
los pasteles y el güen vino...
pero ha querido el destino
que todo aquello acabara [*sic*][38]

The gaucho's rituals and asado here represent the serene, authentic way of Argentine life which had come to an end. By presenting them in romantic and nostalgic light, Hernández considered the gaucho eating habits as inspirational and he even idealized or mystified this tradition. Accordingly, it would be great a sin to ruin this divine and pure collective delight:

[38] Translation: *For the womenfolk, those were days full of hurry and bustling to get the cooking done and serve the people properly. And so, like this, we gauchos always lived in grand style. In would come the meat roast in the skin and the tasty stew, cooked maize well ground, pies and wine of the best. But it has been the will of fate that all these things should come to an end* (Hernández in Ward, Spanish p. 20, English p. 21).

Si ensartaba algun asao,
¡pobre! ¡como silo viese!
poco antes de que estubiese
primero lo maldecia,
luego despues lo escupia
para que naides comiese

Quien le quitó esa costumbre
de escupir el asador,
fue un mulato resertor
que andaba de amigo suyo,
un diablo, muy peliador,
que le llamaban Barullo

Una noche que les hizo
como estaba acostumbrao,
se alzó el mulato enojao,
y le gritó: "viejo indino,
yo te he de enseñar, cochino,
a echar saliva al asao" [*sic*].[39]

When it turns out that Fierro's guardian, the personage Vischacha, had the habit of spitting on roasted meats so that no one else would have it, his immoral behaviour, is expressively rejected. Someone who ruins asado, is considered barbaric because it is a collective value. In popular Argentine language, the phrase *escupir al asador* evolved into another expression related to asado and grew out meaning 'to do something that is wrong' (González, 2017). Herein, the saying firstly implies that every Argentine knows the comings and goings of asado and secondly, is aware that to ruin this culinary delight for the whole group, is a disprovable, sinful act. Ergo, asado is perceived to be familiar to the imagined Argentine community, including its conventions and social value. Consequently, asado became grafted onto Argentine morality as sacred culinary ritual to be enjoyed collectively. Concludingly, the importance of asado lays in its power to construct identities. However, not only along the asado table itself social relations are build up, it also enables imaging Argentine community. Asado equates collective morality and spoiling this meal proves of bad taste in Argentine consciousness. *Martín Fierro* was particularly conductive in cultivating this national belief by glorifying and mystifying traditional asado to the symbolic, emblematic and canonical ritual it nowadays is. Eventually, asado became linked to national imagination to such a degree, that

[39] Translation: *If he was putting meat on to roast (poor soul! I can see him now) first he used to put a curse on it just before it was ready, and after that he'd spit on it so that no one else would eat it. "The one who cured him that habit of spitting on the meat was a mulatto, a deserter, who went around with him as his friend". A devil of a one for fighting -- Barullo was what they called him. "One evening when he did it as he was accustomed to, up got the mulatto in a rage and shouted 'Your filthy old man, you dirty swine, I'll teach you to go spitting over the meat!'* (Hernández in Ward, Spanish p. 346, English p. 347).

modern-day *asadores* can still imagine themselves, and fellow Argentines, true gaucho heirs as they ceremonially prepare their asado.

3.7 Macho Asado

Step 6 Un Aplauso para el Asador

After all the food and meats are served and enjoyed and everyone is satisfied, the asado is ended by thanking the asador with an applause

Central at asado is the *asador*, the person who leads the fire making, grilling and serving of the food. Traditionally, the role of *asador* is carried out by men who have honourable job of presenting the food to the guests. It is hard work since the *asador* is up on his feed all night next to the hot fire and has to make sure everyone gets plenty of well-done meats. When the eating is done, asado is ended with *un aplauso para el asador*, wherewith guests show their appreciation and gratitude. Women often make the salads or sauces but overall, asado is a male activity. Why does asado privilege men over women and are these gender divisions fixed in Argentine identity?

3.7.1 Patriarchal Asado

Historically speaking, asado has always been a men's business. First Argentine asados were prepared and enjoyed by men and men alone. In folkloric imaginary, male gauchos would wander along the Pampas living like vagabonds without settling down. The menu consisted of beef captured without any extras or side dishes. Later on, when gauchos settled down to worked at *estancias* and live in families, women took over most cooking tasks, but beef-roasting remained in men's hands. Actually, the catching, butchering and preparing of meat has been a masculine task in most traditional patriarchal societies (Pilcher, 2006: 4). Beef evokes masculine associations because of its symbolic meanings of power, sexuality and fertility and roasting beef therefore, has been in male charge in most traditional societies. Additionally, the whole process of cooking asado is a heavy task physically. Especially preparing traditional asado with a natural fire, roasting whole cuts of the cow on a spit by lifting and turning it, is a tough job. Besides traditional patriarchy, symbolism and muscle-power, the fact that asado is a relatively simple dish as well supports masculine authority. Traditionally, asado's only ingredient is beef. Also, the few required utensils are fire, a grill and knife (Tobin, 1998: 33). Unlike other famous Argentine dishes such as *dulce de leche* (caramel mousse) or *locro* (corn stew) it neither requires specific cooking skills nor knowledge. Even more striking is that, Argentine women generally cook at least six times a week (Ibid.: 32). Yet exactly asado, the only dish prepared by men and exclusively at special occasions, has been appointed to represent Argentina foodwise. Argued here is that apart from mystification of asado in literature, gender ideologies in 20th century Argentine social and culinary context too kept the masculine privilege of asado intact.

3.7.2. Petrona's Alternative

Doña Petrona, in fact left asado and *cocina criolla* in general almost completely aside. Perhaps because housekeeping, cookbooks and thus cooking in 20th century Argentina was predominantly in female charge (Pite, 2013: 5). Arguable is that Petrona did not bother paying attention to asado since she believed it to be part of outdoor masculine domain instead of indoors female domain. Men were neither Petrona's main audience, so there was no sense in attending to asado extensively. Also, Argentine men were perceived to obtain their asado-knowledge from experience or to have inherited their skills naturally from generations of gauchos (Tobin, 1998: 60-61). They would not need to consult a cookbook, let alone a "female" cookbook. Nevertheless, Petrona's cookbook referred twice to asado:

> ASADO A LA PARRILLA
> Para un buen asado a la parrilla, preparar dos o tres kilos de tira de costillas cortada ancha y condimentar con sal. Preparar un bueno fuego con brasas bien prendidas, colocar en la parrilla, poner el asado y dejarlo cocinar al fuego regular. Cuando la parte inferior esté bien asada, recién se da vuelta y se cocina del otro lado. Se sirve acompañado de ensaladas, ya sean cocidas o crudas y rociado salsa criolla cruda (ver receta en la pág. 173) (Petrona, 1934: 246).[40]

Clearly, Petrona proposed a simplified version of asado. In contrast to Gonzaga and de Vela, this asado is not labelled traditional nor modern and is a general recipe without any specifications. The preparation lacks information about authenticity, history of asado and makes no reference whatsoever to gauchos. As for the instructions, where the recipe is specific regarding meat and seasoning, it remains vague in describing the desired fire, utensils like the correct grill, wood, or even required cooking time. Moreover, this recipe suggests side dishes such as salads and sauces which in traditional asado are less significant. By referring to the page for these recipes, it seems as if attention is turned away from beef towards entremets, traditionally women's tasks. As a matter of fact, Petrona indeed proposed an alternative for traditional outdoor asado, namely 'asado from the oven':

> AL HORNO
> Preparar un trozo de carne de dos kilos, algo gordita, condimentar con sal, pimienta y acomodar en una asadera: ponerlo papas peladas y algo grandes, añadir a la asadera media taza de agua, ponerle por encima, tanto a las papas como a la carne poco de manteca, colocar en horno de temperatura regular, y dejar cocinar durante una hora y media o dos, más ó menos, según sea el tamaño del asado. Esta carne debe resultar jugosa y algo rosada, pues seca no es agradable [*sic*] (Petrona, 1934: 246).[41]

[40] Own translation: *Asado from the Grill: For a good asado from the grill, prepare two or three kilos of short ribs and season them with salt. Prepare a proper fire with nicely glowing embers, and place the grill and the ribs and let it grill on a regular fire. When the inner part is well-cooked, turn them around and cook them from the other side. It can be served accompanied by salads, cooked or raw like salsa criolla.*

[41] Own translation: *Asado from the Oven: Prepare a piece of meat of two kilos, somewhat fatty, and season it with salt, pepper and place it in a broiler pan: put some big and peeled potatoes next to it, ad half a cup of water to the pan and apply to both the potatoes as to the meat a little bit of frying fat. Place it in the oven with regular temperature and*

Unmistakably, Petrona here is more detailed about options, ingredients, preparation temperature, time and the desired result. Next to salt, pepper, water and even frying fat can be added. Also new to previous versions of asado, supplements such as potatoes, again are suggested to accompany the meal. Hereby, it challenges the traditional meat-focus and offers a less beef-centric asado version Moreover, beef in this recipe is supposed to turn out juicy and somewhat reddish. This differs from how beef traditionally was preferred and it is likely that Petrona adopted this style from European dishes. This has however multiple implications. By abstaining from giving extensive instructions, thus by not teaching female readers how exactly to prepare traditional asado, Petrona for one thing, reinforced male authority. Because her asado recipe did not provide enough details, it is imaginable that women unfamiliar with asado, left it to their male counterparts instead of trying it out themselves. On the other hand, Petrona did offer a female alternative. *Asado al horno*, literally brought asado from the outdoor male domain toward the indoor domain. This recipe was a way to feminize asado and to empower women to participate in the grilling tradition, before exclusively male. But as Petrona's attitude towards asado both tackled asado as a manly act as it enforced it, asado remained a men's business in the end.

3.7.3 Petrona and *Cocina Criolla*

Actually, Petrona did not just ignore asado but turned from *cocina criolla* as a whole. By presenting principally cosmopolitan recipes, she contributed to the image of Argentina as middle-class nation resembling Europe (Pite, 2013: 7). Despite *criollismo* tendencies in Argentine arts, society and nationalist discourse from the 1920's onwards, Argentine cuisine in general kept focussing on Europeanness instead of looking at indigenous, local or regional culinary contributions as was happening in other Latin-American countries such as Mexico (Pilcher, 2012: 12-14). Argentina remained struggling with her identity as both a European and Latin-American country, and particularly cuisine was a sensitive topic. Even Petrona's own ethnic identity as a provincial woman, was concealed to fit the national imaginary (Pite, 2016: 113-114). Additionally, Peronist food politics converted to reduce beef consumption after the problems in the livestock industry had reversed and replaced beef asado in their 1950's campaigns for more healthy foods (Milanesio: 108). Possibly colonial thinking about food and identity too, subconsciously endured and kept troubling the consideration of local cuisines as good to eat until the mid-20th century. Until then, asado was still not fully accepted at the imaginary table of "proper" Argentine cuisine. The second wave of folklore 1960's and 1970 meant however a turning point to *cocina criolla*. Doña Petrona publicly embraced her provincial origin and local dishes alike began to be more appreciated. Through folklore, regional and rural foods were increasingly presented as typical foods and were rediscovered as authentic, traditional sites of Argentine food culture and identity. Nonetheless, Petrona's attitude towards asado did not change. In 1973 she continued to

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let it cook for about an hour and a half, depending on the size of the meat. The meat should be juicy, tender and somewhat reddish, since it is not tasteful dry.

refrain from making asado outdoors and explained in interviews that her husband Atilio was the "*asador de la casa* (griller of the house)" (San Martín in Pite, 2016: 118). And so, despite the growing popularity of *cocina criolla*, asado succeed as good to cook, yet merely for Argentine men.

3.7.4 Idealized Masculinity

Again remarkably, asado as the only meal traditionally prepared by men, has become Argentina's national culinary symbol par excellence. This although other dishes are possibly more representative when looking at all Argentine regions and to what ends up the Argentine tables on a daily basis. Traditional dishes like *locro* or *puchero*, often prepared by women neither made it on top of the Argentine symbolic menu even though they are considerably more elaborate or complicated. Even female culinary star Doña Petrona could not change asado male supremacy. A final interpretation can be found in the canonical and masculine connotations of asado. From its conception, asado in Argentina has been performed by male gauchos who eventually evolved into role models for modern middle-class Argentine men (Tobin, 1998: 46). Literary works such as *El matadero* and *Martín Fierro* along with popular culture showcased these masculine layers of asado and from time to time even proclaimed a loss of this masculinity. Asado in Argentina therefore established as personification of a nostalgic longing for masculinity. At asado, the *asador* is tested to live up to this model, as he is to be blamed or blessed for the roasted beef. His prestige and masculinity are at stake and his grilling skills, perceived to have come natural to him, can make or break his image of true Argentine gaucho descendant. This patriarchal position, which is both powerful and vulnerable, makes asado grounded as quintessential masculine culinary activity. Hence, the dominance of asado on the national Argentine menu, corresponds with an idealized rural masculinity in Argentine identity. And as almost all Argentine asados end with an applause to the male *asador*, the natural leader, asado is both the culinary personification and consolidation of machismo in Argentine society.

CONCLUSION
Digesting Asado

Having followed the asado recipe, it is time for evaluation. This research has shed light on the development of the asado tradition and its changing representation in 19th and 20th century Argentine society. Within the frame of three theoretical approaches of *invented traditions*, *imagined communities* and *cultural materialism* and by the method of food genealogy, the origin and success of asado in Argentina has been analysed. Hereby, multiple bibliographical sources from travel writings to cookbooks have helped to understand the way Argentine 'barbecue' became embedded in both the Argentine stomachs and minds.

What has become clear is that the success of asado on the one hand lays in its material nature; it excellently suited the gauchos' appetite. The specific preparation mode of roasting on a spit and using as few tools and ingredients as possible, proved extraordinary convenient on the Pampas which had, apart from beef, not much else to offer. Also, beef asado did not only prove *best to eat* also good to sell and promote. Its omnipresence and growing economic importance, secured beef's place on the collective Argentine menu, despite not being native but rather inherited from Spanish colonialism. The Argentine beef industry too, had a share, even though it was long controlled by foreign influences and subject to European tastes. Likewise, the 'barbecue' preparation style as well as the usage of salt were neither native, exclusive nor authentic Argentine. Actually, the asado practice in general is not restrictive to Argentina since it is shared with other Latin-American countries and rather characterizes *rioplatense* or *porteño* culture. So, though these pragmatic evolutions support asado's material *success* on Argentine grounds, they still do not explain its authority in Argentine identity.

Indeed, that asado became Argentina's culinary representation is no 'accident of history' but rather the result of constructive processes on the other hand. Early modern travel writings already noticed the Argentine abundance of beef and gaucho eating habits but Echevarría first connected this to Argentine identity. Where asado in *El matadero* had been part of either decadent despotism or violent barbarism, asado in *Martín Fierro* embodied morality, integrity and thoroughness. *Martín Fierro* hereby discovered and actively contributed to the process of mystifying and inventing traditional asado which conquered a place in Argentine imaginary. Along with the ideology of *criollismo*, gaucho traditions, including asado, were elevated to crafts or rituals and their pureness and honesty started to be worshiped through nostalgic glimpses. The iconic poem clearly connected asado to gaucho culture which was now an authentic, traditional and positive personification of Argentine identity. Asado references in cooking books were however more subtle. Notwithstanding, some like *Cocina ecléctica* added a layer of respectability and mysteriousness. By portraying the gaucho's roast as a proficiency reserved for male experts and special occasions, Gorriti's recipes assisted in establishing asado as status symbol. Chef Gonzaga actively appropriated asado and gave it new, national importance by proclaiming its

Argentineness. Gonzaga's efforts had also made asado a more public and accessible culinary affair. The beef industry and Peronist food politics alike further supported the popularization and institutionalisation of beef eating and asado as part of their objectives, either commercial or discursive. In contrast, asado was never really accepted by Argentine cooking star Doña Petrona, at first because of its *criollo* flavour and later predominantly for being part of the masculine domain. Yet, despite Petrona's lack of interest and minimal alternatives, asado did evolve into the quintessential Argentine food.

So, representations of asado in written sources clearly contributed to the growing acceptance of asado as component of true Argentine identity. Nevertheless, its widespread success lays in its social character too. First of all, the competence to create collective feelings of simultaneity and parallelism and therefore imagining Argentine community, has been a factor. The communal character of the asado tradition, also expressed in multiple national sayings, together with its focus on sharing and ability to enforce social relations additionally made it suitable to construct collective identity. Asado succeeds to appeal to national imagination and while Argentines share their beef, social ties are bound, not only along the private table but also along the greater imagined national table.

Moreover, asado became represented as culinary reflection of Argentine identity because most of its conditions overlap with other components of national identity in Argentina. Firstly, from a regional approach, asado, among other national symbols, is dominated by either *rioplatense* or *porteño* culture. Asado, as part of the cuisines of Río de Plata, Buenos Aires and adjacent Pampas, is put forward to represent national cuisine while not shared by all regions. Secondly, asado, like other national customs such as football, is shared with other Latin-American countries, yet profiled as typical Argentine. Furthermore, asado, as similar to Argentine culture in broader sense, focusses on European, Italian and Spanish influences while indigenous, non-white and Afro-Argentine contributions have been outweighed. Even when indigenous, local and *criollo* traditions were rediscovered, Argentina's culinarian attitude remained European focussed. When they were accepted at last, they instead became portrayed as white. For example, the gaucho figure has been accepted as descendant from first generations of Spaniards and more recent European migrations while his indigenous roots are neglected.

In terms of class, asado likewise matches other cultural elements subscribing *argentinidad,* such as the tango. Namely, it similarly is a lower-class cultural expression in origin, picked up and popularized by upper and middle classes. In colonial times, beef was so abundantly available that asado did not construct prestige nor status. In independent Argentina this had already started to change, when asado was predominantly food for either powerful elites or barbaric, rural gaucho societies. However, traditional gaucho asado really gained potency of an urban elite speciality when Hernández and later Gorriti and Gonzaga discovered the value of this interesting rural dish for the urban upper and middle class. Peronist food politics of the 1930's presented asado as part of the common Argentine menu, aiming to make it more approachable to urban working classes. Nonetheless, especially at times of economic decline, beef and asado, remained luxuries and accordingly class-exclusive. Nowadays, asado is particularly popular in cities such and specifically among those who can afford buying expensive cuts of beef, have access to outdoor cooking and living space and the

possibility to prepare asado as recreational activity. This way, asado has become more exclusive and urbanized then it originally was, yet still considered a meal for every Argentine.

Concerning gender, asado too resembles other folkloric icons of Argentine identity such as tango and football, because all are defined by masculinity. From all Argentine meals, asado is the only one traditionally prepared outdoors by men. All other dishes prepared throughout the week are looked after by women and prepared inside the kitchen. Still, exactly asado receives most prestige despite being a relatively easy and requiring few ingredients, techniques and utensils. Arguable is that gender ideologies and sexual connotations of beef, in Argentine literature, vocabulary and society alike, keep asado limited to the male share of Argentine community. Beef, gauchos and asado symbolize masculinity and even though, or perhaps *because*, gauchos eventually disappeared from the national scenery, their image developed into nostalgic longing of passed masculinity, which modern Argentine men can try to grasp behind their grill. Despite emancipation and growing entrance of women to the work field, the knowledge and authority over the grill, persist to be a form of masculine power.

Finally, the great symbolic meaning of asado further describes asado's place in Argentine mentality. As mentioned, national identities are dynamic concepts and thus difficult to define. Argentine identity in particular is complex since Argentina as a nation has been struggling to approach its national character. However, especially from the late 19th century the gaucho culture and traditions, before despised and abominated, were considered representing true and authentic Argentine identity. Through the words of Argentina's most popular gaucho Martín Fierro, asado accomplished emotional and nostalgic longing to times of a purer, strong and braver Argentina. Asado also achieved emotional and mystical status and established as a nearly sacred culinary tradition to be captured and embraced at all times. Folkloric icons, events and national sayings continue to remind modern-day Argentines to this liturgy on a daily basis and keep nostalgic and emotional layers of this food habit intact.

Concludingly, in between 1870-1970 asado indeed was represented as authentic component of Argentine identity. Its appreciation in relation to collective identity however fluctuated and along with renewed thinking of Argentine identity, its symbolic meaning shifted correspondingly. Thus, Argentina appreciated the asado practice on and off linked to how to it valued the local culture, and population particularly, as a whole. In times of political imbalance and dissatisfaction with its local identity, asado, gauchos and *criollo* culture were considered inappropriate and Argentine cuisine preferred to look at cosmopolitan and European gastronomic inspirations. However, when the newly arrived European migrants neither solved the Argentine identity dilemma, *criollismo* and *gauchesque* literature, rediscovered the traditions of gauchos as alternative inspirational source. Asado perfectly suited folkloric tendencies and helped imagining the Argentine nation when it was split between civilization and barbarism, between Europe and Latin America, between cosmopolitanism and *criollismo*, between the city and the countryside and finally between the migrants and natives. Asado altered to symbolize intrinsic collective values and ultimately, a positive, authentic component of national identity.

Today, numerous of books and online blogs agree on one thing: asado is the typical Argentine dish and when preparing and attending this 'authentic' culinary performance means to taste a little piece Argentina. This suits the global trends of national cuisines (as far as they exist) whereby dominant dishes become merchandized internationally as representative of a country's culinary character. Together with trade and commerce and migration, the international establishment of nationalist and ethnic restaurants has contributed to a global neutralisation of cuisines. As regard to asado, nationalist elements and "gaucho-stylings", continue to be broadcasted as stereotypical Argentine, not only in Argentina but also abroad. When ether in Buenos Aires or Amsterdam, one can experience and taste "authentic" Argentine roasted beef. Possibly this present-day internationalisation of food culture offers a final explanation for asado's supremacy. Where in modern times food and eating tend to be about variety, efficiency, unlimited availability and continuous accessibility, the asado tradition continues to focus on a single ingredient, simplicity and quality time with friends and family.

Conclusively, one must keep in mind that food is never neutral but always accommodates imagination and identification. The suggestive competency of food i.e.; the labelling, rating, emotions, and memories it evokes, carried out by smells, flavours and textures, together with the whole food circle from production to preparation, consumption up to its place in human metabolism, has made food and cuisine potent strategies in (national) identity discourses. Therefore, pointing out certain aliments, fares or food traditions as representing collective identities must always be done cautiously. Accepting the normalisation of asado as legitimate culinarian representation of Argentina, means excluding many facets of Argentine culture. It means being indifferent to culinary contributions of other Argentine regions and civilizations. It also means not attending to the everyday meals cooked by women along with dishes containing other types of meat than beef or no meat at all. In sum, acknowledging asado as Argentina's quintessential and authentic culinary embodiment constructs a unified image of Argentina while it in fact is much more multifaced.

Argentine identity in this sense is rather to be understood as melting pot or hotchpotch. In this spirit, other foods such as *locro* or *humita*, hypothetically represent Argentina better foodwise. Anyhow, in Argentina of the 19th and 20th century, no other food was as constructive to collective imagination and identity formation as asado was. Which other food might be an alternative authentic or appropriate representative of Argentine identity is left to be examined in further research. *Puchero*, a boiled dish, from Italian and Spanish chorizo, indigenous sweet potatoes and squash is a potential candidate (Tobin: 57). In this dish all ingredients are served and mixed together but keep their distinct flavour. Besides, while this research has focussed on analysing a combination of written sources like literature and cookbooks, it leaves room open for other disciplines to find out what asado means to the national imaginary of Argentina. Do modern Argentines actually feel truly Argentine when having an asado? And is this focus on asado and beef in Argentine mentality sensitive to global trends towards a less meat-based diet? But for now, it is asado that thrives on the Argentine dinner tables, especially at weekends or special occasions. Asado continues to be the meal where Argentines find each other and celebrate life combined with a good glass of Malbec wine. And perhaps, *that* is the essence of Argentine identity.

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