

Gastronomy in Value: a Case Study of Horchata and Fartons in Valencia (Spain)*

[English Version]

Gastronomía en valor: un estudio de caso de la horchata y los fartons en Valencia (España)

Gastronomia em valor: um estudo de caso da horchata e fartons em Valencia (Espanha)

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Abstract

Objective: to approximate the local geography of two characteristic products of Valencian gastronomy, that is, Horchata and Fartons. **Methodology:** non-participant observation was used as the primary source of information. The academic and sectoral bibliography was implemented as the secondary source. **Results:** a high degree of identification of these two products with Valencian culture and gastronomy and, therefore, their ability to transmit an authentic identity were noted.

Conclusions: the projection and commercialization of practices and experiences associated with local products also help to face globalizing trends in the current gastronomic context.

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Keywords: Local development; Gastronomic tourism; Regional Cuisine of Valencia, Spain; Ecotourism; Horchata; Fartons.

Resumen

Objetivo: aproximar la geografía local de dos productos característicos de la gastronomía valenciana, esto es, la horchata y los fartons. **Metodología:** para ello, se utilizó la observación no participante como fuente de información primaria y la bibliografía académica y sectorial como fuente secundaria. **Resultados:** se advirtió un elevado grado de identificación de estos dos productos con la cultura y la gastronomía valencianas y, por lo tanto, de su capacidad de transmisión de una identidad auténtica. **Conclusiones:** la proyección y comercialización de las prácticas y experiencias asociadas a los productos locales ayudan, también, a hacer frente a las tendencias globalizadoras del contexto gastronómico actual.

Palabras-clave: Desarrollo local; Turismo gastronómico; Cocina Regional de Valencia, España; Ecoturismo; Horchata; Fartons.

Resumo

Objetivo: aproximar a geografia local de dois produtos característicos da gastronomia valenciana, isto é, horchata e fartons. **Metodologia:** para isso, a observação não participante foi usada como fonte primária de informação e a bibliografia acadêmica e setorial como fonte secundária. **Resultados:** houve um alto grau de identificação desses dois produtos com a cultura e a gastronomia valenciana e, portanto, sua capacidade de transmitir uma identidade autêntica. **Conclusões:** a projeção e comercialização de práticas e experiências associadas a produtos locais também ajudam a enfrentar as tendências globalizantes no atual contexto gastronômico.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento local; Turismo gastronômico; Cozinha Regional de Valência, Espanha; Ecoturismo; Horchata; Fartons.

Introduction

Food, cooking and gastronomy are among the most significant elements of any culture. Several authors develop the role of gastronomy as one of the foundational characteristics of culture (Berno, 2017; Fischler, 1988; Sims, 2009). In this sense, identity is transmitted through gastronomy, which offers a genuine sample of the cultural and natural geographies of a place (Tresserras and Medina, 2008). Here, Horchata and Fartons are an example of Valencian gastronomic culture, not only at the national level but also in the international context, closely linked to the territorial and social values of food and regional cuisine.

The objective of this article is to analyze Horchata and Fartons as typical Valencian products, and to discuss their potential as elements of tourist attraction. In particular, this article develops these two products from their importance, as part of Valencia's gastronomy has to offer, which is a sample of their cultural and natural identity. After contextualizing the theoretical framework and defining the implemented methodology, the article analyzes the geography of Horchata and Fartons to finally point out, in the conclusions section, the limitations, implications and opportunities for future research about this topic.

Theoretical Context

The discovery of culture through gastronomic landscapes is one of the mainstays of gastronomic tourism. Thus, gastronomic landscapes are understood, according to Adema (2006), as "social, cultural, political, economic or historical landscapes that, in some way, are related to food" (p. 13) [own translation]. In this way, gastronomy is one of the foundational elements of any culture, which is understood as the set of all the elements that comprise the identity of a community, including the sum of cultural and natural landscapes, that express a sense of unique place associated with each identity (Anthrop, 2005; Smith, 2015; Tellström, Gustafsson and Mossberg, 2006) and each geographic context.

Among these landscapes, gastronomic ones are not only manifestations of culinary heritage, but emerge as intangible associations between a given place and its food (Fusté-Forné, 2016b). In this context, recognition of gastronomic heritage as an intangible asset from UNESCO occurred in 2010, which is an example of the importance of gastronomy, both in relation to the preservation of local landscapes and in terms of its tourist projection.

Gastronomic tourism refers to traveling to a place with the aim of not only trying products and dishes, visiting production centers or points of sale, attending fairs and festivals or any other tourist activity based on gastronomy (Hall and Sharples, 2003), but also knowing the senses and meanings associated with

gastronomy and culture, as well as culinary traditions. This definition includes a great variety of opportunities that are generated around gastronomic tourism, where local economic development is one of its main objectives.

Thus, in the current academic literature on gastronomic tourism practices, local products stand out as one of its central mainstay, which at the same time are key to this regional development (Bessière, 1998; Díaz and Llundés, 2013). Hence, although wine is the most widely developed (Hall, Sharples, Cambourne and Macionis, 2009; López-Guzmán, García and Rodríguez, 2013), other products, both sea and mountain, such as oil (Guerra, Moreno and López, 2014), mussels (Lund, 2015) or cheese (Fusté-Forné, 2016a), to cite just a few examples, have also been studied from the point of view of authenticity, regional development and tourist experience.

In addition, there are dishes that have also been addressed in scientific works aligned with cultural and tourist studies, such as Paella (Duhart and Medina, 2008) or other international examples such as Japanese noodles (Kim and Ellis, 2015). All these culinary and gastronomic elements, symbols of a local identity, are also used for the promotion and marketing of destinations (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Hjalager and Richards, 2002).

In the current globalization context, it is also important to emphasize on the local-global conflict. On the one hand, geographical diversity is the origin of regional culinary differentiation and the starting point for its tourist use (Cànoves and Villarino, 2000). However, on certain occasions, tourists prefer those products with which they are already familiar (Belisle, 1983), which confers *tranquility and security* in economic and socio-cultural terms. Anyone who has eaten at a fast food chain knows what it offers, what it tastes like, and how much it costs, regardless of location. This benefits the globalization processes linked to the homogenization of gastronomy as a cultural ingredient.

In view of this, local authenticity is a manifestation of cultural and natural landscapes (Hughes, 1995), and can be expressed through gastronomy. When a local product is consumed, not only the nutritional qualities of the food are incorporated, but also symbolic qualities, related to the ephemeral appropriation of the local identity (Bessière, 1998), as well as its historical and socio-cultural meanings that in the process of exchange between hosts and guests are part of a ritual associated with hospitality and respect for the other (Korstanje, 2010). Therefore, the enhancement and promotion of local gastronomic culture represents an important factor in promoting tourism (Fusté-Forné, 2019; Hernández-Rojas and Dancausa-Millán, 2018; Leal-Londoño, Vázquez-Medina, Medina, 2018).

In this sense, gastronomic destinations must be able to offer products and experiences that effectively communicate the link between gastronomy, the te-

territory and the local communities (Hillel, Belhassen, Shani, 2013). The aim of this is to provide the tourist with exposure to an authentic culinary experience - gastronomy as a cultural identity in a particular geographical context (Fusté-Forné, 2015). In this case, this is analyzed from the historical and sociocultural relevance of the Horchata and Fartons in Valencia, and its integration in the landscape of the city as a source of attraction of gastronomic tourism.

Methodology

In order to meet the objective of this study, a qualitative approach has been adopted, based on non-participating field observation work (Somekh and Lewin, 2005), supplemented with data obtained from secondary information sources. In the field of tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization (2001), qualitative research is a strategy used with a descriptive purpose around a phenomenon of interest. Specifically, field observation is the procedure of looking closely at the objective of observation, and can be related to 'monuments' of various kinds (Pardinas, 1969).

In this case, the objective of the observation is to compile the presence of Horchata and Fartons in the geography of Valencia, chosen due to its capital of the region of the Valencian Community. The field work was carried out in May 2018 in the central streets of the city of Valencia, the main geographical axes being the Town Hall Square, the Central Market, and the Estació del Nord railway station. The interpretation of the secondary data has been based on sources that allow to trace the historical context of Horchata and Fartons, as much from the academic as the sectorial point of view.

Results

Both Horchata and Fartons are products that can be seen widely represented in the day to day life of the Valencian Community, and, in particular, of the city of Valencia. Thus, the Valencian gastronomic and cultural landscape contains abundant references to Horchata, to Fartons, and to Horchata with Fartons (for example, Figure 1).

First, it is important to emphasize that the Horchata is a drink made from the Chufa (tigernut) (Figure 2). The cultivation of tigernuts goes back thousands of years, finding evidence of its existence for example in Ancient Egypt (Maroto, 1998). In this sense,

The tigernut was already consumed in Ancient Egypt, as it is testified by the vessels found as part of the funerary trousseau of pharaohs, nobles and craftsmen. The Egyptians cooked the tubers and consumed them as a dessert. Persian and Arab societies used tigernuts for therapeutic purposes, basically for their digestive and disinfectant properties (Sirvent-Barcelona, 2018, p. 1) [Own translation].

Thus, there are also ancient references to Persians and Arabs, or to the Chinese empire (Consell Regulador D.O. Xufa de València, 2018; Maroto, 1998; Serrallach, 1927). But

Tigernuts were first cultivated in the Huerta del Norte of Valencia in the 13th century by the Arabs, who brought the crop from the Sudan because they found the Mediterranean climate in Valencia to be ideal for planting: sandy soil, a mild climate and a high level of humidity (Sirvent-Barcelona, 2018, p. 1) [Own translation].

Its medicinal properties, together with its consumption as a refreshing drink, began to make it popular as “*leche de chufas*” (tigernut milk) during the Islamic rule of the Iberian Peninsula (Pascual and Maroto, 1984).

Figure 1. Integration of the Consumption of Horchata and Fartons in the Gastronomic Landscape of the city of Valencia.



Source: Author's

Figure 2. Products and Tools for the Traditional Elaboration of the Horchata de Chufa. Valencia



Source: Author's

According to the *Diari Oficial de la Comunitat Valenciana* (2010), in the text that approves the regulations of the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) Chufa de Valencia and its Regulatory Council, it is established that

The production of protected tigernuts will be carried out exclusively from tubers of the tigernut population variety (*Cyperus esculentus* L. var. *sativus* Boeck.) obtained or multiplied, and grown on land located in the following municipalities: Albalat dels Sorells, Alboraya, Albuixech, Alfara del Patriarca, Almàssera, Bonrepòs i Mirambell, Burjassot, Foios, Godella, Meliana, Moncada, Paterna, Rocafort, Tavernes Blanques, València and Vinalesa (p. 21057). [Own translation].

These municipalities are located in the Valencian region of L'Horta Nord, being the only territory in Spain that meets the climatic and orographical conditions for the cultivation of the tigernut.

The regulations cover practices related to the processes of cultivation, harvesting, washing and drying. Specifically, the protected tigernut is characterized by being a root that can "acquire different shapes, among which elongated and rounded ones predominate, traditionally known as Llargueta and Ametlla, respectively" (*Diari Oficial de la Comunitat Valenciana*, 2010, p. 21057). Likewise,

the following types of tigernut are distinguished: a) Tender: Tigernuts that are recently harvested and washed. b) Dry: the product that has been subjected to the washing and drying operations (p. 21057).

From the cultivation of the tigernut the Horchata is made. According to Álvarez, “in the territory of the former Kingdom of Valencia it has been ingested for centuries [and] the first written references to *leche de chufas* date back to the 14th century” (Álvarez, 2017, p. 1). Later references highlight the origin of this drink as follows and as a legend as well:

From the etymological point of view, the word "Horchata" comes from Italian and refers to barley water at the beginning. The name derives from the Italian participle "orzata" and in turn from the Latin "hordeata", "made with orzo" (ie hordeum, Latin word for barley). Despite this fact, legend professes that during the Reconquest, the King of the Crown of Aragon, Jaume I "El Conquistador" drank a glass of horchata that was served by a girl. The King, delighted with the taste, was interested in the name of the drink. The girl replied that it was *leche de chufa*. The king exclaimed "Això no és llet, això és OR, XATA!" translated as "This is not milk, this is gold, pretty girl!". A word game between “or” and “xata” originated, giving the supposed origin to the Valencian word “orxata”, the way to write it in that language (Sirvent-Barcelona, 2018, p. 2). [Own translation]

Currently, Horchata and its consumption are present not only in horchaterias (Figure 3), but also in restaurants or cafes (Figure 4) and even in food trucks (Figure 5). In addition, its presence in supermarkets also stands out (Figure 6). This latter example is especially relevant given the increasing use of apartments by visitors and tourists, which complements its tourist consumption in restaurants with the purchase of products in local food stores and supermarkets to cook them *in house*. This means that its tourist use is deeply rooted, as evidenced by a great varied number of posters that use Horchata as their main attraction –and also Fartons–, with the aim of tasting local gastronomy by visitors and tourists.

Figure 3. Example of Horchata Stall (I). Valencia



Source: Author's

Figure 4. Example of Horchata Stall (II). Valencia



Source: Author's

Figure 5. Example of Horchata Coffee Shop (III). Valencia



Source: Author's

Figure 6. Sale of Horchata and Fartons in a Supermarket, Valencia



Source: Author's

With respect to the same topic and in relation to the accompaniment of Horchata, according to Álvarez (2017), it was in the 60s in the 20th century when “an elongated bun revolutionized the way of eating it. It's about fartó” (Álvarez, 2017, p. 1). Thus, the birth of this product is associated with the Polo family:

Dionisio, the oldest of the three brothers, and José, a 14 year old teenager used to spend hours in the bakery. They prepared the bread for the next day and experimented with new creations. The fartó came up from those trials. Until then, horchata was drunk with donuts or bread. A bread loaf was cut into strips and introduced into the slush drink. Since it is compact, it takes a long time to soak up. That is why we came up with the idea of baking a new product that was also long and we spread the upper side with sugar,” explains José. The two brothers took *Panquemao* dough as a base and made some changes. [...] First of all, this innovation collated the attention of the horchaterias that worked in Alboraya, although they soon began to be distributed to other places in Valencia. The popularity that Polo buns reached spread like wildfire. In fact, in 1973 they were already being marketed throughout the region thanks to the collaboration of other relatives. Supermarkets' interest in this product was a turning point. It promoted consumption at home and from the 90s it opened the doors of other territories (Álvarez, 2017, p. 1). [Own translation].

Thereby, Fartons become a product with more recent historical references. As a form of expression of gastronomic culture and Valencian food and culinary customs, it can be stated that Fartons appear closely linked to Horchata. Polo (2016) describes Fartons as follows, highlighting the birth of Fartons in 1960:

At the time of development, the Polo family decided to move to Alboraya [where] they acquired an oven in the town square and after several tests, they found a perfect product to accompany the horchata. It was a bun made with the dough of *Panquemao*, elongated to be dipped into the glass and very fluffy to better absorb the Horchata. They spread the syrup made of sugar to make it more tasty and this was the beginning of what we know today as Fartons (Fartons Polo, 2016, p. 1). [Own translation]

Later, the knowledge, the distribution, and the acceptance of the Fartons was going to increase, not only in the Valencian region, but also abroad as aforementioned. Then, from the 70s in the 20th century,

Given the success achieved in Valencia, they immediately began to distribute the Fartons throughout the Valencian Community and to the rest of Spain, where it has been very well accepted. For example, inland tourism that reaches the Valencian Coast is contributing to this, and since, once one has tasted Horchata accompanied by such a unique product, it is rare that you do not want to repeat this and look for it in your place of residence. (Fartons Polo, 2016, p. 1). [Own translation]

From these two, Horchata and Fartons, a product is born bringing together two traditions of the Valencian identity and lands. As previously mentioned, both have a great number of references along the streets of Valencia. This is reflected in a use that includes local residents and visitors.

However, Costa (2016) mentions that even today, many people think that “Horchata remains as though it were an unknown old woman, a treasure to be discovered” (p. Xx) and highlights it as an untapped culinary and gastronomic heritage. Although its touristic potential is evident, he states that still, few tourists know about it (Costa, 2016). As a traditional product, of territorial origin and handcrafted, its qualities to be a gastronomic attraction are evident, and can be seen in initiatives such as ‘La Ruta de la Chufa’ or its pivotal role in ‘Les Falles de València’. In addition, the consumption of Horchata with Fartons results in a combination with another artisan local product, which is born from the tradition linked to the bakery and pastry shop, and which it manages to find in the preparation - and consumption - of Fartons the perfect accompaniment to Horchata.

Conclusions

Horchata and Fartons are two hallmarks of Valencian culture and gastronomy. Without going any further, the principal presence of Horchata in Las Falles, with the media coverage that this implies, also opens the door to the spreading of knowledge of this product, which is deeply present in the Valencian cultural and gastronomic geography. Besides, the written and photographic examples herein demonstrate that there are other initiatives that add to the integration of these products in the circuits and tourist landscapes of Valencia, such as ‘La Ruta de la Chufa’. This route runs through the tigernut cultivation areas and its traditional production spaces. This allows us to discover associated materials and constructions (Consell Regulador DO Xufa De València, 2018).

Other examples are also the activities organized by the regulatory council, such as the participation in fairs and exhibitions or tastings and *showcookings*.

All these actions are projections of the locality facing the globalization of today's gastronomy. Although this conflict is not developed in this work, it may be an issue of future discussion when conducting empirical studies on the projection of the tourist image of the region.

Although, amidst the limitations of this article, its mainly descriptive nature, its theoretical and practical implications can lead to different research opportunities. In relation to the theoretical contribution, this article can serve to further studies that develop narratives associated with these products - both from the point of view of supply and demand, locally, nationally and internationally.

In practice, several implications are observed mainly for points of sale and distribution, where possibilities for product development and its experiential context are opened. For example, although the original recipe for Horchata is still maintained today - based on tigernuts, water and sugar - other specific products based on tigernuts (*chufas*) are already being made or are rising their value in restaurants and particularly in haute cuisine.

In the same direction, innovation also comes to ways of making products available to consumers, through either samples of street art (Figure 7) or street food (Figure 8), both current concepts within the understanding of the relationships between gastronomy, territory and tourism. In the framework of the synergies between food, traditional cuisine, gastronomy and tourism, studies on the subject could deepen the nutritional properties of Horchata and Fartons, their role in the Mediterranean diet, or the importance of PDO for the visibility of production and motivation for consumption.

In this regard, it should not be forgotten that both Horchata and Fartons, although they represent the Valencian identity, they are not the only gastronomic products that help to build the culinary image of this region. The study of the integral composition of the Valencian gastronomic landscape is another line of research that can be addressed from disciplines such as anthropology or marketing, both from the perspective of local residents and tourists.

Figure 7. The Symbolic Consumption of Horchata as Part of *Street Art*. Valencia



Source: Author's

Figure 8. The Traditional Offer of Horchata with Fartons Through *Street Food*. Valencia



Source: Author's

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