



Gloria Hinoztroza at the book presentation with the journalist Raúl Vargas in the 23er International Book Fair of Lima.

Photography: Andrew Gibbon / Le Cordon Bleu University

Books and publications

The Cuisine of Peru

Of Gloria Hinostraza



La cocina del Perú, relatos tradicionales (The Cuisine of Peru, Traditional Stories) is the first publication undertaken by the Le Cordon Bleu University and edited by Editorial Planeta, which brings together historical data with traditional ways of preparing eighty cooking recipes, carefully selected by its author Gloria Hinostraza, a renowned chef, researcher and promoter of Peruvian cuisine.

This first edition is a valuable testimony of the cultural wealth of Peru: a country recognized worldwide for its biodiversity, historical heritage, and exquisite cuisine; a country where the dining experience remains as a magical-religious ritual, in which the diner,

the fruits of the sea and the land are harmoniously related through the flavors, aromas, and emotions.

La cocina del Perú, relatos tradicionales gathers ancient techniques for the treatment of food native to the land of the Incas, and the way they intermixed with the products that came to America from Europe in colonial times, giving rise to one of the best food of the world.

This publication was launched at the Lima International Book Fair 2018, and the remarks were made by the prominent Peruvian journalist Raúl Vargas Vega, renowned promoter of Peruvian gastronomy.

By Raúl Vargas*

I am particularly pleased to participate in this presentation of the book by Gloria Hinostroza Clausen, not only because I witnessed her extensive gastronomic career, but also because her lineage is linked to that of Rodolfo Hinostroza, great poet and gourmet; also, —and from another perspective— because I am a witness to her dedication to teaching, in which a granddaughter of mine has taken part as a student. There are, thus, well-founded reasons to comment on a book whose main desire is to claim the ancestral idiosyncrasy of our Peruvian food; a book that in these times joins an evaluative current of our cuisine, but, in this particular case, it vindicates the pre-Hispanic legacy, deeply based on national gastronomy, that of our time.

In simple words, it could be argued that as in so many other well-known cases, the cuisine has deeper roots than the times in which we live. There is a legacy, a progeny, a magical charm that lies deep in our food and gastronomic work. It is not that, in the end, we are much bigger eaters than our congeners —we are the same the whole world over —but it does happen that in some places eating becomes a central, gratifying, defining, ritual activity. In that case, eating is not only a pleasure, but also a civilizing and rewarding bid to existence.

However, creating a culinary heritage is not an easy task, taking into account that each time, epoch, and setting is changeable and holds prejudices, disparities, and the mistaken perception that, to define a central feature of a culture or civilization, a statutory vision of customs and tastes must be imposed. It sounds irritating, but it is unavoidable to make a change in the famous saying, “A man is known by the food he eats.”

The adventure of the Spaniards in the Americas —the first European approach to different and equally advanced cultures— is a great surprise, since there were discerned different races, cultures, customs, which —constructing a historical error — were absolutely different from that Spain, also lagging behind in relation to other European countries. Abruptly, the culture of the peoples from the Americas, whose civilizations had many exponents and its high peak in the case of Mexico and Peru, was disregarded.

It is true that it can be claimed that the consequent mix resulting from the encounter of the Americas and Spain can mean a transfusion of mutual influences, but we cannot hide the fact that the transition from contempt for the unknown to the assimilation of the new takes time, and their inconsistent biases must

This is the start of Piru or Pirue, which, according to the author of this book, means “the warehouse of all things”



be overcome. The colonial period, which could be called an unequal period of mutual and misunderstood assimilation, was also that of the growth of a blend of cultures, whose force is not similar to what occurred with the colonialist experience in Africa or Asia. The wonder of the Americas is, in this sense, particularly attractive because it gives rise to a fusion of ways of living, customs, and ideas that have fairly complemented colonial Europe in a gradual manner.

As it always happens, the first reason for comparison of customs is food, since newcomers have to assume that in order to stay alive, they must eat what they are able to find. In the case of the Americas, it was like winning the lottery because the Spaniards discovered variety, creativity, and flavor with inherent productive capacity, which are generally found in the different cultures of the Americas, and especially in the Aztec and Inca ones. It can be said that the blend of cultures begins between us and with the food.

These scopes are fabulously portrayed in Gloria Hinojosa's book because with every dish, she exposes the influences that come into play, and, thus, the so-called Creole food conveys every step of the confluence of tastes, flavors, and gastronomic techniques. The consecration of this mix is not

immediate, and there are peninsular chroniclers who bite the bullet to approach three major indigenous products: potatoes, corn, and chili. Regarding meat and fish, some products are unknown to the West, such as lamini and some unfamiliar species of birds; and the significant feat of marine products, that deserve the special mention of chroniclers.

The combination of European and American products was inevitable; and, evidently, local products, because of their amount, variety, and custom—substantive food for all alike, here is another contrast—, prevail undeniably almost immediately, as there was no other alternative at the beginning. This is the start of Piru or Pirue, which, according to the author of this book, means “the warehouse of all things”. The conquistadors found, successfully, a food policy that reached the entire population—despite the enormous geographic variety—, and an equally widespread agricultural and storage infrastructure. Furthermore, a policy of production, storage, and distribution had been developed. As Gloria Hinojosa points out, these civilizing features allowed the Incas to increase the quality and difference between products, based on geographical differences, progressively creating a food policy based on reciprocity, mita¹, barter, and disciplined product distribution.



*Unique Peruvian
purple corn*

¹Mita refers to the forced-labor draft imposed by the Spaniards on the indigenous inhabitants of Peru.

When the Spaniards arrived in Peru, they found an already established civilizing network, on which they built and governed a system that, while threatening deep-rooted customs and disciplines, sought to be consistent with the forms of the Spanish conquest. It must be said that this process of conquest and viceregal settlement meant a breakdown of the previous order, and there were advances and setbacks that, from the gastronomic point of view, lead the author to indicate the existence of a framework “of a great cuisine that has more than three thousand dishes created thousands of years ago in the splendid Peru or Pirue.”

Since food and gastronomy are the basis of universal feeding, its main characteristic is that all currents are open; and, although it is possible to talk about its own national framework, it is also agreed that all progress is part of a global cuisine. There are countries that due to historical circumstances have the opportunity to enrich their gastronomy; and, in the case of South America, Peru is a prime example of this multiple culinary undertaking, ready to accept influences and include them into their own repertoire. Therefore, in addition to the contributions of the multiple regions of Peru, its departments and provinces, these interactions and exchanges stand out by making of popular cuisine a diverse magma having a common core.

It seems that we are only referring to a work of Peruvian anthropology or sociology, when, on the contrary, while it constitutes a gathering of opinions on the contribution of cooking in Peruvian society, it also is an authoritative and knowledgeable guide to sociocultural phenomena and their immediate expression in gastronomy.

It is not an easy task to select emblematic contributions, as stated by the author, “within the framework of a great cuisine with more than three thousand dishes created thousands of years ago,” for a preliminary collection as the one we discuss. However, at the same time, this represents entering a field of cultural exchanges, of fortunate coincidences, which facilitate identifying Peru as a great source of gastronomic inspiration and sociocultural multiplicity. We speak of a detailed and didactic guide to expand the gastronomic horizons of any native home.

Not unnaturally, it begins with the aggregate of the main Peruvian products: corn, potatoes, chili, fish, and shrimp, among others. The entries are then reviewed, the first sources of contentment, whose function is to whet the appetite with a variety of colors. Anticucho de corazón, whose name in Quechua means “skewered food” luxuriously marinated for roasting, which, if being grilled with heart of llama or alpaca, is mixed with Arab cuisine of beef



heart. Cangrejos reventados, typical of the north coast, especially of Chiclayo, before roasted, the crabs are soaked in chicha de jora. And, since we are getting more unrestrained, we could cite the colonial causa with shrimp escabeche, or the causa stuffed with king prawns in cream of rocotos, primordial tributes to the immemorial potato.

We continue with heraldic dishes: the northern-style fish or seafood

“We speak of a detailed and didactic guide to expand the gastronomic horizons of any native home”

ceviche, stone-baked; pork scracklings; heterodox duck cebiche, genuinely from Huacho; the refreshment stall from Lambayeque; the never powerful and democratic choros a la chalaca; different types of escabeche, among which, the chicken one stands out; fish jalea; majao de yuca; and the much-maligned ocopa

of shrimp from volcanic Arequipa. Likewise, we continue identifying uses of potatoes (stuffed, a la huancaína); corn (parpas or humitas) or pastel de choclo; patitas with peanuts; octopus with rocoto or stuffed with loin; solterito; the eponymous red or green tamales; fish tiradito; or yuquitas stuffed with king prawns.

As the listener will realize, a way of indicating that we are only talking about the entries, and therefore, the less pretentious portions, is the use of the Spanish diminutive

form. In any case, every term is ‘-ito’ to reach the ahíto (satiated) stomachs.

The substantial liquid

Soups are indeed a separate chapter from Creole cuisine. Wherever you go, you will see a sign that announces soups or chupes or aguaditos. And do not think of finding differences because soups are the basic to warm the body and encourage the diner for successful undertakings. Perhaps you will go for the luxurious shrimp chupe — Felipe Adán Mejía, El Corregidor, called it “the Venus de Milo of the Peruvian soup dipping”— but he also felt Creole nostalgia for the sancochado, the puchero, the chairro, the aguadito, the chupe de piedra, or quinoa, the espedado, the pebre, the parihuela, the shambar, among others. Our blood would not be the same if this enormous variety of marvelous, miraculous, and nutritional liquid had not existed.

There is still room for main dishes

If the listeners expect that all of the aforesaid was more than enough to understand the wide variety of the Peruvian cuisine, they obviously fall short: we are missing the main dishes, which confirm that if there are few places where you live to eat, Peru is one of those that have first place in that rank.

Peruvian peppers

After piqueos, appetizers, snacks or bienmesabe, as if nothing had happened, the main dishes came, which means that you have to hang a napkin, loosen the belt, and think that you are entering paradise. The owners of the house devoted a considerable part of their fortune in these celebrations, and the godparents also contributed several hundreds of soles to make the party fulfilling and the object of future praise.

The author reminds us of a mention by Ricardo Palma regarding a marvelous banquet: "In 1608 the Dominicans gave a feast to the Augustinian and Franciscan congregations, what a feast!: There was sopa teóloga, fritanga de menudillos, stuffed turkey, rabbit carapulca, mutton stew, pepián and locro de patitas, meat in marinade, San Pedro and San Pablo and pastel de choclo; in other words, a gastronomic fun mayhem. Let us now recall the times that in our century arise and astonish: fish marinade, ají de gallina, duck chili in the fashion of Chepén, rice with seafood (squid, scallops, octopus, crab), rice with duck a la chichayana, rice with chicken, cabrito in red wine, caiguas stuffed with loin (what a luxurious treat!), shrimps stuffed with passion fruit honey, mushroom capchi, carapulca con

medallón de lechón, cau-cau, cheese cauche, cuchi kanca, cuy chactado, beans with turkey, frito norteño, juane, sole a lo macho, shrimp locro, lomo saltado ... and here we stop for a break."

While moving forward on this display of flavor, abundance, magnificence, we should add liqueurs and desserts, when the afternoon gives the way to the evening.

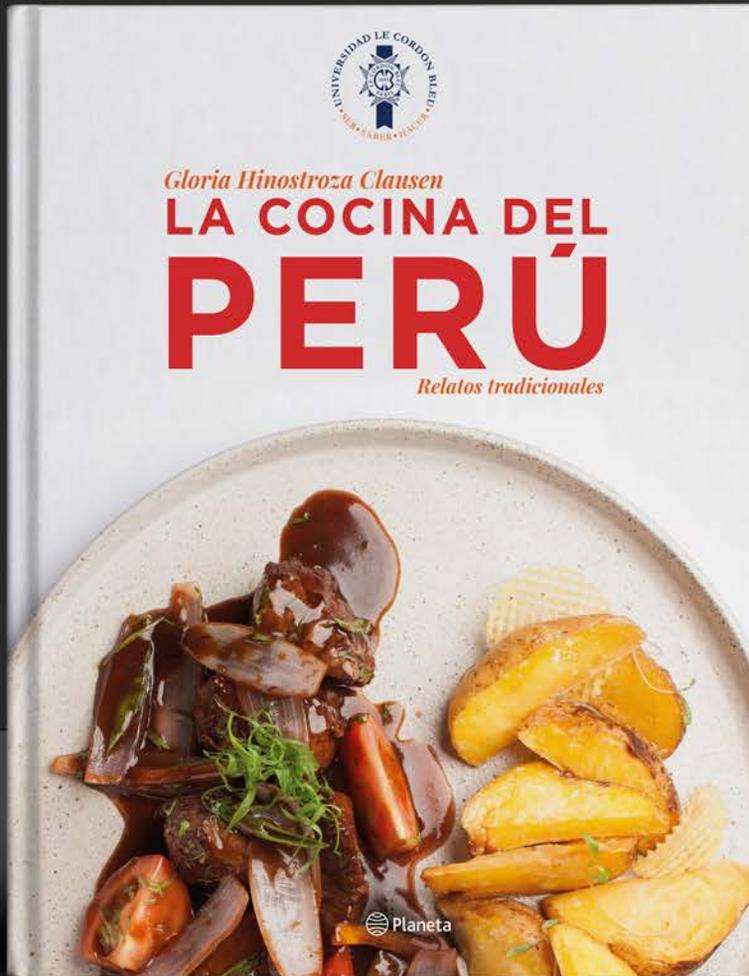
It is possible that the times have led to a reduction some of these excesses, but the Creole custom remains and it is part of the doings and the knowledge of Peruvian society, in addition to the fact that today many of these recipes and dishes are no longer the privilege of a certain region or city: they join the pharaonic court of Peru, poor but splendid and pachamanquero.

Congratulations to the author of the appetizing book Gloria Hinostroza Clausen, and let us follow her example, not only to continue the tradition, but also to support tourism, the visit to this long-lasting warehouse of daily rations and joy. It would be fine to conclude by singing, together with the Compadre Guisao: "As the water is a bad brew, I propose, on the day, to extend a pipeline from Pisco to Ferreñafe."

"The owners of the house devoted a considerable part of their fortune in these celebrations, and the godparents also contributed several hundreds of soles to make the party fulfilling and the object of future praise"

(*) Remarks by Raúl Vargas at the book presentation on August 3rd, 2018 at the International Book Fair

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