

*Gastronomy as discourse: the discursive construction of food identity in the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil**

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Abstract:

The purpose of this article is to investigate the inseparable relationship between gastronomy and discourse, analysing how meanings surrounding food identity are constructed in the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil* (*History of Food in Brazil*). The central hypothesis is that Brazilian gastronomy, beyond being a field related to eating practices, also constitutes a symbolic space structured by discursive struggles that regulate perceptions of authenticity, tradition, and belonging. Adopting the perspective of French Discourse Analysis, grounded in the works of authors such as Pêcheux (1993, 1997), Orlandi (2007, 2015), and Maingueneau (2008, 2014, 2017), this study seeks to understand how discursive formations stabilise or challenge meanings about food, revealing processes of legitimation and marginalisation of particular forms of gastronomic knowledge. To this end, we conducted a qualitative analysis of the series, focusing on three main axes: discursive memory, gastronomic *ethos*, and food ideology. The findings indicate that Brazilian gastronomy operates as a discursive field in which different agents-chefs, historians, specialists, and traditional communities-compete to define what is regarded as legitimate and authentic within the national food repertoire. Thus, the study demonstrates that discourses on gastronomy do not merely document food practices but actively participate in the construction of cultural identity and the symbolic hierarchies that shape the food domain.

Keywords:

Gastronomy; Discourse; Identity; Memory; *Ethos*.

Resumo:

A proposta deste artigo é investigar a relação indissociável entre gastronomia e discurso, analisando como os sentidos sobre identidade alimentar são construídos na série História da Alimentação no Brasil. A hipótese central é que a gastronomia brasileira, além de um campo relacionado a práticas alimentares, é também um espaço simbólico estruturado por disputas discursivas que regulam as percepções sobre autenticidade, tradição e pertencimento alimentar. Ao adotar a perspectiva da Análise do Discurso Francesa (AD), fundamentada nos trabalhos de autores como Pêcheux (1993, 1997), Orlandi (2007, 2015), Maingueneau (2008, 2014, 2017), entre outros, buscamos compreender como formações discursivas estabilizam ou tensionam sentidos sobre a alimentação, evidenciando processos de legitimação e marginalização de determinados saberes gastronômicos. Para tanto, realizamos uma análise qualitativa da série, focalizando três eixos: memória discursiva, ethos gastronômico e ideologia alimentar. Os resultados indicam que a gastronomia brasileira opera como um campo discursivo em que diferentes agentes – chefs, historiadores, especialistas e comunidades tradicionais – disputam a definição do que é legítimo e autêntico no repertório alimentar nacional. Assim, evidenciamos que os discursos sobre gastronomia não apenas registram práticas alimentares, mas também participam ativamente da construção da identidade cultural e das hierarquias simbólicas que atravessam o campo alimentar.

Palavras-chave:

Gastronomia; Discurso; Identidade; Memória; Ethos.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies in the field of gastronomy have long demonstrated that food transcends its biological function, manifesting itself as a cultural and symbolic phenomenon (Eleutério, 2014; Montanari, 2013). In this regard, previous research on gastronomic discourse has shown how food operates as a symbolic arena of ideological struggle (Poulain, 2013), in which different agents seek to legitimise their perspectives on authenticity and food tradition. Thus, the field of gastronomy is established as an interdisciplinary domain, encompassing multiple cultural, historical, and social dimensions. This study seeks to advance this discussion by articulating discursive memory, gastronomic *ethos*, and food ideology to construct Brazilian food identity in the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil* (*History of Food in Brazil*). Within this framework, the constitution of gastronomic knowledge is understood to go beyond culinary practice, being inscribed in the realm of food traditions and identities of different peoples-thereby situating it within the scope of discourse.

Building on Eleutério's (2014) definition, "[...] the formation of a people's gastronomic culture derives from the combination of various factors, such as ethnic, religious, and socio-cultural background; miscegenation; patriotism and regionalism; climatic conditions; geological conditions; among others"-issues that are fundamental to understanding a people's gastronomy. This definition clearly shows that a group's food habits are not merely reflections of their biological needs, nor are they limited to choices of ingredients and preparation techniques; rather, they are symbolic manifestations that reflect historical, social, economic, and geographical relations over time. Consequently, it becomes evident that the study of gastronomy cannot be dissociated from its historical and cultural context, since every dish, technique, and ingredient associated with eating carries discourses of belonging, identity, and tradition.

An example of such diversity can be observed in Brazil, a country of vast territory and rich culinary traditions. In different regions, it is common to find dishes sharing the same name but prepared in distinct ways, each influenced by its cultural background, the availability of ingredients, and its own regional characteristics. Moqueca, for instance, is a typical dish in both Bahia and Espírito Santo, yet it presents marked differences between the two versions. While moqueca baiana includes palm oil (*azeite de dendê*) and coconut milk-ingredients that provide an intense and striking flavour-moqueca capixaba traditionally omits them, using annatto (*urucum*, also known as *colorau*) instead to give the dish its distinctive colour. Another classic example is *cuscuz*, interpreted differently across Brazil. In the Northeast, *cuscuz nordestino* is prepared with corn flakes and is typically served with butter, milk, cheese, or savoury accompaniments. In São Paulo, *cuscuz paulista* has a denser consistency and incorporates ingredients such as cornmeal, fish, eggs, and vegetables, usually presented moulded.

Historically, many traditional dishes indeed emerged from the need for sustenance. However, this is not the sole explanation for Brazilian gastronomic diversity. The foods we consume and the reasons why we 'choose' them primarily reveal aspects of our collective history. In other words, preparations and techniques are imbued with a memory that produces diverse meanings, including the construction of our identity as the "Brazilian people". Brazil's gastronomic plurality is not limited to the names of dishes that indicate their regional origins; it also underscores the richness of

the country's cultural formation, which places its cuisine in a position of prominence on the world stage—particularly when compared to countries whose entire territory is smaller than many Brazilian states. The diversity of preparation methods and locally produced ingredients, shaped by historical, social, and regional influences, makes Brazilian gastronomy a genuine cultural heritage, rich in history and identity.

Given this diversity, it becomes pertinent to question how these food practices are represented and legitimised in discourse. Gastronomy is not merely a set of food practices but also a space of signification where cultural identities are constructed and contested. Discourse Analysis provides the theoretical means to understand how Brazilian food identity is constituted through historical processes of signification and symbolic struggle, examining the meanings that emerge from these practices and how they are stabilised or re-signified. In this context, understanding how certain gastronomic discourses consolidate as legitimate representations of national food identity requires an approach that goes beyond the mere description of food practices. Discourses on gastronomy do not simply record customs; they structure them and stabilise meanings relating to belonging, authenticity, and tradition (Assis, 2025). Hence, food must be viewed not solely as a material object but as discourse, since its meanings are socially constructed and ideologically contested.

From this perspective, the article proposes to explore the articulation between French Discourse Analysis (henceforth FDA) and gastronomy studies, aiming to comprehend the discursive mechanisms that regulate the formation of meanings surrounding Brazilian food identity. To anchor our discussion, we draw upon authors such as Pêcheux (1993, 1997), Orlandi (2007, 2015), and Maingueneau (2008, 2014, 2017), among others, whose works enable an understanding of discursive relations and the effects of meaning that construct food identity in Brazil. The FDA approach posits that discourses do not emerge spontaneously but are traversed by historical and ideological determinations that regulate their production and circulation—a premise that substantiates our theoretical choice. To conceptualise gastronomy as a discursive field, we engage with notions such as discursive memory and formation, food ideology, and gastronomic *ethos*, since these concepts elucidate the processes through which certain meanings about food become stabilised and naturalised over time. As Bourdieu (2007) asserts, taste is not an individual given but a product of one's social position and of the power relations structuring the cultural field—an observation that aligns with our understanding of the importance of examining the discourses that shape our actions in relation to eating.

Building upon this theoretical framework, this article proceeds from the indissociable relationship between discourse and gastronomy to analyse the discursive construction of Brazilian food identity. Our corpus of analysis is the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)*, which provides relevant discursive material for understanding processes of signification related to food in the country. This series, based on the eponymous work by Câmara Cascudo (2011), offers a historical panorama of Brazilian cuisine and highlights the intersections between Indigenous, African, and European cultures. The hypothesis guiding this research is that the meanings attributed to food are discursively produced, regulated, and historically situated. Furthermore, it assumes that discourses on food not only preserve cultural memories but also operate in regulating identity affiliations, defining which food practices are legitimised and which are marginalised within distinct historical and social contexts.

To accomplish these objectives, the article is organised into several sections. Following this introduction, we present the theoretical framework and discuss the core concepts underpinning our analysis. We then outline the methodology, specifying the theoretical approach and corpus. In the analytical section, we examine selected excerpts to pursue our research aims, test our hypothesis, and elucidate the discursive phenomena underlying the construction of Brazilian food identity. Finally, we offer our concluding remarks and summarise the key findings of this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this article, we contend that FDA constitutes an indispensable theoretical and methodological framework for understanding Brazilian gastronomy not merely as a set of food practices but as a space of meaning production, where memories, identities, and relations of power are constructed and re-signified. Since its initial formulation by Pêcheux (1997), FDA has argued that meanings are neither natural nor spontaneous, but are traversed by discursive formations that regulate and stabilise them over time. For the author, "it is not the subjects who establish the meanings, but rather that it is in their relation with discursive memory that meanings are constituted and stabilised" (Pêcheux, 1997, p. 165).

From this perspective, Orlandi (2015, p. 30) notes that "discourses are neither transparent nor neutral, but constitute ways of saying that are anchored in historical processes of signification." Thus, investigating the meanings produced in gastronomy from a discursive perspective means recognising that discourses about a people's food operate under specific historical and social conditions, being produced and contested in different contexts - conditions which are indispensable for their comprehension.

This conception is also shared by scholars in gastronomic studies. Poulain (2013), for example, makes clear in his work that the relationship among food, culture, and society is indissociable. This approach therefore provides gastronomy with a broader understanding, placing it within a sphere that surpasses the purely nutritional, technical, or culinary dimension, situating it as a discursive field that enables us to explain the reasons behind food choices, the meanings attached to them, and those produced through them. What is eaten, how it is eaten, and what is valued within a food culture are not isolated decisions, but historically constructed processes imbued with meaning.

Assis (2025, p. 115) understands food memory as a gesture of resistance to the homogenization of meanings, stating that "in every recipe passed down through generations [...] there is a gesture of resistance to the standardization imposed by the hegemonic discourses of nutrition, consumption, and efficiency." Thus, food memory is not a simple affective recollection, but a space for the re-inscription of meanings that updates, in the present, practices and knowledge from the past. From this perspective, comprehending gastronomy implies recognising that food discourses not only reflect cultural practices but also legitimise, regulate, and transform them over time. This view resonates with Pêcheux's (1997) understanding of the non-transparent nature of discourse and of how meanings are produced within specific discursive formations, traversed by ideology and memory. According to the author:

Words, expressions, propositions, etc., receive their meaning from the discursive formation within which they are produced. We shall say that individuals are 'interpellated' as speaking subjects (as subjects of their discourse) by the discursive formations that represent, in language, the ideological formations corresponding to them (Pêcheux, 1997, p. 49).

Thus, a people's gastronomy is a discursive practice and cannot be separated from the historical and social conditions that constitute it. The meanings attributed to food and to the ways of eating are not fixed; they are traversed by symbolic disputes that determine what is regarded as authentic, legitimate, or traditional within a given food culture-that is, within a given discursive formation.

Food identity, in this context, may be understood as a set of historically constructed meanings that associate eating habits with cultural and social belonging. More than a set of material practices, food participates in the symbolic construction of social relations, functioning as a discursive element of distinction and belonging. For Pêcheux (1993), discourse does not merely reflect reality but actively participates in the constitution of the meanings that structure a field of knowledge. Applied to the domain of food, this perspective allows us to understand that discourses on gastronomy not only record culinary practices but also delimit what is recognised as food identity.

Orlandi (2007) reinforces this idea by asserting that discursive identity is always an effect of meaning, a process through which certain elements are legitimised while others are silenced. In the

case of gastronomy, this means that some culinary traditions are repeatedly represented as symbols of authenticity, while others are reinterpreted as minor practices or as detached from legitimate identity belonging. This discursive operation - central to this research - highlights that identity is an effect of meaning, (re)constructed and negotiated across different discursive spaces.

Seen from this discursive perspective, food identity may be examined through the ways in which particular foods and methods of preparation come to represent a group or a nation, while others are displaced or re-signified. This dynamic is organised through discursive memory, which retrieves meanings from the past in order to stabilise or transform discourses on food. Furthermore, food ideology participates in this process by defining the criteria through which cultural values are attributed to food, thereby naturalising certain choices and silencing others.

These processes of attempted stabilisation and transformation of meaning are not arbitrary but operate within discursive structures that regulate which meanings are legitimised and which are contested. The organisation of such regularities in discourse is directly related to the notion of discursive formation. As proposed by Pêcheux (1997), a discursive formation corresponds to a set of rules that determine what may or may not be said within a particular ideological position. Maingueneau (2017, p. 25) clarifies that "every discourse is embedded in a system of relations that defines its place within a broader network of meanings." In the context of gastronomy, this notion allows us to discern which gastronomic discourses become socially accepted and which are silenced or marginalised. Charaudeau and Maingueneau (2004) likewise emphasise that the production of discourse is bound by institutional rules and conditions that determine its legitimacy.

In the gastronomic sphere, this implies that the selection of a dish or ingredient depends not solely on its origin or characteristics but on the discursive conditions that allow its acceptance within a given context. Authier-Revuz (1998) explains that the construction of food discourses involves the intersection of materiality and the symbolic representations surrounding it. Accordingly, we understand that the materiality of food-its ingredients, composition, and methods of preparation-is always intertwined with discursive representations that confer value and meaning upon what is eaten. Hence, within gastronomy, dishes or culinary practices may be exalted as symbols of identity and tradition, or conversely devalued and associated with social stigma.

When we examine these contrasting valuations, it becomes evident that discursivisation in the gastronomic context unfolds amid symbolic and ideological disputes, situating the discussion within the scope of food coloniality. As Pêcheux (1997) and Orlandi (2015) demonstrate, the stabilisation of meanings depends upon ideological conditions that naturalise some practices while devaluing others. Discursively, there is a constant struggle between them. In gastronomy, this is manifested, for instance, in how certain food standards are promoted as "superior" to others, without this valorisation being explicitly recognised as an ideological process. French cuisine, for example, has historically been consolidated as a model of sophistication and refinement, whereas Indigenous and African culinary knowledge-equally rich in technique and expertise-is often treated as exotic, rudimentary, or peripheral.

This symbolic dispute, which defines which food practices are legitimised and which are disqualified, is directly linked to the operation of food ideology. Food coloniality, a concept derived from decolonial studies (Grosfoguel, 2009; Quijano, 2005), refers to the persistence of colonial power patterns in food practices and discourses. This process is discursively consolidated through ideologies that stabilize meanings about authenticity, tradition, and sophistication, naturalizing historical inequalities in the gastronomic field.

By stabilising some meanings and rendering others invisible, food ideology functions as a discursive mechanism that regulates perceptions of what is deemed healthy, authentic, and appropriate in gastronomy. According to Brandão (in Canesqui, 1988), food ideology manifests itself in the way beliefs and norms structure eating habits within a social group, determining not only what is eaten but also the significance attributed to food.

Food, therefore, is permeated by cultural and economic values that establish patterns and restrictions of consumption, often naturalised as individual choices. Canesqui (1988) argues that such practices cannot be analysed in isolation, as they form part of a broader social system in which

foods and preparation methods are influenced by historical and political factors. While the author's anthropological perspective conceives food as a phenomenon structured by cultural and social dynamics, in this work we adopt a discursive approach, understanding food ideology not merely as a set of beliefs but as a device that stabilises meanings about food, naturalising certain practices while silencing others.

In this sense, the notion of food ideology-understood through FDA concepts-reveals how certain meanings concerning gastronomic choices are revisited and re-signified over time. As Pollan, (2008) points out, the globalisation of eating habits reinforces a logic of domination in which Eurocentric standards are promoted as superior, while traditional food practices are relegated to a secondary position or associated with a past to be overcome. Among the central concepts of FDA that enable this understanding, discursive memory stands out as fundamental for grasping how meanings surrounding food choices are retrieved and transformed over time. According to Orlandi (2007, p. 33), discursive memory "is not merely what is preserved from the past, but what, from the past, remains active in the production of meanings." In the context of food ideology, this memory is manifested in how certain foods, culinary techniques, and gastronomic practices are either reclaimed or erased from the legitimating discourses on food.

This process is evident in the revaluation of historically marginalised foods in Brazil, such as maize and manioc, sometimes identified as symbols of cultural resistance associated with disadvantaged social groups, and at other times re-signified within the logic of the gastronomic market and incorporated into the discourse of higher social strata. Cascudo (2011) notes that Brazilian eating habits were profoundly shaped by interactions among different cultural groups, yet not all of these influences have been granted equal status in the construction of national food heritage.

The discursive memory we refer to, however, does not operate homogeneously. As Pêcheux (1997) reminds us, meanings circulate within a space of contradiction and struggle, where different discursive formations strive to stabilise meanings according to their ideological positions. In the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)*, as we shall see, numerous examples illustrate discursive memory and formation in the food domain. One particularly relevant aspect is the contribution of Indigenous cuisine, which throughout history has been alternately valued as cultural heritage and marginalised through processes of colonisation and appropriation.

These symbolic disputes in the gastronomic field will be analysed through the notion of discursive *ethos*, as formulated by Maingueneau (2008). The *ethos*, in this context, extends beyond the individual identity of an enunciator to encompass the construction of credibility and legitimacy within food discourse. For the author, every discourse constructs an image of its speaker that must align with the expectations of their milieu and with the discursive formations sustaining it (Maingueneau, 2008). In gastronomy, this notion helps us to understand how different actors-chefs, specialists, popular cooks, and traditional communities-construct self-images in discourse and how these images contribute to the legitimation or marginalisation of particular culinary practices. Thus, gastronomic discourses do not establish a fixed hierarchy among foods and practices but operate within constant symbolic negotiations of authenticity, tradition, and innovation.

We therefore understand that food ideology is manifested discursively through the construction of specific *ethé* (plural of *ethos*), which confer legitimacy upon food discourses and establish which practices are valued or marginalised. Different social actors mobilise distinct *ethé* to sustain or contest stabilised meanings about food, either reinforcing or challenging hegemonic patterns within the gastronomic field. The *ethos*, in this sense, not only projects the enunciator's image within gastronomic discourse but also participates in the naturalisation of meanings, reinforcing food patterns that present themselves as legitimate and universal (Assis, 2025).

This discursive process regulates not only perceptions of authenticity and culinary adequacy but also structures the symbolic struggles that determine which practices are recognised as representative of cultural identity. In this movement, culinary memory (Assis, 2025) functions as a space for discursive resistance, where silenced practices and knowledge are reactivated and re-inscribed under new conditions of enunciation. This perspective aligns with the thinking of Cascudo

(2011), who recognizes the construction of Brazilian cuisine as a historical and cultural phenomenon permeated by fusion, yet one also traversed by power relations that influence the valorization or marginalization of different culinary traditions.

In this regard, Atala (2013) highlights the need for a more critical gaze upon Brazilian gastronomy, emphasising that the valorisation of local ingredients and traditional techniques must stem from a discourse that acknowledges the historical processes of food exclusion. Charaudeau and Maingueneau (2004) reinforce this view by asserting that the legitimacy of a discourse is directly linked to its conditions of enunciation—that is, to who speaks, in what context, and under which power relations. In the gastronomic field, this implies that a nation's food identity is not a fixed entity but a discursive construction that transforms as the social actors and institutions dominating this space reconfigure meanings of authenticity, tradition, and innovation. The notion of discursive *ethos* is thus inscribed within this process, as the credibility of gastronomic discourse depends not only on the content enunciated but also on the image constructed by the enunciator within a particular discursive formation.

Within this theoretical framework, the analysis of the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)* will allow us to understand how discourses on food identity are structured, identifying the discursive strategies that legitimise or disqualify particular culinary practices. We will also examine how discursive memory retrieves and re-signifies specific elements of Brazilian gastronomy and how different *ethé* intervene in the construction of authenticity and belonging within the gastronomic field.

METHODOLOGY

Gastronomy, as previously discussed, is understood as a symbolic field in which discourses on food identity, memory, and culture are continually negotiated and re-signified. Consequently, the methodology employed in analysing the gastronomic field must also draw upon a theoretical framework that allows for an understanding of the meanings produced around food in different historical and social contexts. To foster this dialogue between discourse and gastronomy, this study adopts a qualitative methodological design, grounded in Discourse Analysis (DA) and gastronomic studies. This interdisciplinary perspective enables us to investigate how meanings relating to food identity in Brazil are constructed within the gastronomic sphere.

To carry out our analyses, we selected the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)*. This series, directed by Eugenio Puppo and scripted by Cristina Ramalho, has been available since 2017 on streaming platforms such as Amazon Prime and Apple TV. The series, consisting of thirteen episodes of approximately twenty-six minutes each, is based on the eponymous work by Luís da Câmara Cascudo, originally published in 1967. The choice of this corpus is justified by its broad exploration of food practices in Brazil, offering a historical overview of Brazilian cuisine and its multiple cultural intersections. Moreover, the relevance and representativeness of this production in the field of food culture make it a significant object of analysis for gastronomic studies, which explains its wide recognition in this area.

Our analyses are based on selected excerpts and employ an enunciative and interdiscursive approach, following the principles of FDA. To this end, we consider the conditions of production of the utterances and the discursive formations that structure the meanings surrounding food. Methodologically, we used the transcribed version of the series, from which we extracted the excerpts presented in our analyses. The selected segments explicitly address relationships between memory and food, the construction of culinary tradition, and the mechanisms that structure food coloniality.

The selection of these excerpts does not follow quantitative criteria, as the research does not aim to provide an exhaustive survey of the discourses in the series. Instead, it seeks a qualitative and interpretative analysis, focused on utterances that articulate meanings about gastronomy and Brazilian gastronomic identity. The choice of excerpts was based on the recurrence of central themes for Brazilian food identity, prioritising segments that emphasise relationships among discursive

memory, gastronomic *ethos*, and food ideology, which will be examined in the analytical section. Moments in the series where participants mobilise discourses of authenticity, tradition, and food belonging were also considered. Our analyses therefore focus on the discourses articulated in *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)*, represented by excerpts cited in this article, since this material provides structured narratives about Brazilian food that interweave past and present, tradition and innovation, resistance and cultural appropriation.

To fully grasp how these discourses operate within Brazilian gastronomy, however, it is essential to consider the dimension of food coloniality. Food coloniality, a concept derived from decolonial studies (Grosfoguel, 2009; Quijano, 2005), refers to the persistence of colonial power structures in food practices and discourses. In the Brazilian context, food coloniality is manifested in the valorisation of European ingredients and techniques to the detriment of Indigenous and African food traditions, perpetuating racial and cultural hierarchies. This logic is reflected, for instance, in the exaltation of *haute cuisine* over traditional cooking, which is often associated with poverty or a lack of sophistication. The analysis of food coloniality allows us to deconstruct the discourses that naturalise such hierarchies, revealing the power relations that shape our food choices.

Drawing upon this methodology and its assumptions, our analyses are organised around three main axes. The first axis involves identifying traces of discursive memory in accounts of traditional cuisine. The second analytical axis concerns discursive formations and the construction of different *ethé* (Maingueneau, 2008), based on the hierarchisation of foods and gastronomic practices in the series. The third axis focuses on food ideology and the coloniality of gastronomic discourse. By articulating these three analytical axes—through the examination of corpus excerpts, grounded in the theoretical discussion previously outlined, and incorporating the dimension of food coloniality—this study aims to demonstrate that discursivity plays an active role in the construction and consolidation of meanings surrounding food identity, shaping perceptions, symbolic relations, and cultural belonging within gastronomy.

ANALYSES

Discursive Formation of Legitimacy in Gastronomy

To begin this discussion, the analysis is grounded in the notions of discursive formation and legitimacy, as observed in the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)*. In this context, gastronomy operates within a discursive formation that regulates which practices and bodies of knowledge are recognised as legitimate and which remain marginal to dominant narratives. This becomes evident in the way the series does more than recount the history of Brazilian food: it also participates in the discursive process of stabilising meanings regarding what is to be considered traditional, authentic, or sophisticated in the gastronomic field.

Within this framework, food coloniality functions as a structuring principle of gastronomic legitimation, naturalising the discourse through which so-called *haute cuisine*—deeply informed by Eurocentric standards—is exalted as refined and cultured, while popular and traditional culinary practices are frequently associated with simplicity, poverty, or a bygone past. This asymmetrical valorisation reflects not merely differences in taste but the operation of power relations that shape the gastronomic field and establish symbolic criteria of social distinction (Bourdieu, 2007). Consequently, food ideology contributes to the perpetuation of these hierarchies, reinforcing the marginalisation of Indigenous, African, and popular culinary knowledge.

The series highlights, for instance, the intersection of Indigenous, African, and European cultures in the making of national cuisine, yet attributes a central and legitimising role to European influence in the development of gastronomic sophistication. This process is illustrated in the statement that “wheat and bread, brought by the colonisers, introduced a new dietary standard and redefined the population’s habits” (Chapter 4). Such a discourse not only records an historical fact but also produces a meaning of progress and refinement linked to the incorporation of European

elements into Brazilian food. In this way, the legitimation of certain discourses depends on emphasising the contributions of specific culinary groups and practices at the expense of others.

Another crucial aspect of gastronomic legitimation concerns the representation of ingredients and dishes. Manioc (*mandioca*) is celebrated as a “symbol of *brasilidade* (Brazilianess)” (Chapter 3), yet its valorisation remains circumscribed to popular cuisine, without questioning its exclusion from the circuits of *haute cuisine*. Similarly, dishes of African origin, such as *vatapá* and *acarajé*, are acknowledged as part of Brazil’s cultural heritage but receive less prominence in elite culinary spaces than recipes inspired by European gastronomy. This selective process reflects a discursive mechanism of inclusion and exclusion that defines which elements of the national food repertoire are legitimised according to prevailing social and ideological conditions.

Beyond the differential valuation of dishes and ingredients, discourses of modernisation and refinement also contribute to stabilising meanings in the gastronomic field. The series suggests that Brazilian cuisine has undergone a process of refinement through the incorporation of new techniques, reinforcing the notion that authenticity itself must be reformulated according to standards validated by *haute cuisine*. As one expert states, “technique transforms a simple dish into a gastronomic experience” (Chapter 7), implying that a dish’s value lies not in its origin or tradition but in the extent to which its preparation aligns with discursively legitimised aesthetic criteria.

Based on our observations, the analysis of the series reveals that the discursive formation of Brazilian gastronomy not only mirrors eating habits and cultural influences but also organises the very conditions under which discourses are accepted as legitimate representations of national food identity. What counts as traditional or innovative in Brazilian cuisine is not a fixed reality but an effect of discourses that circulate and stabilise within particular formations. Thus, gastronomy is not merely a collection of material practices but a discursive field in which meanings about food are historically produced, contested, and regulated through mechanisms of legitimation.

Discursive Memory and Brazilian Food Identity

As previously discussed, historical processes determine which aspects of gastronomy are recognised as authentic and which are marginalised. The stabilisation of these meanings reveals the effects of discursive legitimation, but also the way in which discursive memory retrieves and re-inscribes elements of food culture within new social frameworks.

The analysis of *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)* makes it possible to observe how discursive memory operates as a mechanism that recalls and reorganises meanings surrounding national food identity. More than a historical record, the series actively participates in the production of meanings about Brazilian gastronomy by establishing continuities, hierarchies, and silences. This recuperation is shaped by symbolic disputes that expose the operation of food coloniality: many historically marginalised food practices are only reintegrated into the gastronomic discourse once they have been re-elaborated and legitimised according to the criteria of *haute cuisine*.

The contemporary valorisation of ingredients such as manioc and maize often occurs not through the recognition of traditional knowledge, but through their re-signification within narratives of culinary innovation that serve the globalised gastronomic market. This process demonstrates how food coloniality structures the discursive memory of gastronomy, deciding which elements of the past may be preserved and which remain outside the bounds of the national food identity.

A central aspect of this narrative lies in the mobilisation of discourses on African and Indigenous food. The series points out that “beans, a traditional food in African communities, were incorporated into Brazilian cuisine and transformed into dishes such as *feijoada*” (Chapter 5). This example shows how ingredients of African origin are continually re-signified over time, reinforcing the idea that discursive memory does not simply preserve the past but re-activates it in new contexts of meaning.

Yet this process is asymmetrical: foods and culinary practices are not equally valued in every discursive space. While the series recognises the fusion of Indigenous, African, and European

influences, it nonetheless privileges the European contribution as the principal source of refinement and sophistication. This can be seen once again in the statement that “wheat and bread, brought by the colonisers, introduced a new dietary standard and redefined the population’s habits” (Chapter 4). Such a construction attributes progress and standardisation to European elements, while Indigenous and African practices are narrated as vestiges of a remote or subsistence past.

In line with our discursive perspective, the series demonstrates that Brazilian gastronomy functions as a symbolic field where discursive memory both preserves and reorganises meanings, legitimising some cultural influences and marginalising others. On the one hand, discursive memory acts to conserve traditional food practices; on the other, it reconfigures them according to the conditions that enable their valorisation or devaluation. These dynamics indicate that Brazilian food identity is not fixed but a continuous process of meaning-making, involving inclusion, erasure, and re-signification of gastronomic knowledge.

Discursive memory also manifests itself in the series’ construction of a symbolic repertoire of ingredients and culinary practices circulating across distinct discursive contexts. Manioc (Chapter 3), beans (Chapter 4), and carne seca (dried meat) (Chapter 5) emerge as central to the national diet, whereas ingredients such as maize (Chapter 6) and fish (Chapter 7) are associated with specific regional traditions. However, the ways in which these ingredients are valued reveal discursive tensions in the construction of identity: the series reinforces their historical significance without interrogating how their marginalisation in elite gastronomy results from discursive processes that devalue certain forms of knowledge and technique.

Another tension concerns the relation between tradition and innovation. While the series acknowledges the importance of preserving culinary traditions, the discursive stabilisation of tradition is often mediated by chefs and culinary experts who occupy a privileged position in validating contemporary gastronomy. This mediation appears in statements such as “Brazilian cuisine must modernise without losing its essence” (Chapter 10), uttered by a renowned chef when commenting on the importance of adopting international techniques without compromising traditional dishes. Such discourse delimits the scope of innovation within a pre-established framework of authenticity, constraining the reconfiguration of food identity to already legitimised narratives.

Taken together, the analysis of *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)* reveals that discursive memory not only preserves elements of national cuisine but also regulates how these elements are updated, legitimised, or silenced over time. Food, therefore, should not be viewed as a mere reflection of the past but as a discursive arena of symbolic struggle, where competing discourses strive to stabilise meanings of authenticity, belonging, and tradition. Brazilian food identity thus emerges as a dynamic field of signification, continually renewed by the discursive conditions that guide its interpretation.

Food Ideology and the Construction of *Ethos* in Gastronomy

At this stage of the analysis, we now turn to the role of food ideology and its relationship with the construction of *ethos* in gastronomy. As established in the previous sections, gastronomic discourses not only organise food practices but also determine which meanings are stabilised and legitimised as authentic or prestigious. If discursive formation structures the conditions of legitimacy and discursive memory retrieves and re-signifies elements of national cuisine, food ideology functions by naturalising these meanings, giving them an appearance of universality and neutrality.

In *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)*, food is shown to be permeated by power relations that dictate which practices are legitimised and which are marginalised. Food ideology represents the process through which meanings about food are produced, circulated, and socially naturalised. It materialises relations of power that determine what can be said about food, delineating which foods and practices are authorised and which are silenced. In this sense, food ideology reflects social values and actively contributes to producing meanings that render particular habits and preferences natural, inevitable, or universally valid, while

concealing their historical and social origins.

This dynamic is visible in the recurrent valorisation of Eurocentric food standards, often presented as paradigms to be emulated, whereas Indigenous and African practices are portrayed as residues of a distant past or as exotic curiosities. In one segment, an expert claims that “Brazilian cuisine was born from the encounter of traditions and became one of the richest in the world precisely because of this mixture” (Chapter 2). Although this discourse celebrates cultural diversity, it simultaneously obscures the tensions and erasures that have shaped that fusion, particularly the re-signification and suppression of Indigenous and African food practices over time. The legitimacy of such discourse is reinforced by the *ethos* of authority conferred upon the speaker, illustrating how the credibility of enunciators influences the discursive construction of food identity.

Food ideology is also evident in the way the series frames notions of healthy eating and culinary authenticity. The idea that traditional Brazilian food is “naturally balanced” or “spontaneously healthy” recurs without addressing the historical contingency of such concepts. This construction belongs to the context of food coloniality, which not only regulates which culinary practices are deemed legitimate but also establishes the criteria of legitimacy themselves.

Within Brazilian gastronomy, authenticity frequently operates through an exclusionary logic, whereby traditional practices are valued only once validated by haute cuisine specialists. In effect, expertise becomes a gatekeeping device that authorises what counts as “authentic,” while relegating popular knowledges to a residual, folkloric register. This reinforces meanings that associate refined cuisine with innovation and technique, while popular and traditional knowledges are relegated to the realm of “rustic” or “old-fashioned” cooking. Such mechanisms demonstrate how food coloniality underpins the symbolic hierarchy of gastronomic discourses, reproducing distinctions of class, race, and power in the food field.

A participant in the series states that “true Brazilian food is healthy because it was born from the balance among three continents” (Chapter 4). We treat this claim as a historically situated construction rather than a descriptive fact, since definitions of “health” emerge from specific scientific, social, and institutional regimes of truth. This claim advances a notion of essentialised harmony, effacing the fact that definitions of health and nutrition are historically situated and context-dependent. The validation of this discourse is grounded in an *ethos* of expertise, as the authority of the chef-speaker reinforces the naturalisation of the concept without any explicit critical interrogation.

Another key dimension of food ideology concerns the construction of culinary authenticity as a value to be safeguarded. Authenticity is often associated with recipes said to have “survived time”, passed down unchanged across generations. As a historian remarks, “to preserve Brazilian cuisine is to ensure that our typical dishes remain the same, without losing their essence” (Chapter 6). This statement implies a static vision of gastronomy, overlooking the fact that eating habits are historically dynamic and subject to constant transformation. Furthermore, gastronomic authenticity is frequently legitimised through an *ethos* of tradition, in which enunciators linked to cultural heritage are regarded as authoritative custodians of what should be preserved in national cuisine.

The valorisation and marginalisation of particular ingredients further illustrate how food ideology regulates meaning. The series shows that olive oil and wheat are associated with sophistication and culinary progress, whereas ingredients historically tied to the working classes, such as maize and manioc, are portrayed as traditional or rustic. This suggests that the value of a food item is defined less by its historical presence than by the discursive frame and the speaker’s position. The *ethos* of distinction (Maingueneau, 2008) operates here, endowing certain discourses with prestige and relegating others to the periphery of cultural value.

In sum, the analysis reveals that food ideology acts to stabilise meanings about food, producing discursive effects that render particular choices and techniques natural or self-evident. The gastronomic *ethos* participates in this process by shaping the credibility of enunciators who validate such meanings, ensuring that specific discourses are received as legitimate and trustworthy. By reinforcing a narrative of cultural synthesis that silences historical asymmetries, the series demonstrates how gastronomic practices are continually regulated by discursive mechanisms that

control whose voices hold the authority to define and transform Brazilian cuisine.

Therefore, food ideology, by naturalising these constructions, conceals the power relations that determine which knowledges are valued and which are erased. The construction of *ethos* in gastronomic discourse contributes to this legitimation, since the authority of enunciators directly influences the acceptance or marginalisation of food practices and traditions. Gastronomy, then, should not be regarded merely as a reflection of culture but as a discursive field where meanings are continually produced, negotiated, and contested, revealing Brazilian food identity as a dynamic and historically situated construction shaped by social, economic, and ideological relations.

CONCLUSION

From the outset of this study, we have sought to investigate gastronomy as a discursive field in which meanings surrounding identity, memory, and culture are continuously constructed, contested, and re-signified. Our central hypothesis has been that discourses on food not only record eating practices and habits but also participate actively in the constitution of belonging and exclusion within Brazilian food identity. In this respect, we adopted French Discourse Analysis (FDA) as our theoretical and methodological framework, articulating concepts such as discursive memory, discursive formation, *ethos*, and food ideology in order to understand the mechanisms of production and stabilisation of meaning that establish Brazilian food identity within the gastronomic field.

The analysis of the series *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)* has shown that gastronomic discourses operate in delimiting what is considered legitimate and authentic within national cuisine. To this end, we examined three main axes: the discursive formation and legitimacy of gastronomic discourses; the discursive memory and constitution of Brazilian food identity; and the articulation between food ideology and the construction of *ethos* in gastronomy.

Initially, we observed that discursive formation structures the conditions of legitimacy in the gastronomic field, regulating which practices, ingredients, and traditions are recognised and which remain peripheral. The series' narrative contributes to this stabilisation by reinforcing certain cultural influences over others, associating the modernisation and sophistication of Brazilian cuisine with Eurocentric patterns, while Indigenous and African food practices are frequently represented through lenses of tradition or subsistence. This discursive operation does not merely concern cultural legitimation but also expresses food coloniality, that is, the persistence of colonial relations within discourses on gastronomy. This process can be identified in the valorisation of certain cuisines and ingredients at the expense of others, consolidating a perspective that privileges Eurocentric standards over local culinary traditions.

Subsequently, we explored the role of discursive memory in constructing national food identity, revealing that gastronomic discourses not only preserve past practices and ingredients but also continually reinscribe them within new cultural and social frameworks. By emphasising the fusion of Indigenous, African, and European influences, the series contributes to the construction of a food memory that reinforces the narrative of Brazilian cuisine as the outcome of a harmonious balance among diverse traditions-without necessarily problematising the processes of exclusion and appropriation that marked this history. Discursive memory is therefore fundamental to what is regarded as authentic or legitimate within the national food repertoire, influencing how tradition is recognised, adapted, and re-signified over time.

Within this process, food ideology operates as the principle of naturalisation sustaining such representations, masking the power relations that determine what is valued as authentic and what is silenced or marginalised. Food coloniality becomes visible when traditional culinary practices are revalorised only after undergoing processes of re-signification within haute cuisine. This movement demonstrates how the discourse of authenticity functions as a mechanism for selecting cultural elements, favouring certain preparation methods and ingredients over others.

Finally, we analysed the relationship between food ideology and the construction of *ethos* in gastronomy, showing how certain discourses become stabilised and naturalised through the

credibility conferred upon specific enunciators. The gastronomic *ethos*, constructed in the series through the voices of experts, chefs, and historians, contributes to the legitimation of discourses on authenticity and tradition, granting authority to particular interpretations of national cuisine and reinforcing a discursive organisation in which haute cuisine becomes a reference point for the valorisation of food practices. This process reveals that certain culinary traditions achieve legitimacy only when reinterpreted within a discursive space that confers prestige upon them, evidencing a process of reclassification of food practices and their social meanings. Moreover, we identified that food ideology also operates in constructing meanings around healthy eating and authenticity, naturalising the valorisation of particular dietary standards while obscuring the historical asymmetries that shape Brazilian gastronomic identity.

On the basis of these analyses, we confirm the hypothesis that discourses on food do not merely reflect culture but actively participate in its construction, operating through discursive mechanisms that stabilise meanings of belonging and exclusion within the food domain. Gastronomy thus emerges as a privileged discursive space of signification, in which tradition, innovation, and identity are continuously negotiated and reconfigured. The study of *História da Alimentação no Brasil (History of Food in Brazil)* has demonstrated that food identity is not a fixed datum but a dynamic process, influenced by discursive formations, memories, and symbolic struggles that regulate the legitimacy of gastronomic discourse. In this context, food coloniality can be understood as a determining factor in the way gastronomic discourses organise culinary knowledge, favouring certain practices while others are gradually replaced, transformed, or silenced. We therefore understand that legitimacy within the gastronomic field is sustained by discursive processes permeated by power relations, in which food ideology acts to naturalise cultural values and hierarchies.

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