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**Policies and Practices for Safeguarding Colombia's Food Heritage: A  
Study of *Llanero* Traditions, *Ajiaco Santafereño*, and *Cuy***

Master's Thesis

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Tartu, 2023

## Acknowledgements

To Ester Bardone and Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, for their constant support and help during the complete process of this research, thank you for the patience and for making me truly believe in my research.

A Santiago Franco, Cachi, Patricia, Francy y Alejandro, por recibirme en su espacio y permitirme descubrir la magia que tiene Yopal y los llanos. A Luz Nandar por mostrarme un lado distinto de la increíble práctica que es el Cuy. A Jackie y Doña Luisa, por abrirme los espacios de su cocina para contarme de sus Ajiacos. A Diana Vernot por ser siempre un referente y una mentora de vida.

A mis papas y mi hermano, gracias por permitirme cumplir mi sueño, apoyarme en cada paso, celebrar mis victorias y acompañarme en mis derrotas, y ante todo dejarme soñar tan alto como puedo en este loco sueño de estudiar patrimonio.

Gracias a mis amigos, que no me queda suficiente espacio para nombrarlos a todos. Gracias por siempre creer en mí, gracias por apoyarme y darme risas y acompañamiento cuando lo necesitara, pero mas que eso, gracias por ser quienes son, y por permitirme acompañarlos en el camino, ustedes también son mi familia. Éste logro también es de ustedes, y no puedo esperar para celebrarlo con todos.

Los amo, esto es para ustedes.

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## **Introduction**

Safeguarding traditional food practices in Colombia is an important issue with far-reaching cultural, social, and economic implications. Traditional food practices represent an essential aspect of cultural heritage, reflecting local communities' history, beliefs, and values. Loss of these practices could signify the disappearance of a significant part of Colombia's cultural diversity, one of the country's defining characteristics; it can also affect how individuals relate to their surroundings and perceive their identities. In addition, safeguarding traditional food practices could promote sustainable methods in the food industry, thereby safeguarding the environment and the lives of local tradition-bearers and other heritage stakeholders. This study raises awareness of the significance of traditional food practices and identifies the obstacles and opportunities associated with safeguarding them. This research seeks to inform local communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders about my personal considerations and strategies for preserving and promoting traditional food practices in Colombia, thereby enhancing their cultural value and socioeconomic significance.

When studying intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding practices during my bachelor's studies, I came across the document Policy for the knowledge, safeguarding, and promotion of food and traditional cuisines of Colombia (La Política para el conocimiento, salvaguardia y el fomento de la alimentación y las cocinas tradicionales de Colombia), released by the Ministry of Culture in 2012. Since there had never before in Colombian history been a policy designed to protect and promote traditional cooking traditions, the national government regarded the aforementioned policy as a model document. The policy document is very detailed. However, it always left me questioning how the government could adequately safeguard traditional cooking methods, collaborate with local communities, and promote them. This led me to investigate this policy, its origins, scope, etc. Evidently, the policy was developed in response to Colombia's 2006 ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, whose effects led to the development of a Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage on a national scale. This policy serves under the heritage system of Colombia in the sense that although it is a separate document from the ICH national list, its purpose is not only to safeguard the traditions but also to give tools to communities to nominate them in the list if they wish.

With further studies in my current Master's program, I decided to inform myself about the profound issues surrounding the heritage lists and explore the validity of Colombian policy. My deep interest in food as a gastronomist and the rooted feeling of nostalgia for being away from home became the focal point of the research I wanted to engage with. This thesis delves into a comprehensive study to elucidate the operational efficacy and community engagement dynamics of the 2012 policy implemented by the Ministry of Culture in Colombia. The subsequent sections of this document present an in-depth analysis of the aforementioned topic, focusing specifically on the interaction between the policy and the communities responsible for preserving and transmitting culinary traditions within the country. I chose three places in Colombia based on three different food traditions. The three case studies were selected based on three aspects of food traditions I wanted to study.

The first one is the Cuy (or guinea pig), a product well-known in South America and widely consumed in the east region of Colombia, in the department of Nariño. This practice has deep historical roots, which is why it was selected. The main point is how current individuals in this region interact with the product, its meaning, and its continuous consumption.

The second practice is the Ajiaco Santaferense, a soup very typical of the central region of the country, in the capital city of Bogotá. Being a city native and having spent my whole life there, I grew up unavoidably surrounded by many iterations of this soup. Being one of the iconic dishes of Colombia in general but more specifically Bogotá, it was in my interest to know how this practice moves away from households and into professional settings and how the government treated the practice within the scope of its heritage. Regional proximity was the main reason for choosing this tradition.

The third practice is not a dish but more of the general tradition surrounding the food culture in the llanero traditions in Yopal, the country's eastern plains. I chose this region and its general practices because of a constant conversation with someone from that region who told me the government did not consider their practices when they built narratives about food practices needing study, inventorying, and safeguarding. So, I wanted to find out how they view their practices and their interactions with safeguarding and intangible cultural heritage.

After choosing a topic for my Master's thesis, selecting research questions that would guide the fieldwork and the overall research was crucial. Listed below are the research questions:

- How effective is the policy of the Colombian Ministry of Culture in preserving and promoting food traditions in the three locations chosen?
- How do tradition-bearers perceive the efforts of the Ministry of Culture to protect food?
- What are the most effective strategies for preserving and promoting Colombian food traditions?

These guiding questions helped me define the theoretical framework and methodology for working on this research. Relying on existing research, I chose three conceptual lenses to guide this thesis: heritage regimes, heritagization of food, how food is perceived, and how its value changes in light of the UNESCO/heritage list.

The study is based on fieldwork materials collected in the summer of 2022. I relied on semi-structured interviews, which I conducted with traditional cooks/tradition-bearers in the cities of Bogotá, Pasto, and Yopal, as well as for former government officials of the Heritage section of the Ministry of Culture. Additionally, I examine the Policy for the knowledge, safeguarding, and promotion of food and traditional cuisines of Colombia itself as a source.

This thesis consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, the theoretical framework for this study is presented, along with a review of the literature and explanations of key terms. The second chapter thoroughly discusses the evolution of food systems and traditions in Colombia. The third chapter is dedicated to the materials and methods used for interviews and data analysis. The fourth chapter is dedicated to policy analysis, using the main definitions, their message, and the primary audience of the policy itself. Also, the interviews with government officials take the spotlight here by describing their work with the policy and safeguarding food traditions. There will also be case studies comparing the Colombian policy with the policies of neighboring countries with significant food heritage scenes like México and Perú. Finally, the fifth chapter analyzes the ethnographic materials and contrasts the three cases. To finalize the research, a conclusion is drawn, which helps to give specific answers to the questions.

## **Chapter 1. Food Culture as Heritage: Theoretical Framework**

A comprehensive exploration of food practices and their relationship with the state needs a meticulous examination, clarification, and utilization of various conceptual frameworks. As mentioned, this research incorporates three distinct concepts: heritage regimes, heritagization of food, and food perspectives within the context of UNESCO's framework. These concepts are integral to understanding and analyzing the intricate dynamics and implications inherent in the intersection of food practices and the state.

Before the concepts are defined and analyzed, one of the important things to discuss is the concept of heritage itself. It is a tricky concept widely discussed in literature from many scholarly approaches. Nonetheless, one of the most easily explained definitions given, helpful for this research as well, is the one provided by Smith, who defines heritage starting from the premise that heritage is not a thing, a site, a building, or a material object. Instead, heritage is "a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present" (Smith, 2006, 44). Smith emphasizes that cultural heritage management is constituted by heritage discourses that reflect sociocultural meanings and values related to heritage (ibid., 13).

The realm of intangible cultural heritage encompasses a diverse array of objects, practices, knowledge systems, and environments fundamentally rooted in various communities and cultures across the globe. This thorough description highlights the high prevalence of heritage in various socioeconomic contexts, where representations of culture related to culinary culture take on specific and complex manifestations. It is crucial to acknowledge that heritage, even in its most rudimentary form, reflects societal practices and collective understandings, providing valuable insights into the complex web of culinary practices and their meaning within various cultural contexts.

Because heritage is synonymous with sustainability and the identity of individuals and communities, it draws a variety of stakeholders with a range of interests. These interests entirely alter the usage and definition of heritage. As described by Kuutma (2013), "In essence, heritage is a value-laden concept that can never assume a neutral ground of

connotation. Heritage indicates a mode of cultural production with reformative significance" (Kuutma, 2013, 21).

As described by both Smith and Kuutma, heritage cannot be limited to a single practice, object, or dish. Heritage is embedded in a symbolic universe unique to the communities or tradition-bearers. These people are the ones that constantly reenact their heritage practices, they are custodians of it, and therefore, the heritage practices cannot exist without the meaning and value these communities provide. At the same time, policymakers and heritage policies implant certain narratives or points of interest in safeguarding, giving space to reinterpretations that fit their objective or interest. In summation, the material objects themselves serve as vessels of community expression, imprinted with value and importance by the people that use them as part of their communal expression.

### **1.1. Heritage regimes**

Understanding heritage regimes is of utmost importance in this study since it directly relates to its main analytical focus, the Policy for the Knowledge, Safeguarding, and Promotion of Food and Traditional Colombian Cuisines (2012). Given that Colombia ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for Intangible Cultural Heritage a mere few years prior, in 2006, a comprehensive examination of heritage regimes becomes imperative in understanding the formulation and implementation of the policy. By delving into the interplay between heritage regimes and the development of this policy framework, this research aims to shed light on the intricate dynamics surrounding the recognition, safeguarding, and promotion of food-related intangible cultural heritage in Colombia. We can trace the turn of heritage focus during those years, and thus the interplay of heritage regimes started working.

Based on the definition of heritage above, it is crucial to define the concept encapsulating the rest, which is heritage regime. The central literature around the concept is from the book "Heritage Regimes and the State (2013)" edited by Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann. In short, they base heritage regimes on norms or rules regulating relationships between a state party and society. As the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies are not a government in and of themselves, they are still an extra-state actor that influences and affects heritage in society and the context of various states with various organizations and systems. This is the case with



Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), which supports itself with the term governance (Bendix et al., 2013, 13).

It is essential to understand that the power dynamics and the heritage regimes interact at different levels in each situation. The most basic structure shows regimes at a local and grassroots level in organizations represented by individual tradition-bearers, communities, or groups of individuals. These constantly reenact and practice particular traditions, followed by local governments or organizations, with the national government at the top of the chain. The state-level power shows the leading authority and power in decision-making related to heritage. International organizations like UNESCO operate on a supranational level. Although they do not exert direct control over heritage-related decisions at the national level, they hold power to elevate practices to an international level, where it is understood that the heritage and safeguarding efforts belong to the state party and the international community.

A heritage policy decision catalyzes the activation of a heritage regime within the functioning apparatus of the heritage system. An illustrative case of such a decision is ratifying the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Within this convention, UNESCO defines ICH as encompassing a wide range of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and artifacts that communities, groups, and individuals acknowledge as integral to their heritage (Article 2, paragraph 1). Moreover, the convention outlines the concept of safeguarding, which entails a comprehensive set of measures to ensure ICH's continued viability, encompassing activities such as promotion, transmission, revitalization, identification, and documentation (Article 2, paragraph 3). In this context, the definitional framework established by UNESCO conveys a clear message regarding the nature and means of securing intangible cultural heritage.

Simultaneously, UNESCO has articulated explicit criteria about the obligations and prerequisites for nation-states upon ratification and adherence to the convention, which start with the compilation of an updated inventory. This process extends to the formulation of a policy framework that ensures the active promotion of ICH, the establishment of competent bodies tasked with safeguarding such heritage, and the implementation of legal and administrative measures aimed at fostering its cultivation, facilitating access to it, and establishing comprehensive documentation (Articles 11, 12, 13, 14) (Convention for the

Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003). By ratifying the convention, a nation-state assumes the responsibilities and adopts the definitions delineated by UNESCO within the agreement. Consequently, countries align themselves with a supranational heritage regime and pledge their commitment to formulating internal policies that effectively manage and govern their own distinct heritage regimes within their territories.

When considering heritage regimes, it is also essential to remember that they operate differently depending on the environment; regional and cultural differences make it evident how different heritage regimes exist and interact, and ICH performs a distinct purpose. As described by Svensson and Maags, "The listing, reification, and celebration of certain cultural practices can thus be a governance tool, especially when individuals and communities are excluded from decision making but still come to internalize the validation of the selected practices and behaviors." (Svensson & Maags, 2018, 20). Since there are clear distinctions between heritage management in different spaces, one of the most significant challenges is proper management; this requires adhering to UNESCO guidelines while also adhering to national policies and responding to their constantly reenacted unique characteristics and cultural individualities.

## **1.2. Food heritage and heritagization of food culture**

In the arena of heritage regimes and power dynamics, food has increasingly captured the attention of global actors, not only because of its societal and cultural significance or the apparent effect on people's daily lives but also because it proves to be a commodity that can be sold. Food is one of the most tangible aspects of ICH because the final product is something palpable and consumable, and it also evokes emotions and stimulates the senses. However, the ICH practice is not the final dish, but everything that precedes it, including inter alia, acquisition of products, specific utensils used to prepare the dish, gender division of work, cultural expressions such as singing or storytelling in the kitchen, regional-based ingredients, and cooking techniques. Moreover, food can foray into the ICH realm because of these elements.

Since heritage can be understood as a process, a synonym could be heritagization. The turn of events where expressions, community practices, and heritagization became intertwined can be linked to globalization and the promotion of heritage preservation in national and

global agendas. Nonetheless, the idea permeates heritagization as its own universe, affecting food and many practices. "Patrimonialisation or heritagisation entails the intellectual appropriation of material and immaterial aspects of the foodscape against the background of uprooting societal shifts brought about by globalisation and industrialisation, national and international changes, or political and economic transformations" (Geyzen, 2014, 94-95). The transformation and evaluation of food habits in response to globalization, industrialization, and changes in the food systems are thus characteristics of the heritagization process in this context. Heritagization is a transformative process that tries to give a sense of identity to a community that practices traditional cuisines. It also attempts to give it a sense of property or ownership. "Heritagisation should not be viewed as a teleological process with a clear-cut starting and ending point, but rather as an amalgam of fragmented and sometimes conflicting initiatives. Some (or maybe a great deal?) of these initiatives focus on food and expose certain aspects of the foodscape – whether material or immaterial – to appropriation processes" (Geyzen et al., 2019, 73). As described by Alcántara et al., the heritagization of gastronomy is the revaluation of culinary practices, both of their products and the physical means or equipment and rituals used in their preparation. These characteristics of a geographical area have constituted a cultural value through the generations, considering validating those practices that have needed embellishment, adaptation, or creativity to be preserved (Alcántara et al., 2004).

The phenomenon of heritage stemmed from organizations like UNESCO, and lists like heritage sites or ICH inventories gave groups of stakeholders from different levels in heritage regimes the idea to give identity markers to communities or even to a national level through food. Heritagization in relation to food has gained momentum due to the idealized belief that consuming food reminiscent of previous generations represents an authentic experience embodying a community's essence and cultural practices. This valorization process reflects the transformative dynamics of food traditions, which are influenced by the emphasis on cultural heritage and the subsequent formulation of heritage policies. The three practices investigated in this study are influenced by heritage policies and regimes, which alter how citizens perceive them. At the same time, customers' expectations for the quality and origin of their food have changed in response to these changes in heritage, making the concept of heritagization important to the research.

One of the outcomes derived from the concept of heritagization within the framework of food can be referred to as food heritage, signifying the process of ascribing renewed significance and revitalizing culinary practices within the realm of cultural heritage. As Bessière and Tibère describe, "We define food heritage as the set of material and immaterial elements of food cultures that are considered a shared legacy or a common good. This food heritage includes agricultural products, ingredients, dishes, techniques, recipes, and traditions. It also includes the table manners, the symbolic dimension of food and, in its more material aspects, cooking artifacts, and the table setting: utensils, dishware, etc." (Bessiere & Tibere, 2010, cited in Matta, 2013, 2). The concept becomes particularly evident in cases involving the revitalization of food traditions, where the attribution of new meanings to food practices is often motivated by specific economic benefits. It can be exemplified through Svensson and Maags' (2018) research, where the authors describe how heritage processes responded to the need to build upon an image of nation-building that can relate to the political system in China. As well as interact with the citizens and provide a sense of adherence to certain practices in their identity (Svensson & Maags, 2018).

Sammells (2014) describes a second example in her research on the processes of food heritagization in Bolivia. She demonstrates how llama meat is typically not consumed by ordinary Bolivians and is associated with indigenous practices and populations that are in poverty. Nevertheless, with the promotion of gastronomic tourism, llama meat, an exotic product, became an essential element and thus created a new type of cuisine and "tradition" (Sammells, 2014). Tourism, in the most literal sense, changed the foodscape of Bolivian cuisine.

Food heritage creates different routes through which heritage regimes in action can benefit, from the local to the state level; the result of the production of food heritage depends on the benefits it can bring. As described by Matta (2015), A distinction arises between an "inward culinary heritage," which emphasizes the revival of local and cultural knowledge, techniques, and practices, and an "outward culinary heritage," which prioritizes the selection of agricultural techniques and food products that can generate economic value and, consequently, a perceived sense of well-being. This division creates a gap in the approach to culinary heritage, highlighting different motivations and outcomes associated with

preserving and promoting food traditions (Matta, 2015). In a way, food heritage is reproduced either on the inside or the outside, depending on what stakeholders want from that practice. Food heritage is a vital idea for this research because when the analysis of the three practices comes into play, there will be an image of what type of food heritage is produced from those encounters within power structures.

### **1.3. UNESCO Convention of the ICH and its interpretations**

All the concepts described come into synergy and result from heritage processes, specifically from looking at food practices under the UNESCO lens. UNESCO's supranational heritage regime influences how food traditions are understood. This observation highlights that culinary practices tend to evolve and undergo reinterpretation when subjected to the influence of the convention and the emerging concept of heritage regimes. When state parties ratify the convention, food practices are typically governed by implicit regulations that alter how states view their cultural practices. By realizing the benefits of being inside the system, different stakeholders, mainly national organizations, NGOs, and other private actors, can re-interpret the UNESCO guidelines and give them a meaning of commercialization and commodification. Food practices offer a unique opportunity to create marketable products and generate revenue by developing compelling narratives.

Although UNESCO intends to promote the ideas of humankind, create an awareness of the importance of heritage, and find appropriate ways to include communities in the process of safeguarding heritage to keep it alive, the real issue lies in the interpretation that specific stakeholders give to the convention and the UNESCO tools. Hafstein (2008) explains this new interpretation and its risk. When analyzing inventorying and making lists and their effect on tourism, he claims that "Far from being an accidental consequence of listing, increased tourism is expected to give a boost to local economies while guaranteeing the economic viability and survival of places and practices that have lost their former economic *raison d'être*" (Hafstein, 2008, 106).

Complementing the idea of the revenue gained from tourism and economic opportunities, an identified issue is that often the narratives created by a nation to attract visitors do not reflect traditional culinary practices. In addition to not reflecting traditional cooking techniques, it may convey a misleading impression of social conformity and historical continuity. Cang

(2018) and Cwiertka (2017) used the 2013 UNESCO-approved Washoku meal nomination to the ICH to demonstrate this idea. The authors explain how the candidacy was conceived as a subtle declaration of competitiveness against their neighbor South Korea, whose food-related nomination was presented the same year rather than to protect food. The researchers also found inconsistencies in the nomination's name. "Washoku" is a term that distinguishes Japanese food from Western food. The nomination also breaks Japanese food history by showing post-war food consumption, giving space to a post-war image of tradition (Cang, 2018; Cwiertka, 2017). The cited case elaborates on one of the meanings frequently ascribed by state parties to nominations: that they have "mundane" practices regularly carried out throughout the territory and are a part of people's daily lives. It nonetheless holds the potential to serve an elite interest among foreigners but also stresses that because these practices are part of daily life, they hold a value that should be recognized and safeguarded.

To further elaborate on the idea from the previous paragraph, it is crucial to mention Ichijo's (2017) analysis, which claims that "The nation-state then finds itself in a very peculiar position: in order to play to the discourse of world heritage which could bring a range of benefits, it first has to identify which cultural features are worthy of protection, thus making it 'special' but then to present it as something banal to the international authority" (Ichijo, 2017, 267).

As stated, inventorying and list creation are prerequisites to joining and adhering to the UNESCO ICH convention. Therefore, the interpretation process starts internally with how each country handles its national heritage lists and inventories. This means that what arrives at UNESCO when nominating a practice or a site is a direct result of the narratives of each nation-state at the time of creating the policies that guide lists and inventories. It implies that the list will inherently respond to a state's desire to project an image that reflects and adheres to its political system. It might also represent the behaviors or expressions that particular countries value. These arguments are only meant to strengthen the understanding that UNESCO and ICH lists can transform local narratives and deepen the gap in power structures in heritage regimes. Generally, it reflects that stakeholders who wish to gain from heritage activities frequently use the lists and conventions to achieve agendas other than their original intent: to maintain and preserve traditions that have "outstanding universal value."

UNESCO's influence on how food is perceived is also critical for this research because of the importance of understanding how food traditions have changed and evolved in Colombia since ratifying the 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH in 2006. The ratification of the UNESCO convention provided an impetus for establishing an inventorying process and creating a nationally representative list of ICH. In Colombia, this list was officially established in 2009 through Decree 2941, enabling the government to implement mechanisms that facilitate citizens' and communities' nomination of cultural practices. This ratification also inspired the Ministry of Culture to create the Policy for the knowledge, safeguarding, and promotion of food and traditional cuisines of Colombia (implemented in 2012).

In the subsequent chapters of the thesis, there will be extensive discussion of the shift in food traditions from various heritage regimes and power spheres, ranging from local and individual tradition-bearers to former government agents who managed ICH within the Ministry of Culture.

## **Chapter 2. Colombian food culture: an exploration of agricultural developments, regional diversity, and the impact of modern food systems**

This chapter aims to contextualize the "food scene" in Colombia comprehensively. It will commence with an overview of the country's diversity, climates, and the broad spectrum of food offerings available. Additionally, it will present a concise summary of the agricultural evolution in Colombia since the mid-20th century, highlighting key developments and transformations in the sector. Furthermore, the chapter will delve into the division of Colombia based on food traditions and consumption patterns, shedding light on the distinct regional variations in agricultural practices and culinary customs. This discussion will also examine the agricultural and food context in the three cities that were the focal points of the fieldwork, offering insights into the specific dynamics and challenges faced in these areas. The subsequent section will explore the changes in food systems, particularly concerning the emergence of new organizations and institutions that have influenced the reproduction of traditional food practices in the context of globalization and technological advancements. Special attention will be given to understanding the impact of these changes on the viability and sustainability of modern-day traditional foods.

### **2.1 Snapshot of Colombian food**

Colombia is a mega-diverse country, occupying a second place among countries with the most considerable biological diversity in the world (FAO, n.d.). This biodiversity is a direct result of the multiple climates and regions:

*Colombia, located in the northwestern corner of South America, is a Caribbean country, an Andean country that shares with others the Amazon and Orinoco basins, and a Pacific country, to which almost all of the biogeographic Chocó belongs. Three mountain ranges run through the geography of the west and center of the country, and two long rivers, the Magdalena and the Cauca, cross the territory from south to north, giving rise to two extensive inter-Andean valleys. The location in the tropics and the complex Andean gradient form a mosaic of agrobiodiversity niches that sustain the traditional diet of Colombians. Products from different thermal floors and agricultural traditions are found in the commercial circuits of stores and marketplaces. (Sánchez & Sánchez, 2012, 7)*

Because of the varied climates and territorial conditions, Colombia is a very regionalized country, with thirty-two departments (names for the country's administrative divisions). Their



food traditions are a direct result of those regional differences. It is impossible to call for a "national dish" because each region has its own ingredients, microclimates, and specific and unique food traditions.

The region's daily diet in Colombia is strongly influenced by geographical particularities and historical migrations, leading to a rich tapestry of traditional food preparations that reflect the land and its diverse cultural influences (Instituto Distrital de Turismo & Escuela Taller de Bogotá, 2015). Each region has unique culinary traditions shaped by climate and proximity to natural resources.

For instance, the Caribbean region's warm climate and proximity to the sea contribute to a diet rich in fish and seafood. The influence of Middle Eastern migrations is evident in the consumption of fish and meat-filled fried pastries. On the other hand, the Pacific region, with its lush rainforests, offers an abundance of sweet water fish and mollusks gathered from mangrove trees during low tide. The cuisine in this region also bears the influence of African traditions brought by maroon communities during slavery.

These examples highlight the complexity of Colombia's food system, where cultural encounters and expressions occur in every corner of cities and small towns. Food serves as a medium through which people recreate and live their culture, fostering connections and preserving traditions. The diverse culinary landscape of Colombia is a testament to the country's rich heritage and the integral role that food plays in the cultural fabric of its communities.

## **2.2 Transformation of agriculture in Colombia from the 1950s to the present day**

Agriculture moves hand in hand with food production and, therefore, with food traditions. To talk about the general evolution of agriculture in Colombia would entail a much larger scope of research, which is out of the question. Therefore, what will be discussed in this section is agriculture from the 1950s until the present day, which marks the beginning of an agricultural advancement that vastly reflected and impacted what we see in the present-day country. This section will be divided into three main periods, the first from the start of the 1950s until 1966, the second from 1966 until 1983, and finally, from 1984 until the present day.

This section draws heavily on the scholarly work of Salomón Kalmanovitz and Enrique Lopez, specifically their book "Agricultura Colombiana en el siglo XX" (2006). This source provides a detailed examination of the agricultural systems in Colombia throughout the 20th century, with a particular focus on the economic aspects. The book offers insights into the impact of poverty and violence on agriculture, explores food consumption patterns, and provides a comprehensive economic analysis of the Colombian context in relation to agriculture.

The first period (the start of the 1950s) occurred under a conservative government, where the abnormally high taxes on importing raw materials gave way to the internal development of agriculture. This period is recognized as a protectionist era, where the government started creating different government-controlled subsidies for agricultural development. The government selected the farmers who received these incentives in a neither equitable nor egalitarian manner. As a result, the power structures in agricultural production were altered, and some workers benefited financially by expanding their enterprises. The farmers not included in the decision-making process had no choice but to participate in a competitive system, leading to the emergence of a significant tertiary market characterized by the smuggling of imported goods. Another vital element of this period is the government forcing the central bank to change its function to a development bank. Subsidies were allocated to influential actors in the private sector who maintained close ties with the government, prioritizing their interests over those of the most secure and financially viable projects. For food production, this meant that the general industrialization of crops was dependent directly on politics rather than ability; the focus ended up being on keeping up with international standards and raising productivity, weakening the internally established production system (Kalmanovitz & López E, 2006, 145-146).

Implementing Law 26 in 1959 was a significant milestone in the agricultural sector, as it allowed agricultural activities to access development credits through establishing intermediary banks like "Banco Bananero." However, the subsequent combination of reduced interest rates and high demand for these credits resulted in commercial banks predominantly offering short-term loans. This situation did not favor the agricultural sector, as the nature of agricultural activities requires longer-term investments to generate profitable

returns. Agriculture was steadily increasing in production during the following years, but the most significant growth and impact started in the period from 1966. The Agrarian Finance Fund (FFA) was established in the year in question, introducing a dedicated fund that operated through development bonds specifically intended for medium and large-scale agricultural projects (Kalmanovitz & López E, 2006, 156-157).

The underlying concept was to provide monetary incentives to encourage increased production, which, in turn, required workers to adopt modern technologies available at that time. These technologies encompassed improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, and specialized technical support. The government benefited from this approach as it facilitated effective agricultural planning and led to significant growth in commercial crops, particularly lucrative ones such as cotton and rice. During this time, Law 26 was still operating but changed its focus towards livestock, semi-permanent crops, land suitability, and machinery acquisition. The Agricultural Finance Fund (FFAP), whose main goal was to boost agricultural operations' productivity to fulfill the Colombian population's food requirements, was established in 1973 in response to the country's expansion. Nevertheless, since there had been production growth, it was also aimed at strengthening agricultural goods' exports and stimulating a fair distribution of rural income and appropriate usage of work and land. Although it sounded idyllic and a perfect solution to the developing economy in the country, problems did not take long to appear, and the realization came with the fact that the FFAP had mismatches between financing sources and the usage of resources. In part, the yields were not being given at the same rate as loans, so the usage of resources initially proposed for the agricultural sector had to be shifted towards covering a massive economic deficit. (Kalmanovitz & Lopez 2006, 157-161)

Towards the end of 1984, the development funds and institutions encountered various challenges that had implications for the availability of loan opportunities. The high-interest rates of these loans made it increasingly difficult to recoup the costs of establishing these financial mechanisms. Consequently, the viability of loan repayment became virtually unattainable for borrowers. These techniques were used to enforce paternalistic government behavior, implying that policies had to be adopted and substantial interventions had to be made inside a particular sector, such as the agricultural sector. In addition to these conditions,

many funds were focused on specific crops, resulting in a wrongful resource allocation (Kalmanovitz & Lopez 2006, 165).

It is essential to acknowledge that despite the challenges faced, the concerted efforts in research, mechanization, market access, and product diversification during the 1950s laid a foundation for substantial agricultural growth in Colombia. These advancements propelled the sector forward and played a crucial role in enhancing food production, generating economic opportunities, and fostering agricultural development in the country (Kalmanovitz & Lopez 2006, 251).

Early in the 1990s, it became apparent that the current system could not be maintained. The government's first action was to return the central bank to its original functions and to separate monetary policies from development policies. The recognition of the limitations of the existing system in the early 1990s led to significant developments, including establishing a dedicated fund for financing the agricultural sector. This fund, known as Finagro, was created as a direct response to the need for specialized financial support tailored to the unique requirements of the agricultural industry. Significant disparities were evident among these approaches, with Finagro and other institutions opting to separate from the central bank and persisting with practices reminiscent of the previous models observed in the FFA and the FFAP. This perpetuation of interventionist-like practices hindered agricultural workers from accessing these credit lines due to their limited financial gains. The allocation of credit lines exhibited a recurring problem, as it favored an agricultural elite characterized by more significant financial resources. This privileged group could secure substantial loans, while rural and low-income workers, who lacked such advantages, had no choice but to seek informal loans. Commercial banks, being selective in lending practices, turned away these individuals due to their challenging economic and living conditions and the absence of collateral for loan security. Simultaneously, the government aimed to facilitate development credits based on economic efficiency and ease of loan acquisition. (Kalmanovitz & Lopez 2006, 165-169).

Apart from these problems, the decade of the 1990s was characterized mainly by very different situations in agriculture. The ongoing and violent internal conflicts in Colombia were the first unfavorable situation; conflicts with FARC and other illegal groups harmed

many regions, there was a constant feeling of unease, and incidents like cattle theft in places like Casanare led to the transfer of cattle to more fruitful areas like Caquetá or Uraba Antioqueño (Kalmanovitz & Lopez 2006, 286). Conversely, this period emerged as a significant juncture in terms of market liberalization. The economy witnessed a process of enhanced competition and equitable treatment of all stakeholders, which had been lacking under previous protectionist measures. Moreover, this liberalization facilitated the recognition and appreciation of agricultural production, thus expanding the potential for its economic value. One example of this is the value given in the exported and imported goods; items like barley and wheat started to be imported from countries like the United States, and in return, fields in regions like the Andean highlands switched to products like potatoes and flowers which valorized the land and raised the efficiency. (Kalmanovitz & Lopez 2006, 194)

When the millennium turned its page, the 2000s were starting to become an age of continuous market opening and preparation for future Free Trade Agreements (FTA) that could benefit the Colombian economy. Furthermore, during this period, the multifaceted consequences of rural migration to urban centers in search of employment began to manifest, encompassing both advantageous and disadvantageous aspects. Simultaneously, this era marked a pivotal juncture characterized by increasing openness. Particularly noteworthy was the signing of a crucial Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that profoundly influenced the Colombian economy—the landmark agreement established between Colombia and the United States in 2011. The deal went into action in 2012. Although some positives resulted from the agreement, it also showed acute adverse effects. As their book describes, Suarez and Barbieri (2015) explain how the FTA generated a disproportionate trade system, where imports were often more significant than exports. In addition to the disproportionate system, the trade balance of the first two years showed a deficit of approximately US \$920 million (Suarez Montoya & Barberi Gómez, 2015). In general terms, the agreement's result put Colombia in a position of competition against a much more developed and large market. Measures like the use of GMO seeds and pesticides like glyphosate only helped deepen specific social and economic issues in the rural agricultural context of Colombia.

Results from the agricultural evolution can be seen in other arenas as well. One example is the improvement of food consumption in response to expanded markets like dual-purpose

cattle and industrial aviculture. Improved accessibility of food and lower market prices all correlate to agricultural evolution. Kalmanovitz and Lopez (2006) provide a comprehensive analysis that shows the transformative trajectory of food expenditure over time. Their study reveals a substantial shift in the proportion of an average worker's wage allocated to food, from a considerable 70% at the onset of the 20th century to a significantly reduced 28.3% by 1998. (Kalmanovitz & López E, 2006, p.307).

The ideas regarding the development of food systems in Colombia demonstrate that the present system is associated with contemporary methods, reliance on the global market, a high level of agricultural technology, and greater standards of food consumption. At the same time, as will be exposed in further chapters, current regulations about food consumption can lead to alterations in traditional food practices. Modern laws and regulations about hygiene and food safety restrict the use of material elements commonly associated with traditional food practices, such as wooden spoons, skewers, or clay pots. These restrictions have implications for the sustainability of traditional food practices, mainly when adopted in restaurant or food-selling settings.

### **2.3. Regional divisions of food culture in Colombia and food production in studied cities**

As stated before, Colombia is a biodiverse and pluricultural country. As such, dividing the country into gastronomical regions is increasingly difficult. That is why for this section, the classification will be based upon the criteria used in the "Policy for the knowledge, safeguarding and promotion of food and traditional food" released by the Colombian Ministry of Culture in 2012.

The Ministry of Culture extended an invitation to emulate exercises like the one by historian Julio Jaramillo Uribe (1997), in which social, economic, and ethno-demographic factors must be considered when dividing the country into regions. One of the classification examples used involves dividing food culture into nine distinct cultural macro-regions: Atlantic Coast, Pacific Coast, Antioquia and Antiguo Caldas, Southern Andean region (región Andina meridional), Santanderes, Cundinamarca and Boyacá, Tolima and Huila, Eastern Plains (*llanos orientales*) and Amazon (Jaramillo 1997, cited in Ministerio de Cultura - República de Colombia, 2012). This division highlights fundamental food traditions differences while

considering social and cultural factors. However, even within these macro-regions, food traditions have distinct differences, so this classification falls short.

Considering the previous idea, marking the difference between departments (administrative divisions of the country) is essential. In the three cases studied in this research, the *cuy* and *ajiaco santafereño* belong to the Andean region. However, the food differences are shown when divided into the departments, the *cuy* in the department of Nariño and *ajiaco* inside the Cundiboyacense region. Finally, the *llanero* tradition belongs to the region of the Eastern plains. When discussing food consumption and food traditions in the three case studies, it is necessary to highlight the regional differences in food production and consumption. Regional differences in food consumption and food culture in Colombia could be attributed to a culinary code, an acquired term by de Garine (1995) that refers to an organized system, internal of a group or community, where signs of originality in preparation and consumption of food reveal the organization of said community (de Garine, 1995). Characterized by its exceptional biodiversity, Colombia exhibits diverse climatic and socio-economic variations, contributing to the emergence of region-specific culinary traditions. The distinctiveness of regional recipes in Colombia serves as a marker of community identity, reflecting not only geographic distinctions but also micro-level differentiations at the familial and individual levels. This dynamic interplay of factors continually shapes the country's food culture and engenders the development of culinary traditions.

Food traditions and heritage are directly reflected in the studied regions' food systems and production. The first region to be contextualized is **the city of Yopal**, from the department of Casanare, where the *llanero* traditions on food were studied. The population of this region is varied, mixing natives from the land and a strong presence of indigenous communities. At the same time, because of the growth in economic activities linked to the extraction of oil, African palm, sorghum, corn, and the rice-agro industry, there have been migratory movements of people from other parts of the country (Sánchez & Sánchez, 2012, 441). Yopal, and in general Casanare, possesses particular geographical and agricultural characteristics, which give foot to their food traditions. The department's agricultural expansion plan for 2020-2023 describes these characteristics at length.

First and foremost, when talking about productive land, it can be identified that it is mainly composed of floodable savannas, followed by valleys, mountains, and hills, with seven main rivers. It also contains very defined seasons, one rainy season from April until October and drought from November until March. Its many microclimates range from a frigid and pluvial environment to a medium-humid temperature as it descends toward the foothills (Gobernación del Casanare, 2020, 26-27). The climate conditions gave space to particular agricultural activities that are performed there. The main one, which also shapes most of the *llanero* food tradition, is beef. 64,7% of the used land is used for cattle raising. Cattle are moved around the territory according to the season and the terrain, and in general, the cattle cycle is concise, with almost no transformation or added value in this chain. Most cattle are raised, sent to sacrifice, and sold to restaurants or other buyers (ibid., 91). Different agricultural products are also produced in the rest of the region, like plantain, corn, cassava, cacao, pineapple, and rice. Despite this, most economic activities are mining and quarrying (Gobernación del Casanare, 2020, 85). In this case, it is shown that the terrain gives limited agricultural offers, which is also why most food traditions are related to beef, and proteins like fish, capybaras, and tubers.

Moving towards the south-eastern region, we find **the city of Pasto**, in the department of Nariño, the epicenter of the *cuy* (guinea pig) food practice. The agricultural plan of the department demonstrates how this territory is also where different populations collide. Most of the population comprises farmers, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants (Gobernación de Nariño, 2019, 13). Nariño department, like many others in the country, is primarily a rural territory, with a staggering 63,7% of the rural population against a small 36,2% of the urban population. One prominent characteristic of this department is the presence of a dispersed population across its municipalities, primarily driven by various social and environmental factors. Factors such as social exclusion and challenging environmental conditions contribute to the limited commercial relationships observed within the department's municipalities. As a result, economic activities and trade networks are relatively minimal, leading to a decentralized and geographically fragmented population. The dispersed nature of the population and the limited commercial interactions within the municipalities present unique challenges for economic development and social connectivity in the region. Agriculturally speaking, there are two extensive production areas: the Andean



and coastal regions. The coast is recognized to have mostly permanent crops like *borojó* (native fruit), coconuts, and oil palm. At the same time, the Andean region is occupied mainly by transitory crops mixed with different grasses, which is also why *cuy* culture is practiced (Gobernación de Nariño, 2019, 15-19).

In addition, the Nariño department's agricultural plan describes how one of the department's most significant problems is that only 5% of all agricultural settlements receive assistance from the local government, whose mission is to assist family agricultural practices to ensure food security, leaving the department highly vulnerable in terms of technical assistance. Finally, another persistent issue that the department has is that because of the lack of infrastructure, travel times inside the department can take up to 10 hours, which is just another reflection of the poor condition and constant disconnection that the department has between municipalities. When talking about *cuy*, the central aspect of the food practice studied, it is the leading employment and income generator for families, occupying more than 86% of the municipalities and benefiting more than thirty-thousand families. On the other hand, it has been identified that in the production of *cuy*, there are primarily individual or family efforts, which limits a consolidation of the sector as a productive chain, and in turn, miss out on funding opportunities by both the local and national government to become a strategic axis in departmental agricultural development (Gobernación de Nariño, 2019, 25-54)

As a politically structured capital district, **Bogotá city** is not only the capital of the department of Cundinamarca but also of the country. Since the turn of the 20th century, Bogotá's population has grown to nearly eight million, making it a prominent and modern city. As such, it is not even considered inside the agricultural expansion plans because of the lack of usable land, as it is primarily modern buildings and streets. The economy of Bogotá is crucial to the country's development, but, as Herrera (2015) exposed, their economic structure differs from other cities because it mainly produces services, including financial services, education, communication, and public administration, among others. Bogotá is a commercial powerhouse, and it is also imperative when discussing food and commerce by providing approximately 32,5% of the national supply of hotels, restaurants, and general commerce. The city is also one of the primary receptacles for agricultural products from all

over the country and imports from different parts of the world (Herrera, 2015). Apart from the restaurants, the city's main attractions are 19 public marketplaces offering different food and allowing people to shop for groceries without going to big retail suppliers. As an illustration, the "La Perseverancia" marketplace is renowned for its expertise in a variety of soup preparations, while the "12 de Octubre" marketplace specializes in offering a diverse range of meat cuts, including blood sausages and intestines, among other options (Dueñas & Vargas, n.d.). Apart from the marketplaces, Bogotá is a place of many gastronomic fairs happening throughout the year, like Expo La Recetta in April; Alimentec in June; Expovinos and Alimentarte in June and July, the Chicha festival, which rescues traditions related to one of the oldest fermented drinks in the country made with corn, and the Ajiaco Day, a celebration around one of the most iconic dishes of the city (Instituto Distrital de Turismo & Escuela Taller de Bogotá, 2015). On Ajiaco Day, there is a contest with specific metrics designed to choose the best ajiaco in three different categories; it is a monumental celebration that moves around this preparation (Instituto Distrital de Turismo & Escuela Taller de Bogotá, 2015).

The analysis shown in this section helps to demonstrate how Colombia is a strongly regionalized country; its food practices all respond to its geographical and social context. Further chapters help in the understanding of the fundamental differences between the departments and their food practices, mainly because the analysis of the practices, the relationship between local governments and people, and general safeguarding initiatives correlate to this context. In this sense, without a proper contextualization of each region, it will not be possible to see the bigger picture of safeguarding food practices in Colombia.

#### **2.4 Effects and Impact of the modern food system on traditional food practices**

Given that food practices are outcomes of production systems influenced by agricultural development, examining the potential impact of food systems on traditional food practices is of utmost importance. The effects vary from alteration to original preparations to territory transformations, but what is clear is that modern food systems can negatively affect traditional food practices and food heritage. As described by Georgina DeCarli, market opening and exposure to international markets and products have affected the perception of

traditional food practices not only in Colombia but also in South America, as demonstrated by the agricultural evolution of the country:

*The already omnipresent globalization in Latin America is provoking a process of uniformity of lifestyles that threatens the survival of our cultural diversity and, on the other hand, a reaction that leads to processes of reaffirmation of identities and valuation of our own identities and the valuation of our own, not exempt from a certain ethnocentrism (DeCarli, 2006, 36).*

Rivas Abadía et al. (2010) conducted a study to identify novel food components absent from the Colombian Food Composition Table (*Tabla de Composición de Alimentos Colombianos*, TCAC)<sup>1</sup> in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities of Colombia. This study serves as an example of potential loss or damage to food heritage at the local level. Notably, the researchers discovered 92 new food components that individuals in these communities frequently consumed yet were not documented in national registries (Rivas Abadía et al., 2010). The authors exemplify how foods can be lost due to a lack of knowledge about traditional food practices. The idea behind this argument is that it is impossible to classify food components if there is an ignorance of what communities eat. Furthermore, the inclusion of TCAC in nutritional programs can indirectly neglect food security and disregard the significance of traditional food consumption. Consequently, the cumulative effect of these efforts may pose a risk to cultural heritage, as the unintentional neglect of traditional food production and practices can disrupt the dietary patterns of traditional communities and undermine potential safeguarding initiatives.

The processes of expansion and globalization have had significant implications for food security, particularly concerning the ability of communities to achieve food sovereignty. Despite the apparent abundance of ingredients and food items in Colombia, a significant underlying issue exists concerning the inadequate accessibility of food supplies among specific populations. This problem manifests in various forms, including limited access to nutritious food due to economic inequalities and residing in regions where government

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<sup>1</sup> The TCAC is a resource created by the Colombian Institute of Family Well-being (ICBF), its purpose is to provide information about the nutritional composition of various Colombian foods. The purpose of this table is to offer data on the macronutrients (such as carbohydrates, proteins, and fats) and micronutrients (such as vitamins and minerals) present in different traditional Colombian ingredients and dishes. It is used to guide Colombian nutrition to obtain healthy and nutritional diets, and it is published on the following website: <https://www.icbf.gov.co/bienestar/nutricion/tabla-alimentos>

presence is weak. Governments sometimes prioritize certain products for their economic benefits at the national or regional level. Still, in doing so, they may neglect the agricultural practices and food products that hold significance for the identity and well-being of specific communities.

As demonstrated in the study conducted by Parraguez-vergara et al. (2018), the recognition of traditional agricultural systems as critical contributors to food sovereignty at local and regional levels has become increasingly important. These systems, characterized by their integration and adaptation to local weather conditions, provide necessary nutrition to communities. The authors emphasize the significance of Andean tuber crops, such as *hibias*, *chuguas*, and *cubios*, which hold economic relevance and contribute to the identity and culture of Andean communities in Colombia. However, due to their limited economic importance in the urban market, these crops are often overlooked in public policies, potentially erasing traditional agricultural practices, consumption patterns, and production methods. This not only impacts food heritage and traditions but also poses a threat to the survival of communities themselves. Without sufficient food security and governmental support, traditional communities and low-income rural individuals struggle to access the essential foods integral to their cultural identity and nutritional well-being. This can be observed in Colombia, where out of 102 native groups, 35 are at risk of disappearing (Parraguez-vergara et al., 2018, 328-331). Altering traditional food practices in traditional communities like indigenous groups can affect people's way of life because food practices are strongly linked with how they see and interpret the world.

An illustrative instance demonstrating the influence of modern food systems on traditional communities is the observed decline in food practices within specific groups as a consequence of food system modernization. The study conducted by Castellanos et al. (2022) analyzes how ancestral food practices have affected the Inga indigenous group in Nariño. The authors emphasize how substituting native crops with commercial crops, changes in farming practices, and depletion of natural resources have affected food security in these communities, which has also been a factor in the disappearance of ancestral foods. The study also illustrates expanding opportunities for financial gain in industries such as wood. The average income has increased due to substituting traditional crops with coffee. With

increased purchasing power, there is a clear preference for "Western" or novelty products such as pasta and bread (Castellanos et al., 2022, 2-7). The change in taste marks a clear preference in children to consume more appealing foods and forget the consumption of traditional foods. As it was named before, heritage practices can primarily secure their survival by constantly reenacting and constant practice, which seem to be at risk in these communities.

The consumption patterns of traditional foods are observed to be influenced by contemporary agricultural practices, including the use of modern fumigation techniques. Castellanos et al. (2022) provide an illustrative case study of the Inga community, which actively avoids the fumigation of ancestral crops with glyphosate. Their avoidance stems from contamination concerns, perceived adverse effects of chemicals in food, and a reduced inclination to cultivate crops in fumigated areas due to apprehensions regarding soil quality degradation associated with glyphosate. Additionally, in this community, elders believe younger people ignore their advice and push for globalized food production and consumption to adapt to the modern food system. As explained more in-depth by the authors: "It should be recognized that the value of traditional food practices goes beyond simply consuming food and that foods can be healthy or of little benefit. Ancestral means seeing the underlying symbolic content and how knowledge gives a community identity" (Castellanos et al., 2022, 10). In this sense, there is an apparent disconnection between modern interventions and ancestral practices. Governments should employ more intercultural and intersectional approaches in social programs related to food consumption. Further efforts must complement ancestral diets with different foods from other contexts but always consider the nutritional value and adopt modern practices that could facilitate food preparation (ibid.).

Initially, agricultural policies should be linked to a higher general income for the country. Still, food security is an element that should not be neglected. Governments should be able to provide their citizens with good nutrition. The government should let traditional communities have tools like food sovereignty to sustain themselves when they cannot. Modern agricultural practices are a repeating cycle that aims to keep profit going. Parraguez-Vergara et al. (2018) have studied that in Latin America, the same ten species (avocado, rice, banana, coffee, sugar cane, beans, maize, mangoes, potatoes, and wheat) are being constantly

promoted by governmental programs and subsidies. In discussing modern agricultural systems, the authors approach the idea that

hybrid seeds create a bigger demand for water, fertilizers, pesticides, and the accompanying infrastructure, and they are highly vulnerable to plagues and climatic variations. The problem is the cost associated with the modern agricultural system. The indigenous and campesino's rural livelihoods are characterized by high poverty and degradation of ecosystems, making food sovereignty one of the best alternatives (Parraguez-vergara et al., 2018, p. 335).

The examples above reflect a disconnection between seemingly modern food systems and traditional food production and consumption practices. Regarding safeguarding food heritage, the existing research indicates that one of the main issues is the mediation between the perception of safeguarding and actual safeguarding practices. It means that the focus needs to be intersectional; safeguarding practices cannot be limited to only certain parts of a food system or a minimalistic understanding of safeguarding a dish. Contrary to that, a government's image of safeguarding has to align with the complete production system, and safeguarding has to permeate all stages of food production cycles.

A gap in heritage and food policies that needs to be addressed is how to modernize food practices and provide food security to citizens of all economic and social strata without erasing traditional food practices significant for self-recognition, identity, and cultural value. Traditional groups are directly affected by the effects of modern food systems and governmental decisions regarding the modernization of agricultural production. In order to preserve the cultural and ethnic diversity of Colombian communities, agricultural policies should not prioritize yields and profits exclusively. Acknowledging these groups' identity and cultural practices when formulating and enforcing such policies is crucial. Trading cultural differences for food security and financial gain is detrimental to heritage preservation practices and poses a threat to heritage preservation in the country. Recognizing and safeguarding cultural heritage is a non-negotiable aspect of agricultural policies.

### **Chapter 3. Materials and Methods**

This study can be defined as a qualitative study of traditional food practices in three cities in Colombia using ethnographic methods and qualitative document analysis to make sense of the heritage regimes and policies shaping modern food culture and the experiences of tradition-bearers and policymakers who aim to safeguard Colombian food heritage in their terms.

Documents such as agricultural expansion plans, reports on the production of specific items, and journalistic articles were used to examine the argumentation surrounding food culture and heritage to comprehend the Colombian food system and its stakeholders. Document analysis on public policies related to safeguarding and preserving traditional food practices must be analyzed to successfully understand the objective, scope, reach, and message of public institutions in Colombia. Additionally, governmental documents like agricultural expansion plans or economic texts analyzing agricultural evolution in Colombia must provide the reader with a broader context. The main objective is to explore the historical evolution of agriculture, its impact on traditional food practices, and how the studied traditions reflect the unique characteristics of food production within each context. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand how various factors, such as climate, society, and infrastructure, operate differently across regions, shaping the food landscape in diverse ways.

Additionally, the interviews gave personal perspectives on safeguarding initiatives and efforts being built in the local context related to food traditions. These interviews were essential because heritage initiatives are inevitably linked to communities. Grassroot and bottom-up initiatives are linked to greater cultural adherence and consider a community focus, which policies often fail to do. It is also essential to give these people a voice because, on multiple occasions, these initiatives are very near-reaching, shadowed by policies, and are in real danger with a lack of public support.

### 3.1 The introduction of the regions

This research is focused on three cities inside Colombia, which were chosen for different reasons and represented other traditions. The regions and research selection are going to be described below.

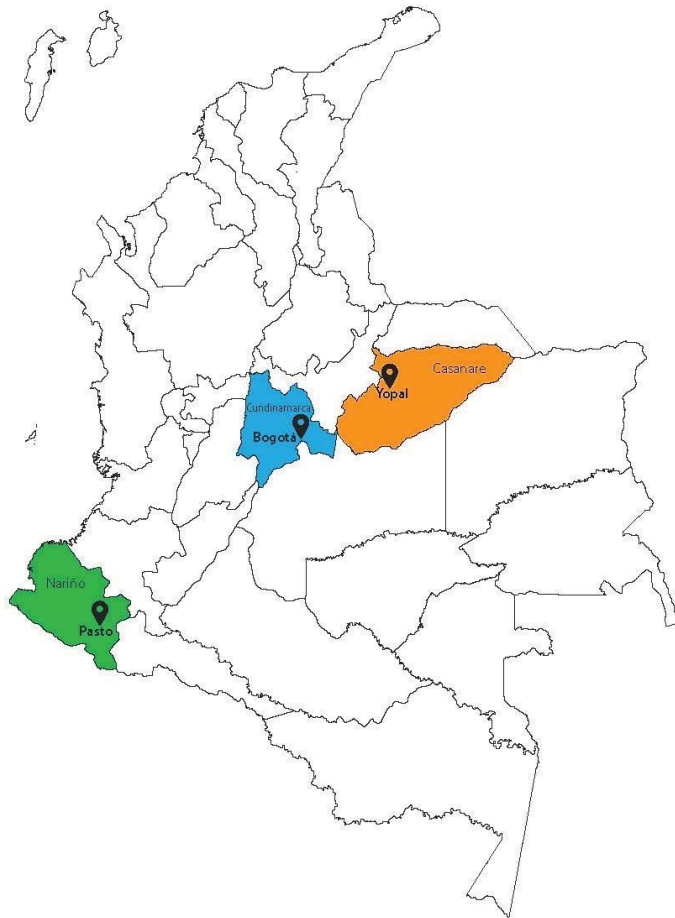


Figure 1. Political Map of Colombia with studied regions, personal creation, 2022

The first chosen city is **Pasto**, in the country's southwest region, colored in green; it is the capital of the department of Nariño. This city was selected mainly because of its iconic food tradition, the *cuy* or guinea pig. The *cuy* has one of the longest-standing recorded histories of consumption and domestication, which started in the Inca empire. It is also a fascinating tradition in the local context because, although it has a long history and has the characteristics of being a tradition ingrained in the regional identity, it has not been studied from a cultural perspective enough in Colombia. Related research can be mainly represented through articles



like Pieter van Dalen Luna's (2020) research on the importance of *cuy* in the Huaral region in Peru and Edmundo Morales' (1994) research on the guinea pig impact on the Andean Economy. Furthermore, my interest in the practice stemmed from its unfamiliarity as it originated from a different region, prompting a desire to comprehend its local impact. Additionally, I was particularly interested in exploring the safeguarding practices employed and identifying the potential threats faced within the Colombian context.

The second city, located in the eastern part of the country, is **Yopal**, the capital of Casanare. The reasoning behind the selection of this practice was brought to a personal interest by a peer in Colombia. This city and region have particular food traditions based on regional availability. The main issue is that in the general efforts done in the country regarding food preservation, this region has been constantly forgotten. There are very few studies on food in this region. Because of this, many practices are at risk of disappearing. There are not enough studies or interest in this region, which is why this city was selected. Precisely because of the little exploration, it was deemed a promising city to study for initial inquiry and an exciting city to contrast against other initiatives in more studied regions. Also, in the case of Yopal, tradition-bearers focused more on general food-safeguarding initiatives related to regional traditions rather than focusing on only one dish to explore new ingredients and cultural practices.

The third city was **Bogotá**, the country's capital, an industrialized space with very defined food traditions and few agricultural practices. The first approach and reason were of personal interest. As an individual born and raised in the city, the knowledge of food traditions was already present. Still, there was a desire to explore the safeguarding initiatives, which are much more centralized and in synergy than other cities. Since there are many options, the decision was made upon the most famous soup of the region, the *Ajiaco Santafereño*, a dish constantly being promoted and prepared and has a personal connection to family traditions.

### **3.2 Research Participants and fieldwork reflections**

Although the Colombian food system has multiple stakeholders, I limited my research to tradition-bearers and government officials. The objective of the fieldwork was to interview people from different levels of the power structures while keeping a community-based focus,

with the tradition-bearers at the center of the research. Additionally, I also conducted some observations in field sites.

**Tradition-bearers** are represented in the study through traditional cooks and restaurant owners, who have different contacts with safeguarding depending on the studied practice. As is seen in the case of Bogotá, where the cooks reenact the *ajiaco santafereño* in their restaurants, receiving the raw ingredients from local producers without engaging directly in the rest of the chain or indirectly participating in contests like the *ajiaco day*. On the other side, cases like Yopal are representative of people that are actively engaged in safeguarding, they not only receive and prepare the food, but they are constantly visiting their local territory, scouting for possible products, and trying to create a safeguarding awareness in people to facilitate safeguarding traditions.

**Former government officials** are represented mainly through one person, the former director of the Heritage Dependency in the Ministry of Culture; this person has contact points mainly with researchers and bureaucrats. Although his work inherently includes members of local communities and intends to aid in heritage management, their contact with local communities or activists, in most cases, tends to be understandably lower.

**Table 1. Information about the interviews**

<b>Person Interviewed</b>	<b>City and occupation</b>	<b>Date</b>
Juan Luis Isaza	Medellín, former heritage director for the Ministry of Culture	February 7, 2023
Luz Nandar	Pasto, traditional cook	July 19, 2022
Francy Cuta	Yopal, traditional cook	August 4, 2022
Cachi Ortegón	Yopal, historian	August 3, 2022
Alejandro Vargas	Yopal, legal representative of “La mamona” restaurant	August 5, 2022
Jacqueline Arévalo	Bogotá, traditional cook	August 19, 2022
Doña Luisa	Bogotá, traditional cook	August 21, 2022

Source: personal creation, 2023.

Because tradition bearers are vital informants in the study, the interviews had to be centered around their engaged practices. The language and type of interview had to facilitate people to open up about their own processes and life stories. Because of that, semi-structured informal interviews were the method chosen. A general interview guide (see Appendix 1) was created, and the interview was directed more toward a flowing conversation rather than just a question-answer dynamic. In terms of a time frame, the fieldwork was divided over three months in Colombia (June, July, and August 2022). Bogotá required less planning because it is my residence place, but for Yopal and Pasto, there had to be thorough travel planning to accomplish the research goals.

The planned activities for every trip included previous meetings with possible interviewees or people with a social network of food stakeholders in the city. The first city visited was **Pasto**. This trip had five planned days, with two primary interviews. The interviews aimed to get experience from owners of two different *cuy* restaurants, one from the restaurant “*Asadero de cuyes Pinzón*” and another from “*El Potrerillo*” market square. Two challenging

things happened in that city. The first was that the budget-friendly travel dates had a holiday on a Wednesday in the middle of the week, which limited the opportunity to visit other locations and conduct additional interviews. The second issue was that one of the agreed-upon and selected interviewees stopped responding and were absent on the interview day. With the added complications of the holiday and being in a new city, this situation drastically reduced the number of interviews from a maximum of three to just one.

Two weeks after Pasto, the next trip was to **Yopal**, in a very different circumstance where travel costs were high but additional contacts could be made. Traveling to the eastern region of Colombia was difficult, as a nine-hour bus journey was required to avoid the high costs of flying. The person who led to the other sources was a local historian with a vast social network and knowledge of who could be interviewed. He agreed to be interviewed and connected me with four other individuals who played different roles in food production and safeguarding. Because of the time constraints of an initial three-day trip, only three interviews could take place. The first interviewee was the named historian, and the second was a local restaurant owner who is also very active in food safeguarding and travels inside the region to discover food traditions and talk to people. The third interviewee was the legal representative of one of the city's most famous local food restaurants, "*La Mamona*." In the latter case, the attention was on how food systems have altered one traditional dish, "*Mamona a la Llanera*," and how it has evolved through the years. The restaurateur also shared his perspective on the current beef market and how production systems work in synergy with his objective for the restaurant.

**Bogotá** was very different in terms of experience. Since that is the city I grew up in, previous contact was not as necessary. The first focus was scouting different market squares and finding potential interviewees; three were found and selected in two public squares, "*La Concordia*" and "*La Perseverancia*." Ultimately, the only possible interviews were in the Concordia market square because of communication issues. Trips were made to have initial contact with the owners or head cooks and to establish a suitable time for interviews for the two interviews; four trips in total were made.

Regarding the fieldwork plan, it was followed through without many issues. Nonetheless, in the cases of Pasto, Bogotá, and government officials, there was contact and communication

with other important stakeholders, who all agreed to be interviewed. They then stopped answering, which made following the plan more difficult. Out of the twelve planned interviews, only seven could be made.

The general interview guide was intended to begin with the topic of agricultural processes, in which information was to be gathered about the primary sources of the tradition, where they obtained it, past shortages or supply chain issues, and the process from ingredient receipt to client service. Then the interview would switch to general safeguarding and heritage, what interviewees knew about specific safeguarding initiatives, secondary elements of the practice like gender division of work, material objects unique to the practice like cooking utensils, information about heritage lists and incentives to inscribe the traditions to a heritage list, among others. The third part of the information was about their opinion on the local and national government with their related expertise, how easy the process of keeping the tradition alive has been, any adverse effects from governmental decisions, and things they felt were essential to keep safeguarding alive. What ended up happening was that the best opener was to understand where interviewees learned the tradition and move from there to the different topics. Since the interview was informal, open questions and a flowing conversation made the people interested in the research and willing to share their perspectives on traditional food practices. They often openly criticized past government actions and explained how they affected their work. However, in general, the interviewees were doubtful about the governmental actions because in the months while the fieldwork was being done, there were recent presidential elections. So, the opinion was directed more toward what they would like in the new president and what to change from past experiences. It was also clear that the majority of the food traditions currently did not have any specific or ritualized gender division of work, material objects currently used, or other labors like weaving in direct relationship with the cooking practice itself. It became clear that although the information provided was beneficial, the research will end up being focused on safeguarding measures and safeguarding initiatives from different levels of the heritage regime, but in a certain way, detached from traditional scholarly approaches to food practices and safeguarding in terms of ritualization, material culture, or secondary labor. This is because the interviewees all participate in the safeguarding activities, but from a modern food production perspective, following health and safety regulations and having direct contact with providers. This

removes certain preconceptions about safeguarding food when realizing that current safeguarding methods are engulfed in modern production systems.

In addition to the tradition bearers, government officials directly impacted the policies and the top-down initiatives. In this instance, the interviews were conducted with a semi-structured approach, wherein a higher degree of organization and utilization of specialized terminology on food practices was employed. There was communication with two different officials, but I decided to interview the former heritage director of the Ministry of Culture online. He worked in that role for six and a half years and was the person in charge of creating the Policy for the knowledge, safeguarding, and promotion of food and traditional cuisines of Colombia. The interview with the official focused on the government narrative, the creation process of the Policy for traditional cuisines of Colombia, how the government helped safeguard food traditions, and their perspective on the Policy and mechanisms as the representative heritage list, among other topics. The interview brought an official perspective on how safeguarding was happening and how it was involved in food production. There was also exciting information on how the government views food traditions and how government officials wanted to frame the Policy for community and intersectional participation.

I also did some participant observation, mainly at the restaurants, in addition to the interviews. I was looking for what kind of people were eating in that restaurant and how their relationship with food is when dining at the restaurant. In Bogotá, as explained further in Chapter 4, the tradition of *ajiaco santafereño* is already included in daily life. It used to be prepared more for special occasions, but people from Bogotá and visitors see it now as a daily tradition; they eat the soup any moment without having it as a special occasion.

Reflecting on the fieldwork, I believe it was an exciting experience because the opportunity opened up to understand how people from different regions relate to their food practices. The food also reflected the regions, their climate, and environmental availability. As a personal experience, it also allowed me to try traditional dishes and understand their complexities. On the topic of ethical issues, there were no identified ethical risks from the research. Participants were approached honestly on the purpose of the study, the problems that would be discussed, the institutions involved, and the general goal of the researcher. There was also a combination of written and oral informed consent; all participants approved using their full names in the

research, and none of them asked for any part of the interview to be removed or not used. The only ethical issue that could conflict after the research is that, as the research contrasts views from different levels of a power structure, there are encountered opinions, mainly from the traditional cooks, that go against some government initiatives. Because it goes against some initiatives, it could prove harmful to the personal image of the participants, and to their initiatives, under the far-fetched assumption that the opinions could be an object of criticism by the government at all levels.

Finally, related to data analysis, there was an established structure of identification, contextualization, and analysis, the research questions guided the fieldwork, provided the context of the Colombian reality, and the study cases were analyzed based on the theoretical framework and experiences.

The primary aim of this exercise was to conduct separate examinations of the individual cases and subsequently compare them, considering their unique characteristics, the analyzed Policy, and the theoretical framework. The intention was to derive specific findings that shed light on diverse realities, safeguarding measures about food traditions and existing risks, and provide recommendations based on the experiences encountered.

## **Chapter 4. From the ground to the Desk. Safeguarding Colombia's culinary heritage through the 2012 Policy**

This chapter begins by examining the 2012 Policy for the Knowledge, Protection, and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia, formulated by the Colombian Ministry of Culture. Subsequently, a comparative analysis is undertaken to explore the policy frameworks and interpretations of food heritage in neighboring countries Mexico and Peru.

### **4.1 Colombian food heritage policies: institutions, implementation, impact**

The efforts Colombia has been making in terms of safeguarding ICH are relatively recent. Colombia became a member of UNESCO in 1947 and signed the Convention on World Heritage in 1983. From this point on, the rising interest in intangible culture gave space to the creation of Law 397 in 1997, also called "Culture Law," which focused on promoting and safeguarding cultural heritage (Ministerio de Cultura - República de Colombia, 2010). It could be said that the government's ongoing relations with UNESCO prompted a reevaluation of its relationship with cultural heritage and a realization of the need to protect and safeguard it through political instruments such as public policies. In 2006, the government of Colombia ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), resulting in the development of a Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage on a national scale.

The Policy for the Knowledge, Safeguarding, and Promoting Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia was created amid an adoption of the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the ICH (2003). There was a realization that the traditional cooking practices of the country were at risk and in dire need of boosting and promotion. Following this line of thought, it is also possible to demonstrate that the Colombian government's narrative explicitly adheres to the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the ICH (2003), as the analysis of the document led to the conclusion that the current system had to conform to international standards that closely adhere to the safeguarding and protection of community expressions. The Ministry of Culture composed the policy document using a special ad hoc working group comprised primarily of prominent Colombian figures in the local cuisine, including chefs and researchers of significant works such as Lácides Moreno Blanco or Julian Estrada. The policy is based on the significance of Colombia's culinary system and how food customs



contribute to communities' sense of cultural identity at all levels, from individuals and families to entire cities, in addition to generating income for the country.

The Policy for the Knowledge, Safeguarding, and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia is set precisely, corresponding to the discussion object of this first section of the chapter. After the background and culinary system setting, the following objects are the critical topics identified as threats, the scope of the policy, related institutions, general principles, policy vision, general objective, and five main strategies with set objectives, guidelines, and recommended actions.

The initial segment of the policy document selected for analysis encompasses the identification process, which aims to highlight eight significant aspects that directly pose challenges to traditional culinary systems and their preservation. The document commences by acknowledging a lack of knowledge or recognition of the country's traditional culinary heritage, followed by the undervaluation of its culinary traditions. Subsequently, it enumerates the absence of initiatives to teach culinary traditions, the disruption of intergenerational transmission that facilitates knowledge transfer, and the endangerment of culinary heritage. Additional factors encompass the degradation and crisis of peasant economies, environmental deterioration and limited utilization of food biodiversity, the absence of a system or mechanism to incentivize and promote traditional cooking practices, and instances where the necessary measures to ensure hygiene and formalize traditional kitchens inadvertently undermine culinary traditions (Ministerio de Cultura, 2012, 65-68). The scope of the policy is the set of viable transmission-enabling traditions, knowledge, practices, and social processes. The policy is directed in a general way to citizens and in a particular way to tradition bearers, people in charge of culture, public administrators, researchers of traditional culinary systems, and interested social organizations (ibid., 69-76).

Regarding the vision and general objectives of the policy, the idea is to value and safeguard diversity and cultural wealth of knowledge, practices, and food products of Colombia's traditional kitchens as fundamental factors of identity, belonging, and population well-being. It is also vital that there are appropriate processes of recognition, research, valuation, creativity, transmission, and recreation of traditional culinary practices and culinary knowledge, considering the regional differences and localities (ibid., 76)

Additionally, the implementation of the policy is delineated through the subdivision of five critical strategies accompanied by recommended actions. The subsequent section of this study will primarily concentrate on the analysis of the first strategy, as it encompasses the most relevant criticisms and observations pertinent to the research at hand.

The first strategy outlines several suggestions for promoting and preserving traditional cooking techniques in Colombia. It addresses recognizing, valuing, and teaching food heritage and traditional food practices. The recommendations include the development of ministerial guidelines that integrate culinary culture within regional initiatives, promoting research collaborations with academic institutions, incorporating studies on culinary culture into national incentive programs, and facilitating the transmission of traditional cooking techniques within households. Additionally, the document suggests designing and implementing a state-funded program to produce promotion materials, intercultural dialogue, mutual learning between tradition-bearers and professional cooks, and supporting exhibitions, festivals, and regional exchanges. The strategy also suggests prioritizing traditional food practices in food programs run by territorial actors like the Colombian Institute of Family Wellness and encouraging cooking schools to include traditional culinary practices in their curricula.

Juana Camacho has examined the first strategy, particularly the contradictions and tensions in formulating a culinary and food policy from a heritage perspective in the 2012 Policy for the Knowledge, Safeguarding, and Promotion of Food and Traditional Cuisines in Colombia. Firstly, she highlights that the description of the proposed actions implies that teaching about food traditions should also be done at home. This implication means that there will be a governmental effort to go into the private spheres of citizen life, and it is precisely in these spaces where socialization and teachings about food are done initially, in the family home. The underlying message might suggest that efforts are being made to exert control over the settings in which families practice their customs independently of the state, which could harm how people interact with food. Similarly, the strategy mentions technical assistance from other institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Colombian Institute of Family Well-being (ICBF), which, on paper, have an impact and direct influence on both agricultural policies and the implementation of food and nutrition

policies. However, the named organizations' harmful effects on agricultural and nutritional policies should not be glossed over. The ICBF has contributed to food dependency and homogenization of food habits with products like *bienestarina* in parts of the most vulnerable populations. At the same time, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been at the forefront of the modernization of agricultural practices, which, as indicated before, created a neoliberal and commodified way of seeing agricultural production in the country, which in turn affects traditional food practices and nutrition in various ways. Finally, another recommended action plan in the first strategy discusses promoting research and teaching traditional food practices. In this sense, it is proposed that cooking schools should modify their curriculum to add more Colombian food practices. Theoretically, it appears positive because more students will approach and learn about these practices. On the other hand, it can lead to decontextualization and dissociation between tradition-bearers and traditional methods of knowledge transmission.

Furthermore, the policy proposes the selection of specific components from local culinary customs, a practice that, according to Camacho, may result in the preservation and perpetuation of these customs, potentially creating fixed and idealized representations of authenticity and tradition. The chosen repertory may be viewed as illustrative of the area, but what happens to the customs and dishes that were not chosen? There is still a disparity between the practices (Camacho, 2016, 189-190). There has to be a proper mediation between knowledge transfer of traditional food practices without abandoning modern cooking techniques, but cherry-picking certain traditions to teach can create selective imaginaries of what food heritage and food culture in the regions are.

There will not be an in-depth analysis of the following strategies, as it may suppress important observations and criticisms of the policy document. To provide a brief overview, however, the following four strategies are:

1. Safeguard the in-risk cultural heritage of traditional cooking and food practice, whose main objective is to put in place effective processes of culinary heritage safeguarding practices and to adopt measures for their documentation, rescue, revitalization, promotion, and development

2. Strengthening of organization and cultural management capacity of tradition bearers, which grazes different topics about recognition of work and social function of tradition bearers, stimulation of those functions, support through conformation of networks and social organization with agricultural workers, and contribute to the development of productive entrepreneurial projects that involve culinary traditions.
3. Promote knowledge and use of biodiversity for food purposes. In summary, it discusses creating public consciousness about the relationship between food, culinary culture, and natural availability. It offers to ensure the protection of the environment and widen the food base.
4. As the name states, institutional adequation seeks to establish administrative, technical, finance, and intersectional coordination mechanisms and contact with local and departmental administration for policy implementation. (Ministerio de Cultura - República de Colombia, 2012)

The discourse coming from the officials at that time was that this policy was more about strengthening internal systems rather than focusing on supranational tools like the UNESCO ICH list, as it was named by the former heritage director<sup>2</sup> of the Ministry of Culture Juan Luís Isaza: "The vice minister of tourism insisted that Colombian cuisine should be world heritage, but from the Ministry of Culture we said no, it is not the purpose, it is in our interest to strengthen internal processes before even thinking about an international nomination" (Juan Luis Isaza, personal communication, February 7, 2023). One of the main ideas described by Juan Luis Isaza was what he called a "*de-filet mignonization*" of culinary heritage - it was insane to go to a region like Mompox and be served a filet mignon while having a great abundance and richness of culinary expressions in each city, town, and region. The same idea is passed on to the policy, which tries to defend the idea of not having a national dish. By its very nature, Colombia is a country of distinct regional expressions, so having a national dish would obscure all other traditions and flavors. On the positive side,

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<sup>2</sup> The function of a Heritage director is very large, but it could be said that some of the main functions included formulating policies, plans and programs for protection, safeguarding, restoration, promotion and sustainability of the Cultural Heritage of Colombia. Other functions also include implementation of strategies to ensure plans, programs and projects are being accomplished, lead action for elaboration and update of Cultural Heritage inventories, and the guidance on design and put in action of instruments for safeguarding, protection, restoration, promotion and sustainability, among others. (Ministerio de Cultura - República de Colombia, 2023)

the policy has shown a general tendency to care more for food traditions, mainly at the grassroots and local levels. Initiatives such as *60 nativas*<sup>3</sup>, a Bogotá born project aiming to recover native potato species, show that the ripple effect has brought positive things.

Nonetheless, it is also crucial to speak about certain inconsistencies and issues that the policy has, starting with the fact that the celebratory emphasis of the policy tends to erase specific effects of different macroeconomic and agrifood policies on peasant economies, food-producing sectors and the country's nutritional situation (Camacho, 2016). Furthermore, the document provides guidelines and orientations but has no institutionally binding effects; consequently, the policy is more symbolic than obligatory. With no binding forces, the heritage system cannot move, and at the same time, other state bodies are not obligated to participate in the efforts. The effort seems to be made only by one state body, in this case, the Ministry of Culture. Nonetheless, cultural heritage is a very complex issue, with many ramifications that typically permeate multiple areas of a functioning state. As it affects different parts of the food system, policy-based decisions regarding heritage should be made in an intersectional context. In this case, the action plans are merely proposals to create intersectional approaches like dialogue tables. Nevertheless, the root issue is that other organizations with stakes and influence in the heritage system were not considered at the formulation stage. This can further complicate heritage decisions by being unilateral. The policy names certain institutions directly affecting food traditions and safeguarding, such as the ICBF and INVIMA (*Instituto Nacional de Vigilancia de Medicamentos y Alimentos*, the primary organization in charge of hygiene and food safety policies), and the Ministry of Tourism. In the case of INVIMA, we can see that the organization was founded in 1993 through Law 100, which set the guidelines of the general system of health-related social security, and gained new competency through Law 1122 of 2007. becoming the sole entity in charge of inspecting, keeping an eye on, and controlling the production and processing of food, the slaughter and processing of animals, the gathering and processing of milk, and the transportation involved in these activities. Additionally, it is the principal agency in charge

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<sup>3</sup> *60 nativas* is a business and project from chef Óscar González, the purpose is to discover and recover local potato varieties from all over Colombia. According to an interview from 2021, the project already has helped re-discover more than 200 native varieties. The project also goes beyond discovery, and it is present as a restaurant and with different local potato products. The interview is available here: <https://canaltrece.com.co/noticias/papa-nativa-colombiana-60-nativas/>

of providing sanitary registers to enterprises (INVIMA, 2011). Being a public organization with administrative autonomy, it makes the decisions for restaurants, which have the responsibility to ensure good practices and quality of food products arriving at the consumers' bodies, but again, since its work is exclusively on sanitary measures, the cultural and traditional aspects of food practices are not taken into account in decision making. For instance, certain elements closely related to food activities, such as the objects used in traditional kitchens (wooden spoons, ceremonial clothing, wooden stoves, etc.), are not included in their regulations. To ensure safety, when organizations give a traditional cook a stainless-steel ladle in place of the generations-old wooden ladle that has held cultural significance and been a part of their cooking rituals, they are not mediating with the object's material culture, which has the potential to change traditional culinary practices. There is a need for mediation between traditional practices and modern food production systems. All links in the production chain must be analyzed to keep the practices existing and alive while also giving the modern consumer a final product that is safe to eat, which is not happening as of today.

Additionally, there appears to be a lack of cooperation from other stakeholders for unknown reasons. According to the previous heritage director of the Ministry of Culture, the hesitation was evident even at the highest levels of the heritage regime in terms of authority: "One of the emphases by Mariana Garcés [the Minister of Culture at the time] was the topic of a cultural tourism policy. We tried in every way, invested money, time, and effort with it, and finally, we had to put it into informal terms; the door was closed in our faces by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, saying that the proposal was more their competence than ours, they were not interested" (Juan Luis Isaza, personal communication, February 7, 2023). The provided information reflects the fragmented state management that was, and still is, significantly seen in Colombia: people in charge of food and nutritional security, income generation through tourism, and culinary issues are all working separately. Following this observation, we can see that, although the expert group gathered to formulate and discuss the policy was composed of people involved in food research for decades, with great expertise and brilliant ideas, there was still a lack of civic participation. Additionally, the participation from other stakeholders with competence in the food sector, like food producers, small business owners, tradition bearers, and food activists, was also missing.

However, The Ministry of Culture has created interesting initiatives to support the preservation of food traditions. One of the central programs is "Escuelas Taller," an initiative that arrived in the country in the late 1990s. The general idea is to create labor opportunities for young Colombians by preserving ancestral knowledge and recovering ICH linked to traditional labor (Escuela Taller de Bogotá, n.d.). Despite focusing initially on different forms of traditional labor, the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the primary organization responsible for these specialized institutions, introduced cooking workshops into the curriculum to transmit knowledge and practices. Another initiative associated with these educational institutions was the "Cocinas en riesgo" program, which, as described by Juan Luis Isaza, involved engaging school administrators, teachers, and students in discovering and appreciating ingredients, individuals, practices, and knowledge that were marginalized within food culture but still held cultural significance, to revitalize their value. The Ministry of Culture has also made progress in safeguarding through the implementation of stimulus programs. These programs involve issuing calls for proposals to individuals or established groups engaged in various cultural activities, including tradition-bearers, cultural project workers, cultural researchers, and cultural managers. The purpose of these programs is to provide monetary incentives for their work, either for ongoing projects or completed ones seeking recognition. The stimulus programs have well-defined guidelines for participation, evaluation, selection, and monitoring of activities, and they operate as a contest (Ministerio de Cultura - República de Colombia, 2023). Additional activities include national cooking contests about Colombian food traditions and tools like the special safeguarding plans (PES) used to inscribe practices into the National Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage List. Most of these initiatives and programs follow what is established in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for ICH, as they try to include civil society in developing cultural policies. Nonetheless, one might argue that the presented efforts are still disconnected from the realities that tradition-bearers face today; this will be discussed in depth in further sections of the thesis.

The main challenges highlighted by the policy document align with the identified issues. It demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of the necessary actions to address the risks and potential disappearance of food traditions due to globalization. However, in its early stages, the policy implementation suffered from fragmented state management. Additionally, a lack

of cooperation networks across different territories was evident, indicating scattered efforts in safeguarding. Moreover, while inter-institutional cooperation is emphasized as a guiding principle, its practical implementation appears limited in specific locations such as Yopal.

#### **4.2 What are the neighbors doing? Contrasting policies with Mexico and Peru**

One way to understand and contrast Colombia's efforts in safeguarding traditional food practices is to compare them with other cases. In this research, Mexico and Peru were chosen because both countries have gained fame with their cooking practices, and their experiences show similarities in cultural terms due to being Latin American countries. Additionally, both countries attempted to nominate some of their food practices into the UNESCO List of ICH, with only Mexico being prosperous in the endeavor.

Peru is a country whose incursion into the food heritage arena responded to a very different process than Colombia. The country entered a "gastronomic boom" in the early 1990s, as Raúl Matta described in his research about Peru's food incursions into global heritage. Most prominent figures, like Gastón Acurio, went to training in European chef schools and came back to "displace and translate rural, indigenous or 'remote' food knowledge into cosmopolitan canons and speak with authority about their interpretations of Peruvian cuisine. They constantly re-appropriate and re-signify rural food long seen as backward and un-modern by upper classes using haute cuisine techniques and aesthetics" (Matta, 2016, 342). The international recognition this boom brought was the perfect opportunity, combined with newly adopted neoliberal agricultural policies, to be named Cultural Heritage of the Nation in 2007. It did not take long before an inscription to UNESCO was started in 2008. After an internal rejection, its focus changed completely, from an anthropologically and culturally interesting engrained nomination to a much more market-oriented one that aimed at launching Peru into worldwide gastronomic circuits; the second nomination was returned and has not been submitted ever since (ibid., 343)

One issue comparable to the Colombian case was the issue of hygiene and standardization. In the second Peruvian nomination process, some of the main stakeholders showed concern for the hygiene of peasant tradition bearers. The stakeholders wanted the cooks to hold international standards in events like gastronomic fairs; at the same time, one of their desires was to have at least a minimal level of standardization. The aim was to know approximate



quantities of agricultural product yield, all favoring the market as they wanted to sell the heritage as a commodity (Matta, 2016, p.347). The Colombian case works inversely in terms of globalization processes. Countless products have been lost due to crop replacement with more productive ones. Moreover, in this sense, with such modern food systems, hygiene policies quietly absorbed certain practices of traditional food bearers to fit a certain level of consumer desires.

As Peru tries to evolve into a neoliberal market for heritage commodities, Colombia is trying to step back and work with the available heritage products to safeguard the practices. Theoretically, they could move to a market-oriented strategy with more informed diagnoses of traditional food practices. In terms of public policy, Peru has yet to have a document similar to Colombia's, but there is a 2019 law project about promoting and developing Peruvian cooking. It takes a similar approach to Colombia in that the representatives proposing the policy want to revalorize their historical and cultural identity among all state actors and civil society. Although the project still has an interest in international markets and attracting foreigners, it also names variations in food policy, taking into account nutrition standards and food health but prioritizing local products like potatoes, quinoa, and Andean products (*Ley de Promoción y Desarrollo de La Cocina Peruana*, 2019). Like Colombia, they want to consider culinary traditions specific to each region in the country, the creation of registries for local cuisine, intersectional councils, and the creation of gastronomic routes.

The Mexican case is in many ways similar to Peru's in that its primary purpose as of right now is to serve an international market that brings revenue with strategies of gastronomic tourism. It began with a failed nomination to the UNESCO ICH list in 2005 and a second successful nomination in 2010. Although the nomination about food culture in the state of Michoacán did bring positive revaluing and recovery of products, ingredients, recipes, and a diverse group of knowledge and techniques of different regional foods to revindicate identities, it has also been exploited as an economic and political strategy to promote gastronomic tourism (Zúñiga Bravo, 2020).

When discussing public policies, Mexico's document, the Policy for Promotion of National Gastronomy, produced in 2015, responds to economic revenue. Its main points speak about producing integral strategies covering all of the steps of the productive gastronomic cycle,

aiming to provide new gastronomic experiences tightly linked to complementary services such as hospitality (Gobierno de México, 2015). Other points include linking territory to local culinary traditions, value creation through gastronomic experiences that should organize around effective systems of public-private cooperation, and a balance between environmental issues and the gastronomic sector that provides effective practices that promote sustainable use of natural and energetic resources (Gobierno de México, 2015). It is also important to note that these practices are closely related to the national tourism agreement.

One of the interesting measures Mexico has taken to showcase and promote its cooking traditions is the registration of traditional female cooks (*cocineras tradicionales*)<sup>4</sup> in the public education and tourism secretariats, which in turn has raised participation and interest from women from all over the country to participate in local programs (Zúñiga Bravo, 2020). What is interesting about this measure is that, although it brings recognition and generates employment opportunities for traditional female cooks, these women fit both as an identity marker and a vital cog in the gastronomic tourism industry. The individuals chosen for participation in this initiative are carefully selected and acknowledged as representatives of their respective culinary traditions. However, besides their cultural role, they are also expected to fulfill an economic purpose by training in hygiene and customer interaction. This training enables them to effectively showcase their gastronomic traditions within a context of heightened tourism focus (Matta, 2019, 5-8).

The communities in Mexico, in turn, can use the government-provided strategies for their benefit and to look for opportunities otherwise not provided by the Mexican government. These initiatives and communities, as described by Zúñiga Bravo, "see in the recovery and reevaluation of their food heritage a strategy to demand from the State the right to decide on the management of their territories and heritage, seen as a way to promote environmental sustainability and conservation through economic and social recovery based on an ecological transition" (Zúñiga Bravo, 2020, 193).

There are interesting points when contrasting the Colombian, Peruvian, and Mexican cases, one from a language and meaning perspective. When examining the Mexican context, it

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<sup>4</sup> The focus on female cooks responds to many regional cases where traditionally, women are the cooks of the communities, and is traditionally, in many ways, a feminine space

becomes evident that "gastronomy" is employed instead of phrases such as "cooking practices." This deliberate choice is driven by encompassing a broader framework beyond the mere act of cooking, incorporating elements of commerce, politics, and scientific inquiry. However, the utilization of the term "gastronomy" also entails a shift in meaning and significance, as it situates the subject matter within a modern and progressive sphere, thereby distancing it from its traditional roots (Hernández 2018, cited in Zúñiga Bravo, 2020, 191). Another critical aspect is that policies and strategies related to food traditions started to be implemented in Mexico and Peru after gaining international recognition and identifying opportunities to gain revenue from tools like heritage lists. Thus, the UNESCO lens on food traditions impacts food systems in terms of safeguarding and highlighting the cultural significance of food and opportunities to generate income. Meanwhile, Colombia's cooking practices are engulfed in modern production systems and affected by globalization before even being affected by heritage policies. Mexico and Peru have actively embraced and implemented heritage initiatives closely aligned with the international recognition and proliferation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). In contrast, Colombia has undertaken efforts to organize and revitalize its remaining heritage traditions, focusing primarily on internal promotion and enhancement of its cultural significance.

The heritagization of food practices appears to be a natural consequence of international heritage policies, which only highlights the fact that the Colombian heritage system still suffers from significant disorder, that food practices are dispersed and constantly threatened by external forces, and that we are approaching an era in which globalization and capitalism will be the dominant system. In this sense, Colombia is trying to heritagize its traditional cooking practices through public policies. However, the food system has evolved in such a bizarre way that the intersectional efforts that were supposed to start in the early 2000s with the new UNESCO convention are happening more than 15 years later. It seems like we are deeply embedded in a system that values heritage as a commodity, and the gap in safeguarding efforts in food traditions is narrowing. Furthering on this idea, one may argue that there is a need for a complete revamp of the heritage efforts in Colombia. Intersectional initiatives should no longer be a topic of discussion but a necessity; heritage initiatives related to food practices need to impact all of the steps in the productive cycle; these ideas need to be deeply ingrained in policies of all state dependencies.

There needs to be mediation between traditional food production and food security and sovereignty. Agricultural policies must consider cultural aspects with economic revenue to save traditional crops lost due to a lack of interest in cultural significance and how communities eat. Cultural tourism initiatives should also be developed to bring value to traditional cooking practices and bring recognition to tradition bearers. Additionally, the nation requires education on food traditions. As Colombians, people need to value their traditions and put them at the highest level rather than devalue them for not following Western haute cuisine standards. Colombia's safeguarding efforts seem disconnected from the rest of the national political system and will not fulfill its great potential unless valuable changes start in the following years.

In turn, cases like Mexico and Peru show that economic revenue brought by food traditions comes at a price. Although international eyes in the food sector turn first to these types of countries when visiting the global south, safeguarding practices appear to focus on a mercantile purpose. Recognition of cultural identities and food traditions is done to sell them as innovative products. This can erode and create images of a culinary tradition that is, by a large margin, a small percentage of the total regional and national traditions. The comparative analysis reveals that all three countries, for various reasons, require interdisciplinary approaches to heritage preservation. Whether motivated by the urgency to prevent the continued erosion of traditions or to enhance and promote culinary heritage, implementing more humanistic and anthropological strategies is crucial. Each country, however, finds itself at distinct stages in heritage policy formulation and implementation as they strive to advance and compete in developing comprehensive heritage frameworks.

## **Chapter 5. Exploring Colombian Food Heritage: Case Studies of Llanero Traditions, Ajiaco Santafereño, and Cuy**

During fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2022, there were visits to three different cities in Colombia's central, southwestern, and eastern regions, specifically Bogotá, Yopal, and Pasto. This chapter centers on the examined traditions and scrutinizes them concerning safeguarding measures, potential threats, and opportunities for safeguarding.

### **5.1 Llanero traditions with food, Yopal, Casanare**

The city of Yopal, the region of Casanare, is located in the eastern region of Colombia, a territory recognized for its oil-exploitation activities, agriculture, and, most importantly, cattle work. Their cooking is highly linked to Amazonian cooking traditions; historically, it is a feminine practice. Casanare is recognized as one of the regions that preserve traditions better. However, at the same time, there is very little culinary research on this region and very few measures by the state regarding safeguarding and protection programs (Quintero Prieto, 2013).

Llanero cooking combines sweet, sour, spicy, robust flavors, strong agricultural practices, hunting, fishing, and cattle raising. Meat is consumed nearly at each meal. (Quintero Prieto, 2013) One of the reasons they consume so much meat is because of the activities their ancestors from the region had.

*We cannot ignore that in this region especially, we came from a descendant of hunters. We were not farmers. Then they tell me, why do the llaneros eat so much meat? It is because we come from those ancestors; ancestrally, we are hunters. (Francy Cuta, personal communication, August 4, 2022).*

Over time, Yopal experienced a significant increase in oil-related activities, transforming into an industrialized city centered around this industry. This shift had profound implications for the traditional cooks of the region, who perceived it as a decisive factor contributing to the erosion of their culinary traditions, cultural identity, and ancestral roots.

*We had the influence of oil once we arrived, or, better said, from all the country's regions and influences from other countries because we received many foreigners at the time. So, we practically lost that identity as llaneros (...) We let ourselves go because those llaneros eventually became oil workers, and we forgot our roots. (Francy Cuta, personal communication, August 4, 2022)*

Food traditions in the Yopal are varied, ranging from different kinds of fish like *cachama* to small land animals like *chiguero* or capybara, all the way to fruits and agricultural products like *caña brava*, or *anon*<sup>5</sup>, to name a few. The different climates of the department bring different practices depending on the territorial conditions of the living space. Nonetheless, and as a first general issue, we can see that food practices in Yopal have, like many others, fallen victim to the globalization processes. Modern food systems have deeply affected food traditions and have had different effects on different practices.

Following this idea, we first see that in the rest of the country, and even inside the region, there is a lack of knowledge of food traditions. One of the effects is that there is a trend to minimize food practices in Yopal and the region to one practice, which is *mamona a la Llanera*. The dish quickly gained popularity and became a ubiquitous culinary representation, effectively solidifying and perpetuating a fixed image of the food culture within the country. The practice originated in old *llanero* social gatherings (Quintero Prieto, 2013). It was a dish to share made of veal under nine months old. After cutting it into large pieces, it is seasoned with salt and sometimes beer, skewered into large wooden skewers made with local trees or palms, and roasted in a bonfire for hours, usually three to four (Alejandro Vargas, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Restaurants sprouted all over the city and the region, mainly promoting this dish and attracting visitors, but as described by Francy Cuta: "The truth is that we are very, very, very forgotten, they don't know us other than that we were referred to as *carne a la Llanera* and that is where we stayed. We are much more than a *carne a la Llanera*" (Francy Cuta, personal communication, August 4, 2022).

*Mamona a la Llanera* underwent a process of heritagization in which it was re-signified and became a static image of what is known of the region. Moreover, by placing the dish's image as a reflection of the region, stakeholders, like restaurant owners and tourism promoters, seized the opportunity to bring value and revenue to the new portrayal of *Llanero* food culture. As food demonstrations shifted to show the emblematic dish, other practices moved down in importance, away from any relevant safeguarding efforts. What is curious about the evolution of this practice is that it showed interesting heritage characteristics because it

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<sup>5</sup> *Anon* is a green fruit, known for growing in regions where temperature does not go below 28 degrees Celsius. Its flavor is close to a soft melon.

adapted to the effects of modern food systems without fundamentally changing the practice itself. What it means is that the practice itself has seen modifications through the years, responding to a much more formalized and business-oriented market perspective, as it was discussed with the legal representative of one of the most famous restaurants in Yopal:

*A cattle farmer can choose between selling a 500-kilo steer, with all the logistics that this implies and the cost, or selling a cow or a heifer weighing 100 kilos or 250 kilos less. Well, of course, the steer market becomes much more interesting because it is better paid and because it amortizes costs better (...) But to think about these practices nowadays is very complicated because who has cattle? Well, the cattle breeders. And who are the cattle breeders? Livestock business people who are looking for economic profit. I do not believe slaughtering an eight-month-old animal is profitable (Alejandro Vargas, personal communication, August 5, 2022).*

Apart from not using veal, other practice changes include using stainless-steel skewers instead of traditional wooden ones and cooking inside the restaurant or building instead of the field. All of these changes could be attributed to hygiene practices and requirements by INVIMA. From the consumer perspective, consuming food that is safe and up to standards is appreciated and required. From the perspective of tradition, the main components of their practices are still present in the elaboration. However, the ritual part of it has disappeared to serve a different purpose. When trying the dish, there was no perceivable difference in flavor. At the same time, the changes now create personal doubt if the *mamona a la Llanera* taste was the original tradition at any point.

The central inquiry pertains to the extent to which a traditional food practice can undergo modification before it transforms a distinct tradition. The study seeks to discern the thresholds at which the re-signification and acquisition of new meanings prompt substantial changes in practice. Furthermore, explicitly delineating the circumstances under which a practice may transition into different heritage processes, such as inventorying or nominations, is crucial.

Moving away from this practice but staying on the lack of awareness, it is clear that ignorance of food traditions starts from inside the department. Multiple products have been at direct risk of being lost or not taken advantage of because people do not know about them. Products

like *caña brava*<sup>6</sup>, or *malanga*<sup>7</sup>, are being cut down from farms because people consider they need to plant crops that bring more economic revenue. Alternatively, farmers are slowly decreasing planting because people are not buying the products. As discussed before, this directly affects modern food production systems because if a product is not economically valuable, it is not useful. However, the cultural value and associated traditions are being severed from the practices.

Globalization has significantly impacted the lives of individuals residing in the region. As articulated by Francy Cuta during her exploration of the region, she encountered individuals experiencing food deprivation. However, this predicament was not solely attributed to financial constraints. Instead, it probably was because the general preference among these individuals was inclined toward canned products, which offered convenience in consumption and obviated the need for culinary endeavors. Thus, time-saving and convenience seemed to supersede their inclination for traditional cooking practices. The described issue is connected to what was mentioned in the second chapter. Introducing new, ready-to-consume products is enticing, but it is also a matter of mindset; if there is no knowledge of the relevance of traditional culinary procedures for cultural identity, people reject it.

Another difficulty with traditional food practices in Yopal is the ongoing undervaluation of food traditions. There is a tendency to present Western cuisines and kitchen regulations as a golden standard without even realizing what particular things or activities entail for the individuals performing them. Francy's experience exemplifies this:

*The other thing I do is that when I present myself (to showcases, gastronomic fairs, etc.), I go with my Llanero hat. Some people have not wanted to let me present because I don't wear a chef's hat. One American chef told me that it was improper, so I told him what happens is that it was my identity, I came representing a region, and I was going to wear it.* (Francy Cuta, personal communication, August 4, 2022).

Another example was described when Francy Cuta was to receive a former minister of culture to the city. She proposed to serve a cocktail based on *guarapo*<sup>8</sup>. Stakeholders agreed it was

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<sup>6</sup> *Caña brava* is a type of cane plant, used mainly for crafts, or medicinal purposes.

<sup>7</sup> *Malanga* or Taro in English, is a root vegetable used in traditional cooking practices in multiple regions of Colombia, it can be cooked in many different ways, depending on the dish or the traditions

<sup>8</sup> Guarapo is a traditional Colombian fermented drink, usually produced from sugarcane



not a good idea and requested her to prepare a Cuban mojito. The second time she looked for advice, someone recommended calling the preparation a *guarapo highball*; adopting a term from a cocktail category made it sound fancier, and she could serve it. This is just a repetition of the long-time trend of westernizing traditional cooking practices to appeal to an elite palate.

A third concern concerns the lack of government assistance and acknowledgment in fostering and sustaining traditional culinary practices. Traditional cooks many times encounter neglect and a lack of support from local governments when endeavoring to participate in gastronomic fairs. Regrettably, governmental authorities frequently disregard the potential positive influence of active participation in public events on preserving and promoting the region's culinary heritage.

It can be analyzed that government issues also extend to other areas like infrastructure. The following experience, which refers to a family that had various citrus crops, describes how family businesses in the Yopal case would sometimes rather stop their agricultural practices than deal with the logistical challenges of selling that product:

*They had a lot of oranges, naranjas criollas, limón mandarino. These people decided to get rid of everything because transportation costs them a lot, the problem is the roads, and people have gotten tired of waiting for solutions. It would be much more expensive for them, and when they come here (to market squares), the market prices are abusive. They pay what they see fit for the poor people who arrive and if it suits them. Then some people told me, look, I prefer it to be lost in the bushes than to lose money paying for transportation to the marketplace. (Francy Cuta, personal communication, August 4, 2022).*

The final concern related to government bodies is with INVIMA. Francy Cuta thinks that the rules are excessively onerous; there appears to be a gap between the government's desires for cultural preservation on the one hand and its subsequent restrictions on the same traditions on the other. While the issues are significant, analyzing the preservation efforts made by individuals and local communities is also interesting from the heritage viewpoint. Francy Cuta's main initiative tackles multiple issues. It helps reinforce the idea of cultural identity and regional belonging, topics that are all part of the safeguarding practices, and a different way to heritagize food. She identified the issue of industrialized packaged snacks, such as

potato chips, being available in local supermarkets, which, as described previously, contribute to a shift in the relationship between people and food. The proposed solution was to satisfy the need for packaged snacks in a culturally significant way. The entrepreneurial result from it was a package of varied snacks that rooted itself in *llanero* culture, from the selected name "*avío llanero*," which was the name of the rations that llaneros took on their long cattle-moving workdays, all the way to the products. She combined local snacks like *arepuelas*, root vegetables like *malanga*, and pork and beef meat cuts, which are then processed. The final result is packaged snacks with no added preservatives. The use of *malanga*, for example, was attributed to the fact that she saw batches of the product rotten in market squares; she then bought it and thought of the best way to showcase them, in this case, thinly sliced like chips and fried. This initiative is an excellent example of how modernity can still connect to traditional cooking practices to bring awareness and connect people to their cultural identity. Francy Cuta's heritagization process is distinctive, as it involves the selective extraction of elements from the food culture, drawing inspiration from traditional llanero practices, and employing modern cooking and packaging techniques to confer novel significance. This approach enables producers to market previously overlooked products and adapt to the evolving preferences of an industrialized society while retaining their intrinsic value and cultural meaning.

Other initiatives include traveling through the region and finding products consumed in the past, identifying what is being done with them, and taking action. Agricultural ingredients like *caña brava*, *ruanes*, *malanga*, and leaves of trees like bananas are at risk of being lost. Reasons include discarding the by-products like leaves because farmers could not find utility. Another reason is a cease in production due to a lack of consumption and economic revenue of products. For people like Francy Cuta, ingredients like the ones named above are essential for regional development, and where the city or department government needs to intervene to support local initiatives.

Another strategy traditional cooks employ involves engaging with the local community to gather insights into historical consumption practices, cooking methods, and alternative ingredients uses. By tapping into firsthand knowledge from primary sources, a secondary process emerges to re-purpose or reevaluate the product. However, these endeavors remain

insufficient without government involvement, as heritage initiatives driven solely by grassroots efforts lack the necessary economic support. As Francy Cuta stated,

*I think the story of the caña brava is very important for the region, and the caña brava is running out. So, I say that if I manage to make a dish with caña brava, I need the public entity's support. Why? Because it is up to us to encourage because the caña brava is not only edible, the caña brava has many uses. So, it is like being able to reach the people, those behind the desk, hey, come on, understand what this is about (Francy Cuta, personal communication, August 4, 2022).*

These approaches put into perspective how disconnected the government, at least the local one, is from food practices in Yopal. Although it is more anecdotal than academic, Francy discussed how the local government approached her to participate in a project about industrializing *tungos*<sup>9</sup>. The main idea, presumably, was to industrialize the production of *tungos* to sell or promote them inside the department and in other parts of the country. However, the fundamental flaw Francy identified was that the government only looked at the final dish, disregarding and disconnecting it from the other links in the supply chain. Francy Cuta raised an important question regarding producing a certain quantity of *tungos* nationally: Where would the necessary leaves be sourced from? This query considers the current practice of discarding the leaves as if they were unwanted weeds. Additionally, the challenging process of obtaining these leaves during the summer further complicates the situation. It could not be overlooked that, more than the dish itself, it is crucial to ensure that the other steps in the supply chain operate correctly if the goal is to promote the product for safeguarding. There is a need to analyze the environmental impact of industrializing traditional food practices. It must be remembered that most traditional food practices work around environmental availabilities, and over-exploitation of resources can also put the practice in danger.

One of the first lessons Yopal learned in the scope of heritage is a disconnection between the acting heritage regimes. Grassroots initiatives are taking up the challenge to protect and safeguard the community's food practices by engaging civil society and creating support networks. The local government is attempting very neutral projects that are neither

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<sup>9</sup> Dough based on rice and local fresh cheese, typically wrapped in banana or similar local leaves and then cooked

productive in the long term nor helpful to the safeguarding objective. According to interviewees, the national government seems to have forgotten the Casanare region regarding safeguarding. There is a profound lack of research in food practices, which also shows that action plans like research and education written in the policy are not being executed on equal terms through the national territory; it is not something that happens in a few years, but it is worrisome that after almost 11 years from the Policy for the Knowledge, Safeguarding, and Promotion of Food and Traditional Colombian Cuisines publication, there is no visible help to the region.

It also seems that the alteration of food practices, stemming from initiatives like the UNESCO ICH list, is only partially affecting the region, with *mamona a la Llanera* being the specific practice changed through it. However, other practices are in ongoing heritagization processes, starting from the identification of products.

Additionally, it is essential to discuss safeguarding potential and possible recommendations derived from personal experience in the region. These are the main recommendations, which are all linked to each other inside the food production system:

1. Gastronomic experiences: Developing food experiences inside the city and department can benefit all sides of the system; it can boost tourism in the region while promoting food traditions and agricultural practices of products not well known.
2. Practice identification and product visibility: There is a need to use public resources to identify food practices that are still out of reach because of a lack of interest or state presence in the department. In this same vein, there needs to be an effort to give visibility to identified food products at risk of being lost.
3. Ecological viability: When identifying practices and putting them in industrialized or heritage-related projects, there need to be ecological studies about exploiting the practices; there must be the security that heritage practices do not damage ecological structures.
4. Infrastructure development and fair prices in marketplaces: one of the steps that need to be taken in order to help isolated practices is to invest in infrastructure. The department still has infrastructurally isolated localities from main cities, which can be dangerous to undiscovered traditional food practices. The process is slow, so it is

also essential to regulate predatory practices by people in market squares who exploit producers trying to sell their products there.

5. Strengthening civil society networks: As previously discussed, grassroots initiatives rely on direct relations with people in all supply and production chain steps. More effective communication networks can expand territorial product transportation and usage and therefore identify products at risk by modern practices.
6. State presence: It is clear that the government is not present as it should be. There needs to be more presence and relations within all the heritage regimes. It is also essential to create educational dynamics focused on culture so people can better know and use their products more effectively.

## **5.2 Ajiaco Santaferense, the star of the capital, Bogotá D.C**

Bogotá's food culture could be defined as very well-known; there are certain established traditions like *tamal santaferense*<sup>10</sup>, *ajiaco santaferense*, *chicha*<sup>11</sup>, and pastries like *buñuelos*<sup>12</sup>.

*Ajiaco santaferense*, an iconic soup in Bogotá, is prominent in the city's culinary landscape. While *ajiaco* as a culinary practice extends beyond Bogotá and is also found in other Latin American countries, the name "ajiaco" derives from the inclusion of aji, or chili peppers, in its preparation (Quiroz Arango, 2012). The dish typically consists of a boiled soup incorporating legumes and meat. Over time, the modern rendition of ajiaco has undergone significant evolutionary changes, reflecting adaptations and modifications in its preparation and ingredients. Recipe books containing references to the dish, apart from a poem passage written in 1877, were conspicuously absent prior to 1937. Notably, more standardized renditions of the dish, resembling its contemporary form closely, emerged consistently during the 1970s (Quiroz Arango, 2012). Since the 1970s, the recipe has remained unchanged, with minimal deviations observed among different families, albeit without straying significantly from the core ingredients. Most of the discussion around *Ajiaco*

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<sup>10</sup> *Tamal Santaferense* is a specific variety of Colombian tamales, The dough is made from corn and a marinade, and filled with different pork and chicken cuts, potatoes, peas, and carrots. When mixed it is wrapped in banana leaves and cooked.

<sup>11</sup> *Chicha* is a fermented drink, originated from indigenous tribes mainly from the Andean region. It is traditionally made from corn.

<sup>12</sup> *Buñuelos* are traditional Colombian fritters, they are made from a dough with a cassava base and cheese, rolled in balls and fried, their consumption is very typical for the Christmas season

*santafereño* is, for example, around the use of *arracacha*, an Andean tuber that many argue is part of the tradition, and others deny the statement. The current known preparation comprises three different kinds of potatoes, *pastusa*, *sabanera*, *criolla*, chicken, a local aromatic herb called *guasca*, and spices. Because of the different compositions of the potatoes, they dissolve at different paces, giving the soup a recognizable and unique thick texture without the need to add thickeners (Sánchez & Sánchez, 2012). The dish is one exemplary representation of what a *mestizo*<sup>13</sup> dish is, an amalgam of different cultures clashing together. It is said to take inspiration from an ancient Spanish dish called *olla podrida*<sup>14</sup> (Bermúdez Rodríguez, 2021).

Jacquelin Arévalo, a traditional cook interviewed in Bogotá, describes how ingrained the practice of *ajiaco Santafereño* is in the city and her family. Information like this is vital because, unlike other food practices, *ajiaco* has a strong cultural adherence to the city.

*My grandmother used to prepare it, so let's say it's not that I have changed the recipe because it was how she used to prepare it. The ingredients have always been available because the ajiaco santafereño is very traditional. Then there is always the pastusa potato, the sabanera potato, the corn (...) Some people do not add arracacha; they say it is only potatoes, but I do not. I keep the tradition with arracacha* (Jacquelin Arévalo, personal communication, August 19, 2022).

Food practices native to Bogotá are vastly different from other traditional practices. This is because, as the capital holds priority in the reception of agricultural products and is a receptacle throughout the year of products from around the country, it is not affected by common shortages in many cases. Also, because it has been the capital for centuries, food practices have been adopted and replicated without much trouble. *Ajiaco santafereño*, despite being a relatively recent tradition when contrasting with other food practices, quickly found its space in restaurants and family houses, and the custom of making and eating this soup continues to be widely practiced.

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<sup>13</sup> *Mestizo* is a term that refers to individuals of mixed racial or ethnic heritage, especially used on the combination of European and Indigenous American ancestry. In the context of this research, a *mestizo* dish refers to a dish, product of cultural clashes throughout history, mixing ingredients from European, African, and Indigenous places.

<sup>14</sup> *Olla podrida* is a stew originated from Spain, which includes a variety of meats, legumes, vegetables and spices, recognized as well for its long cooking time.

Bogota's food practices are also ritualistic. There is a respect for traditions performed at specific festivities, *buñuelos*, and *natilla*<sup>15</sup> at Christmas, *tamales* and hot cocoa on Sunday breakfast, and preparations without meat during Easter. The *ajiaco santafereño*, deeply rooted in the city's cultural fabric and culinary customs, can be regarded as an established facet of the local food heritage. Its significance is manifested in its enduring presence in daily culinary practices, mitigating the likelihood of abrupt erasure. Moreover, the dish exemplifies a remarkable intergenerational transmission of knowledge across various socio-economic strata, attesting to its all-encompassing association with the city as a collective entity. In the case of traditional cooks<sup>16</sup>, it is clear that intergenerational transmission of knowledge is especially relevant. Jacquelin Arévalo is already a third-generation tradition-bearer of her grandmother's recipe, with the teachings passed down to her daughter. In the case of Doña Luisa, a traditional cook from the region of Valle del Cauca, she learned the tradition, is replicating it, and already has her son learning the tricks of her *ajiaco* recipe.

The promotion and development strategies of *ajiaco santafereño* in Bogotá diverge from those observed in Yopal. In Bogotá, the city government assumes a primary role in actively engaging with cultural activities, given its recognition as one of Latin America's most renowned tourist destinations. Consequently, the government plays a crucial role in promoting and developing *ajiaco santafereño*, leveraging its cultural significance to attract tourists and support the preservation of this culinary tradition. Among the initiatives involving traditional cooks such as Jacquelin Arévalo and Doña Luisa, the *Ajiaco Santafereño Days* stand as a prominent one. This event occurs annually in October and November, selecting restaurants deemed exemplary in preparing *ajiaco*. Subsequently, the nominees are compiled into a voting roster, encouraging citizens to sample the different *ajiacos* and vote for their preferred establishment. This participatory approach underscores the collective engagement of the population in celebrating and recognizing culinary excellence in the realm of *ajiaco* preparation (Instituto Distrital de Turismo, 2022). This exciting initiative includes civil society and puts people as the protagonists by nominating

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<sup>15</sup> *Natilla* is a traditional Colombian dessert, it is a custard-like sweet with a thick consistency made normally from milk, sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and vanilla.

<sup>16</sup> In this specific context, a traditional cook is a person who learned how to cook from older generations inside the family, following the traditional recipe, and using the traditional utensils.

their favorite restaurants. The initiative aims to keep the tradition alive and to invite, especially younger generations, to reenact and try the dish in its many versions and unique recipes around the city. An additional initiative encompasses organizing a competition to identify the best *ajiacó* in the city. This competition comprises three categories: "Best Restaurant in Bogotá," "Best Ajiaco by Locality," and "Best Ajiaco in the District Marketplace" Notably, both Jacquelin and Luisa garnered accolades in the latter category, securing the titles of best ajiaco cooks in the years 2019 and 2021, respectively. This recognition underscores their unwavering dedication to preserving and perpetuating the tradition of *ajiacó*.

As explained in the previous chapter, market squares, marketplaces, or plazas de mercado, are ways the city government boosts local producers and cooks. Every public market square has its food court with specific food specialties. Market squares in the city are also a synonym for tradition, "Many people come here to look for tradition, they come to the squares because there is tradition, many older people come here to this square to eat the *ajiacó*, to eat the *cocido*" (Doña Luisa, personal communication, August 21, 2022)

Jacquelin and Luisa have restaurants in the marketplace "*La Concordia*," located in the neighborhood La Candelaria, one of many marketplaces that went under renovation by the district institute of tourism. The goal was to revitalize the spaces so that more people would want to use them. Nevertheless, the renovation was not devoid of challenges, as it carried inherent risks that directly affected tradition-bearers. According to Jacquelin Arévalo, the announcement of the renovation and the requirement for the marketplace cooks to vacate the premises for a few years came with a promise of relocation and preservation of their spaces once the renovation was complete.

*I was going to get kicked out (...) The standard is seniority because if it had been for a while, we would not be here, and here would be Café Oma, Hamburguesas del Corral, and well, behind that, there were many people, but we had to respect our seniority and the commitments we had made because we had signed commitments* (Jacquelin Arévalo, personal communication, August 19, 2022).

This example demonstrates that contrary to the intended objective of promoting inclusivity and wider involvement, established chains such as *Hamburguesas del Corral*, *Café Oma*, and *Jeno's Pizza*, among others, presented a direct threat to the traditional culinary landscape of



the market square. The city's mayor intervened to uphold the previously established agreements in response to this challenge. This recurring theme throughout the research highlights the influence of globalization and economic interests, which posed a significant risk to preserving one of Bogotá's important sites for traditional gastronomic practices.

When conversing with traditional *ajiaco* cooks in Bogotá, there was a realization that the practice had no visible threats. It is a practice that is well protected, constantly reenacted, and promoted. However, the safeguarding issues in the city originated not in *ajiaco* but in other food preparations. In line with this observation, it appears that Bogotá's native dishes face a similar predicament to that of *mamona a la llanera*. This implies that a select group of culinary traditions, such as *ajiaco*, *buñuelos*, and *tamales*, occupy a prominent position in Bogotá's gastronomic heritage. These practices are commonly associated with the city and contribute to its cultural identity. However, lesser-known traditions like *cuchuco*<sup>17</sup> and *mazamorra chiquita*<sup>18</sup> have gradually faded from public consciousness, particularly in establishments like "La Concordia." Although these specific preparations fall outside the scope of the present research, it would be inaccurate and unjust to assert that these native soups of the city are currently endangered. Nevertheless, the testimonies of the involved traditional cooks unanimously advocate for increased awareness and appreciation of the lesser-known culinary offerings within the city.

Other expressed concerns regarding preserving food traditions in the city are more broadly related to agricultural practices, particularly the prerequisite of exporting the highest-quality products and importing those of lower quality for domestic consumption. Colombian products should be prioritized in the food industry to mitigate the excessive reliance on imported products that could be cultivated within the country's abundant territory. This call for prioritization extends to addressing the diminishing participation of younger generations in agricultural work, resulting in an aging agricultural workforce more susceptible to risks. Additionally, the fluctuating prices of agricultural goods can significantly impact the financial plans of small enterprises. Furthermore, the redevelopment of market squares has

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<sup>17</sup> *Cuchuco* is a traditional soup from Bogotá, its name derives from the use of *cuchuco*, which is a type of whole wheat grain, other ingredients also include various vegetables, and some sort of meat for added flavor

<sup>18</sup> *Mazamorra chiquita* is another traditional Colombian soup from the Andean region, it is usually prepared with dried corn, tripe, chard, beef, beans, onions and spices.

occasionally displaced rural farmers who previously sold their products directly at these locations, thereby transforming these market squares into tourist destinations rather than open spaces for local peasants.

The *ajiaco Santaferiño* can be regarded as a form of food heritage that has attained a prominent status within the region's cultural fabric. The active engagement of civil society in preserving and perpetuating this tradition demonstrates a solid commitment to its continuity. The local government, functioning as a heritage regime, adopts a transversal approach, prioritizing collaboration across different sectors rather than hierarchical structures to safeguard these culinary practices effectively. Moreover, the *ajiaco Santaferiño* is characterized by its vibrant and dynamic nature, reflecting its vitality and relevance in contemporary contexts.

In light of the present study, it is pertinent to suggest incorporating recommendations for safeguarding food traditions into existing agricultural agendas. However, it is important to exercise caution when considering exploring further food practices in the specific context of Bogotá. Given the city's high level of engagement and interconnectedness, the feasibility and relevance of such explorations may be questionable. From a research standpoint, one might contend that investigating different food traditions could fall outside the study's scope. Nevertheless, it remains essential to acknowledge the possibility that certain culinary practices may have silently disappeared due to the existing mechanisms for safeguarding the primary food traditions of the city. Hence, unveiling any overlooked or forgotten practices concealed in plain sight could be imperative to understand Bogotá's culinary heritage comprehensively.

### **5.3 Cuy, dynamism in the rural, Pasto**

The essential food tradition in Nariño is the *cuy* or roasted guinea pig. It is one of the best-preserved food practices in the region, having been consumed in the Andean subregion since before the arrival of the conquerors; it was widely consumed in Perú, in the Inca empire, that expanded to what is Pasto today. The consumption and domestication of *cuy*s started in about 5,000 B.C. (Morales, 1994). The regular consumption of the animal comes with very few seasonings, just like the *mamona a la Llanera* from Yopal, it is usually spiced with just salt,

and sometimes lemon is added to remove the musk from the carcass after cleaning; afterward, it is roasted and served (Sánchez & Sánchez, 2012).

This food tradition accomplishes various functions inside society in the department. An important function is that it is one of the most significant revenues to small family enterprises and individuals, as explained by Luz Nandar, a restaurant owner in the "Potrerillo" market square in Pasto:

*The farmers sometimes bring their cuys, and I think it is a vital means for the economic development of the region, because, for example, there are not many companies here, there are no factories and all that, what do they have to do here? We live in the countryside, in agriculture.* (Luz Nandar, personal communication, July 19, 2022)

Apart from bringing revenue, it is a product that represents the cultural identity of people in the department. They are proud of their product; it has the symbolic value of being a gift to receive guests to one's living space, and it is also a main dish in special celebrations like Mother's Day or Father's Day. It has its celebration, the Festival of Cuy and Peasant Culture, which has been done for more than ten years; it is a celebration around the product, with cultural activities, gastronomic experiences, and recreation (Alcaldía de Pasto, 2020). This food tradition also accomplishes a cohesive function; the spaces where the animal is sold, cooked, and consumed are spaces of unity and community. Contrasting this practice to the *mamona* in Yopal, we can see that this practice is beneficial for all of the steps of the food chain. As with the *ajiaco*, it is also a practice that is past a heritagization process in the sense that it has already been safeguarded, promoted, and documented. It is produced and consumed regularly everywhere in the department and accomplishes different functions in the identity process. It could be considered food heritage because people work every step of the way to ensure everyone can consume it, and it gains different meanings depending on the social group. Furthermore, the production of *cuy* has expanded beyond national borders, as evidenced by the influx of Ecuadorians who travel to the region to purchase these animals and the development of numerous business opportunities. An illustrative example by Luz Nandar highlights a producer who has amassed over 15,000 *cuys* and has planned agreements to export the product to Japan.

The main issue with this practice is that producers work very isolated from each other; each restaurant has its supplier, and some individuals even go to the market squares with 10 or 20 animals to sell. There is no productive unity; this lack can cause issues like shortages, a problem identified in the production chain. Consumption of *cuy* has increased to the extent that shortages have been observed by business owners like Luz Nandar for the past five years, with celebratory months like December presenting a challenge for consumers to find it, akin to a "lottery."

In addition to the challenges related to the cohesion of production units, the escalating costs of feed concentrate for *cuy* breeding contribute to reduced production rates, thereby hindering the procurement of these animals. Therefore, *cuy* producers have raised their prices in response, exacerbating the situation. Moreover, the proximity of Ecuador and the cross-border migration of individuals seeking more affordable *cuy* products in Colombia have further compounded the issue. Consequently, the market value of *cuy* has increased significantly, rendering it potentially inaccessible to low-income households. The silver lining is that people like Luz Nandar do not mind paying high prices because of the enormous benefits she sees from the product and its help to small enterprises.

Locals attribute this shortage problem to a lack of government presence. The economic landscape surrounding *cuy* production predominantly consists of family-based operations, which generate sufficient income to ensure food security. However, the production systems employed are characterized by outdated methods, limited technological advancements, and insufficient local production of concentrate feed to meet the demands of the entire population. The production system needs constant input because *cuy* raising only takes three months before it is commercialized, which means that a large output needs a more extensive input; this means enough technical knowledge to handle animal gestation, the quantity of food to ensure the nutritional standards of the animal and having sound transportation systems. To handle these issues, the responsible organizations developed a *cuyícola*<sup>19</sup> wellness manual to certify producing farms and form national production chains in the three central *cuy* production departments: Nariño, Putumayo, and Cauca (Trujillo Velásquez, 2022).

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<sup>19</sup> *Cuyícola* as a concept, refers to the industrial practices that circle around the production of *cuy*, from raising the animal, feeding, selling, sacrificing, and transportation, among others.

The second heritage issue identified originates from regions other than Nariño and parallels the case of Francy Cuta in Yopal. Urban dwellers, particularly those from larger cities like Bogotá, often harbor aversion and reservations towards consuming *cuy* due to its association with the animal being traditionally domesticated and kept as a pet. However, it is noteworthy that a significant portion of the population recognizes and appreciates the cultural significance attached to this practice.

Heritage analysis of this practice is complicated, mainly because the initiatives are synergized between grassroots communities and the local government. Additionally, the practice is already fully inserted into the population; there is no need for promotion tactics because inter-generational knowledge transfer is assured in most parts of the department.

Apart from this, the risk of *cuy* production is mitigated by recent measures taken by competent organizations. The recipes, just like *ajiaco*, vary minimally and in no significant way; in the production stage, from the information received, there is not any particular gendered practice or specific utensils or crafts that are being threatened by the possibility of modernization, which positively means the practice can adapt to modern food systems without being affected. Moreover, even if the practice shifts to a more market-oriented approach, the cultural identity and social cohesion associated with the practice are deeply rooted in the general population. This means the practice has strong societal roots that would still push for safeguarding against eventualities.

What is interesting about this case is that, out of the three visited regions, this is the only one where the interviewee openly wishes to take the next step in the heritage process. Luz Nandar wants the product on the national representative ICH list and can only see positive outcomes of getting more people to know about the practice. This could be a starting point for a joint effort to nominate the practice, starting with the national representative ICH list. However, as with most heritage initiatives, it entirely depends on the willingness of people to create a special safeguarding plan.

#### **5.4 Contrasting and comparing the three cases**

From the previous analysis, we can infer that the three practices, first and foremost, respond to very different needs in the social and cultural context of each city. In the case of the *ajiaco*

*santafereño*, the practice responds to the need for cultural identity since agricultural practices and government initiatives are well-developed. What is left is the reinforcement of social practices. In a city where restaurants of different types of world cuisine open up every day, where haute cuisine can be found everywhere, and where different cultures face each other in everyday situations because of years of migration processes, there is a regular contestation of what it entails to be a native of the capital. Traditional food practices can help fill that identity gap; people can reinforce their identity by keeping local traditions alive, reenacting them daily, and ritualizing certain practices around social groups that hold value. People from Bogotá are continuously contributing to the heritage system. In that process, they create social cohesion and cultural adherence to practices that make them feel pride in being from Bogotá.

In the case of Llanero traditions, significant problems that are entangled in the heritage system can be identified, such as a lack of awareness, imaginaries about food, a lack of exploration, and feelings of state forgetfulness are all mechanisms that impede a robust process of cultural identity reaffirmation. Grassroots initiatives in the region are a reflection of these issues. There is a constant need to explore and identify products to register food practices that unite the department—accompanied by a regular need to show value to food practices and a perceived need to detach from the national imaginaries about food. Evidently, from the vantage point of individuals in safeguarding measures and conditions, a considerable array of food practices awaits presentation and acknowledgment that have yet to receive due recognition. In this regard, the involvement of both local and national governmental entities assumes a pivotal role.

When switching to the *cuy*, one can see that it has more profound and rooted connotations for the general population than the other practices. People find their rural identity reflected in the practice. There is no separating the food practice from the cultural identity. *Cuy* consuming tradition is integral to defining who people from Nariño are and how they act as a community and society. With such strong sentiments towards a food tradition, people's efforts respond to the need to ensure the practice is safe in the long term. Participating in something more significant, like the national heritage representative lists, is the best way for them to realize this goal.

Regarding heritage processes, all three food practices are in different stages. Llanero traditions are in the early stages of heritagization, except for the *mamona a la Llanera*. In this case, there is still much to discover and unravel, and practices like *tungos* must be recognized and formalized. There is a dire need for discovery and documentation and a constant risk of food traditions being lost due to factors explained previously. There are still many heritage-related issues like the discovery and recognition of practices to be solved before getting to the point of safeguarding measures. In Bogotá, most of the recognized food practices are already considered food heritage, they are at a stage where the continuation is almost assured, and there is no need or initiative to enter national or international heritage lists. Citizens of Bogotá are happy with reenacting the food practices, and the local government shows promising advancements in passing down the knowledge, and their dishes are already recognized worldwide. So, each stakeholder plays their part in the heritage system. In the case of *cuy*, it is clear that the practice is also already part of the department's and the nation's food heritage. People are rooted in food practices, and heritage persistence is almost achieved with the measures taken. Before taking the next step, there is a need to wait for the results of the contingency plans for the *cuy* shortage. If there is no certainty that the shortage could be managed, following further heritage stages like nomination to the national representative ICH list could prove risky; in this case, the communities needed the government measures earlier.

All three practices relate to the heritage regimes differently. In Bogotá, the heritage regimes are well-defined, and the power structures are played out in people's daily lives. Additionally, there is consistency in a horizontal approach; there is synergy and constant collaboration from all of the stakeholders in the food chain, there are clear objectives to perform, and it seems that, despite serving a tourism and market-oriented approach, their stakeholders genuinely care about the heritage aspects of local food culture. In contrast, the execution of the heritage regimes appears to be rigid in Yopal. Almost all of the initiatives regarding food traditions are happening from below, and there is a call for action directed towards the higher heritage regimes to collaborate and help. At the same time, there appears to be a lack of comprehension of the local government's role in the cultural and heritage sphere. The local government seems to be focusing on isolated practices and steps of food production without looking at the bigger picture or understanding the cultural needs of the people. In light of this

observation, it can be deduced from empirical evidence that the relatively little prominence accorded to food traditions is not attributable to a deficiency in experience or expertise, as demonstrated by the well-developed nature of other cultural practices such as working chants and *llanero* music. Instead, it is conceivable that the relatively diminished interest in the potential opportunities culinary traditions offer may contribute to this regard. Moving to the south, in the case of Pasto, it looks like everyone is rowing in the same direction. Although government help and investment are arriving late, there is also synergy within the heritage regimes, collaboration is coming from all directions, and they all want the *cuy* to become something more significant than it already is.

Regarding the Ministry of Culture's 2012 policy and how its strategies and action plans are implemented in the three cases, it is evident that the most significant results for Bogotá are the ongoing education initiatives, participation of the civil society, and promotion efforts. There is also a solid cultural management capacity of tradition bearers and good institutional adequacy, which means that four of the five main strategies are being practiced. In Pasto, the main focus is the institutional adequacy and the strengthening of the organization and cultural management capacity of tradition bearers. The strategy concerning the recognition and teaching of food heritage and traditional food practices was not implemented because it was applied before through different cultural initiatives. In Yopal, none of the main strategies listed by the 2012 policy document are actively successful because of the persistent disconnection between civil society and government authorities. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that grassroots initiatives are being pulled toward the strategy of recognition, value, and teaching of food heritage and traditional food practices, followed by requests for institutional adequacy and strengthening the cultural management capacity of tradition bearers. Interestingly enough, relying on results from all three regions, there is almost no exploration of the use of biodiversity for food purposes. This might be due to cultural adherence to existing practices, and, in the case of Bogotá, additionally, the infrastructure and rapid urbanization do not allow for the development of biodiversity.

Ultimately, it is vital to speak about certain realities of Colombia that have affected and will affect heritage efforts in the future. One of the most important political aspects is the country's vast political landscape, meaning that parties are from the left, center-left, center-right, and a



very conservative right. With such extremes, the last few presidential elections have not been consistent; the former and current presidents vary in this way. This means that planning policies can shift in radical ways. For instance, there is no consistency in agricultural and economic policies, which can slow the advancement processes of regions and intrinsically affect heritage efforts. In this same vein, continuous processes in areas like agriculture can never reach their full potential because these policies only come into effect after more than 5 or 10 years, as described in the agricultural context in Chapter 2. There are constant interruptions in policy implementation. By stopping specific flows of action, the short-term impacts are constantly reflected when a new political term is selected, which stops development and reverses specific measures taken by the power. In general, the most significant national heritage regime, which is the national government, is affecting heritage development by not being consistent. However, in a working democracy, people choose who goes into power, which also pertains to a degree of responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

When reaching the end of the study, it is crucial to summarize the key findings stemming from the research questions and aims and understand how the study can contribute to new opportunities in safeguarding food heritage. Through document analysis and three case studies, this study examined the effectiveness of the Ministry of Culture's policy in preserving and promoting food traditions, how tradition bearers perceive these efforts, and the most effective strategies for preserving food traditions in Colombia. The findings suggest that the implementation of the policy by the Ministry of Culture in 2012 served as a pivotal moment, wherein a noticeable shift occurred in the public discourse surrounding the acknowledgment and appreciation of the importance and worth of food traditions. The policymakers understood that the main goal was to safeguard and work in different ways with food traditions, with a sense of community, and with the initial message that they were all striving for the same objective in every region of the nation. Furthermore, the government did not intend to exploit heritage for commercial purposes or utilize instruments such as the heritage list to pursue fame or recognition. A narrative of safeguarding and food heritage as part of cultural identity must be reinforced in all regions. Nonetheless, the policy was limited to particular recommendations and calls for actions of different stakeholders in the food heritage arena, which limits the real power the document has, in terms of binding the decisions.

Moreover, due to the absence of cohesive mechanisms, there is noticeable isolation in the preservation of culinary traditions, while the government's heritage policies exhibit a lack of clarity and cohesiveness. This situation hinders the government's endeavors from being intersectional, comprehensive, and horizontally aligned across all levels of the heritage regime. Compared to the cases of Mexico and Peru, Colombia's heritage system, particularly regarding food tradition initiatives, was approached from a different perspective. This implies that Colombia was initially pulled into a globalized and neoliberal agricultural production system. The initiatives then attempted to modify this system and return to one that was culturally significant and sustainable without sacrificing modernity. Meanwhile, Mexico and Peru took a strong stance on capitalizing on their international fame in food culture to develop policies that work according to an economy-based approach to internationalization. In this way, cultural policies in Colombia seem to be somewhat effective

but still disconnected from the rest of the governmental functions. There is a prioritization of specific heritage domains instead of the whole system.

Regarding the three case studies, tradition bearers perceive safeguarding efforts and initiatives from governmental bodies differently. In the cases of Bogotá and Pasto, there is ongoing support for promoting and safeguarding traditional food practices, regardless of how long the local governments work towards actively incentivizing initiatives that include civil society. Local governments support the tradition bearers and their practices. In the case of Pasto, they are trying to amend the issues related to *cuy* shortage, which was identified as the weak link in the production cycle. In return, tradition bearers are happy to participate in the initiatives and are thankful for the support and help received. For Yopal, governmental efforts are few and not built in the way tradition bearers want them to be. The latter feels the local government is not approaching civil society and understanding their needs to safeguard traditional food practices. Instead, local government agencies seem to focus more on the built imaginaries of food traditions and are, to a degree, detached from the vast number of discovered food traditions.

From the learned lessons in the fieldwork and analysis, it should also be said that the three cases are all in different stages of a heritage process. One of the main reasons is different, often uneven funding to certain territories. In addition, people's relationships with their local governments influence their culinary practices. Two of the three cases show that, with cooperation, safeguarding goals are possible and feasible in the near future. At the same time, with a distanced relationship and a lack of cooperation, heritage initiatives tend to lose strength, people tend to lose motivation, and practices could disappear.

In general, most food-safeguarding initiatives seem to come from below. People find the interest and take on efforts to preserve. With holistic initiatives from the government, people also tend to be inspired and participate, just like in the *Ajiaco* and *cuy* initiatives. It should also be noted that this image aligns with the UNESCO vision expressed in the 2003 ICH convention.

Finally, although it is clear from previous research and well-known documents like the UNESCO 2003 Convention, Colombia needs to avoid top-down approaches to food heritage and prevent falling into a system that only relies on civil society (bottom-up). The working

system has to be transversal, where integration is necessary for all levels of heritage regimes, from ministries and local governments working together to strong social networks of communities and tradition bearers. It is a shared responsibility where every stakeholder needs to play a part. All kinds of people must share cultural responsibility and safeguarding sentiments, not just participants in the initiatives. This goes to the point described previously, where fundamentally, a lack of knowledge of food traditions is prevalent in the country, and people do not feel responsible or see the importance of the knowledge and existence of food practices.

Broadly speaking, a need exists for a reinforced sense of cultural identity, increased cultural adherence, and enhanced education on food practices within the country. This study was produced to create knowledge about safeguarding and promoting traditional food practices in Colombia. The study could serve as a foundation for future research in additional regions and contexts to identify culinary traditions in the country and prevent their further disconnection and extinction. In addition, it could help bring awareness to the topic and reveal that people in every region are committed to safeguarding culinary traditions and require support.

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## Resümee

Kolumbia toidupärandi kaitse poliitika ja praktikad: uurimus Llanero traditsioonide, Ajiaco Santaferño, and Cuy kohta

Magistritöö keskendub Kolumbia toidutraditsioonidega seotud poliitikele ja praktikatele ning nende kultuurilistele, sotsiaalsetele ja majanduslikele mõjudele. Uurimuse eesmärk on laiendada teadmisi toidutraditsioonide väärtusest ning selgitada välja takistused ja võimalused nende edendamiseks ja säilitamiseks. Ühtlasi käsitletakse toidutraditsioonide säilitamise olulisuse seost jätkusuutlikkuse ja kultuurilise mitmekesisusega. Analüüsitakse Kolumbia kultuuriministeeriumi poolt 2012. aastal välja kuulutatud poliitika toidukultuuri ja traditsiooniliste köökidega seotud teadmiste kaitsmiseks ja edendamiseks. Ning selle poliitika rakendamist ja mõju Nariño, Bogotá ja Yopali kohalike toidutraditsioonide säilitamisel ja edendamisel. Töös uuritakse 2012. aasta poliitikat, mis loodi pärast seda, kui Kolumbia ratifitseeris UNESCO vaimse kultuuripärandi kaitse konventsiooni. Poliitika edukus, traditsioonide alalhoidjate roll ning tõhusad meetodid Kolumbia kulinaarsete traditsioonide säilitamiseks ja levitamiseks on magistritöö peamised alateemad. Töös kasutatud uurimismeetodid hõlmavad poliitikadokumentide kvalitatiiivset analüüsi ja välitööde raames tehtud poolstruktureeritud intervjuusid toidutraditsioonide kandjate ja endiste valitsusametnikega Kolumbias 2022. aastal.

Uurimus koosneb viiest peatükist: esimeses peatükis käsitletakse töös kasutatud mõisteid ja teoreetilist raamistikku; teises peatükis antakse ülevaade Kolumbia toidusüsteemide ja tavade arengust 20. sajandist tänapäevani; kolmandas peatükis tutvustatakse uuritavaid regioone (Nariño, Bogotá, Yopal) ja uurimismeetodeid ning materjale; neljas peatükk keskendub 2012. aasta poliitika analüüsile ning võrdleb Kolumbia toidupärandipoliitika naaberriikide Mehhiko ja Peruuga. Töö viimane, viies peatükk, on pühendatud välitöömaterjalide analüüsile. Selle fookuses on kolme traditsioonilise toidu - Llanero traditsioonide (Yopal), Ajiaco Santaferño (Bogotá), and Cuy (Nariño) – elujõulisus ning nende jätkusuutlikkusega seotud väljakutsed traditsioonikandjate vaatepunktist lähtudes.

Magistritöö tulemustest selgus, et 2012. aasta toidutraditsioonide kaitset ja edendamist käsitlev seadus kajastas märkimisväärset muutust inimeste suhtumises

söömisharjumustesse, rõhutades, kui oluline on kaitsta kultuurilist ainulaadsust. Poliitika piirangud ja õigusliku jõu puudumine viisid aga üksikute algatuste ja pärandit käsitlevate määruste ebahühtlase kogumi tekkimiseni. Juhtumiuuringud näitasid, et erinevatel toidutradsioonide alalhoidjatel on erinevad arusaamad. Bogotá ja Pasto kohalikud omavalitsused pakuvad järjepidevalt toetust, mis julgustab aktiivset tegevust ja kaasamist. Yopalis seevastu puuduvad valitsuse algatused ja see on kodanikuühiskonnast ära lõigatud. Välitööde õppetunnid toidutradsioonide säilitamiseks rõhutasid vajadust koostöö, nõuetekohase rahastamise ja jagatud vastutuse järele.

Uurimistöö järeldest rõhutatakse vajadust toidupärandi valdkonnaülese strateegia järele, mis hõlmab koostööd ministeeriumide, kohalike omavalitsuste, kogukondade ja traditsioonide säilitajate vahel. Kokkuvõttes kutsutakse üles tähtsustama traditsioonilise toidu rolli inimeste kultuurilises identiteedis Kolumbias ning rõhutatakse vajadust täiendava uurimistöö järele, et tuvastada ja kaitsta traditsiooniliste piirkondlike köökide tavasid. Toidutradsioone on vaja edendada ja säilitada ning laiendada teadmisi nende kultuurilisest tähtsusest.

## **Resume in Spanish**

Políticas y prácticas para la protección del patrimonio alimentario colombiano: un estudio sobre las tradiciones llaneras, el ajiaco santafereño y el cuy

La tesis se centra en las políticas y prácticas relacionadas con las tradiciones alimentarias en Colombia y sus repercusiones culturales, sociales y económicas. La investigación pretende ampliar el conocimiento sobre el valor de las tradiciones alimentarias e identificar obstáculos y oportunidades para su promoción y preservación. También abordará el vínculo entre la importancia de preservar las tradiciones alimentarias y la sostenibilidad y la diversidad cultural. Se analizará la política anunciada por el Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia en 2012 para proteger y promover el conocimiento de la cultura alimentaria y las cocinas tradicionales, y su aplicación e impacto en la preservación y promoción de las tradiciones alimentarias locales en Nariño, Bogotá y Yopal. El trabajo examina la política de 2012, que se creó después de que Colombia ratificara la Convención de la UNESCO para la Salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial. El éxito de la política, el papel de los guardianes de las tradiciones y los métodos eficaces para la preservación y difusión de las tradiciones culinarias colombianas son los principales subtemas de la tesis. Los métodos de investigación utilizados en la tesis incluyen un análisis cualitativo de los documentos de la política y entrevistas de campo semiestructuradas con portadores de tradiciones alimentarias y ex-funcionarios del gobierno de Colombia, realizadas en 2022.

El estudio consta de cinco capítulos: en el primero se discuten los conceptos y el marco teórico utilizados en el trabajo; en el segundo se ofrece una visión general de la evolución de los sistemas y prácticas alimentarias colombianos desde el siglo XX hasta la actualidad; en el tercero se presentan las regiones estudiadas (Nariño, Bogotá, Yopal) y los métodos y materiales de investigación; el cuarto capítulo se centra en el análisis de la política de 2012 y compara las políticas de patrimonio alimentario de Colombia con las de los países vecinos México y Perú. El último capítulo, está dedicado al análisis de los materiales del trabajo de campo. Se centra en la viabilidad de tres practicas alimentarias tradicionales - Tradiciones Llaneras (Yopal), Ajiaco Santafereño (Bogotá) y Cuy (Nariño) - y los retos relacionados con su sostenibilidad desde la perspectiva de los portadores de tradiciones.

Los resultados de la tesis de maestría mostraron que la política de 2012 para la Protección y Promoción de las Tradiciones Alimentarias reflejó un cambio significativo en las actitudes de las personas hacia los hábitos alimentarios, enfatizando la importancia de proteger la individualidad cultural. Sin embargo, las limitaciones políticas y la falta de fuerza legal dieron lugar a una mezcla desigual de iniciativas individuales y normativas sobre el patrimonio. Los estudios de caso mostraron que las percepciones de los distintos portadores de las tradiciones alimentarias difieren. Las ciudades de Bogotá y Pasto prestan sistemáticamente un apoyo que fomenta el compromiso y la participación activa, Yopal, en cambio, carece de iniciativas gubernamentales y está aislada de la sociedad civil. Las enseñanzas extraídas del trabajo de campo sobre la conservación de las tradiciones alimentarias subrayan la necesidad de cooperación, financiación adecuada y responsabilidad compartida.

Las conclusiones de la investigación subrayan la necesidad de una estrategia intersectorial para el patrimonio alimentario que implique la cooperación entre ministerios, gobiernos locales, comunidades y los portadores de las tradiciones. En conclusión, el informe reivindica la importancia del papel de la comida tradicional en la identidad cultural de los colombianos y subraya la necesidad de seguir investigando para identificar y proteger las prácticas culinarias regionales tradicionales. Es necesario promover y preservar las tradiciones alimentarias y ampliar el conocimiento de su significado cultural.

## Appendix

### Interview guide

#### Topics to discuss with the tradition bearers/traditional cooks:

- Agricultural processes, where does the primary sources of the dish come from, is it imported or planted internally, is there a shortage or is it enough, are there any practices that affect, have affected or could affect their practices and the conservation of it in the future
- Gender division of work, is there a strict division of tasks? Who does what, is there a division in the tasks in the community in general?
- Walking me through the process, from the reception or recollection of primary ingredients or harvest, slaughter of animals, utensils they use in it, are there any specific utensils very own to the practice itself? Anything particular that belongs to that region or to a specific region of the country. If it's with an animal, what parts do they use, is there a specific division of the parts they use according to a special occasion or the communal practices? Is there food for the daily practices and for special occasions?
- DO they have knowledge of the practice being written down or safeguarded in any literature? Do they pass it down from generations or is it a fairly new tradition in the community?
- Have they thought about heritagizing the practice? Are there incentives to make them go to the representative lists, what makes them close or far away from nominating, is there support from the local or national government? Have any recent decision from the government affected their practices, anything they saw change they were against
- How does the practice affect different cultural contexts?
- What other jobs (weaving, pottery making, etc.) are in direct relationship with the cooking practice itself? Is there an established relationship or a more subtle and indirect one?

**With government officials:**

- How is the government working or has worked towards the heritagization of the different cooking practices on the country, are there initiatives stemming from the 2011 policy that are helping safeguarding food traditions?
- Regarding the three specific practices, are there works in place to heritagize them? Anything in the region that helps with the development and conservation of these practices? How is the process of inscribing elements into the list for communities? Are there mechanisms to help them if they don't hold the infrastructure for it?
- For local governments: how are they making an effort to safeguard cooking practices inside their region, what policies, initiatives, laws, programs, etc. are in place for helping their own local people? Do they think there is value in nominating elements into the heritage lists?
- Talk to the people in charge of the intangible cultural heritage section, ask them about the process of the policy, process of culinary practices, why is there almost no nominations? Is it a time constraint, an interest one or are there other reasons they believe food shouldn't be nominated into the national lists

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