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GASTRONOMY, TOURISM AND
THE REVITALIZATION OF FESTIVALS IN SPAIN

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Revitalization of Festivals in the Global World

Modern technology and the postmodernity of the globalization that surrounds us have entailed a paradoxical but nonetheless important rise in the celebration of rituals. This fact does not just reflect the opinion of anthropologists but can be seen clearly in our life. This unplanned phenomenon includes the creation of new festivals and celebrations, and also the revitalization of old ones (Manning 1983: 4; Boissevain 1992: 1).

Usually, when accounting for cases of revitalization or creation of festivals, a single, specific explanation is given, thus the general nature of this festive ebullition in the current, modern world has not been theorized. Economic factors are, undoubtedly, among the arguments put forward to justify the boom of this interest towards the festival. However, these are not unique, and on one hand the influence of the rise in the means of consumption can be considered; whilst, on the other hand, the lack of confidence in capitalist systems that aim for increasing production and profits have had a great impact, as has the economic crisis that occurred in the 1970s, to great extent. Other political phenomena, such as the crisis of the state and the peak of nationalisms have affected an extremely delicate subject: ethnic or community identity. Therefore, given the worldwide homogenization that globalization seems to bring with it, some groups have decided to modernize certain aspects of their cultural tradition to contribute to reinforcing their own identity.

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1 Original Spanish text translated into English by Laura Fernández Farhall.
2 The draft of this text was read by Cristina Sánchez-Carretero and Antonio Cea Gutiérrez, Department of Anthropology of CSIC. I thank them both for their leniency with my errors, and, mostly, for their contributions which, on the other hand, have made the text considerably richer.
3 For precise terminology on these concepts see Boissevain (1992: 19) and Cruces and Díaz de Rada (1995: 128).
In Europe, and specifically in the Mediterranean area, the growth of ritualistic festivals has been taking place since the 1980s and is marked by a series of characteristics which Boissevain notes (Boissevain 1992). During the 1950s, this southern area was considered a redoubt of traditional lifestyle, thought of as predominantly rural and abandoned by the industrialized and urbanized northern area of Europe. The mass emigration of the inhabitants of these areas, which played an important part in the process of economic modernization these countries underwent, also brought about the sudden disappearance of its traditional forms of culture in the next decade, including most importantly religious rituals and liturgical festivals; which implies that, previously, a great number of festivals were celebrated, and they were spaced throughout the year. The nature of these festivals was both religious and secular, as well as regional or reflective of some other type of group (families, brotherhoods, youths, etc.). On one hand the decline of these celebrations was due to the lack of people, needed not just to organize them but also to take part in them. On the other hand, these festivities had become discredited because they reminded inhabitants of the economic backwardness and even of the political authoritarianism in which these countries (Spain, Greece, and Portugal) had been living for many years. The model of economic growth adopted after the Second World War was called into question with the emergence of the energy crisis in 1973. Traditional lifestyles were rediscovered and said to be a model of balance and quality of life and gave great importance to the maintenance of the ecological status of the environment (Boissevain 1992: 10). From these years onwards, this interest in the “rural life-style” began filling towns with second homes and with tourists looking for peace, unspoiled nature, healthy food, handmade crafts and, of course, colorful rituals.

In Spain, a special political organization was added to these circumstances: the Estado de las Autonomías, introduced in the constitutional system after the Franco dictatorship. This State included the territories, which used to be regions (even those called “historical territories” such as Cataluña, País Vasco and Galicia) in an institutional framework, which granted them a certain degree of political autonomy. The new political system, and moreover, the authorities of the Comunidades Autónomas (Autonomous Regions), needed a framework for the reference of a distinctive identity to guide each region which, on one hand, stressed the particular differences between each culture and territory, and on the other, drew away from the regional stereotypes that had been used over and over again by Franco’s regime (Calvo y Medina 1996: 140). The traditional culture included creative material that was sufficiently varied for this purpose, thus the new political authorities chose those elements, which both assumed a representative base and were not related to the close past (therefore, not being too reminiscent of the recent dictatorship). In this traditional culture, festivals occupied a privileged
place that gave way to the development of various experiences of folklore and the invention and retraditionalization of events and ceremonies. The need to democratize practically all instances of public life in Spain put festivals in the center of political action in all areas (from the local area to the state area, passing through the extremely important area of the Autonomous Region), given that throughout the political transition, both old and new celebrations were seen as means of citizen participation and freedom of expression (Cruces 1992).

The attention, knowledge and legitimizing of folk culture and the stimulation of some of its festive manifestations was favored by the need to consider the interests of subordinate classes and regions (Boissevain 1992: 9). Many political authorities and festival organizers currently follow compositions that date from this time, which refer to what a popular festival should be and what it should be composed of, not just in terms of ludic or participant activities, but also in terms of the “tradition” that should prevail (Vila 1993). The fact that many of the components of traditional festive characteristics belonging to the regions of the Campo del Penedes, El Garraf and the Campo de Tarragona (giants, dragons, devils, etc.) have expanded to the majority of urban festivals organized in Cataluña since the 1980s can be considered a good example of this circumstance (Calvo y Medina 1996; Delgado 1991; Martí 1996; and Noyes 1993 explain many aspects of musical and festive elements in the region of Cataluña).

Tourism

The massive expansion of tourism and its evolution have played a fundamental role in the process of revitalizing festivals in Spain and other European countries since 1975. I do not intend to attempt even a superficial layout of the change this sector has undergone in Spain, where it is of such great importance. However, I will point out a change in tourists’ tastes, as other anthropologists who specialize in this subject (Urry 1990) have done before me. The current tourist is bored with the sun and sea cliché and has become interested in a greater variety of products, among which an interest towards the culture, nature and traditional lifestyle of the places visited are extremely important (Boissevain 1996: 2-3). The relationship between tourists and locals are quite complex and, generally, the negative aspects of tension and confrontation have been greater than positive ones of revitalization and economic viability of vast depressed areas. In this framework, the multidisciplinary approach of the tourist phenomenon increasingly

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4 For an exhibition of the impact of tourism on various sectors of the destination regions, see Santana (1997: 67-114).
gives greater importance to cultural aspects. Firstly, this occurs because they compose part of the tourist’s motivations (known as cultural tourism and ethnic tourism, Smith 1992: 20-21), secondly, because of the effects, given that the influence of tourists encourages many changes in the local groups which are visited.

In Spain, some anthropologists have specifically discussed the influence of tourism in the development of communal festivals, among which the most important are the pioneering work by D. Greenwood (1992) on the Alarde (display) of Fuenterrabia and recent works by M. M. Crain (1996) on the romería (pilgrimage) of El Rocio and by A. M. Nogués who focuses on Zahara de los Atunes (1996), both presented by J. Boissevain. In the introduction to Coping with Tourists. European Reactions to Mass Tourism (1996), Boissevain presents some of the relational situations tourism entails between the communities of locals and visitors, alongside characteristics of cultural tourism. These situations, mainly contradictory and paradoxical, have an effect on the everyday life of the local population, from changing the cycle of work/vacation periods to the loss of privacy of many of their celebrations or the noticeable changes in the distribution of wealth and power between certain groups of people. Boissevain also insists on a fundamental aspect of this argument which considers tourism a cultural boom—an aspect Greenwood approached in a very critical manner in 1977 and then explained in an epilogue to the same book in 1989 (1992: 272-279).

In fact, tourism turns culture into merchandise or a commodity and, therefore, local culture, and any of its traits, come to be considered a “natural resource” from an economic point of view (Greenwood 1992: 259-260). Leaving the judgement on whether tourism has a destructive nature on local culture or not and questions of authenticity (Boissevain 1996: 11-14) to one side, what becomes clear is that a series of changes must inevitably be made to adapt the product to the expectations it arouses. In terms of festive rituals these changes aim to adjust the celebration to the visitor’s needs and means. Among these adaptations, some measures have been to change the dates to make them coincide with periods of higher tourist flow, including both seasonal changes (giving more importance to summer festivals, and less to winter ones) and weekly changes (creating new celebrations which take place on specific weekends). Likewise, giving the events the most colorful atmosphere possible seems to be a fundamental rule in achieving an attractive festival. In this sense, bright or exotic attire, symbolic figures that stand out in the parade, and dances or rare skills, are some of the elements introduced to make the festivals more spectacular. Sometimes this implies retraditionalizing or simply inventing traditions that, although they are created in the contemporary era, seem to be authentic in every aspect (because frequently they are historical reconstructions). Another factor which should be considered when organizing a festival is the importance of the media and advertising, thus
many celebrations are adapted to a television format or are made shorter to accommodate them to the tastes of foreign spectators. Also, journalists and other “specialists,” among whom one can include folklorists and anthropologists, play a very important role in the authentication and recognition of the festival, and of certain celebrations over others, i.e. in their tradition becoming part of the heritage (Cruces and Díaz de Rada 1995: 131). In this case, as in others, today the media takes part in the re-production of the town’s own assets and the consequent re-definition of the sense of possession and identity. This process can be clearly observed in the process of globalization (García Canclini 1995: 24).

Considering all this, Mediterranean countries present certain characteristics that attract foreign tourists, which have left the importance of domestic tourism out of the analysis. For example, the results of a survey carried out in 1983 in Spain showed that of the total number of families who took vacations (from cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants), 43.8% went to a rural area. This number represents a flow of approximately 3.6 million people and shows that “town tourism” was the most important type of tourism in the country in that year (Bote 1988: 15, 19). That same investigation showed that, in terms of figures, the most important group within the survey (around 85%) was made up by people with family ties in those towns and who stayed in their own houses (second residences) or in relative’s or friend’s houses (Bote 1988: 23). This implies that those who are currently called tourists used to be emigrants, and now they return to their places of origin to spend their vacation period turned into “vacationers.” Therefore, when the word “tourist” is used to refer to visitors who flow to various summer festivals throughout the country, one must take into account the division usually made by anthropologists between the “other” and “us.” This should be explained when speaking, particularly, of one community that is seasonally divided and incomplete and only becomes complete during a specific time of year, which usually coincides with the patron saint festival, during which the participants are composed of both those who visit the town (the fewer) and the “children of the town” (the majority).

What is also important and should, therefore, not be left out is that many places that are unpopulated in winter, are fully inhabited in the summer season by people who own second residences, and given that the festival is the ritual manifestation of social interactions in a specific group area, some festivals were

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1 It is important to bear in mind that during Franco’s regime the category of “Festival of Tourist Interest” was established. The Administration entrusted the report to well-known folklore scholars, who gave all festivals who had this feature a quality mark. All festivals with this distinction were recommended to tourists and given a guarantee of authenticity, although on many occasions new festivals were also included in this category.
“invented” specially for these vacationers. After all, the only thing needed to celebrate a festival is people and that is precisely what the countryside needed—the lack of people is what made many traditional Spanish celebrations disappear after the 1960s. The revitalization of these celebrations has been brought about by the return, albeit provisional, of the emigrants (Crucés and Díaz de Rada 1995: 130). Their presence and that of other tourists has also contributed to making the inhabitants realize the value and importance of their environment and the cultural heritage, as an aspect through which they can obtain, among others, economic benefits (Bote 1988: 97-107).

In any case, more or less traditional popular festivals are nowadays part of the culture which are offered, in a wide sense, by various institutional and commercial authorities to the general public as part of organized leisure, be they tourists or not (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). This is how many festivals have surmounted their local or regional scale and have become lures for a wider audience, both native and foreign. Festivals with national and international importance are used as tourist lures for the town and give it considerable prestige, that is used by local authorities to ameliorate commercial and economic interests (Calvo y Medina 1996: 131). Nowadays it is common to see the media reporting on records of attendance which have been broken in important festivals such as the Sanfermines in Pamplona, the Fallas in Valencia or Holy Week in Seville. The great marketing and economic profits gained mask the tensions the foreign invasions produce in these towns.

Food

Festivals can not exist without people, but neither can they without excess (Delgado 1991: 34), and therefore, this revitalization has not only implied a rise in the number of participants, but also (due to the same reasons) a rise in consumption and expenses. Ostentation has always been part of the festival and anthropologists such as Sanmartín have studied its economic aspects (1982: 51-53). Nonetheless, nowadays, the expansion of consumption to practically each corner of everyday life, and even to the definition of a person as a citizen (García Canclini 1995; Foster 1999), undoubtedly also reaches the ritual and the festival. Organization and participation exceeds local control; therefore, the celebration is arranged by many organizing authorities who establish the program and the development of the festive events; be they revitalized traditional festivals or new creations.

In this context, one of the most important elements is the importance food has during festivals. Having considered participation and excess as two of the

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* For example, see the emergence of this type of celebration in Taramundi, Asturias, in García García (1991: 95).
main elements of these festivals, food and drink are no less relevant, as there is no festival that does not imply eating certain foods and preparing special recipes (González Turmo 1992: 39). In fact, in Spain, drinking (alcohol) is considered one of the most important ways of participating. Therefore if one does not drink, it is almost impossible to understand the ludic sense many of these celebrations have, and the participation, understood as sharing something intimately, is seriously restricted. Many different foods and specific culinary recipes are connected to the festival’s traditional cycle and, even today, their intake is considered almost compulsory. In some cases special sweets are made only for certain celebrations, although some of these products are elaborated industrially. The most relevant are made during the Christmas vacations: turrones (a type of candy eaten only at Christmas) and roscón de Reyes (a ring-shaped bun baked for Epiphany); although these are not the only ones. There are also other homemade deserts which are related to certain festive dates (for example, torrijas—similar to French toast—during Easter). Even certain fruits and nuts are strongly linked to the festive calendar; for example, chestnuts for All Soul’s Day; thus nearly every patron saint or local celebration is associated with some beverage or rural or family food where dishes prepared with specific products and preparations are served.

Bread appears in traditional Spanish festivals preeminently and provides a fundamental sense of ritual. Even nowadays, bread is used in many towns to celebrate patron saint days; it is linked to sacred figures of saints: for example, the image of Saint Laurence, Patron Saint of Cabezabellosa (Cáceres), is totally surrounded by rings of white bread when it is carried out on the procession that takes place on the 10th of August. Once the rings have been blessed, they must be eaten by the devotees, pets and cattle, to be protected against rabies and other illnesses (Sánchez 1998: 331). Bread can even become the main character in the procession; an example of this is the procession of the Pan Bendito (Sacred Bread) which is celebrated on the third Sunday of January in Mas de las Matas, Teruel, and in Escatrón, Zaragoza, on the 5th of February (Saint Águeda Day), when a long line of girls wearing the regional dress carry big loaves of bread which are shared among those present (Sánchez 1998: 70, 85). The “charity” mass

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7 The referent of Christ sharing bread among his disciples and Communion is extremely important in Spain, a country strongly ascribed to Catholicism.

8 Most of the information that appears in this paper about the varied local celebrations is taken from the excellent guide to Spanish festivals written by Mª Ángeles Sánchez (1998), which I have used in its second and extended edition. It would be impossible to refer generally to Spanish festivals, as I do in this paper, without this book.

9 There are plenty of Sacred Bread festivals celebrated in Spain. One of the most spectacular festivals is the Festa del Pa Benit celebrated in Torremanzanas (Alicante), on the Patron Saint day, Saint Gregorio Ostiense, where young girls dress up specially and parade carrying enormous loaves of bread on their head, which are decorated specially for the occasion (Sánchez 1998: 224).
distribution is usually of buns (they are called “Charity bread” but they are really sweet buns), but also of bread which has been blessed by a saint who is considered protector against certain illnesses, such as Saint Blas or Saint Roque is also quite common. In some cases they even present specific traits such as the Romería (pilgrimage) celebrated in Palencia on the 16th of April to honor Saint Toribio, where to carry out the town’s vow, after mass, members of the council “stone” those present with bread and cheese balls (Sánchez 1998: 184). On the 6th of August, QueJ (La Rioja), celebrates the Bread and Cheese Festival, financed by the members of brotherhoods who, after hearing mass in the chapel of Santo Cristo de la Transfiguración, throw tortes and cheese at the audience (Sánchez 1989: 326). In Sorbas (Almería) “about 3,000 bread rings” made specially for the occasion are thrown from balconies towards the assistants who strive to collect them (Sánchez 1998: 354).

Battles: Throwing Food

I do not know if this is influenced by or has any connection to this act of throwing food at the audience, but a series of very well-known festivals have appeared in response to the tourist interest, as well as important local economic factors, hoping to attract youth towards festivals. Nonetheless, this tradition does seem to have a functional sense in some celebrations after periods when the material prosperity has not been precisely good (Cruces and Díaz de Rada 1995: 127). The main element of this type of festival is the battle or indiscriminate fight among the participants using water, or the much preferred wine, as projectiles. This is what occurs in the Festa de L’Aigua (Water Festival) in Valencia, which is celebrated on the last Sunday of August or the first of September, with around 5,000 participants. It was created in 1987 imitating the festival in Lanjarón, where there is a famous spring of medicinal waters (Sánchez 1998: 368). The generalization of “battles” can be observed even in festivals in which water used to be thrown in a selective way: youths used the stream of a drinking jug as a flirting ritual. This is what took place in the Fiesta de los Jarritos (Jug Festival) in Galaroza (Huelva, 6th of September) during the 1940s and 1950s. Today the whole town gets wet, regardless of age or sex, and the ceramic jugs have been replaced by buckets of water which drench people completely (Cantero 1991). In the Fiestas de la Vendimia (Grape Harvest Festival) in Requena (Valencia), which

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10 A detailed description of the “pauper’s meal” celebrated next to the chapel during the festival dedicated to the Virgen de la Peña in La Puebla de Guzmán (Huelva) and of the meat cooked there in the year 1950 can be found in Caro Baroja (1957: 418-423).
take place at the end of August or beginning of September and were created in 1948, some of the typical activities are the wine fountain, the wine night, the harvester’s night and, the most important: the “night of the thrashing.” On this night, a multitude run around the streets armed with their botas (wineskins) shouting out for “water,” which people throw them from balconies and windows using buckets and hoses (Sánchez 1998: 381).

Nonetheless, there are two festivals, which have overcome local “tradition” and have reached a considerable national and international acclaim. One is the Batalla del Vino (Battle of Wine) in Haro (La Rioja) on the 29th of June, celebrating Saint Peter and Saint Paul. It was originated by an old litigation between the town of Haro and Miranda de Ebro regarding the property of the crags of Bilbío. Every year on Saint Peter’s day, so as to ritually bear witness of the possession of that spot, a trustee of the council of Haro must go to Bilbío—where there is a chapel in which Saint Felices was said to have lived—and leave the banner of the city there. The battle starts after this, the adversaries throw each other a considerable amount of wine (about 70,000 liters) using wineskins, bottles, demijohns, sulphurizers and any other type of container. A better quality wine, and in less amount, is drunk during the procession, and a rural meal consisting of snails, pork loin with peppers and other local dishes, is also eaten. The festival carries on in the town with vaquillas (young bulls) and other festivities (Sánchez 1998: 280). Haro’s trail has extended and, another locality of La Rioja (San Asensio) has also celebrated it since 1982; this town is renown for its wine, and celebrates the Batalla del Claret (Rosé Battle) around the 25th of July, Apostle James’ day (Sánchez 1998: 307). A festival which is aimed more towards children and teenagers is the battle of meringues which triggers the Carnival of Vilanova i La Geltrú (Barcelona) since the 1960s, and the “caramelada” (throwing sweets) which takes place among the people who attend the parade which takes place after the Easter Sunday procession in Jumilla (Murcia) (Sánchez 1998: 114, 169).

The most widely disseminated Spanish summer “battle” is the Tomatina (tomato battle) which takes place in Buñol (Valencia) on the last Wednesday of August. This festival, which dates from 1945, was celebrated on a local scale until the 1970s, when it achieved its current widespread popularity: nowadays it gathers 30,000 people in a town with 9,000 inhabitants. Those who take part are divided into teams, eat streaky bacon and Spanish chorizo, drink wine for breakfast and get ready for the battle, which takes place at midday (Sánchez 1998: 375). Firstly, they are hosed down to make the tomatoes stick to them easier, then the dump trucks appear and unload 120,000 kilos of ripe tomatoes (in 2000); the adversaries throw these at each other until they are covered with them and the end of the fight is marked by letting off a rocket (El País 24th of August 2000). The format is perfect for televised transmission, given the brief space-
time limits and the visual spectacle the *Tomatina* offers: everything is bright red. All this added to the fact that it appeared on the front page of the *Washington Times* (28th of August 1997) and that it has been featured on American television could explain the interest foreign tourists have in the *Tomatina*. Added to this is the ludic and unusual nature of a bloodless battle, albeit extremely red, which allows everyone to participate, be they local or foreign.\(^{11}\)

The *tomatina* adapts easier than other festivals in which other vegetables are thrown to the requirements of indiscriminate mass participation which are typical of modern society. These other festivals throw the vegetables in a manner that is more ritualistic and precise, they also mean something totally different to the community, which considers the festival as more of a metaphor of a stoning or of food distribution, not a battle, thus the characters are more defined and the performance is carried out in a different way. For example, in Zaragoza, the patron saint festival celebrated on the 27th of August on Saint Atilano day, a character called *Cipotegato* wears a bizarre, colorful costume; when he appears, people throw a great amount of ripe tomatoes at him (Sánchez 1998: 365). Another equally traditional festival is celebrated on Saint Sebastian day in Plomel (Cáceres) where the main character, the *Jarramplas*, wears a mask and a costume made of colorful ribbons. He runs along the streets of the town, dodging and warding off the turnips thrown at him by neighbors (Sánchez 1998: 67; Cruces and Díaz de Rada 1995: 131).

In any case, neither of these types of battles can be considered a gastronomic festival, as food is used as a weapon (that attacks and “kills”) not as something nutritious (which unites and gives life). In these cases food is also used, but not for protection (as with sacred bread), or celebration by means of eating (as with communal meals), but just squandering or, maybe even, a way of getting rid of surplus whilst amusing the masses.

### Glorifying Local Products

However, the term “gastronomic battle” could be used to define festive organizations which use food, and specifically a certain gastronomic product, to compete and gain notoriety in competitions such as “commercial battles” and the contest for the agricultural market is fought in Europe between local protectionism and the absence of borders. Therefore, many events celebrate a local product, whose excellence gives the town or region a brand label. Among

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\(^{11}\) However, one must stress that participation is restricted by two main factors: gender—not many women take part in the battle—and age—everyone is young.
these, one of the most typical is the Calçotada, a competition and mass tasting of calçots (a type of scallion) that takes place on the 2nd of February on the day of La Candelaria (Candlemas) in Valls (Tarragona) (Sánchez 1998: 81). In many cases, the promotion of certain local specialties is not only carried out for economic reasons. Other political and social incentives also move them, in conjunction with commercial sectors, aiming to make a series of products profitable, given that the population under them depend on them. They aim to obtain a guarantee of origin and quality for a cheese, wine or type of meat; to promote a certain breed of cattle or farm animals; to keep the preeminence or exclusiveness of a crop, so as to allow economic viability and the maintenance of the welfare levels in certain areas that are threatened by international rivalry. This is carried out by turning to handmade objects, small scale production, things that can not be imitated in any other place given the special cultural and environmental circumstances which have resulted in an excellent product (Bérard and Marchenay 1995). Their main aim is to create a new consumption need, that contrasts tradition, nature and specific, inimitable products to the standardization and depersonalization that big transnational companies try to impose, interweaving this consumption with a rural, ecological ideology that also has an economic aspect (Ortiz 1999a).

The recuperation or discovery of these products is carried out using certain strategies, among which one can find the protection of authenticity (Contreras 1999: 704), the promotion by means of gastronomic festivals, craft fairs and markets, the launching of images, etc. (Espeitx 1999: 795). Given this phenomenon, “gastronomic” festivals have begun to spread as a means of presenting traditional foods or the importance and recognition of certain products (that mean to be considered part of the heritage) in specific towns or regions. These celebrations are mainly fairs and competitions that focus on one specific food. For example, many are dedicated to cheeses that are produced locally, such as the afuega'lt pitu cheese contest which is held in January in Morcin (Asturias), the Cebreiro cheese fair in As Nogais (Lugo) or the cheese festival held in Santa Maria de Guía (Gran Canaria), which was created in 1978 to promote flower cheeses (made with sheep and cow milk, then set with thistle flowers) typical of the region of Montaña Alta (Sánchez 1998: 59, 194, 225). These competitions usually allow for the exhibition, contest and tasting of the products, alongside the presentation of typical regional dishes and other folkloric attractions. They carry out festive and economic functions and, therefore, they are organized by local corporations together with the sectors who specialize in each area. The hotel sector participates when it is not just a case of presenting agricultural and farming products, but when typical or traditional dishes of the region are prepared, by serving them in their hotels on certain days.
Nonetheless, there is not a single model to follow. One of the most popular festivals concerned with natural and agricultural resources that are managed locally, and aims towards a larger scale trade, is the festival that celebrates the flowering of the cherry tree, held in the towns near the valley of Jerte (Cáceres). It is not held on a fixed date as it depends on the flowering of the trees, but is usually on a weekend at the end of March or beginning of April (Sánchez 1998: 129). An association of town councils of the valley organize the festival by rotation and each year a different town is in charge. The festival was conceived in 1976 as a representation of the cooperative movement that had intensified the cultivation of cherries that have been grown in the valley since the beginning of the 20th Century (Cruces and Díaz de Rada 1995: 134). These activities and the publicity carried out to advertise it insist on the unique and ephemeral traits of this natural spectacle which can only be observed in the valley during a few days, and presents this phenomenon as an example of the harmonious unity of nature cultivated by man. It grows more successful every year, and the main event is the observation of the ephemeral blooming of the trees together with the great number of terraces, dedicated to cultivating cherry trees in the valley.\(^{12}\)

There are many other festivals that glorify the cultivation of an element that is essential for the community, and is the base of the region’s economy and ecology. Holding a festival that celebrates a certain product contributes to making it a symbol of the community and part of its heritage. For example, nowadays the cherry tree and specially bigarreau cherry trees identify the towns of Jerte and are more important than the patron saint days that the towns celebrate with a one-day festival. In this sense, wine stands out as a very valuable element, and among the important festivals which celebrate it are the Manzanilla Fair, celebrated in Sanlúcar de Barrameda (Cádiz) during five days at the end of May or beginning of June, or the Dry Sherry Festival celebrated sometime in May in El Puerto de Santa María (Cádiz) (Sánchez 1998: 223, 224). Galicia holds many types of gastronomic festivals among which there are a few dedicated to the wines produced there: the Festa do Viño Tinto del Salnés has been celebrated since 1973 in Ribadumia (Pontevedra) on the first Saturday of June, and is a competition to select the best wines with the participation of more than 150 harvesters, during which other gastronomic and folklore activities take place (Sánchez 1998: 260). Other festivals with a similar theme are the Festa del Vino Albariño, in Camarados (Pontevedra) on the first Sunday of August and the Festa do Viño do Condado in Salvaterra do Miño (Pontevedra), celebrated on the last Sunday of August since 1959 (Sánchez 1998: 329, 372). These festivals have

\(^{12}\) Tejeda (Gran Canaria) also holds a festival, invented in 1970, to celebrate the blooming of the almond tree (Sánchez 1998: 129).
nothing to do with more traditional wine and grape harvest festivals celebrated in other areas that also produce wine such as La Mancha, Andalucía, Cataluña or Ribera del Duero.

However, the variety of emblematic products in Spain is enormous, and among the oldest celebrations of this type we find the *Monda de la Rosa del Azafrán* (peeling of the saffron plant’s rose) in Consuegra (Toledo), celebrated on the last weekend in October since 1963. It features, among other folkloric contests, the competition of Consuegra’s typical dishes made with saffron but the most important part is the national peeling of the saffron plant competition, considered “the perfect finish of what aims to be the great festival of La Mancha and world windmill day” (Sánchez 1998: 467). Others are more modern but keep the same elements, like the International Vegetable Garden Week, a gastronomic and traditional manifestation held in Los Alcázares (Murcia) at the end of August since 1972; or the Olive Festival, in Martos (Jaén) celebrated since 1981 on around the 8th of December (Feast of the Immaculate Conception) when the picking of olives starts. Some of the activities include sharing out thousands of “hoyos” among the attendants, which is a typical dish made with bread, oil, olives, cod and wine (Sánchez 1998: 486).

Tourism (both cultural and returning migrants tourism) plays a very important role in spreading these and other “rural” products (Poulain 1997), that are offered as part of the cultural heritage of the region in question, as a sample of its “identity.” Buying these products *in situ* is part of tourists’ experience in participating in the authenticity and difference of this other lifestyle they are looking for, and is one of the main reasons of the journey, be it in search of his/her rural origins or to find themselves in the “other.” Culinary grounds are one of the most favorable through which to experience contact with otherness and understand it, given that the person is actually incorporated (physically and psychologically as well as socially and culturally), by means of the intake of food and unusual or unknown dishes, and also by means of behavior and discourse relative to eating, which make up a meta-culinary universe, and include ethical and aesthetic aspects (Long 1998: 182-3).

Tourists usually buys a handmade object that represents the place they have visited also, as a souvenir that reminds them of the place and also gives the feeling of cultural identification. Therefore, buying handicrafts is one of the most typical behaviors of travelling. On the other hand, buying candy, cakes and other food is also related to local festivals—for example the travelling stands of craftsmen who make *turrón* can be found in festivals all over the country—and, finally, the relationship these have with certain fairs or markets is also a common event.

Both elements have contributed to the fact that during patron saint festivals many markets selling local and handmade products are put up. Some of these
are older and more traditional such as the procession on Saint Antón (17th of January) in Elche where turrones, nuts and dried fruit are sold (Sánchez 1998: 56) or the one celebrated in Granada for the patron saint festival of the Virgen de las Angustias (on the last Sunday of September) where all types of seasonal fruits are sold (such as haws, jujubes, pomegranates and chestnuts) as well as cakes made specifically for that day (Ibid.: 440). Others are modern, like the garlic festival that, alongside the ceramic festival, is held during the festivities celebrated for Saint Peter’s and Saint Paul’s day (on the 29th of June) in Zamora (Ibid.: 283). A garlic market is installed in Vitoria on “Blouse Day,” created in 1945 to pay homage to the groups that lead the main festival of the Virgen Blanca (Ibid.: 307); an onion festival is held in the exhibition site in Sanjenjo (Pontiedra), and local farmers exhibit and sell a great amount of this vegetable during the patron saint festivals of Saint Rosalía on the 4th of September; lastly, a chestnut and garden products festival is celebrated on a Sunday in November in Arriondas-Parres (Asturias) (Sánchez 1998: 387, 481). Some markets that feature local products have become detached from festivals, such as the market and exhibition held in Guernica-Lumo (Vizcaya) every Monday in October, the last Monday being the most relevant, where products that are handmade in farmhouses are exhibited, they are “beautifully ordered, arranged esthetically and shining clean (if they can be cleaned) in many txoznas”... Straight from the baserritarra (who leaves the farmhouse on that day to go to the city) to the buyer” (Sánchez 1998: 468). Markets are also festivals, and can be included in the area of folkloric reconstruction of the Basque culture, that contains other typical elements like the bertsolaris13 competition, cattle fair, Basque ball games, hauling stones, etc. (Ibidem). Another similar market is “Lurraren Eguna” held in Vera de Bidasoa (Guipúzcoa) on the last Sunday of October.16

Festival and Feast

The starting point for many Spanish festivals (in which gastronomy is usually the main, and sometimes sole, element) is consumption and the identification of citizens through consumption (García Canclini 1995). Given the local management of great part of the activities that take place during patron saint or local festivals, alongside specialists like cultural organizers, teachers, tourism professionals, etc.

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13 Stands.
14 Native farmer.
15 People who improvise poems.
16 The recent appearance of “medieval markets,” where buyers and seller dress and act as they suppose occurred in old times, is one of the last samples of the market’s patrimonial construction.
many festive activities are full of repetitive and stereotypical elements, that aim to make the festivities more colorful and attractive and, therefore, to attract as many people as possible. The fact that festivals can be financed by official authorities accounts for the fact that many of the events are free and, today, there are hardly any important festivals that do not offer “free” shows or entertainment for different population sectors.

Free food is one of the most alluring elements of these activities. In 1999 a great number of people went to the park and queued to taste the biggest bizcocho borracho (sponge cake soaked in wine and syrup) in the world (that aimed to break the Guinness Record in the production of this local specialty) that was made to celebrate the local festival in Guadalajara. In 2000, on the 21st of May, the mayor of Madrid “was in charge of tasting the first spoonful” of “Madrid’s typical cocido (meat and chickpea stew) made to help Aldeas Infantiles SOS.” It was cooked by army officials using the following ingredients: “1,000 kilos of chickpeas, 265 of pig’s knuckle, 500 of cabbage, 265 of potatoes, 200 of hen, 200 of Spanish chorizo sausage, 100 of blood sausage, 165 of bones, 135 of carrots, 50 of salt and two dos kilos of bicarbonate.” The newspaper I read (El País, 22 May 2000) did not give the number of people, but with that amount of chickpeas and other ingredients, there must have been quite a few. I find it significant that the recounting of the quantities and ingredients that were used has become one of the criteria used to assess the running of the festival: the more sardines, liters of wine, kilos of bread, portions of paella, pieces of chorizo or whole cooked bulls are used, the bigger, and better, the festival.

Many of these newly founded gastronomic celebrations, which are sometimes included now in older and more traditional festivals, often use traditionality as a lure. In many cases rural celebrations serve food in mobile installations, platforms, etc. that give it a rural feeling and “typical products” are eaten. An example of this is the patron saint festival celebrated in Lodosa (La Rioja), honoring Nuestra Señora de las Angustias, on the week before the third Sunday in September, when a whole day is dedicated to the “pimiento de piquillo” (piquant pepper), famous in this town, served with a roast and tasted by the population in the town square (Sánchez 1998: 430).

The possibilities of having a common thread between tradition and novelty are varied and give way to situations where tradition changes to adapt to new guidelines of festive participation. In the perspective of traditional culture, tradition is incurred when intending to copy the latest trend and when bringing old traditional elements up to date to give the festival an identity. In the first case, specific gastronomic events are celebrated as part of the festival’s traditional program that give it a greater importance or attract a greater number of attendants. For example, in El Pla del Penedès (Barcelona), les torrades, i.e. slices of bread
toasted on street bonfires lit on Carnival Sunday have been made for at least two hundred years. Nowadays, it is not just slices of toast with oil and salt, but also kippers and wine are handed out for free. According to information Mª Ángeles Sánchez point out (1998: 100), in 1997, 700 kilos of bread, 30 liters of oil, 6 kilos of salt, 2,500 kilos of kippers and 600 liters of wine were used. On the same day (many food-related festivals are celebrated in Cataluña during the Carnival) in Sant Fruitós de Bagés (Barcelona) the traditional and massive Festa de l’Arròs (Rice Festival) is celebrated, for which a giant paella is cooked and shared out among the participants (Ibid.: 110).

Many patron saint festivals, celebrated both in winter and summer in towns in Castilla, dedicated to saints or Christ or the Virgin, include bullfights. Formerly, it was common to cook the meat of the bull that had been fought in a stew, that way the bull was shared among all the citizens. Among the many festivals of this type the one celebrated in Soria on Saint John’s Day (that takes place from a Wednesday to a Monday, on the 24th of June) is a good model. On each day something special happens: on Thursdays the saca, or taking the bulls from Valonsadero mountain into the town, on Fridays, six young bulls are fought in the morning, and another six in the afternoon (one for each of the festival groups), on Saturday, the agés, the sharing out of raw bull meat between the different groups. “Cauldron” Sunday (the most important day) is when, among other activities, each group parades the town exhibiting its cauldron (where the corresponding bull meat is cooked) until reaching the grove where it is eaten once it has been blessed (Sánchez 1998: 276). As part of the revitalization process many towns are undergoing bull-runs, bull fights and other activities with young bulls are being celebrated again nowadays, and inhabitants are using their cauldrons again in unheard of numbers, quantities and recipes (González Turmo 1992: 79). For example, when Hoyo de Manzanares17 (Madrid), celebrates the patron saint of the Virgen de la Encina on the 8th of September, there is a “stew day,” when more than 5,000 portions of bull meat are handed out (Sánchez 1998: 403).

Other gastronomic activities that ensure certain traits of local identity and antiquity can be included in the festival, if it is not typical to prepare dishes such as cauldrons with bull meat or other traditional meals—such as the vegetable stew made with gurumelos (type of mushroom) eaten in El Cerro del Andévalo (Huelva) on the wake of Saint Benedict (21st of March) (Sánchez 1998: 126). Two other examples are the competition of “railroad pressure cookers,” with the preparation of a cocido campurriano (meat and haricot bean), that appeared in Reinosa (Cantabria) during the festival of Saint Sebastian (on the 20th of January) and the “worldwide stewpot

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17 Town situated close to Madrid, in the Guadarrama mountain range. Its population is mainly made up by second residences that are inhabited over the weekends.
competition” held in Balmaseda (Vizcaya) on the 23rd of October since 1970 for the festival of Saint Severino. For this competition, more than one hundred participants make a haricots bean stew using old pressure cookers, with the object of remembering how the food used to be cooked: with stewpots on charcoal stoves, while the engine drivers worked on the Bilbao-La Robla (León) railway line that passed through the region (Sánchez 1998: 68, 464).

In fact, when it comes to the modernization of many region’s festivities, gastronomic competitions are one of the most widely celebrated activities, especially if they are summer festivals and attract a large number of tourists. Many regions hold marmitaco contests—tuna casserole with potatoes and peppers typical of regions close to the sea—, a food which has aroused an unusual interest in summer at Spanish harbors. Examples of this are the festival created in 1973 to celebrate Saint Nicholas (12th of August) in Getxo (Vizcaya) (Sánchez 1998: 332) or the marmitaco and Spanish tortilla contest which was started in 1996 for the Virgen de agosto in Balmaseda (Vizcaya). However, the level of gastronomic activity culminates in the festival of Bilbao’s Semana Grande (15th of August, celebrating the Virgen de Begoña), “invented” in 1978, where the main acts are contests to prepare bacalao al pil-pil (cod cooked with olive-oil sauce), marmitaco and oxtail (Sánchez 1998: 338). Gastronomic competitions are extremely varied: crusty rice in Elche (Alicante), chanfaina (shepherd dish made with the lamb’s entrails) in Fuente de Cantos (Badajoz), lamb roast on a stake in Pola de Lena (Asturias), pipirrana (fresh tomato relish) in Mengíbar (Jaén), lemonade in Ciudad Real and Valdepeñas, cod cooked with peppers, tomatoes and garlic in Estella (Navarra), paella in Utiel (Valencia) and, most importantly, paella also in Sueca (Valencia), where they meticulously follow the rules of the international paella competition that has been celebrated since 1961, where all the participants are given the standard utensils and ingredients (Sánchez 1998: 426).

Finally, in terms of totally invented festivals based on historical elements, a gastronomic accessory has also been added, which is seen as coherent and combines with the rest of the elements of the festival. This is the case of the Viking “parade” in Catoira (Pontevedra) that is celebrated on the first Sunday of August and was invented by a group of friends in 1961. Everybody is offered free food that consists of enormous cooking pots full of boiled mussels that are served on improvised wooden tables (Ibid.: 329). Other celebrations of this type are the “medieval suppers” held in the castle of Jaraque (Guadalajara) on the night of Saint John (23rd of June) and in the old Saint Magdalene church during the Jewish Festa (festival) in Ribadavia (Orense) on the 31st of August (Sánchez 1998: 272, 368; Cohen 1999: 132) or the harvester’s “pastis” (cake) that is offered in the Festes del segar i del batre (reaping and threshing festival) in Avià (Barcelona, on the third Sunday in July) (Sánchez 1998: 300).
Given this practice, in some cases, the assimilation of one thing or another (be it by tradition or by innovation) is not very compatible. Therefore, cases of mixing take place, that only seem to respond to consuming what both the local population and the tourists consider to be “typical.” A good example of this are the *Almendrero* Festivals celebrated since 1973, sometime in February (they do not have a fixed date) in Valsequillo (Gran Canaria). During the festival, as well as festivities including popular games and folkloric music, many huts serve “typical Canary Island dishes:” *potaje de jaramagos* (vegetable stew), *sancocho* (steamed fish), pork, *ropa vieja* (stewed meat in tomato sauce), potatoes in *mojo* (hot sauce) and Venezuelan food, which is widely accepted given the great amount of people who emigrated there from the Canary Islands (Sánchez 1998: 91).

Activities such as communal meals offered by brotherhoods, groups of youths, etc., fit better into the revitalization process and can be adapted easier to the new ways. This is what has happened with the “popular pestiñada” created in 1989 by one of the groups in the Carnival in Cádiz (the “Dédocrata” group) who shares out thousands of *pestiños* (honey-coated pastry), dipped in anisette. The degree of competition in this Carnival became patent when the “El Erizo” (hedgehog) group invented an *erizada* or the mass tasting of sea hedgehogs with wine, and the “El Molino” (windmill) group a popular meal where a special type of oyster is eaten (*Ibid.:* 73).

Nonetheless, Galicia is the region where the greatest number of celebrations of summer festivals dedicated to eating just one dish or typical product is held. Many examples can be observed by giving a short review of the region: *Chorizo* Festival (Verín, Orense, 17th of January, Saint Antón) (Sánchez 1998: 63) and *Festa dos Chourizos* (Pobra de Trives, Orense, 2nd of February, Saint Blas and La Candelaria; *ibid.:* 76); *Festa da Filloa* (type of crêpe) (Candy Sunday of the Carnival held in Lestedo-Boqueixón, La Coruña; *ibid.:* 104); also during Carnival, Viana do Bolo (Orense) celebrates the *Festa da Androlla* (a cold meat which is eaten by more than a thousand people; *ibid.:* 113). Pobra de Trives celebrates *Fiesta de la Bica* (typical butter sponge cake) on the last Sunday in July (*Ibid.:* 310) and in Moraña (Pontevedra), the youths of the area go the *Carneiro or Espeto Parade* (roast lamb) on the last Sunday of July (*Ibid.:* 311). During the summer in La Coruña, but without a fixed date, as it depends on the tide, Corne celebrates the *Festa do Percebe* (goose barnacle), the number of attendants can be calculated looking at the ton of percebes that was eaten by the 15,000 participants in 1997 (Sánchez 1998: 314); in Porto do Son, on the first weekend in August, a procession of sailors carry the *Virgen del Carmen*, and then a great amount of sardines are cooked and eaten (*Ibid.:* 330), and in Moraña (Pontevedra) the procession of the *Virgen del Carmen* is celebrated by cooking octopus in cauldrons. O Carballino (Orense) also celebrates an Octopus Day on
the second Sunday in August and, on that same day, during the La Peregrina festival, Pontevedra celebrates a regional gastronomical fair. Still in the month of August, other festivals are the Feira do Xamón (ham festival) in A Cañiza (Pontevedra) on the fifteenth, for Nª Srª de la Asunción, plus a mass cooking and eating of sardines with cornbread on the following Sunday. On the Saturday before this, Cee (La Coruña) holds the Festa do cocido. In Naseiro-Vivero (Lugo) on Saint Peter’s day, Naseiro celebrates a festival that brings together many aspects of all the Galician gastronomic festivals, which is celebrated from the last Sunday in August to the following Wednesday, the program includes different days dedicated to cocido, pie, octopus, soup and sardines (Sánchez 1998: 366).

Although rural food has always been a fundamental component, we must not forget that romeria\(^\text{18}\) were mainly religious events, and their main sense was ritualistic (Velasco 1992: 8-9). The change of emphasis is clear, in this sense, from communion with the religious symbol to direct material intake, and nowadays gastronomy has become an evermore important element in these processions.

**Conclusion**

It clearly seems that consumption—in this case of food—is one of the most important elements in the revitalization of festivals. According to this, it could seem that celebrations focus less on the definition of strategies that aim for social identity and are based on interpersonal or group relations and more on the definition, also identity based, of individuals and groups depending on what they consume (with differences by gender, age, region, belonging to a certain community, etc.). Another element that should be implicit in the aforementioned statement is how traditional culture, history, memory and the past, can contribute to creating new identity frameworks through mercantilization. This is carried out through a general process that could be defined as evolution towards the past or innovation by tradition and is additional to the cultural homogenization that globalization entails (Lísón 1989: 123).

Today in western countries, “culture” is a distinct element, which stands out among others that can be purchased by consumer-tourists. Any aspect that is linked to national “heritage” gives a series of symbolic qualities which can be incorporated by means of the materiality of the food. Through what is consumed, the individual can incorporate and through them gain prestige, legitimacy, historical roots and his/her identity as a person (Ortiz 1999a). Therefore, festivals can be considered one of the areas in which consumption becomes sacred and, in these

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\(^{18}\) Romeria is a long procession, usually outside the town, to a sacred place, and involves spending the day out, going for a picnic.
terms, the communion implied by many rituals can be represented as the incorporation of food that is symbolically charged. According to this, the fact that food is present in our festivals is used both as a way to experiment otherness and to feel included in the community. In fact, many social analysts think that the rising importance of rituals and ceremonies in the modern world is a mystery, given that it can not be explained by means of global economy laws, ways of consumption, and specifically the intake of food, and does not respond to the economic rules that conduct analysis tries to impose. The language of food is logical, and this logic has a cultural and contingent order, not a biologically essential one. Cooking feeds the social body (Poulain 1997: 20) and does not just maintain people physically; its presence in festivals is, therefore, related to all the other elements that intervene; they are explained through food and food is explained through them (Ortiz 1999b: 304-305).

Finally, this panorama that includes so many actors (ranging from the influence of the media to the European regulations on guarantees of origin and quality, to the fact that people want to take part in the feast and the interest expressed by returned migrants to resuscitate old festivals) shows how one element, the festival, can survive this ever-changing world (given the capacity social groups have to renew the negotiations that are needed to integrate local lifestyle in bigger frameworks). Therefore, in this complex process of revitalizing festive rituals, two elements interact: on one hand, the intention to reproduce a traditional past that ideally represents the community’s social unity; on the other, the interest of the community in taking part and adapting to the guidelines of a society that is industrialized, consumer based, globalized and urban, thus aiming at the present and the near future. In any case, the main reason for the maintenance of the festival is its capacity to be both a means to construct social continuity and adjust modern development (Cruces and Diaz de Rada 1995: 134). In this sense, as Dell Hymes has pointed out (2000: 68), the need to “traditionalize” seems to be universal—taking the notion as a requirement for social life to work not as a chronological matter but as a functional requirement of social life. In fact, the modern world, albeit full of technology and cultural mixing, does not seem likely to end tradition; actually it does not look like it will even corner it a little.

Works cited


