

“Bolo de Rolo”: From Luso-Brazilian Table to Pernambuco's Cultural and Gastronomic Identity

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Objectives | Practices reveal significant elements of a people's culture. In this regard, elements of Portuguese confectionery influenced the dietary customs of colonial Brazil, giving rise to the “Bolo de Rolo”, one of the key elements that symbolised Pernambuco's regional identity (Brazil). The central objective of this study is to examine the relationship between “Bolo de Rolo” and Pernambuco's gastronomic culture as an icon of regional identity and its role in promoting local identity and culinary tourism.

Methodology | This study emerges from an interdisciplinary approach that intertwines historical, cultural, and gastronomic research. The first phase involved a literature and documentary review, exploring historical records, academic articles, and folklore sources, along with interviews with individuals deeply rooted in local traditions, including a frevo dancer, a maracatu performer, and a giant puppeteer from Olinda. These interviews aimed to answer four subjective guiding questions. Subsequently, informal interviews were conducted with ten participants, including master confectioners and representatives from five main confectioneries in Pernambuco, a maître, and an independent confectioner. These interviews were guided by four subjective questions to gather contemporary perspectives on the importance of “Bolo de Rolo.” Data analysis involved the transcription of the discourse. The analysis of this information provided a deeper understanding of this dessert's cultural and culinary role.

Main Results and Contributions | “Bolo de Rolo”, an icon of Pernambuco's cuisine, has significantly shaped the regional gastronomic identity. Its origins can be traced back to the 19th century when Pernambuco was immersed in the cultural influences of the colonial period and local traditions. This dessert, characterised by its thin rolled layers, gained notoriety for its intricate preparation technique and its intrinsic connection to local celebrations such as Carnival and religious festivities. The link between “Bolo de Rolo” and these festive events became pivotal in understanding how it established itself as a Pernambuco's cultural heritage.

From a historical perspective, "Bolo de Rolo" served as a vessel of cultural memory, preserving ancestral confectionery traditions and techniques passed down through generations. The ability to produce this cake and its presence on special occasions is a living connection to the region's past, underscoring the importance of gastronomy as an intangible heritage. The analysis of "Bolo de Rolo's" journey in Pernambuco's culinary history reveals the evolution of flavours and the construction of collective identity and cultural resilience in the face of socio-cultural changes.

The preservation and promotion of "Bolo de Rolo" not only boost the local economy but also help create a unique tourist identity for Pernambuco.

In summary, "Bolo de Rolo" is an essential component of Pernambuco's gastronomic identity, embodying historical, cultural, and culinary traditions. Its continued presence at celebrations and on the tables of Pernambuco's residents illustrates the deep connection between food and local identity, reinforcing its importance as an intangible heritage of the region. Understanding the complex interaction between "Bolo de Rolo" and Pernambuco's culture provides valuable insights into how gastronomy can be a powerful vehicle in building and preserving regional identities.

Limitations | This study faced some limitations, including the availability of detailed historical sources and the need to consider potential biases when interviewing contemporary sources. Additionally, the scope of the study was limited to Pernambuco, despite the potential influence of "Bolo de Rolo" in other regions, such as the states of Alagoas and Paraíba.

Conclusions | In conclusion, "Bolo de Rolo" is an identity heritage of Pernambuco's gastronomic culture, vital in preserving memory and transmitting local traditions. Its association with deeply rooted regional celebrations and festivities reinforces its symbolic value and promotes its construction as a tourist souvenir. Through the continuous promotion of this dessert and the recognition of its cultural significance, it is possible to strengthen Pernambuco's identity and stimulate culinary tourism, benefiting both the local community and visitors interested in experiencing the historical and culinary dimensions of the region.

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